



## MINISTER FOR TERRITORY FAMILIES

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Ms Megan Mitchell  
National Children's Commissioner  
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Dear Ms Mitchell

Thank you for your letter of 8 February 2017 to the Hon Michael Gunner MLA, Chief Minister, in which you requested details of Northern Territory education, health and welfare policies, programs and services relating to young parents and their children, as well as any relevant evaluation information and case studies. As the Minister for Territory Families, I am responding on behalf of the Northern Territory.

While many broader parenting initiatives in the Northern Territory do not specifically target young parents, programs that provide comprehensive support to young people with vulnerabilities are valued. Examples of these include the Young Mothers - Strong Mothers Program which aims to improve both the health and educational outcomes of young mothers; the Pandanus Program which provides pre and post natal support and education to new, young mothers and BabyFAST which works with young children, their parents and grandparents. The attached table outlines a range of these initiatives.

The importance of supporting young parents and their children fits well into the Northern Territory Government's current reform agenda and I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this project.

Should you wish to discuss this further with Territory Families, please contact Mr Luke Twyford, Executive Director, Strategy and Policy on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

DALE WAKEFIELD

28 APR 2017

CC: Hon Michael Gunner MLA, Chief Minister

**National Children's Commissioner—Young Parents and Their Children Project  
Northern Territory – April 2017**

Information provided by:	Program	Brief description	Evaluation
<b>Department of Health</b>			
<p>Top End Health Service (TEHS) and Territory Wide Services (TWS) Child Youth Health Strategy Unit</p>	<p>Healthy Under 5 Kids (HU5K) Program</p>	<p>The Healthy Under 5 Kids program is the well-child health schedule for remote Indigenous children aged 0-5 years and provides information about the physical growth and nutrition of children in remote areas. The program monitors indicators of health and wellbeing so health service providers and policy makers can ensure that the right programs and policies are being put in place to address health needs from a population perspective.</p> <p>Elements of the HU5K Program have been reported on over the years with a particular focus on program coverage rates, growth and anaemia at the community level. However, a full evaluation of the program has not been undertaken.</p>	<p>An evaluation project is underway through the University of Western Australia.</p> <p>The first phase of the evaluation is a retrospective audit concerned with investigating the coverage, compliance and timeliness of the HU5K Program using data entered into the Primary Care Information System by health professionals in NT Primary Health Care Centres. Preliminary findings of the audit are due late 2017.</p>
<p>Child Youth Health Strategy Unit</p>	<p>Young Mothers - Strong Mothers (YM5M)</p>	<p>Young Mothers - Strong Mothers (YM5M) was a pilot project originally developed by the Department of Health under a National Partnership Agreement titled Indigenous Early Childhood Development.</p> <p>The project aimed to improve health and educational outcomes of young mothers under 25 years in the Darwin/Palmerston region while also improving infant health outcomes. It was a collaborative project between the Department of Health, the Department of Education and non-government organisations.</p>	<p>Evaluation of program effectiveness has not been undertaken.</p>



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TEHS and Child Youth Health Strategy Unit	Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program (ANFPP)	<p>The Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program (ANFPP) targets mothers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander babies and is a licensed adaption of the Nurse-Family Partnership Program, one of "the gold standard" early childhood development programs offered globally with very strong evidence of efficiency and sustained benefit, and of promoting brain development in vulnerable children. The adaptation of this international model into the remote NT setting as an Indigenous remote community outreach model will be unique in Australia.</p> <p>The Commonwealth currently holds the licence for ANFPP and is funding ANFPP in a range of communities across Australia including the NT. Four Commonwealth-funded sites are to be managed by TEHS.</p> <p>The Northern Territory Government (NTG) aims to expand this to another five sites through 2016 election commitment funding within four years.</p> <p>The aim of the program is improved outcomes in pregnancy; improved outcomes in child health and development and improved parental life-course.</p> <p>ANFPP is a partnership between implementing agencies, the ANFPP National Program Centre and the Commonwealth Department of Health.</p>	<p>Ongoing program, no evaluation has occurred as client intake has not commenced for NTG sites.</p> <p>Evaluation of program effectiveness has not been undertaken from NTG perspective.</p> <p>International evaluation of the Nurse-Family Partnership program is available.</p>

