

STRONGER FUTURES

IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

A ten year commitment to Aboriginal people
in the Northern Territory July 2012



Australian Government





With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms and where otherwise noted all material presented in this document is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/>) licence.

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website (accessible using the links provided) as is the full legal code for the CC BY 3.0 AU licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/legalcode>).

This report must be attributed as Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory: A ten year commitment to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory July 2012.

ISBN Print 978-1-921975-52-3

PDF 978-1-921975-51-6

Please be aware that this report may contain the images and names of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have passed away.

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER



Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory is the Australian Government's commitment to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to work with them over the next ten years to drive positive change.

Our ten year, \$3.4 billion commitment will see us continuing to invest to make communities safer and families and children healthier. We will be helping to create jobs in communities, supporting local people to get jobs, and giving people living in outstations and homelands certainty that support for basic services will continue.

Complementing our new investment, our Stronger Futures legislation will help us to work with Aboriginal people to tackle the issues that communities told us were the most urgent. Continuing to tackle alcohol abuse, and the damage this causes, ensuring children go to school every day to get a decent education, and that parents play their part in making this happen.

We have made this commitment over ten years to give Aboriginal people and communities certainty that the Australian Government is there for the long term and because we recognise that the levels of disadvantage too many people in the Northern Territory face remain too high. Overcoming this disadvantage is not short-term work.

I know Aboriginal people and communities are keen to get on with this work. I am pleased that the Australian Government is able to commit to building Stronger Futures with them.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny Macklin".

The Hon. Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Minister for Disability Reform

OVERVIEW



Over the past four and a half years, the Australian Government has delivered record investments in extra housing, jobs and health, education and community safety services to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

Evidence of progress is clear.

The evaluation of our work with remote community stores showed stores have improved and more healthy food is available. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Research Survey of remote Northern Territory communities showed people are feeling safer and believe things are improving in their communities. There is some improvement in Year 3 reading in remote schools, and we have made substantial additional investment in teachers, schools, housing and infrastructure.

There are now more than 60 extra police in remote communities in the Northern Territory, 80 night patrols on the streets, 22 safe houses that provide refuge for men, women and children and more child protection workers servicing remote communities. There are more than 190 extra teachers in Northern Territory classrooms and every school day more than 5,000 Aboriginal children sit down to a decent meal. Nine new crèches have been built and 13 have been upgraded.

Our remote housing investment is delivering better, safer houses to more than 3,000 Aboriginal families in the Northern Territory. More than 670 new houses have been built and more than 2,300 houses have been refurbished.

From 2007, through the Northern Territory Jobs Package, the Australian and Northern Territory Governments funded the conversion of Community Development Employment Projects positions to 2,241 real jobs.

But we know much more needs to be done.

The gap between Aboriginal Australians and other Australians is widest in the Northern Territory – in life expectancy, child mortality, education and employment.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory is a ten-year Australian Government commitment to do the things people told us were the most urgent to build stronger futures – getting children to school to get a decent education; tackling alcohol abuse; providing decent housing;

and increasing job opportunities. It is a comprehensive, long-term package of work, funding and legislation to support people in communities.

The Stronger Futures legislation, which came into effect in July 2012, complements the investment we are making. These laws are about reducing the harm caused by alcohol abuse, making sure good food is available in communities, and ensuring children get to school to get a decent education.

The Stronger Futures legislation repeals the *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007*. The legislation has been designed to comply with the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. The legislation explicitly states that it does not affect the operation of the *Racial Discrimination Act*. The legislation has been prepared in line with Australia's human rights obligations.

The special measures in the legislation will be independently reviewed in three years with a report to the Australian Parliament in four years' time.

OVERVIEW CONTINUED

Our \$3.4 billion investment over ten years will give Aboriginal people certainty that the Australian Government is making a long term commitment to addressing the levels of disadvantage too many Aboriginal people still face. Providing funding over 10 years will give service providers certainty and the ability to build strong relationships with Aboriginal people and organisations. Aboriginal organisations will also be able to build up their capacity over time, knowing that funding is secure.

We are working with communities to **support families and give children the best start in life**. We are making sure crèches, playgroups, parenting programs, child protection services and youth services are all geared to good results for children.

In education, the Government is working to ensure there are **enough teachers, and those teachers are better trained to help Aboriginal children learn**. We are building career paths and qualifications so local people can become teachers and educational support workers in their communities.

We are building houses so communities can get the teachers they need, and keep them. We are continuing to provide school meals so children can concentrate, be healthy, and achieve. And we are making sure parents are clear that **children must go to school**.

We are **creating new jobs, and supporting people to get jobs** and keep them, including through Indigenous traineeships. We are helping small businesses grow strong so they can survive and prosper into the future.

We are continuing our hard work to **keep communities safe**, especially for vulnerable women and children. We are supporting local alcohol management plans, and continuing to fund more police, night patrols and child protection workers.

We are continuing our large investment in more **primary and preventive health** staff on the ground, and in our successful hearing and dental programs.

We are **continuing and increasing our record investments in remote housing** and continuing to work with communities to agree voluntary leases over social housing to ensure major reforms to property and tenancy management continue in remote communities. We are also working to agree voluntary leases over Commonwealth assets that support remote service delivery.

