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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES



COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN



FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME

COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN FACILITATING PARTNER

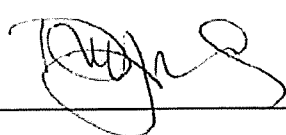
This is an outline of the main elements of the Community Strategic Plan of Anglicare NT Communities for Children Programme in Alice Springs. Based on our research and ongoing consultation with a range of service providers in Alice Springs, we have developed this plan to direct and guide future planning and implementation within the programme.

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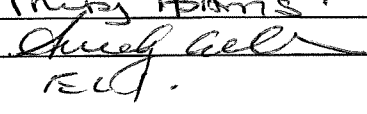
Section 1: Communities for Children Facilitating Partner's Details
Facilitating Partner Details

Service Area Name	Alice Springs
Facilitating Partner Name	Anglicare NT
Facilitating Partner Contact Name	Elizabeth Flynn
Facilitating Partner Contact Title	Initiatives Manager
Address	Shop 10, Cinema Complex, Leichhardt Terrace, Alice Springs
State/Territory & Postcode	NT 0870

Community Strategic Plan

Date CfC Reference Group agreed to Community Strategic Plan	Thursday, March 26, 2015
Name of Facilitating Partner Authorising Officer	Danyelle Jarvis
Signature of Facilitating Partner Authorising Officer	

DSS Use

Date of Submission to DSS	1 April 2015
Date of DSS Approval	2 April 2015
DSS Delegate Name	Tracy Adams
DSS Delegate Position	Chief Clerk
DSS Delegate Signature	 ECU.

Section 2: Community Informed Service Mapping

Introductory Overview

Alice Springs has a population of 25,186 people with 4,689 of them identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islanders (20% of the overall population of Alice Springs). Thirty-five percent of children in Alice Springs are Indigenous (ABS 2011). Alice Springs is a very multi-cultural and diverse community, with 4,049 people who speak English as a second language (ABS 2011). The breakdown of major language groups spoken at home other than English are Australian Indigenous languages at 40%, Southeast Asian Austronesian languages at 8%, Indo-Aryan languages at 7%, and Chinese languages at 5%.

Alice Springs is the hub for Central Australia for shopping, work, health, social, and legal matters. The town has a transitory working population, and Aboriginal people, and others, travel from many communities around Central Australia specifically to access services or visit family in Alice Springs.

In the Northern Territory (NT), in 2012-2013, there were 9,985 notifications to the Child Protection Agency and 6,179 of those children were dealt with by "other means". Indigenous children are overrepresented in the Child Protection Services statistics in the NT. Out of 3,880 children receiving child protection services 3,149 (81%) were Indigenous; and out of 567 children who were the subject of substantiations of neglect (highest of all abuse types) 526 children were Indigenous. Further the highest number of children receiving child protection services were in the 5-9 age group (AIHW 21012-2013).

There are poor educational outcomes for Indigenous children in the NT, as they are reported to be two and a half years behind non-Indigenous students (Closing the Gap: Prime Minister's Report 2015). The NT has the lowest proportion of Indigenous children achieving the National minimum standards. While Alice Springs results are slightly better than the NT average they are still below National standards (Australian Early Development Index 2012).

Low income is a feature of Alice Springs as approximately 30% of Alice Springs residents (aged 15yo and over) reported being below the Centrelink low income line of \$30,000 (ABS 2011).

The issues that are pertinent to the vulnerable children and families of Alice Springs are high levels of intergenerational trauma and exposure to violence (72.5%) and substance misuse (80%) (Segal & Ngyuen 2014).

Feedback from Community Consultation

The following table, collated after consultation with Alice Springs based service providers, summarises the major areas of vulnerability for children and families pre-birth to 12 years old. There were other areas discussed by service providers, not highlighted in the table but interrelated:

- lack of public housing with long waiting lists for families, leading to over crowding in homes
- the impact of families having to come into Alice Springs for health reasons and legal matters
- lack of short-term housing
- lack of adjunct care for families who access parenting/adult learning programmes
- poor public transport that makes accessing services problematic.

These are structural issues that are outside the scope and influence of the Communities for Children (CfC) Activities, but nevertheless are important issues as they have a direct impact on child and family wellbeing.