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Office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer	Pandanus-Childbirth education and perinatal support by Anglicare NT	<p>The Pandanus Program is a free and confidential service for young pregnant women and young parents wanting pre and post natal support and education. Pandanus aims to increase awareness of healthy relationships and enable young people to build support networks. It involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child birth education classes to young pregnant women 25 years and under</li> <li>• Post natal education and peer support for new mums under 25 years of age</li> <li>• One to one support and case management for young parents throughout antenatal and post natal (up to 3 months) periods</li> <li>• Transport, information and referrals to individuals living in Darwin and rural areas.</li> </ul>	Unknown
Environmental Health Branch Office of the Chief Health Officer	No Germs on Me Social Marketing Campaign	<p>The No Germs on Me Campaign was designed to assist with addressing the high rates of infectious disease on remote Aboriginal communities especially amongst young children. The Campaign encourages parents and carers of young children to show their children how and when to wash their hands and faces in order to stop germs from spreading.</p>	<p>McDonald, E. 2015. No Germs on Me (NGoM) Handwashing Campaign Extension Programme - Evaluation Report. Menzies School of Health Research. Evaluation found that the approach has been highly acceptable to Aboriginal people living in remote communities. The messages in the advertising materials are well understood but there is a need for ongoing work to encourage safe hygiene practices.</p>
Top End Health Service (TEHS)	Growing a smoke free generation	<p>Using smoking prevention/cessation as platform, working with remote indigenous youth to train peer leaders to promote healthy life style choices.</p>	<p>Menzies will be undertaking evaluation in 2017-18.</p>

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TEHS	Oral Health Territory Parents sessions	Oral health promotion targeting new parents outlining the oral health care needs of their baby pertaining to oral hygiene, diet, first dental visit and managing an oral trauma.	Not yet available.
TEHS and TWS	Healthy Smiles Program	<p>Training program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners, Nurses and Midwives.</p> <p>These primary health care providers are trained in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confirmation of normal growth pattern and development</li> <li>• identification of deviations and appropriate referral</li> <li>• providing support for child and families that may require other services</li> <li>• oral hygiene and dietary advice</li> <li>• topical application of fluoride varnish where clinically appropriate.</li> </ul>	In progress.
TEHS	Territory Families (TF) referral pathway	Referral pathway established between TF and Oral Health Services NT to ensure that children in the care of TF are provided timely assessment, preventative and curative care and recalls in accordance with their oral health needs.	Work Procedure Review planned for Oct 2016.
TEHS	Nhulunbuy Neighbourhood Centre Mothers' Group	Program for all new mothers with a new baby to come along to encourage engagement, and to provide health education topics.	Evaluated in 2016

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TEHS	Hearing Health Program (HHP) - <i>Strong Little Ears, Strong Life</i>	<p>Hearing Services in the NT aim to reduce the prevalence and incidence of ear disease among Aboriginal children in NT. HHP follows an integrated program of care that works in partnership with families, from initial diagnosis and treatment through to surgical and rehabilitative pathways if required.</p> <p>HHP strengthens community and family understanding of ear health and hearing loss. A key strategy, Ear Health Prevention Program supports otitis media prevention and conductive hearing loss intervention through culturally appropriate community-based partnership. An integral component is to recruit local Community Hearing Workers in targeted communities in partnership with the Department of Education <i>Families as First Teachers</i> to connect families and communities, the prevention of hearing loss and the promotion of language development in children.</p>	<p>Currently being evaluated. The project brief will be altered in accordance with the outcomes of the evaluation between DoH and DoE. The evaluation of the pilot program is available in draft.</p>
TEHS	Newborn Hearing Program	<p>Newborn Hearing Screening is offered to all babies born in NT public hospitals soon after birth and before discharge from hospital. The aim is to identify and diagnose permanent hearing loss at birth, and to provide early intervention to improve the quality of lives of babies with permanent hearing loss.</p>	<p>The coverage rate of Newborn Hearing Screening exceeds the national average of 97 per cent.</p>
TEHS	Territory Parents Support (TPS)	<p>TPS is a support group for new mothers and fathers of new born babies up to six months. This is an opportunity to provide advice, guidance and support, with guest speakers covering a wide range of parenting topics. Up to 20 mothers attend, with babies</p>	<p>No formal evaluation; attendance numbers monitored</p>
TEHS	Early Birds	<p>Program for first time mothers and fathers of babies up to 8 weeks. This is an opportunity to provide advice, guidance and support, with guest speakers covering a wide range of parenting topics. Up to 20 mums attend, with babies.</p>	<p>No formal evaluation; attendance numbers monitored</p>