These commitments will support more employment and training opportunities for local Aboriginal people.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



Building healthy families, giving children the best start in life and supporting young people are crucial to creating stronger futures for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

As part of the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package, we are funding services which strengthen the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children, young people and their families in Northern Territory communities.

HIGHLIGHTS

Children and families

- The Government is providing \$442 million over ten years to:
 - › increase the number of **Communities for Children** sites from four to 19, with a focus on remote communities
 - › continue eight existing playgroups
 - › support up to 23 intensive family support services for families at risk and 16 existing women's safe houses
 - › continue two mobile child protection teams with 25 workers
 - › place 12 extra remote Aboriginal family and community workers in remote Northern Territory communities, bringing the total to 47 workers
- › support up to 225 early learning and child care places at nine crèches in very remote communities
- › keep funding existing youth services to connect students to school and help prevent youth suicide in more than 30 remote communities.
- The Government is creating local jobs through these initiatives by:
 - › recruiting and training local people so skills and jobs stay in the community, including workers in **Communities for Children** sites and playgroups, as well as youth workers
 - › recruiting and training more remote Aboriginal family and community workers from the local communities in which they will work.

Building communities for children

The Australian Government's investment will allow a major expansion of the number of **Communities for Children** sites in the Northern Territory, offering a range of services to help parents provide a safe, happy and healthy environment for their children. Over the next six years the number of **Communities for Children** sites in the Northern Territory will increase from four to 19, with a focus on remote locations. They will provide services including early learning and literacy programs, parenting and family support programs, and child nutrition advice.

Local communities will have a say in which services they want delivered to meet the needs of local families, and local Aboriginal organisations will be partners in delivering these services.

Our investment delivers practical help for families on the ground, through:

- intensive family support services to provide practical parenting support in up to 23 communities for families with children at risk of entering the child protection system
- continued funding for nine crèches for children under five in the communities of Peppimenarti, Robinson River, Areyonga, Docker River, Papunya, Yarralin, Milikapiti, Lajamanu and Timber Creek
 - › as well as early learning and care, crèches offer a good base to deliver programs to get children ready for school and support children's health, safety and early development
- continued funding for supported playgroups in eight remote locations – Borroloola, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Gunbalanya, Lajamanu, Milingimbi, Numbulwar and Yuendumu



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CONTINUED

- › these playgroups build support for vulnerable parents, especially where their children may be at risk
- continuing the Youth In Communities Program over ten years in more than 30 remote communities
- › this program focuses on keeping young people connected with school or training, helping prevent youth suicide, self-harm, and alcohol and substance abuse.

As new services are developed, the Australian Government is committed to recruiting and training local workers so skills and jobs stay in the community and provide opportunities for local Aboriginal people.

Keeping families safe

As part of Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Government will continue to support 16 women's safe houses. These services help keep women and children safe and protect them from violence through crisis accommodation and support services.

Over the next five years, we will also continue to invest in front line child protection through two mobile child protection teams. So far, we have delivered 25 extra front line workers to support Northern Territory child protection officers as they go out and work with families. This means more investigations can occur in remote and regional communities across the Northern Territory to make sure more children are safe.

We are also providing ongoing support for remote Aboriginal family and community workers over five years. These local workers work closely with people in their communities to provide information and support and prevent child abuse and neglect, especially where children are at risk of being removed into out-of-home care. They also undertake a range of activities to support vulnerable families and children, including linking them to other services.

New Stronger Futures investments in an extra 12 workers means the Australian Government will be funding a total of 47 remote Aboriginal family and community workers in remote locations in the Northern Territory.

Aboriginal people also told Government about the need for specific services for men. New men's services, tailored to local needs, with a strong focus on leadership and wellbeing as well as education, training and employment will be established in several communities.

EDUCATION



Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory have told the Government that education is a priority. School attendance and enrolment rates in many communities are still unacceptable and more needs to be done to ensure all children are getting a decent education and attending school every day.

HIGHLIGHTS

Education highlights

- The Government is providing \$476 million to:
 - › continue funding for the extra 200 teachers in Northern Territory schools
 - › provide up to 100 new teacher houses
 - › provide better training for teachers, including teaching English as a second language and helping children cope with hearing issues and learning difficulties
 - › provide school meals to around 5,000 students across the Northern Territory, to improve concentration, health and school results.
- The Government will provide a further \$107 million to improve and expand the Improving School Enrolment and Attendance through Welfare Reform Measure (SEAM) to 16 new communities and align it with the Northern Territory Government's *Every Child, Every Day* attendance strategy.
- We are supporting local education jobs by:
 - › building career paths and qualifications so local people can become teachers and educational support workers in their communities
 - › continuing to employ Aboriginal people in the preparation and delivery of meals and in the administration of the School Nutrition Program.

To ensure children get the best possible education, the Australian Government has made an investment of more than \$583 million over ten years.

This will help to ensure that we have quality teachers in place. We have heard from Aboriginal people that they want teachers who are able to respond to local needs and this funding will provide for teachers to be trained in teaching English as a second language, and providing support to children with learning difficulties.

More teachers, with better training

The Government is continuing to provide funding for an extra 200 teachers in remote Northern Territory schools. Commonwealth funding will continue at current levels for four years. After that period, our funding will begin to gradually taper down. Funding for this initiative will then be subject to negotiation between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments.

