



childfriendlyalice@gmail.com

Child Friendly Alice is the name given to an emerging initiative in which the vision is for every child in Alice Springs to have the best possible start in life and to grow up healthy and strong. Currently four agencies form the backbone (listed below). The role of this backbone is to coordinate a more cohesive, collaborative approach to responding to community identified needs.

Productivity Commission Study Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory	
Response to Productivity Commission draft findings and recommendations	
General Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFA commends the PC on its draft report and the positive direction of the recommendations, it will take courage and commitment by government at both levels to implement these new reforms • The case for change to ‘wicked’ policy problems (Productivity Commission 2019, p.26) requires a stronger commitment to a different and more collaborative and coordinated way of working. The new effort needs to be different from the past, with de-centralised decision-making processes. It must be owned and championed by those people (the community) the Government most seeks to assist or support. It must encompass a placed-based approach as each community will identify their own needs and ways of working. The key factor is local leadership and ground up champions. A local example of a group representing community voice that could be considered to represent this is the Tangentyere Strong Women’s Group focused on prevention of family violence. • Careful consideration needs to occur before diverting funds away from existing service delivery, where there is a perception of ‘overlap’. It should be considered that the best response might be to tie this full investment to a coordinated way of working and integrating, enabling the current investment to be retained, while delivering priorities that have a shared commitment and responsibility. This may include a rationalisation of providers. • There is a heavy reliance on the concept of regional networks, which will largely be Government based and driven. This is a potential risk, given the perceived approach of successive Governments historically for process to be secretive, at times politically motivated and indicative of a lack of authentic community engagement around decision making. Mechanisms that demonstrate respectful and effective community collaboration have been lacking in the past.
Reform Area 1- Governments determine funding by working with	CFA is supportive of the PC’s recommendation of funds pooling between the Commonwealth and NTG, and that a formal coordination process between individual communities, the Commonwealth Government and NT Government is

<p>communities to develop community plans</p>	<p>developed. It is essential that a place-based approach is adopted where each community has control to identify and decide on what services they need, supported by what the local population level data is identifying as priorities.</p> <p>However, CFA, is concerned that the proposed four step process for planning and consultation is essentially Government led and controlled. There needs to be accountability built into these processes that demonstrates the steps the local or regional network leaders have undertaken to ensure they are fully informed and across existing reference groups, place-based activities and priorities already identified in communities. The investigations could be evidenced by local mapping tools and engagement with network groups etc. There needs to be evidence that the effort is deep and genuine.</p> <p>CFA provides an example of where there is committed resource for this purpose, government effort could be enhanced by utilising existing and burgeoning initiatives like CFA, to support the process. Regional networks would do well to participate in these networks and initiatives, to maintain their local knowledge and access to advice, rather than working in or on parallel engagement models.</p> <p>Much has been made of the reference to “the establishment of a number of coordination forums, including the Children’s Sub-Committee of Cabinet, and regional strategic coordination committees involving government representatives” The commission is correct when it acknowledges there is little known about the introduction of these forums, or their success to date. Many high level governments reports (Starting Early for A Better Future, Story of Our Children, The Generational Change report) all point to the value of these forums in their recommendations, however on the ground, there is little evidence of action or commitment to commencing these processes within Government agencies to date.</p> <p>Additionally, community consultation/voice needs to be authentic and included in the development of the Community Plans. The inclusion of the Tripartite Forum as a part of the mechanism is a step in the right direction. With this however, the public need to understand how and where the Tripartite Forum gets its knowledge and authority? We emphasise the need for community involvement at each stage of the process where local expertise and responsibility in community is acknowledged. A direct communication process for a community led initiative to feed information into the Tripartite Forum would also benefit this process.</p>
<p>Reform Area 2-Longer term, more collaborative contracting of service providers</p>	<p>CFA supports the PC recommendation of Governments partnering with ACCO’s to build capacity with funding agreements with the long-term vision of handing over services to them. ACCO’s are well-placed to provide culturally appropriate services.</p> <p>CFA supports PC recommendations, specifically: longer term funding cycles with a relational approach, ensuring the funding covers the full cost of service delivery and service’s ability to provide physically and culturally accessible</p>

	<p>services this will allow organisations more certainty, planning and the building of trust and relationships. However, with this relational approach it is important that a shift occur from funders being “hands off” to the funder being “hands in” the funders have an investment in the outcomes, they need to help to facilitate the process, and help to develop the strategic learning around the new ways of working.</p> <p>When considering a Competitive approach for the tendering for services, government needs to ask itself are there other ways this can be done instead of taking the default position to go to market which can result in the loss of small specialist services for example, EOI’s, preferred service providers and direct negotiations with current providers.</p> <p>Longer lead times are needed for the submitting of tenders the current practice is too short and this does not allow enough time for the development of partnerships and collaborative approaches,</p> <p>Price should not be the major driver in the procurement assessment. Quality, cost and capacity to deliver be all taken into consideration and how this best meets the needs of individuals and community.</p>
<p>Reform Area 3- Better, more transparent data that is shared at the community level</p>	<p>Capitalise on existing initiatives like CFA who have developed a Community Profile for Alice Springs, which integrates available population data with community voice. The population data can be tracked over time to indicate if progress has been made or point to the need of different service delivery models. Where no publicly available data exists, access to Government data would benefit the true picture of how communities are faring and improve place-based service delivery. On the ground, and over many years service providers hear about high level data linkage projects across government, however access to and transparency around this NT data is fraught. There needs to be a stronger commitment to promoting access to this data and it needs to be straightforward to do this.</p> <p>Capitalise and collaborate with existing services who already produce a Service Directory for Children and Families- e.g. Communities for Children in Alice Springs and NTCOSS. Essentially, the Government need to investigate what initiatives and resources already exist and enhance these with their buy-in instead of re-inventing the wheel.</p> <p>How and who will share the data at the community level? Again, consider capitalising on existing initiatives instead of working in parallels.</p> <p>Agree with streamlining the reporting requirements and monitoring evaluation approach for service providers. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks need to be a priority, where possible integrated and contribution frameworks</p>

	<p>adopted, to ensure the progress of the investment of the money can be mapped and the intended outcomes met and ultimately demonstrate children are better off.</p>
<p>Reform Area 4- Stronger Supporting Institutions</p>	<p>How does the Tripartite Forum get their information- is it all going to be filtered through Government hands? Additionally, how is the Tripartite Forum representative of remote communities? An opportunity for the Forum to hear directly from existing initiatives and community members may be a valuable change to introduce. For the Tripartite Forum to be accepted as the appropriate place for Ministerial recommendations it needs to be considered to have the right mix and authority of membership.</p> <p>It is recognised that the Tripartite Forum has been focused in its first year on establishment and process, in the future it would be important to ensure the Forum is able to invest more, in two-way communication and feedback. If the role of the Tripartite Forum is to be strengthened as per the recommendations, a higher level of transparency will be important.</p> <p>The commitment from DCM to the concept of Regional Networks and plans needs to be more visible. Ideally the networks would include Govt / non Govt combined. This will give the community and service provider's confidence that the Regional Networks authentically consult with communities, and this will enhance the opportunity for empowered communities.</p> <p>Additional benefit of linking with existing collaborations and initiatives is that there are already skilled resources operating in this area, they just need strong Government commitment and access to provide the Tripartite Forum with community information which will improve transparency.</p>