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Centre for Disease Control	Community Paediatrics program	Head lice advice – a head lice action pack for parents, schools and child care centres; fact sheet.	Nil
Centre for Disease Control	Community Physician	Reviewing lead exposure in children in the NT and developing policy around the use of lead shot to prevent lead poisoning in children. Drafting changes in legislation to implement policy changes.	Nil
Centre for Disease Control	Trachoma	Implementing a national policy to eliminate trachoma as a public health problem.	Ongoing – independently evaluated.
Centre for Disease Control	Community Physician	Reviewing and developing the NT Water Safety Plan as part of the membership in the NT Water Safety Advisory Council to reduce water related injury and deaths in the NT.	Nil
Centre for Disease Control	Rheumatic Heart Disease	Maintenance of a Rheumatic Heart Disease Register together with family support and education to eliminate Acute Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease from the community.	RHD Strategy is being evaluated by the Commonwealth.
Centre for Disease Control	Immunisation	NT develops, implements and evaluates immunisation programs for children and adolescents. Immunisation coverage is monitored to determine low coverage areas to target education, health promotional activities or reminder/recall systems.	Ongoing
Centre for Disease Control	Sexual Health	The NT lacks a co-ordinated Sexual Health Education program targeted at adolescents and young people. The NT Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Unit had a federally-funded Adolescent Sexual Education Program, from 2009-2015. The program ended when federal funding ceased on 30 June 2015.	

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<b>Department of Education</b>			
<b>DoE</b>	<b>Families as First Teachers (FaFT)</b>	<p>The program is located at 28 school sites across the Northern Territory, and is an evidence based early childhood program that improves lifelong education, health and wellbeing outcomes for young children (from birth to the year before school) and their children.</p> <p>The FaFT early learning program includes play based experiences and planned and unplanned activities that are designed to increase children's learning and development. It also assists families to become an integral part of the school environment, building relationships with school staff and community partners such as local health clinics.</p>	<p>The program has been subject to an external/independent process that studied the establishment of the program through site visits and included interviews with schools, program staff, local community staff and families.</p>
<b>NTSDE</b>	<b>Pregnancy and Parenting Education Support Program</b>	<p>The Department of Education facilitates delivery of education to the Pregnancy and Parenting Education Support Program, which was established in 2013.</p> <p>The program is a support component delivered by the school of Distance Education (NTSDE). Students who enrol in the NTDSE access their education online allowing students to study from home while receiving regular face-to-face support. All pregnant and parenting students can access a flexible learning program through their local middle or senior school. Schools work with students to find an appropriate balance between study and parenting responsibilities.</p>	



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	Young Mothers - Strong Mothers Program	<p>Operating through the Palmerston Child and Family Centre, the program provides young Indigenous parents with improved access to integrated and coordinated education, pregnancy and parenting care pathways across the NT.</p> <p>The program is co-delivered by the Department of Education and non-government agencies such as Anglicare.</p> <p>The program addresses health issues to prevent or decrease risk factors in pregnancy for low birth weight including nutrition, substance abuse, hygiene, homemaking skills and emphasises the need for young mothers to complete their secondary education and secure paid employment. This aims to reduce the likelihood of their children coming into contact with the child protection and juvenile justice systems.</p> <p>In 2016, the program supported 15 young women to complete of a Certificate II in Community Support as part of the requirements for gaining their NT Certificate of Education and Training. Many have expressed interest in continuing their study in 2017 and gaining their Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. There are 20 young mothers enrolled in the program in 2017.</p>	