Aboriginal people told us high quality teachers are important, especially if children have learning difficulties. High quality teaching is critical to children learning vital literacy and numeracy skills and having the best chance of getting a job in the future. In response, under the Stronger

Futures in the Northern Territory package, the Australian Government is not just investing in more teachers, but also in initiatives to make sure teachers have the skills and support to teach disadvantaged students and help children re-engage with school.

This ten year investment will ensure that all remote teachers, including local Aboriginal teachers, have the skills they need to provide specialist teaching in intensive numeracy and literacy for students with English as a second language, or who may experience learning difficulties.



We also heard what people told us in consultations about wanting local teachers working with their children. This funding will help the Northern Territory Government invest in professional development for Aboriginal school staff. This will help more Aboriginal people get education qualifications and create pathways for local people to become teachers and education workers in their communities.

The Australian Government is also building more teacher houses in remote Northern Territory communities to tackle the shortages in staff housing. This will improve the attraction and retention of high-quality teachers in remote schools.

Since 2009 the Australian Government has provided about \$31 million for the construction of teacher housing in remote areas of the Northern Territory. Over the next ten years, we will fund up to 100 extra teacher houses in remote and very remote locations.

Making sure children go to school

A decent education helps children grow up strong and confident and able to get a job. To get a decent education, children need to go to school every day and stay until they finish their schooling.

Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory have been clear that they want their children to attend school every day. They also said that parents have a responsibility to make this happen.

The Australian Government will work in partnership with the Northern Territory Government to align the Improving School Enrolment and Attendance through Welfare Reform Measure (SEAM) with the *Every Child, Every Day* (ECED) strategy.

Working together, both governments will support parents to meet their responsibilities for their child's school enrolment and attendance. SEAM is about ensuring greater engagement between schools and families and giving parents extra support when they need it.

Under this initiative, if children fall below the set attendance benchmark, the Northern Territory Government and the Department of Human Services will work with families to develop attendance plans that will help address barriers to attendance. The funding for SEAM includes providing Department of Human Services social workers and other support services to help families.

If parents fail to attend a compulsory conference, agree to an attendance plan or do not meet their part of the agreed attendance plan, every attempt will be made to assist them to get their child to school. As a last resort, if parents do not comply with their responsibilities and no special circumstances apply, income support payments will be suspended.

Payments will be reinstated once the parent gives clear signals they are complying with their responsibilities and have re-engaged with the school. As long as this is undertaken within 13 weeks of the initial income support suspension all suspended payments will be back paid.

Community information sessions will be held in each SEAM community to outline the new model of SEAM and its available supports. Parents will also be sent a letter at the start of each school semester outlining these new arrangements.

We are also improving enrolment processes to help prevent children who are not present on school rolls from falling through the cracks, especially children in families which move frequently.

Northern Territory Education authorities and the Department of Human Services will now be able to share data for SEAM sites to ensure that children are enrolled in a school and attending regularly.

Over the next two years SEAM will be expanded from six to 22 communities. The new model of SEAM will first be introduced to the current SEAM areas – Wadeye, Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Wallace Rockhole, Tiwi Islands, Katherine and Katherine town camps – as well as Yirrkala and Nhulunbuy.

Over the next two years the new SEAM arrangements will also be expanded to Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, and the communities of Maningrida, Galiwin'ku, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Umbakumba, Angurugu, Gapuwiyak, Gunbalanya, Milingimbi, Lajamanu, Yuendumu and Alyangula.

Historically, school attendance in these locations overall is particularly poor and more needs to be done to ensure all children get a decent education. The initiative will apply to all eligible parents on income support in these areas.

Helping children make the most of school

The School Nutrition Program provides nutritionally sound meals for approximately 5,000 students in participating schools in Northern Territory communities. School meals have been shown to improve student behaviour, attention and health, and the Government will continue to provide funding for this program for another decade.

As with each part of our Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory work, this program provides work and training for local people. We employ local Aboriginal staff in all communities implementing this program, in both the preparation and delivery of meals and in the administration of the program.



JOBS



Having a job improves wellbeing and self confidence and helps build stronger local communities and economies. Young people can see the benefits of getting a good education when there are jobs available in communities that are filled by local people.

Aboriginal people told us that they want to work in regular jobs in their communities, with proper wages and conditions. They said that too often they saw jobs not being filled, or being filled by people from outside the community. They called for training and support to work in real jobs, for real wages, in community. The Government has listened to these messages.

Job creation

The Government is supporting and creating local jobs, ensuring Aboriginal people develop new skills and benefit from new jobs in their communities.

We are funding 50 new ranger positions in the Northern Territory in our Working on Country program. This program is about protecting the environment and delivering permanent Aboriginal jobs. It has a strong track record in the Northern Territory, with 280 rangers already doing valuable conservation work, providing role models for young people and the whole community.

The services being provided as part of the Stronger Futures initiatives will also help to drive local employment. For example, we will strengthen the local jobs plan in our **Communities for Children** sites including youth workers, child and family support and playgroup workers. We are employing local people to provide school meals, and staff the night patrols we fund in

many communities. We will continue to support Aboriginal people to be employed as interpreters and are creating additional Indigenous Engagement Officer positions for more effective engagement with communities. We are also building career paths and qualifications for local people so they might become teachers in schools in their communities.

