

Building Healthier  
Communities

Department of Health and Community Services

# Central Australia Regional Plan

2004



Northern Territory Government  
Department of Health and Community Services





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# Ministers' Message

In February 2004, Government launched *Building Healthier Communities* – our commitment to ensuring all Territorians enjoy long and healthy lives, and that we have health and community services that are responsive, accountable and effective.

Since then local staff of the Department of Health and Community Services have worked tirelessly – including meeting with and listening to members of the Central Australia Community – to turn our vision and priorities into hard and fast action plans.

*Building Healthier Communities* has a sense of urgency and makes a call to action to tackle on-going issues in new ways. The last thing we wanted was for it to be a strategy that remained just that and gathered dust. So it's really exciting to see *Building Healthier Communities* visible and to hear people talking about it everywhere we go in the Territory.

The Department's Plan for Central Australia is part of the first exciting step. It reflects the voice and needs of locals and is the blueprint for health and community services in your region from 2004 plus.

We thank the local staff and the Community for making this happen, for their ideas and shared responsibility and we look forward to seeing the plan unfold.



**The Hon Peter Toyne MLA**  
Minister for Health

**The Hon Marion Scrymgour MLA**  
Minister for Family and Community Services

# CEO Message

*Building Healthier Communities* is Government's broad platform for continuing reform and focus, a document of vision, values and priorities. The release of this framework is significant in giving our Department a fresh start, and reshaping our identity.

The Central Australia Regional Plan has been developed to ensure that local geographic issues within this region are enmeshed in our overall strategic direction and deliverable outcomes. The process that has led to the development of the Plan has involved the active participation of the local staff and key stakeholders.

A suite of Departmental action plans will support the implementation of this Plan. The first steps under these plans are outlined in the Departmental Divisional plans, which can be found on [http://www.nt.gov.au/health/corporate/business\\_plans/business\\_plans.shtml](http://www.nt.gov.au/health/corporate/business_plans/business_plans.shtml)

The Central Australia Region shares common features with other regions such as being relatively small in population; large in geographical area; complex in health and wellbeing issues but with a critical mass that creates the opportunity for service innovation with a reliance on close working relationships.

Evident in the development of the Plan were themes that also featured in



**Robert Griew**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Department of Health and  
Community Services

other Territory regions. These include recruitment, retention and development of our staff with a particular emphasis on the Aboriginal workforce; identification of service gaps; and the need for collaborative partnership and links with others and the community.

Essentially, this Plan outlines the Department's performance agreement with the Central Australia Community.

# Central Australia Region

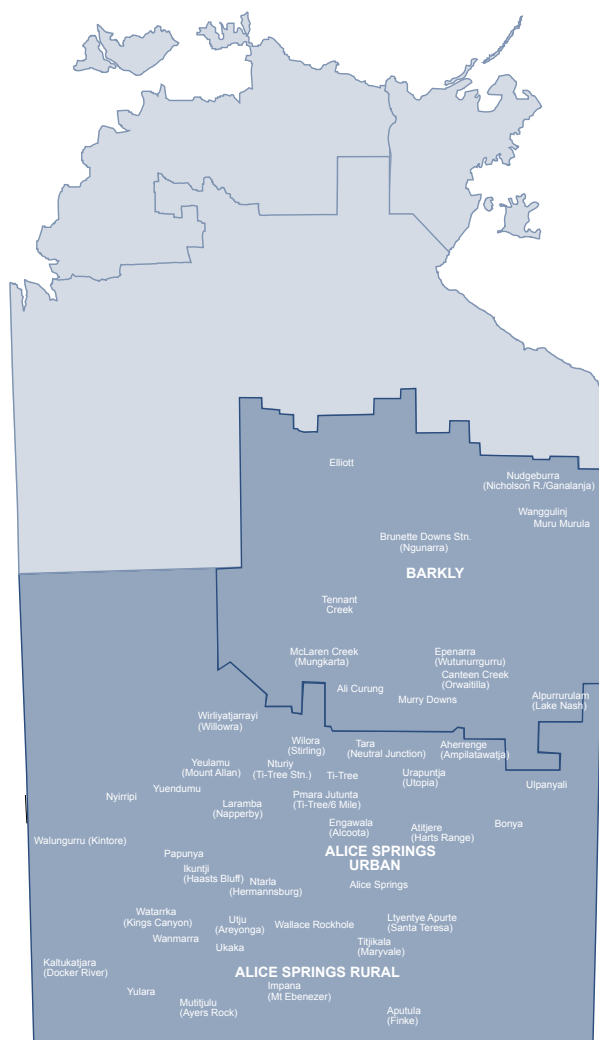
The Central Australia Region comprises an area of over 830,000 square kilometres. It shares a border in the south with South Australia, to the east with Queensland, and in the west with Western Australia. The town of Elliott represents the northern limit of service coverage.

