



# Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage A Generational Plan of Action

## At a Glance

*Closing the Gap* is the Northern Territory's Indigenous Generational Plan, aimed at closing the gap in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians. It contains a vision and objectives for the future socio-economic wellbeing of Indigenous Territorians and sets ambitious but achievable targets for the next 5, 10 and 20 years. It also identifies priority areas for action in the next 5 years, based on the best available evidence of which actions will have the greatest impact.

On 15 June 2007, the *Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse* (the Inquiry) released its findings. The Inquiry report included 97 recommendations across 22 themes, addressing the child protection system, as well as broader social and economic factors including housing, unemployment, offender rehabilitation, health, alcohol misuse and education.

While the Northern Territory Government supports the messages and recommendations of the Inquiry, additional areas need to be addressed if we are to overcome Indigenous disadvantage within a generation. *Closing the Gap* goes beyond the recommendations of the Inquiry to provide a framework for overcoming Indigenous disadvantage.

### RESOURCING

The Northern Territory Government has committed **\$286.43 million** towards 5 year actions to implement *Closing the Gap*. This commitment includes:

- **\$79.36 million** for **child protection**
- **\$38.61 million** to implement the **Remote Area Policing Strategy, community justice** and other safety measures
- **\$10.11 million** for **alcohol and drug management**
- **\$23.4 million** to achieve better **health** outcomes
- **\$42.32 million** for **housing** in Indigenous communities
- **\$70.68 million** towards **education**
- **\$13 million** to improve Indigenous **employment and economic development**
- **\$8.95 million** towards better **cross-cultural understanding and engagement** in service delivery.

The package includes **223 positions**:

- 1 Children's Commissioner
- 10 child protection workers
- 37 additional specialist Family and Children's Services (FACS) staff
- 40 police – Remote Policing Strategy and Child Abuse Taskforce
- 4 specialist alcohol rehabilitation workers
- 26 family violence support workers
- 10 school counsellors
- 10 community corrections officers
- 47 teachers and assistant teachers for remote schools and preschools
- 3 specialist Department of Employment, Education and Training staff
- 2 court clinicians
- 1 witness assistance officer
- 8 alcohol compliance inspectors
- 1 Aboriginal and Islander education coordinator
- 23 specialist FACS staff for the Child Abuse Taskforce.

### LEGISLATIVE REFORM

- Introduction of the **Care and Protection of Children Bill** into Legislative Assembly Sittings in August 2007, to replace the **Community Welfare Act** and to provide for the Children's Commissioner and other child protection measures
- Introduction of the **Local Government Amendment Bill** into Legislative Assembly Sittings in August 2007, to allow for transition to new local government arrangements
- Introduction of the **Local Government Amendment Bill (2)** and the revised **Local Government Act** in late 2007 to embed the new local government arrangements
- Under the amendments passed to the **Liquor Act** in 2006, declaration of **dry areas**, commencing with Alice Springs on 1 August 2007 and progressing to other areas during 2007
- Introduction of amendments to the **Liquor Act** into Legislative Assembly Sittings in August 2007 to provide power to the Minister for Racing, Gaming and Licensing to implement urgent liquor supply measures, to implement alcohol restrictions in town camps and to provide power to police to search vehicles
- Passage of the **Evidence of Children Amendment Bill** during the Legislative Assembly Sittings in August 2007 to provide greater protection for child victims and witnesses
- Introduction of legislation amending the **Bail Act** so as protect witnesses and reverse the onus in favour of bail concerning alleged sex and domestic violence offenders
- Introduction of new **domestic violence legislation** into Legislative Assembly Sittings in late 2007 to improve the effectiveness of restraining orders, including their effectiveness in remote communities
- Development of legislation to reform the committal system (and thus reduce the involvement of victims of crime in the criminal law system).  
Further reform of the laws of evidence by possible adoption of the national uniform **Evidence Bill**