HIGHLIGHTS

Jobs highlights

- The Government is ensuring all Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory programs build in jobs for local Aboriginal people.
- We are also providing more than \$19 million over the next four years to create 50 extra Aboriginal ranger positions in remote Northern Territory communities.
- The Government is also helping to connect people to work by:
 - › offering up to 100 local traineeships for people in remote communities so they can learn on the job and move into jobs
 - › offering a job guarantee to young people completing year 12 in Territory Growth Towns
 - › helping people in remote communities develop business ideas.

From 1 July 2013, the new \$1.5 billion Remote Jobs and Communities Program will see a more integrated and flexible approach to participation and employment services for people living in remote areas of Australia including in the Northern Territory.

Job support

Local traineeships

Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory told us that they want to be employed in local jobs. Some people wanted to be able to ‘shadow’ a job so they could learn the role and eventually be employed in that position.

The Government has responded to this call. We are providing up to 100 new Indigenous traineeships so Aboriginal people can fill jobs in their communities as these positions become available.

The Government will identify jobs that could be filled by a local Aboriginal person in an Indigenous traineeship. These jobs may be in service delivery including services provided through Northern Territory Shire Councils, retail or other available sectors.

When an Indigenous traineeship is offered, a local person will receive job-specific training and shadow the role for up to two years, or until they can comfortably take on the job. Mentoring will help people complete the traineeship and move into the job.

Jobs for school leavers

The Government is also creating opportunities for young people who finish Year 12. We are working with the Northern Territory Government to guarantee jobs to Aboriginal students completing Year 12 in Territory Growth Towns. They will be offered jobs in the Australian Public Service or with organisations we fund to deliver services. These opportunities help young people see the benefits of a good education.

Support for small businesses

Aboriginal-owned businesses help drive economic development by building individual and community wealth. Indigenous business owners are role models for their communities and are also strong employers of other Aboriginal Australians.

Nationally, the Government is helping the Indigenous business sector by supporting new businesses to get started and supporting existing businesses to grow. In the Northern Territory, the Government will help local people identify and develop business ideas. This means Aboriginal people with business ideas will be provided with one-on-one advice and mentoring. This will support the development of small businesses in participating communities and help them be successful in the long term.

The communities of Wadeye and Wurrumiyanga (Nguiu) have been chosen for this work, following an Expression of Interest process earlier this year.

COMMUNITY SAFETY



Keeping people safe, especially vulnerable women and children, is the Government's highest priority in the Northern Territory.

Community safety for Aboriginal people living in remote communities has improved, with assaults, alcohol-related incidents and child welfare incidents continuing to fall in remote communities.

However, while progress has been made, there is still much to be done. Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory have told us that they want community safety measures to continue, including extra police and community night patrols.

COMMUNITY SAFETY CONTINUED

The Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package includes a \$695 million funding boost to provide these services in remote communities across the Northern Territory for the next ten years.

Australian Government initiatives are improving community safety for Aboriginal people living in remote areas, by enforcing alcohol restrictions, maintaining law and order and working with local people to keep their communities safe.

Community safety and justice

People feel safer when police are visible in their community.

An independent review has found that the extra police the Australian Government has funded in the Northern Territory have been welcomed in communities and generally had a good effect on community safety.¹ There has also been a large increase in reported incidents and conviction rates.² More police means a greater ability to report and prosecute crimes.

The Australian Government is continuing funding for 60 police officers in remote areas for a further ten years. The Government will continue to fund five police complexes in the Northern Territory as well as provide funding for further police facilities in remote areas and funding to operate these facilities.

The Australian Government will also support the continued operations of the successful Substance Abuse Intelligence Desks (SAID) and Dog Operations Unit. These units have played an important part in disrupting illegal drug distribution networks into Northern Territory Aboriginal communities from other states. An independent 2012 review of SAID found that the Government's



investment to reduce substance misuse in remote communities is making a difference.³ It said increased enforcement, the rollout of Opal fuel, and more consistent alcohol restrictions were lowering petrol sniffing and alcohol abuse in some communities.

For the next two years, the Australian Government will fund the Australian Federal Police to continue to support the Northern Territory Child Abuse Task Force. We will also fund the Australian Crime Commission to complete the work of the National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force.

Local people also have high regard for community night patrols. Along with more police, they say they are one of the top two most positive influences on community safety in towns and remote communities.⁴ Most people felt night patrols made either a big or reasonable difference to their safety.

HIGHLIGHTS

Community safety highlights

- The Australian Government is providing \$619 million over ten years to:
 - › ensure the Northern Territory Government can continue employing 60 full-time Northern Territory police officers in 18 remote communities
 - › build an additional four permanent remote area police complexes
 - › maintain community night patrols across 80 communities
 - › continue additional funding for legal assistance services.
- This funding also continues important child protection, drug and alcohol policing units, including:
 - › Australian Federal Police support for the Northern Territory's Child Abuse Task Force
 - › Australian Crime Commission support for the National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force
 - › Substance Abuse Intelligence Desks, including Dog Operation Units.
- The Government is also providing \$76 million to continue to tackle alcohol abuse by:
 - › strengthening local solutions through alcohol management plans
 - › supporting liquor licensing and respectful signage
 - › supporting people identified by the Alcohol and Other Drugs Tribunal as being at risk of alcohol misuse and substance abuse through participation in income management, free financial management support services and a matched savings incentive program over two years.
- The Government is also committed to continuing existing alcohol restrictions and strengthening penalties for grog running.
- The Government is creating local safety jobs by:
 - › funding new local jobs in alcohol and drug services
 - › continuing to support the significant investment in local jobs offered by community night patrol services (more than 350 local jobs).