Table 1.0: Alice Springs Community Mapping 2015

	Areas of Concern	Related Services/Strategies
Key Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o More integrated policy & practice, especially early learning support (0-4yo) o More targeted preventative services needed for vulnerable families o Abuse & neglect prevention and early intervention o Effect of substance misuse by parents on children o More cross-sectoral cooperation needed o Healing for children and families who have experienced complex trauma o Cultural displacement & dispossession o Access to services (referral pathways) o Short term funding and staff turnover doesn't provide service consistency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Collective Impact, Kwatja Etatha ➤ Alukura, Family Partnership Programme, Childcare Centre (Abecedarian Approach) & a pre-school readiness programme ➤ Care Team Initiative and Community Therapeutic Team, TFSS & Ketyeye ➤ Trauma Informed Practice Group ➤ Holding Children Together & IFSS ➤ Ingenteme & Clontarf ➤ Develop sustainable funding sources ➤ Increased mutual understanding of what's available
Emerging Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Need for more specialised parenting support o Spread of the ice epidemic o Targeted support for young mums and their families o Lack of cross-cultural awareness (CALD) between the service providers and community, including new practices (e.g. birthing/child-rearing) o Effect of DFV on children (CALD) o Isolation of women with children who have recently come to Australia on visas to live with their Australian husbands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Currently specialists limited to 0-5yo ➤ Preventative education for families ➤ BabyFAST, Ampe Akweke, Mums & Bubs (capacity ≠ demand) ➤ Preventative programme for families
Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Services to engage 8-12 year old disenfranchised youth, girls especially o Tailored activities to high-risk 8-12yo children o Gendered programmes on DFV o Preventative measures to address increasing spread of ice users, and addiction, in the family environment o Access to specialist learning/cognitive assessments o Specialist Children's Workers in DFV o Formal programming needs to be more accessible, flexible and relevant to the needs of vulnerable families o Community/family mentor programmes o Mental health services for expecting mums/dads, young parents, carers o Transitory population and impact on children's school engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clontarf programme success with boys ➤ Targeted community-based programmes ➤ Anti-ice education and treatment ➤ Need more intensive family support outreach programmes ➤ Increased services for specialised parenting, young mums, fathers and therapeutic counselling programmes

functional networks of Community Partners. The long-term goal of the facilitating partner is to assist the Community Partners to build self-sustaining programmes.

We will provide training and information sessions to Community Partners and service providers on various issues of interest, for instance 'How to Engage Children in Decision Making'. We will encourage Community Partners to attend and or present at community forums and conferences.

We will work strategically with other community organisations to gain buy-in to work towards Alice Springs as a child-friendly community.

Section 3: Community Engagement

Engaging and building relationships: We will develop sustainable and trusting relationships with our Community Partners, other service providers, philanthropic organisations and community members, including children. We will ensure open communications with all stakeholders by visits, phone calls, emails, convening and attending relevant meetings and the circulation of information in a timely manner. When engaging with community members, we will be mindful of what the best method of engagement is for them, taking into account cultural considerations.

We will, in the early stages of implementation of Activities by Community Partners, be available to assist in the planning and roll out of Activities to ensure they are aligned with the Objectives of CfC. We will support and assist Community Partners in meeting their data collection and reporting obligations, in accordance with the requirements outlined in their Grant Agreement. We will play an enabling role with Community Partners to ensure that their Activities are moving towards qualifying as evidence-based, and the expected outcomes are being realised.

Networking and collaboration: We will actively expand our collaborative networks in order to influence the enhancement of current programmes and minimise overlaps. We will aim to ensure service providers actively link families and children with other services; that the focus is on the children's needs and that there is communication between service providers. We will continue to be part of the Pre-Birth to 4yo Collective Impact group, Parenting Network and NGO/ Child Protection Partnership and make active links with other early childhood organisations (government and non-government) that provide services to the CfC target group. As target groups are culturally inclusive, we will ensure that we include Aboriginal and multi-cultural organisations in our networking.

Children's participation is vital in order to improve and develop services that meet their needs and help shape their environments. With this in mind, we will directly engage children through consultation to ensure their opinions and experiences are heard directly, as well as seek information from Community Partners on what children are reporting to them.

Enhancing community understanding: We, as the Facilitating Partner for CfC, will enhance the community's understanding of CfC by publishing pamphlets and posters that detail our role, the role of the Community Partners and the overall objectives of CfC. The CfC webpage will be updated as will the Alice Springs Services Directory. The directory will be made available online for easy access and ongoing maintenance. It will be promoted to both service providers and directly to service users. We will revise the Reference Group membership and its Terms of Reference so that it better represents the community and invigorates the Group's commitment to CfC.

To build the community's awareness of the importance of listening to and engaging children in decision making, we will:

- focus on children in community events
- encourage service providers to discover and document what children like and dislike about their community
- create a booklet to guide service providers on how to engage children in decision making
- distribute the poster on the "Rights of the Child" (CROC) to community organisations.