### SAFETY – CHILD PROTECTION – \$79.36m

- Strengthen the child protection system by introducing the **Care and Protection of Children Bill**, establishing a **Children's Commissioner**, expanding **Child Abuse Taskforce** to include 23 FACS staff and 24 police, recruiting **10 additional child protection workers**, expanding **Sexual Assault Referral Centres**, improving case management, and **recruiting 10 school counsellors** at a total cost of **\$79.36m**
- Introduce **Evidence of Children Amendment Bill** and new **domestic violence legislation**

### SAFETY – POLICING, JUSTICE AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – \$38.61m

- Implement the **Remote Area Policing Strategy**, in partnership with the Australian Government, including 16 police, at a cost of **\$11.2m**
- Establish **10 community courts**, employ **10 community corrections officers** and establish a **witness assistance service in Katherine**, at a cost of **\$12.86m**
- Introduce integrated community based **family violence programs**, at a cost of **\$7.9m**
- Continue the **Juvenile Diversion Program**, within existing resources
- Implement **sexual offender rehabilitation** and therapy programs and expand the **Elders Visiting Program**, at a cost of **\$5.4m**
- Implement a **pornography and gambling education program**, at a cost of **\$1.25m**

### SAFETY – ALCOHOL AND DRUG MANAGEMENT – \$10.11m

- Introduce amendments to the **Liquor Act** and declare **dry areas**
- Implement **alcohol management plans**, a licensing identification system, recruit **eight compliance officers** and **two court clinicians**, and expand the **Return to Home** program, at a total cost of **\$10.11m**

### HEALTH – \$23.4m

- Establish **integrated family/children centres** in remote communities to deliver early childhood education and health programs, at a cost of **\$9.6m**
- Expand **alcohol rehabilitation and treatment services**, at a cost of **\$0.5m**
- Provide **sport and recreation programs** and infrastructure in each shire, at a cost of **\$4.5m**
- Expand and implement programs targeting hearing loss and preventable **chronic disease**, at a cost of **\$8.8m**

### HOUSING – \$42.32m

- In partnership with the Australian Government, work to address the **backlog in remote Indigenous housing**
- Negotiate with the Australian Government for a significant share of the **\$1.6b ARIA** program
- Roll out the **\$100m NT Government commitment to remote housing** over 5 years
- Provide **houses** for the growth in **government employees** to be based in remote communities, at a cost of **\$42.32m**

### EDUCATION – \$70.68m

- Provide **six new mobile preschools** and **21 teachers and assistants**, at a cost of **\$9.5m**
- Recruit **26 teachers** across the Territory, **build 15 classrooms**, establish a **school attendance team**, upgrade **two homeland learning centres** and **15 community education centres**, at a cost of **\$54.58m**
- Develop **partnership programs** to improve student engagement and community involvement, at a cost of **\$6.6m**

### JOBS – \$13m

- Transition CDEP jobs supporting Northern Territory Government activities to mainstream Northern Territory Public Sector positions, at a cost of **\$10m**
- Implement **Indigenous economic development** initiatives, at a cost of **\$3m**
- Develop a component under the 10 Year Infrastructure Plan for **road access to remote areas**, at no additional cost
- Use current and future Indigenous **housing construction programs and capital works** programs to facilitate opportunities for training and employment of local Indigenous people

### CULTURE – \$0.5m

- Expand **Indigenous culture programs** in Northern Territory Government schools, at a cost of **\$0.5m**
- Implement **cross-cultural programs** in the Northern Territory Public Sector
- Implement a **whole-of-government Indigenous communications strategy**

### A BETTER WAY OF DOING BUSINESS – \$8.45m

- Establish an **Indigenous Affairs Advisory Council** to the Chief Minister, at a cost of **\$0.45m**
- Establish **local community boards** to allow community representation and involvement in local government, to promote Indigenous leadership and provide the basis for Indigenous people to meet their obligations to build a better future for their children, at a cost of **\$3m**
- Provide **infrastructure** to support local community governance, at a cost of **\$5m**