COMMUNITY SAFETY CONTINUED

In response to this community support, the Government will continue to fund this important safety measure in 80 communities, including Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, for the next ten years. Night patrols protect community members, especially women and children, and defuse violent incidents before serious consequences arise. They also employ more than 350 people in Northern Territory communities and so play a vital part in the Government's job creation strategy.

The Australian Government will also extend legal assistance and services through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Women's Legal Services, and the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, ensuring greater access to advice, support, referral and representation for those who need it.

The Government's new legislation also continues a number of measures to help make communities safer. We will continue the current restrictions on prohibited materials. We will also

continue the powers that enable the Australian Crime Commission to investigate violence and child abuse against an Indigenous person. These powers apply across Australia.



Customary Law

The law will continue to prevent magistrates and judges from considering customary law or cultural practice to determine how serious an offence is when deciding what sentence should be imposed on someone who is found guilty of a crime. Customary law or cultural practice also cannot be used to determine the seriousness of an offence when deciding whether bail should be given to someone who is accused of a crime, and if so, what conditions should be placed on bail. The prohibition on consideration of customary law or cultural practice in bail and sentencing decisions applies equally to all cultural practices. It does not apply only to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practices.

We have, however, created exceptions to the law, which will allow officials making bail and sentencing decisions (for example, judges, magistrates and others who are authorised to make bail decisions) to consider customary law or cultural practice to determine the seriousness of an offence that concerns cultural heritage sites and objects.

The effect of the legislation is not to treat Indigenous offenders less favourably than non-Indigenous offenders, but to treat all persons in Australia equally, regardless of their cultural background or heritage.

Tackling alcohol abuse

People in the Northern Territory have consistently expressed concern about the devastating effects alcohol abuse is having on too many families, including during the three formal Australian Government consultations since 2008. Alcohol abuse is a major contributing factor to the high levels of Aboriginal disadvantage, including low life expectancy, poor health, poor education and poor employment outcomes, especially in the Northern Territory. The evidence confirms that alcohol abuse inflicts a significant level of harm on people, families and communities.

Through the Stronger Futures legislation and investment, the Government is responding to calls for alcohol restrictions to continue; more policing and stronger penalties for grog running; and support for people with drug and alcohol problems.

Over time we want to move to a more sustainable approach to managing alcohol issues that meets the needs of people in communities. That is why we are strengthening alcohol management planning processes to let communities work with government to develop alcohol management plans which are tailored to local community circumstances, and which focus on harm reduction. Alcohol management planning processes will be improved by evidence-based minimum standards to make sure that harm is reduced and by funding to support community members to participate fully. The Minister will also have a role in approving alcohol management plans.

When alcohol restrictions were initially introduced in 2007, public signs were erected on highways and at the entrance to communities to assist with their enforcement. There has been considerable concern, including from the community consultations, about the form and placement of the signs and the offence they caused to community members.

COMMUNITY SAFETY CONTINUED

The Stronger Futures legislation requires that signage telling residents and visitors about the restrictions is respectful. We have already begun working with communities on the wording and design of their community signs. This includes making sure that the content of highway signs is respectful and that the signs are located only in those places where they are needed.

The Government is serious about strong action on alcohol running. The range of penalties for taking alcohol into communities will allow up to six months imprisonment for offences involving less than 1,350mls of pure alcohol (equivalent to three cartons of full strength beer) or up to 18 months for larger quantities. This will mean that serious cases will carry serious implications and grog runners cannot avoid sanction by regularly taking smaller amounts of alcohol into communities.

At the same time, the legislation will enable infringement notices to be issued for the possession and supply of alcohol in a restricted area where that more limited response is appropriate.

Through the Stronger Futures health initiative we are also funding alcohol and other drug abuse treatment services for people who need early help, treatment, case management or referral. Up to 20 extra local workers will provide care, prevention, early support and follow up that supports alcohol management plans.

Our legislation also enables the Australian and Northern Territory Governments to work together to scrutinise more closely the operations of licensed premises that may be related to substantial alcohol-related harm in the community. The Australian Government will be able to request that an independent assessor be appointed under the Northern Territory *Liquor Act* to review the operations of the premises.

We are also changing the law so the Northern Territory Alcohol and Other Drugs Tribunal can refer problem drinkers for income management.

This will work in a similar way to child protection income management. For people with alcohol problems, income management can help by reducing the amount of money they have to spend on alcohol and illicit drugs, and making sure they have enough money for basic needs such as food, clothing and housing for themselves and their families. This initiative will support people with serious alcohol problems, irrespective of whether they are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

To ensure the alcohol regulation system in the Northern Territory is working, the Australian Government will commission an independent review of its effectiveness. This will commence within two years and report to the Australian Parliament in three years.

