

# Mparntwe/Alice Springs Youth Action Plan 2019-2021

**REVIEW**



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land where we live, the Arrernte people and pay respects to their Elders past, present and their future leaders. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of

Mparntwe/Alice Springs and this region. We also acknowledge the Elders past, present and future of all communities and cultural groups of Central Australia that identify Mparntwe/Alice Springs as part of a broader Indigenous community.

## SUMMARY

The Mparntwe/Alice Springs Youth Action Plan 2019-2021 (Youth Action Plan) was a key component in the implementation of the Northern Territory (NT) Government's Regional Youth Services Framework. It identified key action areas to assist young people in the community to feel valued, involved and empowered and to live positive and healthy lives. The Youth Action Plan was developed in collaboration with key community partners, including young people, and outlined the goals and priorities for the community over a minimum two-year period.

The consultation process encompassed the broadest possible range of service providers related to youth in the Mparntwe/Alice Springs region. This included the Australian, Northern Territory and local governments, non-government organisations and services related to youth welfare, law, police, youth diversion, accommodation, transport, health, mental health, education and training and employment.

Representatives from these services formed the Mparntwe/Alice Springs Local Action Group (LAG) which became responsible for input into the sector consultation process and the development of the Plan.

Acknowledging that a great deal of work was underway prior to the development of the Youth Action Plan, progress in the youth space can be challenging and outcomes are often not visible for a long time. The review of the Youth Action Plan is timely and will assist the LAG in monitoring progress against the goals and actions listed in the Youth Action Plan.

The review will also inform the development of the next Youth Action Plan and guide future actions to support young people and families in the Mparntwe/Alice Springs region.

**Mparntwe/Alice Springs Local Action Group**

## MEMBERS OF THE MPARNTWE/ALICE SPRINGS LOCAL ACTION GROUP

Alice Springs Town Council (ASTC)  
Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation (TAAC)  
The Gap Youth and Community Centre (GYCC)  
Central Australia Youth Link Up Service (CAYLUS)  
Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC)  
Jesuit Social Services (JSS)  
Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA)  
Anglicare NT  
NT Council of Social Services (NTCOSS)  
Chamber of Commerce NT  
Bushmob Aboriginal Corporation  
Relationships Australia NT  
Youth Engagement Strategy NT  
CREATE Foundation  
Headspace  
Alice Springs Youth Accommodation and Support Services (ASYASS)  
North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA)  
The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)  
Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC)  
Department of Education (DoE)  
Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet (CM&C)  
Department of Health (DoH)  
NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services (PFES)  
Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL)





# BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

There were 7 goals and 36 actions listed in the Youth Action Plan. Of these, 11 actions are complete, 7 are ongoing and 18 are to be delivered. See Appendix A for further details.

One of the biggest barriers to implementation during 2019-2021 was the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, the youth sector faced challenges like limited face to face engagement and the closure of remote communities. While the sector adapted well to provide support to youth where necessary, progress stalled against many of the actions listed in the Youth Action Plan.

Difficulties recruiting and maintaining staff in the youth sector was another barrier to implementation. This was also exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Alice Springs is a remote centre and has a limited workforce from which to draw qualified staff. Further, the transient nature of the workforce in Alice Springs often means there is limited continuity of staff. Without sufficient personnel, organisations are unable to deliver and build capacity of their programs in a way that delivers definable outcomes for youth.

Additionally, an individual organisation is often not able to respond directly to the multiple and complex issues experienced by young people. In this instance, what is needed is a whole of government approach that facilitates integrated working relationships between different government agencies and the non-government sector. This has been identified by LAG members as something to build into the next iteration of the Youth Action Plan.

# TOP THREE ACHIEVEMENTS

## HOME RUNNERS PROGRAM

The Home Runners Program is operated by the Australian Red Cross in partnership with the Gap Youth and Community Centre. It enables vulnerable young people (10-16yrs) to participate in organised sport by tackling barriers such as transport, registration, fees, equipment, mentoring and adequate pre-sport nutrition.

Youth were involved in the sport selection with AFL clearly the sport of choice during winter, and other sports such as swimming, basketball and soccer amongst choices in the off season.

The ability to participate in a team sport has allowed young people to gain self-confidence and provided them with an additional support and social network. The program also supports family involvement, inviting and providing transport to families to attend matches. This has a great impact on the well-being of the young people, as families are able to show support and encourage young people in matches.