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Information provided by:	Program	Brief description	Evaluation
FAST NT	BabyFAST NT	<p>Families and Schools Together (FAST NT) is auspiced by NT Christian Schools. It offers programs in 20 sites across the Territory to build relationships and empower parents.</p> <p>BabyFAST NT is a multifamily group intervention model for young parents and their children. BabyFAST promotes healthy parent-child relationships, builds informal social support networks for new mothers, and uses experiential learning to teach effective ways to maximize the brain development of the child.</p> <p>It is an early intervention program designed for young parents under 22 years, with children up to three years old. It works with three generations – the baby, the young parents and the grandparents of the baby in an 8 week program. Each week the group meets together for two and half hours to engage in a range of activities. This is followed by a monthly activity program called FASTWORKS which runs over the next 12 months.</p> <p>The program is run by a local team who are trained and supported by a Baby FAST Trainer from FAST NT.</p>	<p>Baby FAST is an evidence-based program, with a thorough research base and ongoing Evaluation Process.</p>

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<b>Territory Families</b>			
<b>Office of Youth</b>	<b>Regional Youth Services 2014-18</b>	<p>A Regional Youth Services initiative was funded for 2014-18 via the Department of the Chief Minister and transferred to Territory Families in 2016. It focuses on early intervention and prevention activities targeting young people to be developed and implemented locally with in the Darwin/Palmerston and Central Australia regions.</p> <p>Two organisations delivering integrated pregnancy and parenting programs were funded in Darwin/Palmerston to support programs that were working in collaboration with Northern Territory Government agencies and non-government organisations to offer wrap-around services including case management and referrals addressing health and wellbeing; life skills and reengagement with education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The WCA of Darwin Parenting Support Program has a focus on re-engaging young mothers with education and developing skills. Participants are assisted with transport and child-care needs to attend school, BabyFast NT and to complete certificated courses. Support groups including play and learn sessions with their children and access to a range of other services are important components of the program.</li> <li>Anglicare NT Pandanus Program (also referred to under the Department of Health section) focuses on childbirth education and post-natal support. Support groups and tailored courses target young expectant mothers, fathers and young couples. Health and nutrition awareness, guidance to navigate through all check-ups and support needs, and linking participants to services are important components of the program.</li> </ul>	<p>It is estimated that half of the participants in these parenting programs are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage, and a quarter of all participants identify with being culturally and linguistically diverse.</p> <p>The Pandanus Program has reported on program outcomes through case studies which may be available on request.</p>

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		<p>In Central Australia, Red Dust Role Models is implementing the Strong Young Women's Program that engages young Aboriginal women of child bearing age in the remote communities of Kintore and Yuendumu and in mandated residential facilities in Alice Springs. This health literacy program focuses on raising awareness of the links between lifestyle choices and wellbeing with an emphasis on alcohol use and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Sport, music, dance and art as well as community partnerships are important components.</p> <p>The members of the Northern Territory Youth Round Table advisory group of young Territorians aged 15-25 undertake projects of importance to their communities. Issues associated with family support are raised every year by members and have been addressed in the advice and community-based projects the members present to the Northern Territory Government. In 2017, opportunities for young parents have been raised as a potential topic for a community-based project viewed from the perspective of a young mother.</p>	<p>Menzies Institute is the external evaluator and will provide a report in late 2018.</p>
<b>Child Protection</b>	<p>Leaving and After Care Support- 'Moving On'</p>	<p>A young person, who has left care can access assistance from Territory Families and agencies funded to provide this support. It is designed to meet the needs of the young person including those young people who are parents themselves. Moving On is an after care support and brokerage service for young people between 16-25 years who have left care and need assistance to maintain independence. The service operates Northern Territory wide.</p>	<p>Nil</p>