1 2010: The Allen Consulting Group, Independent Review of Policing in Remote Indigenous Communities in the Northern Territory: April 2010

2 2011: Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory Monitoring Report: January to June 2011

3 2011: Judy Putt: Review of the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desks and Dog Operation Units

4 2011: Community Safety and Wellbeing Survey

HEALTH



Healthier people and communities are a critical part of building stronger futures in the Northern Territory.

The Australian Government is investing \$754 million over ten years to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

This will support primary health care service delivery, hearing and dental health services, provide child abuse trauma counselling services, and additional alcohol and other drug workers. It will also continue to ensure the local supply of good, fresh and affordable food.

Better health services

The Australian Government will continue to fund Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and the Northern Territory Government to deliver expanded primary health care services. This involves more than 200 full-time staff delivering medical, nursing and allied health services in 80 primary health care clinics.

Extra health professionals will also be available for short-term placements to help ease the workload for permanent staff and give primary health care services access to specialists such as optometrists or podiatrists whose services are not normally available in remote locations.

The Government recognises the need to provide good services to get and keep these staff and so we are also providing funding to build and upgrade staff housing.

There are significant levels of ear disease among Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory. Follow-up audiology assessments and ear, nose and throat services have already been provided to 4,700 children under the Australian Government's hearing health program.

Of these 4,700 children, two thirds have been found to have ear disease. Evaluation results show that the hearing health program is having an impact on improving the ear health of Aboriginal children receiving these services.



HIGHLIGHTS

Under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package, the Government is funding hearing checks and coordination services for children in the Northern Territory. This includes funding for audiology and specialist services to work with primary health staff to prevent ear disease; diagnose children in their communities; manage the disease and refer children for treatment of serious ear disease where this is required. We are also funding a community education program to educate families about their children's ear and hearing health.

During recent consultations in the Northern Territory, local people also raised oral and dental health as a significant problem which needs more work. The Australian Government is continuing our successful dental health program, with more prevention work through a fluoride varnish program. Under this approach, Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory will have access to preventive oral health services through outreach services to improve oral health practices and reduce dental problems.

Health highlights

- The Government is providing \$713 million to:
 - › fund primary health care staff to deliver additional medical, nursing and allied health support across 80 clinics
 - › fund at least 450 short-term placements of medical staff in remote communities every year through the Remote Area Health Corps
 - › build and upgrade staff housing
 - › implement an integrated Hearing Health Program to provide audiology and specialist services to prevent ear disease; diagnose children in their communities; manage disease; refer children for treatment where this is required; and educate families to prevent and manage ear disease
 - › continue the successful Australian Government dental health program, which provides dental checks and surgery to Aboriginal children across the Northern Territory, with a complementary focus on prevention work through a fluoride varnish program
- We are also focused on making sure all communities have better access to good food through community stores with a further investment of \$41 million.
- The Government is also investing an additional \$2 million per year to establish four new community mental health services in remote communities in the Northern Territory.
- We are supporting local job creation through these initiatives by:
 - › employing Aboriginal health workers in primary health care clinics
 - › training local workers to work in the alcohol misuse program.

A focus on improving mental health

The Australian Government has developed new mental health services to provide practical support for individuals, families and communities to better cope with mental illness and address the risk factors leading to mental illness, especially for children and young people. The Government will invest more than \$2 million each year to establish four new community mental health services in the Northern Territory in remote locations.

Personal Helpers and Mentors are very flexible services for young people and adults whose lives are severely affected by mental illness. They support recovery by helping people overcome social isolation and connect back to their community. In remote communities they also use a community development approach to strengthen community support networks. Younger people at risk of suicide are also able to access these services. The services employ Aboriginal people as cultural and family brokers to ensure that individuals and families are able to engage as effectively as possible.

Food security

The Australian Government's work to license community stores in the Northern Territory is proving to be successful. Independent evaluation found a big improvement in the availability, range and quality of fresh and healthy food in remote communities as a result of this work. Stores now have better management and infrastructure (storage, refrigeration, shelving, and financial management systems) in place. They are not only becoming better places to shop, but are also on a more sustainable financial footing. The Stronger Futures package will mean that over the next ten years, more than a million dollars each year will go to stores to improve buildings and provide training.

The Stronger Futures legislation will ensure more stores that are an important source of food, drink or groceries for remote Aboriginal communities will come within the scope of licensing.

Major centres will not be affected by this legislation as the Government believes there is enough competition in these areas to keep prices down and ensure food security without additional licensing.

We have also made changes to the range of penalties available to deal with breaches of licensing requirements. Currently, we can only revoke or refuse to grant a licence. Under the new system, fines can be imposed, recognising the importance of making sure food remains available in remote communities. This means stores can stay open while we work with them to offer better performance and service, and local people will not be disadvantaged by the store being closed.

HOUSING AND LAND



Healthy homes are the basis of healthy lives. They give children and families a safe place to grow, study and be able to enjoy good health and hygiene.

Better housing is a very important part of the Australian Government's work to build stronger futures in the Northern Territory.