Education and capacity building: We will seek to understand the community's strengths and their ability to address challenges. This is essential for capacity building. We will work to strengthen the

Section 4: Service Area Vision

Our Vision is: that all children and families in Alice Springs have the opportunity and support to develop and grow, emotionally, spiritually, physically and mentally, in a child-friendly and nurturing community. CfC will achieve this by:

- ❖ Being involved in a whole of community approach to domestic and family violence in order to promote the emergence of programmes that will meet the needs of victims (women, children) and perpetrators.
- ❖ Being involved in the early childhood community to influence the interface between playgroups and school readiness for young children and their families. Thus making a difference to children's ease of entry into the school environment.
- ❖ Working along side CALD organisations to help highlight the cultural diversity in Alice Springs; discover the needs of the children and families from these cultures; and promote a community response to meeting these needs.
- ❖ Being part of a cross-sectoral effort to assist in establishing sustainable, cooperative and trustworthy relationships between individuals, organisations, and community.
- ❖ Engaging and supporting Community Partners to work towards their Activities qualifying as evidence-based and sustainable in the community by 2019.
- ❖ Gaining an accurate understanding of local community needs in the pre-birth to 12yo early intervention and prevention space. Thus highlighting the gaps in service delivery and building the capacity to close these gaps.
- ❖ Introducing an effective and effortless referral system in the community for children and families, which provides information on relevant services and how to access them. Further there will be functional inter-organisational networks and an online referral mapping service to guarantee a smooth transition for clients into and between services.

Section 5: Priority Areas

Section 5a: Priority Area One – Strong & Healthy Young Families

The health and wellbeing of families plays a critical role in influencing a child's ability to achieve their full potential in all areas of life. These areas include mental health, safety, social capital, decision making, education and other life skills, as well as their eventual employability and potential to contribute positively to society. Parents must therefore recognise this relationship and work to ensure their family values and protects these rights for every child. If parents did not have this type of holistic health in their own upbringing, it is especially important that they develop resilience and also work to guarantee their child's holistic health.

This is directly reflected in the CfC FP Objectives, which specifies the need to support parents to care for their children before and after birth and throughout the early years.

We will work to develop the social capital of young families by the development of support networks. This will minimise overlap, and enhance services' capacity to meet the demand. Services that relate to intergenerational trauma and the exposure of children to violence and substance misuse will be included in these networks. The related gaps are in the areas of mental health of expecting and young parents, and children's carers; and specialist children's services in Domestic and Family Violence. Gendered services and services targeted at the 8-12yo age group, which is currently underserved, will help to strengthen families, and the health and wellbeing of the family as a unit.

The CfC Alice Springs Services Directory will be updated and accessible online, so that people can easily access the services they require. We will keep a record of how many people have accessed our online Services Directory, by using a counter on the webpage.

The key stakeholders in this area will be the target children; their families, including parents and guardians, as well as the Community Partner organisations and service providers.

We will engage with other collaborative efforts, such as the Parenting Network, NGO/ Child Protection Partnership, and the Collective Impact strategy, which is already underway in relation to the Pre-Birth to 4 year old (PB24) target group. We will measure the effectiveness and usefulness of the CfC Programme, through participation rates and feedback. We will keep track of service capacities that are not meeting the demand by consulting with service providers for future funding direction.

Section 5b: Priority Area Two – Early Learning

Education is the key to meeting many of the challenges faced by the NT. Our social, economic and community wellbeing relies on achieving dramatic gains in education. (Territory 2030 Steering Committee)

Early childhood care and education is increasingly recognised as a determining factor in a child's healthy physical, mental and emotional development. Early Learning is one of the CfC Alice Springs Priority Areas. This will be reflected in the programmes with which we engage Community Partners and through additional collaborative efforts.

One of the Goals of the current Strategic Plan 2013-2015 of the Department of Education for the NT is "A great start for children". This will be achieved through the commitment to "working with families so children have the best possible start in life and begin school ready to learn".

Strengthening the links between policy and practice, and building the functional networks between the policy-makers, educators and the community will help to support the most relevant system and content development possible. This may lead to an increase of outreach programmes and specialist services, including learning and cognitive assessments, as well as grow the capacity to serve the most vulnerable children in their communities.

To achieve success in this Priority Area, it is essential that we involve the disengaged children and their families in the planning and delivery of relevant services and activities. It is important to involve relevant service providers, from playgroups, to childcare centres, kindergartens and schools. Coordinating these services together with parenting and life skills programmes should be effective in creating and supporting a learning environment within the family. Acknowledging and addressing the impact of intergenerational trauma on a child's early learning is essential to achieving sustainable positive change among the most vulnerable.