*"The program encourages children to play sports. It helps as I don't have a car. They can't wait to play and can't stop talking about their day" - Mother of Home Runners Participant*



# ALICE SPRINGS YOUTH ACTIVITY GRANTS

The Alice Springs Youth Activities Grants are provided annually by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities. They deliver a range of safe, structured activities during school holidays and after hours.

Funded programs include sports, physical fitness, rock climbing, art and craft, music and dance, splash parties, movies, media production, making comics, girls nights and cultural excursions. Many of these programs incorporate mentoring, nutritional food and transport home.

The activities are an early intervention opportunity to develop relationships with young people and support their access to more formal service responses if needed.



# TANGENTYERE LOOKING AFTER THE KIDS PROGRAM



The Looking After the Kids Program (LATK) is a part of the NT Government's 'Breaking the Cycle of Youth Crime Plan'. It is an Aboriginal-led youth outreach program that provides engagement, transport and follow up outreach services to young people frequenting the Alice Springs CBD at night.

LATK employs an early intervention approach to working with young people who are at risk of entering the youth justice system. On average, it engages with 250 young people per month.

# RATING KEY

**● COMPLETED**

Completed means that an action has been completed for 2019-2021.

**● ONGOING**

Ongoing means that work is underway on a particular action and there is commitment to continuing this work beyond the current Youth Action Plan.

**● TO BE DELIVERED**

To be delivered means that work has yet to begin on an action. This may be due to COVID-19 or for other reasons



# PROGRESS BY GOALS AND ACTIONS

## GOAL 1 BUILD CAPACITY OF EXISTING YOUTH SERVICES TO ENABLE LONG TERM SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

● COMPLETED ● ONGOING ● TO BE DELIVERED

Better Futures Funding (1a)	The Alice Springs Town Council provided funding to employ a Youth Programs Manager and deliver additional youth programs.	●
Impartyemwerre: Alice Springs Interagency Family and Youth Operational Framework (1b, 1c)	Established in 2019, the Framework formalised accountability of existing collaborative relationships of government and non-government agencies. It focused on young people (and their families) to ensure issues causing bad behaviour were identified and tackled to reduce the likelihood of future offending or reoffending. The Framework has since evolved into Operation Lunar.	●
Youth Centres (1a, 5c)	Both the Gap Youth and Community Centre and the Brown Street Youth Centre have been funded for five years to deliver core after hours youth services. The centres deliver a range of activities and provide a safe space for youth to go after hours.	●
Evidence-Based Evaluations (1e, 4d)	<p>Annual reporting requirements have been built into GYCC's Youth Diversion Program, the Tangentyere Looking After the Kids Program and the Tangentyere Night and Youth Patrol.</p> <p>The Gap Youth and Community Centre and the Brown Street Youth Centre were evaluated in the Alice Springs Core After-Hours Youth Services Review. The review took place at the mid point of the five year service agreements with both youth centres, and strengthened the commitment of all stakeholders to the continuous improvement of service delivery.</p> <p>The Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities completed an evaluation of the 24 hour YORET Hub trial to ensure the best outcomes for youth were delivered.</p>	●
Alice Springs Youth Services Mapping Project (1a, 1b)	The Project analysed expenditure on NT Government and NIAA funded youth services and consulted key stakeholders on how to improve the delivery of youth services in Alice Springs.	●



# GOAL 1 CONTINUED

## BUILD CAPACITY OF EXISTING YOUTH SERVICES TO ENABLE LONG TERM SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

● COMPLETED ● ONGOING ● TO BE DELIVERED

Information sharing (1b, 1c)	Over the 2020/21 school holidays, information on youth activity at the Gap Youth and Community Centre, Brown Street Youth Centre, YORET Youth Hub, Looking After the Kids and the Night and Youth Patrol was collated and shared between the non-government youth sector and government agencies.	● ●
Regional Youth Mental Health Group (1f)	This group was formed in April 2020 to progress youth mental health strategies across Central Australia as a response to COVID-19.	●