Healthy homes

The Government is continuing to build healthy homes for Aboriginal people living in remote communities. We have now built over 670 new homes and refurbished over 2,300 more. We are well on the way to our target of 1,456 new homes by 2018 and over 2,900 refurbishments by mid-2013.

HIGHLIGHTS

Housing highlights

- The Australian Government has now built more than 670 new homes in the Northern Territory and refurbished over 2,300 more.
- As part of Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, we are investing an extra \$230 million in Indigenous housing in the Territory on top of the \$1.7 billion we are already providing over ten years.
- The Government is investing a further \$53 million in healthy homes in the Northern Territory. This is providing funding in particular to remove asbestos-containing material, including in houses scheduled for demolition so that new housing can be built.
- The Government has committed to no more compulsory leases and these will all end in August 2012. We are negotiating voluntary leases with communities to support service delivery and continue property and tenancy management over public housing.
- \$221 million over ten years will be provided to support basic municipal and essential services for outstations and homelands – power, water, sewerage and road maintenance, as well as garbage collection and dog control programs. This investment includes \$206 million from the Australian Government and \$15 million from the Northern Territory Government.
- Aboriginal employment will continue to be an imperative and we will build on the 1,400 Aboriginal people employed under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing in the Northern Territory.

In our recent discussions with communities, we heard from many people that they are still concerned about the housing backlog, especially in some small communities. We are responding by investing an extra \$230 million in Indigenous housing in the Territory. This new money is on top of the \$1.7 billion we are already providing over ten years. Much of this effort will be directed to smaller communities and help make sure all existing houses are safe and habitable and have better amenities for residents.

We are also bringing forward some investments we have already committed so we can speed up our building program and build more new houses sooner.

As a result of these changes, more new houses will be built in 2013-14 and 2014-15 rather than in 2015-16 meaning families will be able to move into new homes much sooner.

Significantly, we will also build on the Aboriginal employment outcomes achieved under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) in the Northern Territory, which has seen over 1,400 Aboriginal people employed since the program began, making up around 30 per cent of the total Northern Territory NPARIH workforce. This is well in excess of the formal NPARIH target of 20 per cent and outpaces all previous housing and construction programs in remote Australia.

Supporting new houses and investments

As we make these significant new housing investments, and other investments in remote communities, we are determined to protect these investments for the future.



HOUSING AND LAND CONTINUED



We want to make sure houses are well-maintained and looked after so they last the distance, because longer-lasting houses mean less overcrowding in the long term.

Ten communities now have housing leases which run for 40 years and there are whole of township leases covering six communities. We are continuing to negotiate voluntary leases with Aboriginal land owners so the Northern Territory Government can take clear responsibility for upkeep of houses. The Northern Territory Government can, in turn, then be very clear with tenants about paying rent and taking care of their home, like tenants elsewhere in Australia.

We know that people in the Northern Territory were upset about the compulsory five year leases which were introduced in 2007. We will not be extending the five year leases and we will keep paying fair rent for the five year period that Government has held the leases. All five year leases will end in August 2012 at the latest.

The Government will continue to work with communities to negotiate voluntary long term township leases, where the traditional owners are interested in doing so, which allow for business opportunities and home ownership, without affecting underlying Aboriginal ownership of the land.

The Government is now working to deal with legal and government restrictions that form obstacles to voluntary leasing on town camp and community living area land, so nothing gets in the way of bringing opportunities for home ownership and economic development to Aboriginal people who want to make use of their land in these ways.

The new laws are very clear about two things – making sure Aboriginal land owners of community living areas can get help from Land Councils about any dealings with their land, and making sure we consult all the right people, particularly land owners, on any reforms for town camps and community living areas.

As we move out of five year leases and negotiate voluntary leases, we will continue checking for asbestos and dealing with it where it is found. We have allocated funding to remove asbestos from houses and other community buildings. We want to make sure all buildings we have been responsible for, and the families and staff living and working in them, are safe.

Municipal and essential services

Approximately 9,000 people live in more than 500 small, remote and dispersed communities across the Northern Territory, known as homelands or outstations.

Under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package, outstations and homelands in the Northern Territory will benefit from a \$221 million investment in basic essential and municipal services over ten years. The investment will include **\$206 million** from the Australian Government and \$15 million from the Northern Territory Government to provide long term certainty for Aboriginal people living on outstations and homelands.

This investment will help supply outstations and homelands with access to power, water and sewerage and road maintenance. The funding will also support garbage collection, dog control programs and operational costs for organisations that provide municipal and essential services.

HOUSING AND LAND CONTINUED

Since 2007, the Australian Government has provided the Northern Territory Government with **\$20 million** each year to support the delivery of municipal and essential services to these communities, as well as to town camps in Darwin and regional towns.

The Commonwealth funding under the Stronger Futures package will be used for outstations and homelands. The Northern Territory Government will fund municipal and essential services in town camps.

Alice Springs Transformation Plan

The Australian Government has invested over \$150 million in the Alice Springs Transformation Plan (ASTP) since 2009. The Government is working in partnership with the Northern Territory Government to make the town camps a better place to live.

Construction of 86 new houses and the refurbishment of 196 existing houses has been completed in the town camps. Infrastructure works, which are well underway, include new and upgraded roads, power supply, water supply, sewerage, drainage and street lighting.

