

Northern Territory Productivity Commission: Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory - NAPCAN response to draft report -

The National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) is Australia's first secular not-for-profit organisation to focus entirely on the prevention of child abuse and neglect before it starts. NAPCAN has been operating in the Northern Territory for over 17 years, working to build the capacity of individuals, agencies and communities to keep children safe and help them to thrive.

Response to Reform area 1: Coordinated funding underpinned by community plans

Coordination of services

NAPCAN's submission to the Commission refers to the lack of cohesion around the funding and delivery of services by federal, state and local governments. Local Councils, as one of the major providers of services to children and young people in the most remote regions in the Northern Territory, are rarely referred to in discussions relating to service provision and service coordination. This is a serious omission that occurs consistently in Territory and Federal Government planning, reports and frameworks.

NAPCAN recommends that:

- Local Councils be recognised as major providers of services to children, and are included as drivers (along with Commonwealth and NT Governments) in the development of community plans for children and families.

The NT and Commonwealth governments have a long history of fractured relationships in communities based on the continual change of staff, reduced corporate knowledge, and changing policies and interventions. The NGO sector has extensive knowledge, experience and trusted relationships with communities. This needs to be acknowledged and valued in making decisions about programs that can meet the needs of children and families. The NGO sector is well placed to contribute to engaging community in child safety planning.

NAPCAN recommends that:

- NT based NGOs are given a key role in building the capacity of communities, and in providing culturally sensitive and locally developed resources and training and support the engagement of community in child safety planning.

Response to Reform area 2: Longer-term, more collaborative contracting of service providers.

NAPCAN supports the recommendations to:

- transition to 7 year funding cycles to improve service delivery and coordination and ensure funding covers all costs associated with service delivery, particularly in relation to the costs of delivering programs and services in remote locations

- promote partnerships between organisations through funding arrangements and grant agreements.

There are prevention programs - strongly supported by community over long periods of time, and designed or implemented in the Northern Territory - that have struggled for sustainable funding for many years. These appear to have been sacrificed for political agendas to showcase new programs. Some of these programs include the following:

- *Counsel the Family on Care for Child Development (CCD)* has an evidence base of over 30 years, yet has no funding in the NT
- Love Bites (NAPCAN's Respectful Relationships program), has been intermittently funded over the past 10 years in the NT. The demand for this project remains high and it currently receives no government funding in the NT
- Families and Schools Together (FAST), has been extensively evaluated and has achieved significant outcomes for children, families and school attendance. FAST has continually struggled for sustainable funding even though it is valued and well attended in all communities where it is being delivered.

NAPCAN recommends that:

- when planning funding allocations, effective past and existing programs be considered.

Response to Reform area 3: Better and more transparent data at the community level

NAPCAN supports the recommendations to:

- map services within communities and visiting services and programs - through a single public services list
- include monitoring and evaluation of services and programs in funding contracts in order to develop a strong evidence base about "what works". Evaluation needs to be embedded from the beginning of the delivery of services and funded accordingly.

Response to Reform area 4: Stronger Supporting Institutions

NAPCAN recommends that:

- Local Government be included in setting up the coordination committees in each of the regions.

NAPCAN is well-placed to support community safety planning, with a well-tested model for working in partnership with community organisations and members to develop community plans for the safety and wellbeing of children.

This process includes:

- providing information, support and resources around the safety needs and rights of children
- service mapping around universal, targeted and crisis services and supports for children and family
- workshops to build the capacity of staff working with children and families around child safety, family violence prevention
- providing training and resources to build the capacity of organisations to establish a child safe culture and practices, based on the 10 National Principals for Child Safe Organisations
- development of detailed actions for members of the community and organisations to promote a child friendly and child safe community (The Community Child and Family Action Plan).

See attached a de-identified Community Child and Family Action Plan from 2019

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