# GOAL 2

## IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

● COMPLETED ● ONGOING ● TO BE DELIVERED

Children's and Youth Court Judge (2a)	A permanent children's and youth court judge now presides over all juvenile cases before the court.	●
Remote Youth Diversion (2c)	NT Police have also been strengthening their capacity in remote communities to assist in achieving better diversion outcomes for young people. They work closely with MacDonnell Regional Council in 11 communities and Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation in 4 communities.	● ●
Back on Track Program (2c)	CAAC's Back on Track Program has been funded to 2024. The program provides alternatives to detention and pathways to divert young people away from the youth justice system.	● ●
The Gap Youth and Community Centre Youth Diversion Program (2c)	Through case management, the program aims to prevent future offending, stop young people going to prison, repair harm and build strong supports around young people. The program is based in Alice Springs and has good connections in remote communities. It has been funded to 2025.	●

## GOAL 3 BETTER SUPPORT FOR REMOTE COMMUNITIES

● **COMPLETED**    
 ● **ONGOING**    
 ● **TO BE DELIVERED**

The Right Track (3b)	The MacDonnell Regional Council has been funded to deliver the Right Track Program. The program runs youth bush camps and provides specialist case management services for youth diversion clients.	●
MacYouth Community Diversion Program (3b)	The MacDonnell Regional Council has been funded to 2024 for MacYouth to deliver the Community Diversion Program which provides case management intervention and program options for young people who are assessed as suitable for pre-court youth diversion.	●
Localised Aboriginal Leadership programs (3d)	There is support for developing localised Aboriginal leadership programs and their delivery will be ongoing. For example, Tangentyere Council will receive Commonwealth Government funding for 50 young Aboriginal Australians to undertake youth worker cadetships in 26 remote Northern Territory communities and town camps.	●

*“We can’t resource town and not remote and expect people to stay out bush. It is important to put resources into supporting good things happening for young people in remote communities”*

**Participant, LAG Consultation Report**

# GOAL 4 SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

● COMPLETED ● ONGOING ● TO BE DELIVERED

<p>The Gap Youth and Community Centre and Brown Street Youth Centre Leadership Program (4b, 4c)</p>	<p>Youth leadership programs were delivered through school holiday activities and within youth centres.</p>	<p>●</p>
<p>Young Aboriginal Mentors (4a, 4c)</p>	<p>Youth Aboriginal mentors have been employed at the Gap Youth and Community Centre, Brown Street Youth Centre, GUTS dance program and Better Bodies school holiday fitness program.</p>	<p>● ●</p>
<p>Looking After the Kids (LATAK) Program (4a, 4c)</p>	<p>LATAK is an Aboriginal-led youth outreach program that provides engagement, transport and follow up outreach services to young people. The program uses Aboriginal employment targets which ensure Aboriginal people can support at risk Aboriginal Youth and the workers they engage with.</p>	<p>●</p>
<p>NTPFES Cadets Program (4a, 4b, 4c)</p>	<p>A two year program provided for Year 11 students to participate in fun and educational activities while gaining skills in business, leadership and community and cultural engagement. The program also provides pathways into the NTPFES.</p>	<p>●</p>
<p>Youth Media Project (4b, 5b)</p>	<p>The youth media project is a young person-led radio program empowering young people to have a voice, connect with the community and share information about their aspirations, goals and issues affecting them. Work began on this project in September 2021 and is supported by Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, CREATE Foundation, Congress, Bush Mob, The Gap Youth Services, Tangentyere Council and NTCOSS.</p>	<p>● ●</p>

# GOAL 5 IMPROVE EDUCATION, TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR DISENGAGED YOUTH

● **COMPLETED** ● **ONGOING** ● **TO BE DELIVERED**

<p>Experiential Learning Programs (5b)</p>	<p>Young people have been supported to engage in experiential learning and personal development through school holiday programming, the Alice Springs Youth Activity Grants, the Home Runners Program and youth centres. Funded activities include coding, music, arts and crafts, bike maintenance, furniture making, gaming, drone piloting, competition sports access and fitness programs. Experiential learning programs will continue to be supported beyond the sunset of the current Youth Action Plan.</p>	<p>● ●</p>
<p>Professional Development Support (5e)</p>	<p>The Department of Education has begun putting together professional development support that will be provided to Town Camp youth workers to facilitate learning opportunities during outreach</p>	<p>●</p>
<p>Understanding of Case Management and Trauma Informed Practice (1d, 5e)</p>	<p>Jesuit Social Services have developed workshops for non-government organisations to improve their case management skills and trauma informed practice.</p>	<p>●</p>
<p>NT Education Engagement Strategy 2022-2031 (5d, 5e, 5f)</p>	<p>The NT Education Engagement Strategy sets a new course for student engagement and improved educational outcomes so that every child can engage in learning. Consultation on the Strategy was undertaken between May and August 2021 and the Strategy was launched in Alice Springs on 18 October 2021. It will strongly inform the development of the next Youth Action Plan.</p>	<p>● ●</p>