The measures of success will include positive feedback from schools regarding children who have participated in the programme and ongoing 'participatory videos' telling the stories of the families and children. Stronger results in the AEDC will indicate positive change within the community.

Section 5c: Priority Area Three – School Transition & Engagement

The rates of school attendance and achievement in the NT are poor compared to all the other states and territories in Australia (NAPLAN 2014). It is essential to recognise this as a challenge for the whole community. Therefore we must recognise what is working, and support the growth and development of positive and functional programmes, while revising those that aren't as effective.

One of the current Department of Education Goals for the NT is to make "Every student a successful learner" through their commitment "to creating opportunities and the environment for successful learning for every student in every school" (Strategic Plan 2013-2015).

The task for early childhood providers is to get children, their families and the school community ready to engage, connect and learn. The challenge is how to build and create a whole of community approach so that children and families feel safe in approaching schools, see the value in education and parents hold a vision for their children's future.

We need to support any measures that Alice Springs schools introduce that recognise their cultural, social and environmental context. Ideally this would be developed through a collaborative effort between community, community organisations and schools. Along this line, we would also need to work at enhancing the family's relationship with their child's school to ensure maximum parent and community input to the school environment, and thereby encourage better attendance and engagement by the student.

In some service areas, there is a lack of cross-cultural awareness among the service providers and the community. In order to counteract this, we will facilitate stronger functional partnerships with organisations that represent the local CALD and Indigenous communities. Services need to target all of the most at risk and vulnerable children and their families, specifically young and single parents. Children, girls especially, in the 8-12yo age group are underserved. The aim for these partnerships would be to facilitate greater understanding and communication between schools and community organisations.

Further, due to the mobile nature of much of the Alice Springs population, schools need to work together to ensure 'transfer students' are not disadvantaged. Interschool cooperation should facilitate easier transitions between schools. This is one of the target issues of the PB24 Collective Impact efforts, which is currently being piloted at Braitling Primary School.

Section 5d: Priority Area Four – Creating Strong Child-friendly Communities

As children shape our future, it is important to enable their holistic and healthy development and growth. This is the ideal on which our final priority area (and the whole CfC programme) is based.

In the Alice Springs Council Strategic Plan (2013-2015) they specify that their goal is to create “a harmonious and healthy community” that is “actively engaged in recreation, art and culture”, with the goal outcomes including; the protection of history and heritage; a strategic and collaborative approach to community service provision; strong support to Youth Services providers; and strong links with the Arrernte people, traditional owners of Mparntwe (Alice Springs).

While the Alice Springs Council does not have a specific goal of creating a strong child-friendly community, CfC can add value to their strategic plan by ensuring that children are kept at the centre of community development plans. Children have the right to be protected from harm, abuse, exploitation and neglect; to practice their own culture, language and religion; and to quality education.

To create a child friendly community, we must be vigilant in identifying where children are most vulnerable and where their rights are unrecognised or eroded. To address deficits in this, we will work in a collective and holistic manner with the whole of community (represented by the Alice Springs Town Council). Most importantly, we must directly consult children about their experiences, and listen and respond to their voices and opinions.

Protecting a child from the various forms of harm, especially those within the home, is a very complex issue. It is also an issue that needs to be addressed by the whole of community and therefore needs to be publicly discussed. Early intervention programmes for children, youth and adults are essential to prevent intergenerational trauma. Empowering families to protect their children is key to this.

It is our community’s responsibility to protect and nurture our children, and there must be recognition of this at all events and community hubs throughout town. Programmes that are recognised as being “child-friendly” should be acknowledged as positively contributing to community building efforts in Alice Springs. This will be done online through the CfC webpage. We will list the programmes that are recognised as child-friendly, and list child-friendly spaces available in town.

Due to the mobile nature of families in Central Australia, it is important to have easy access to community and service information. Making it available online and at the Visitor Information Centre would improve accessibility, as well as at accommodation facilities where families are likely to stay. We would also need to ensure that the children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are aware of the availability of interpreting services and printed or online information that is available in their language.

Priority Areas have been separated for the ease of this plan. However all of these areas are inextricably interwoven. For example, the family’s mental health and capacity to deal with intergenerational trauma has an influence on the early learning a child experiences. This then can have a direct impact on how well the child transitions into and engages in the school community. And overall the creation of a strong child-friendly community, is dependent on improvements in each of the first three Priority Areas.

