

## Thriving Kids in the Northern Territory

In February 2026, the Northern Territory and Australian governments reached a landmark agreement, securing a joint funding commitment over five years to commence delivery of new supports outside of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, known as Foundational Supports.

The first stage of implementing Foundational Supports will focus on establishing services for children aged eight and under with developmental delay and/or autism who have low to moderate support needs, as well as their families. These services will be delivered under the initiative known as *Thriving Kids*.

The Northern Territory faces service delivery challenges not experienced in other jurisdictions across Australia. Providing services across our vast geographic area and to diverse communities requires careful planning. The Northern Territory Government is committed to applying a Territory-specific lens to the design and delivery of Thriving Kids, ensuring supports are responsive to local contexts and meet the needs of all Territorians.

### What services will be available through Thriving Kids?

Thriving Kids will help give children the best start in life by ensuring those with additional developmental needs receive quality supports where they live, learn and play. These supports will aim to:

- improve community awareness and understanding of developmental delay
- better identify and respond to developmental delays
- support parents, families, carers and kin to build their skills and connection to community, information and advice
- respond to need by connecting children and families to additional supports focused on supporting development.

Children do not need a diagnosis to get help through Thriving Kids. Families will be able to access services when they first notice their child may need support.

### What is happening next?

The first services and supports under Thriving Kids are expected to begin from 1 October 2026 and will be established progressively, with full rollout completed by 1 January 2028.

Supports will be delivered through three service streams, each operating under a 'no wrong door' approach to ensure all services can respond to, refer, and guide families, regardless of where they first seek assistance.

Service streams will include:

#### Information, advice and navigation

Plain language, culturally responsive, evidence-based information, advice and resources focused on child development and available services so children and their families can connect with the right supports earlier.

## Parenting supports and programs

Recognising the critical role that families, carers and kin play in a child's early development, Thriving Kids will provide supports to build family capacity by:

- strengthening skills and knowledge to support children's development
- fostering strong, positive relationships between children, families and the people in their lives
- enhancing peer support and community connections to enable families to share experiences and learn from others in similar circumstances.

These supports will build on the strengths, priorities and goals of children and families. They will be delivered through a range of accessible and flexible formats, such as online courses, short videos, home-based resources, peer support groups, supported playgroups, family programs and self-advocacy supports.

## Targeted supports

Targeted supports will provide specialised assistance to children and families who need more help than parenting supports and programs alone. This will include:

- Developmental supports focused on enhancing functional skills and independence delivered by trained allied health workers such as occupational therapists, speech pathologists, physiotherapists, social workers and psychologists. Low-cost assistive technology, aids or equipment may also be provided if needed.
- Support to help families build capacity to navigate the systems and services supporting a child under Thriving Kids.

Children with permanent and significant disability will continue to be eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, subject to usual arrangements.

## Community and sector consultation

Over the coming months, the Northern Territory Government, supported by key sector partners, will undertake targeted consultation with sector representatives, peak bodies, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and community members to inform the design and effective delivery of Thriving Kids.

Engagement with parents, families and the disability community will be undertaken throughout this period, with opportunities to provide feedback, including through Northern Territory Government social media channels.

This consultation will help identify the places where families already engage with support and services, ensuring Thriving Kids is embedded in existing community settings and aligned with local needs.

## Where can I find more information?

For more information about Thriving Kids, visit the following websites:

- The Northern Territory [Department of People, Sport and Culture](#)
- The [Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing](#)

More information will be available about upcoming consultation opportunities, service design and the timing of the implementation over the coming months.