# GOAL 6 DEVELOP INTEGRATED PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE OUT LATE AT NIGHT

● COMPLETED ● ONGOING ● TO BE DELIVERED

Tangentyere Looking After the Kids (LATK) Program (6a, 6d)	An Aboriginal-led youth outreach program that provides engagement, transport and follow up outreach services to young people frequenting the Alice Springs CBD at night. On average, the program supports 250 kids a month.	●
Tangentyere Night and Youth Patrol (6a, 6d)	The Night and Youth Patrol provides culturally appropriate assistance to Aboriginal youth at risk of either causing harm or being harmed. Extended operating hours for the patrol have been funded until 2024.	●
Youth Outreach and Re-Engagement Team (YORET) (6a, 6d)	<p>YORET provides support to young people in the Alice Springs CBD who are not participating in anti-social behaviour but may benefit from some direction. The team aims to divert young people from partaking in anti-social behaviour and offending by supporting them and connecting to active outreach services in the CBD.</p> <p>From November 2020, the Alice Springs YORET Hub was trialled as a 24-hour youth drop-in centre. This trial was then reviewed by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities to ensure the best outcomes for youth were delivered.</p>	●
Operation Lunar (1b, 6e)	Established in October 2020, Operation Lunar co-locates local staff from key children and families agencies to work alongside NT Police full time. This facilitates information sharing and enables an integrated response to case management for vulnerable young people.	●

*"The team [at LATK] are a compassionate group of people who take their jobs seriously and care deeply for the kids and families they service. It was great to see how the service was engaged with and how well the team can read situations in the street."*

**Jimmy Cocking, Alice Springs Town Councillor**

## GOAL 6 CONTINUED DEVELOP INTEGRATED PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE OUT LATE AT NIGHT

● **COMPLETED**  
 ● **ONGOING**  
 ● **TO BE DELIVERED**

The Strong Grandmothers Group (6a)	The Strong Grandmothers Group patrol the CBD Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights to look out for and engage with young people.	●
Traditional Owners Group (6a)	Funded by the Alice Springs Town Council in 2021, a Traditional Owner foot patrol called 'Arrente patrol' walks the streets of the CBD at night engaging with young people and community members.	●
School Based Policing Program (5c, 6d)	This collaborative program is being undertaken by the Department of Education and NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Starting term 3 2021, School Based Police Officers were placed in multiple Alice Springs schools to improve young people's understanding of community and safety issues.	●
Family Responsibility Agreements (5f, 6b)	Family Responsibility Agreements are collaborative, voluntary agreements between the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities and the parents and carers of at-risk young people. They help parents and carers support young people to change their behaviour.	●

## GOAL 7 ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING OPTIONS THAT ARE FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

● **COMPLETED**  
 ● **ONGOING**  
 ● **TO BE DELIVERED**

Crisis Accommodation (7d)	ASYASS Crisis Accommodation provides supported accommodation for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. During their stay, young people will also be provided support through case management where appropriate.	●
Youth Homelessness (7d)	NT Shelter and the Office of the Children's Commissioner NT are currently developing a project looking at youth homelessness in Alice Springs. The project will draw on the Youth Foyer model and aims to ask young people for their perspectives on their housing needs, refocus the narrative away from youth crime and towards the challenges and issues faced by young people in Central Australian and develop a call to action by young people for young people.	●