Tenancy reforms have also been implemented so that residents are required to pay reasonable rent and have support to help them maintain successful public housing tenancies.

Through the Transformation Plan more accommodation for visitors is now available, to help reduce overcrowding in the town camps and homelessness in Alice Springs through:

- the Apmere Mwerre Visitor Park, providing short term accommodation for up to 150 visitors to Alice Springs

HIGHLIGHTS

Alice Springs Transformation Plan highlights

- The Australian Government has now built 86 new homes in the town camps and has rebuilt and refurbished 196 more. The new houses and extra visitor accommodation have resulted in 500 additional beds to ease accommodation shortages.
- As part of Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, we are investing an extra \$14 million in support services over four years:
 - › The priority areas for support include alcohol rehabilitation, early childhood and family services, domestic and family violence, education support and tenancy management
 - › Local Aboriginal employment remains integral to delivering these services.

- an extra eight beds for emergency accommodation for homeless people through Salvation Army services
- 40 beds through Alyerre (the Lodge) for people visiting Alice Springs for medical treatment
- 79 beds for transitional accommodation through Aherlkeme Village for people on the waiting list for public housing in Alice Springs.

These substantial improvements under the ASTP are in addition to over \$33 million being invested to improve and strengthen social support services in Alice Springs in the key areas of alcohol rehabilitation, family support, and family violence services, safety and security, early childhood services, tenancy support, life skills and intensive case management.

Under Stronger Futures, the ASTP will benefit from an additional \$14 million over four years to continue funding of these key social services for Aboriginal children, families and individuals in Alice Springs, including additional intensive support to help sustain public housing tenancies for Aboriginal people living in the town camps.



GOVERNANCE AND LEADERS



Community governance is about how decisions and plans that affect the lives of people in communities are made.

To be effective, it must be more than processes and about actually getting things done in the community.

To build stronger futures, it is essential for Aboriginal communities to take charge of planning, build personal responsibility and work with different levels of government. Aboriginal people have told us they want to be listened to and to be actively involved in local community decision making. Strengthening the local leadership helps to increase community involvement in all levels of planning and governance.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory invests almost \$427 million over ten years to support local governance and leadership skills and structures; improve government engagement and coordination with communities; and support the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service.

Many local organisations deliver services or work on behalf of their communities and these organisations need to be well governed to be effective.

To support community members and Aboriginal organisations, the Australian Government is continuing to fund activities like building leadership skills; training people running Aboriginal community organisations; and supporting communities to participate in existing and new community governance arrangements and planning forums.

HIGHLIGHTS

Governance and leadership highlights

The Government is providing **\$427 million** over ten years to:

- increase the number of communities in which Indigenous Engagement Officers work from 30 to 54 over the next two years, creating full and part-time job opportunities for up to another 60 local Aboriginal people.
- continue to have staff working and living in local communities to become even more involved in engaging with local people, including working in a more joined-up way at the regional level.
- continue support for the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service, so local community members can get equitable access to the services they need and provide local Aboriginal employment.
- involve communities in planning and measuring what is happening in their communities under the Stronger Futures package.
- support governance and leadership development in communities in the Northern Territory, including to:
 - › build the capacity of local Aboriginal organisations to be involved in the delivery of services
 - › provide increased opportunities to develop personal, family and community leadership.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP CONTINUED

As well as the work being done by communities, the way government manages its business in these communities is also important and can support better local planning and governance. Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory have told us that they want government workers to continue to live and work in communities, and that they want government to work more closely with them.

As part of our Stronger Futures investments, the Australian Government will continue to employ people to live and work in communities. These people work locally to make sure services are effective and to help support local planning processes.

As we move ahead, we will be asking these staff to become even more involved in engaging with local people. We will also be supporting our people to work in a more joined-up way at the regional level.

We currently employ people to live and work in remote communities across the Northern Territory, with around 45 Government Engagement Coordinators and 30 Indigenous Engagement Officers.

As part of the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package, we will be seeking to increase the number of local Aboriginal people filling these roles. More engagement officers will be employed over the coming years, with jobs to be available across 54 communities. More local jobs mean more Aboriginal people working with the Government. It also means the Government is much more likely to have a strong understanding of local issues.

Indigenous Engagement Officers will work closely with Government Engagement Coordinators, previously known as Government Business Managers, in regional teams to ensure they are well supported in their roles. Government Engagement Coordinators will also work and live in communities, with their roles reflecting feedback from communities, helping to ensure strong relationships between government and Aboriginal people. This regional team approach will also provide improved career pathways for local Aboriginal people.

We are also continuing to fund the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service, which employs many Aboriginal people. Interpreters assist people to get the most out of services, understand their rights and responsibilities and have their voices heard in local planning on policies that affect their lives.

The Australian Government will involve communities in measuring what is happening in their communities and whether we are addressing the biggest issues and getting good outcomes on the ground. This significant partnership will build local governance and leadership skills, and continue to improve engagement between communities and government.

CONCLUSION



Stronger Futures provides us with the opportunity to work together over the long term to overcome the unacceptable levels of disadvantage still faced by too many Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

The initiatives that are at the centre of Stronger Futures reflect what Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory have told us. They are our commitment to work with Aboriginal people to ensure they are supported to live strong, independent lives.