# APPENDIX A: ACTIONS LISTED IN THE MPARNTWE/ALICE SPRINGS YOUTH ACTION PLAN 2019-21

● COMPLETED ● ONGOING ● TO BE DELIVERED

<b>Goal 1: Build capacity of existing youth services to enable long term sustainable change</b>	
1a: Review funding levels to youth service providers to ensure they have capacity to deliver innovative sustainable programs	●
1b: Investigate the feasibility of non-government organisations (NGOs) in the youth sector gaining some level of access to shared government agency databases.	●
1c: Initiate cross-sector training and professional development to ensure NGO and government staff are aware of their capacity and permissions to share information between services. Establish information sharing rights and responsibilities through Service Level Agreements	●
1d: Support networking events to boost professional development within the youth sector.	●
1e: Build evidence based evaluation into all funded youth programs.	●
1f: Lobby for the establishment of a youth in-patient mental health service with a resident clinical psychologist.	●
<b>Goal 2: Improve outcomes for young people in the youth justice system</b>	
2a: Lobby for the establishment of a dedicated children's court, with a permanent children's and youth court judge	●
2b: Investigate the Koori court model for Alice Springs and surrounding remote communities, which has a judge and Aboriginal elders as part of the court process.	●
2c: Streamline diversion options for young people especially those living remotely.	●
<b>Goal 3: Better Support for remote communities</b>	
3a: Support consistent resourcing of services across the whole region	●
3b: Increase resources to support youth diversion in remote communities	●
3c: Develop a process to establish an institutional systematic response through NT Government and youth justice/diversion programs	●
3d: Support the resourcing of localised Aboriginal leadership programs and initiatives for young people in remote communities.	●

Goal 4: Support the development and implementation of mentoring programs for Aboriginal people	
4a: Ensure there is an Aboriginal mentoring component as well as Aboriginal employment targets in funded programs. In particular, specific initiatives and funding are required for Aboriginal mentors to support and guide service providers and to work directly with Aboriginal youth at risk.	●
4b: Youth leadership initiatives and programs should be supported and further developed.	●
4c: Ensure there is mentoring for and by young people in funded youth programs.	●
4d: Build evidence-based evaluation into youth mentoring programs.	●
Goal 5: Improve education, training, development and employment outcomes for disengaged youth	
5a: Consult with young people about what they need to help them get to school.	●
5b: Support young people to engage in experiential learning and personal development rather than be directed into vocational training programs.	●
5c: Provide learning opportunities for disengaged young people through the evenings or at night	●
5d: Investigate funding options to support community based education responses in both the urban and remote context.	●
5e: Build collaboration between the youth sector, NT Government, Department of Education and schools to support professional development of staff and case management support for young people.	●
5f: Investigate opportunities for family support and mentor support for young people while they are at school.	●
5g: Consider gender issues when developing strategies for re-engaging young men and women in schools and education pathways.	●
5h: Improve access to education and training for young people in detention.	●
5i: Strengthen pathways to real local employment opportunities such as Aboriginal Community Police Officers, Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers and municipal services work.	●



<b>Goal 6: Develop integrated programs for young people who are out late at night</b>	
6a: Develop integrated programs to assist young people who are out late at night to find a safe place and provide support where this is not available.	●
6b: Support the strengthening of roles and responsibilities of parents of young people who are out late at night.	●
6c: Initiate consultation between Territory Families and the youth sector about how to extend and improve the process of screening and referral of young people who are out late at night.	●
6d: Increase programs that support early intervention before young people become at risk.	●
6e: Encourage timely information and data sharing between police and the youth sector regarding youth anti-social and criminal activity to better inform the community.	●
6f: Increase the capacity for self-referral by children and young people to Territory Families.	●
<b>Goal 7: Encourage the development of housing options that are flexible and responsive to the needs of young people</b>	
7a: Address the need for the provision of supported youth accommodation for transition into tenancy.	●
7b: Build an understanding within youth accommodation services (existing and future improved services) that young people may be recovering from trauma and homelessness and may not be able to immediately take up school or structured activities.	●
7c: Encourage the utilisation of supported bail accommodation by the courts for young people engaged in the juvenile justice system.	●
7d: Address the urgent need for accommodation for young people who are homeless.	●

## WHERE TO FROM HERE

This review will inform the next phase of the work of the Mparntwe/Alice Springs Local Action Group, including the next iteration of the Youth Action Plan. While some key actions have been delivered, there is more work to do in reaching the goals identified in the current plan.

This will be delivered through continuing to strengthen the collaboration of young people in this work and working in a coordinated way through the Mparntwe/Alice Springs Local Action Group.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Northern Territory Government  
National Indigenous Australians Agency  
Alice Springs Town Council  
NT Council of Social Services (NTCOSS)  
The non-government youth sector