The Department of Health and Community Services provides or supports delivery of services to a population of about 44,700 people, of whom approximately 16,200 are Aboriginal. While approximately 26,000 people live in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, the remainder of the population is scattered throughout the 45 remote communities and out-stations of the region.

A large proportion of the service to Central Australia is provided over significant distances where populations in remote pastoral concessions and Aboriginal communities may vary between 50 and 1000 people.

A unique feature of providing services in Central Australia is the need for flexible cross border, or tri-partite service delivery agreements. The Department provides yearly emergency services to more than 4000 people living adjacent to, but outside of, the boundaries of the region in South Australia and Western Australia.

The Department employs 1129 staff in the Central Australia Region.



## Key Priority

# Recruitment, retention and development of staff

We aim to create a working environment that will support *Growing Our Own*, this includes strengthening our Aboriginal workforce. Strategies that support staff retention and address workforce shortages will be implemented to ensure we continually deliver high quality services that meet the needs of our population.

### How we are going to do it

- Increase Aboriginal recruitment by developing career pathways across all health and community service professions and promote the Department as an employer of choice
- Develop and implement a Recruitment and Marketing Strategy that will address staff shortages across Central Australia including the Barkly Region
- Monitor and inform staff of recruitment and retention practices by implementing a systematic approach to workforce planning based on prior workforce patterns
- Develop partnerships with learning institutions to enhance best practice, staff learning and professional development opportunities

### How we will know this has been achieved

- Increase in the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff
- Implementation of a Central Australia *Growing Our Own* Recruitment and Marketing Strategy
- Development of formal partnerships with learning institutions





# Key Priority

## Identification of priority service areas

The Department has identified key service areas to be delivered in both urban and remote regions that will promote healthy living and ensure greater access and equity for the whole population.

### How we are going to do it

- Increase the capacity of alcohol and drug services by supporting increased coordination and the development of partnerships between Government and non government agencies in the Barkly Region
- Allocate resources to support public health nutrition experts to work in remote communities
- Implement disability planning and funding agreements with Western Australia and South Australia
- Support the Territory wide review of the sexual health services, ensuring that the views of Central Australians, Department of Employment, Education and Training, and non-government organisations are considered
- Establish Telehealth services
- Increase behaviour support services to children and their families in remote communities

### How we will know this has been achieved

- Successful establishment of a Telehealth trial
- Successful establishment of an Alcohol and Other Drugs interagency group in the Barkly
- Increased number of nutrition staff working in remote areas



## Key Priority

# Early intervention and prevention initiatives targeting children and youth and strengthening families

Children and youth are our future. The Department is committed to giving kids a good start in life, which includes protecting children and youth that are at risk and supporting families who are in crisis. The Department aims to provide services that will reduce disadvantage and better meet the care and protection needs of all Territorians.

### How we are going to do it

- Continue to develop policies and procedures for adult, youth and child mental health services
- Increase access to mental health, sexual assault and domestic violence support services in remote communities
- Support the implementation of key regional early intervention and prevention strategies such as the Alice Springs Child and Youth Safety Strategy and the Barkly Regional Community Safety and Action Plan
- Support and participate in a model of interagency case management for children and youth at risk particularly relating to inhalant misuse
- Provide leadership to improve the coordination of youth services within Alice Springs especially in relation to out-of-hours access for youth
- Support the establishment of a combined Crisis and Family Support Centre in the Barkly Region

### How we will know this has been achieved

- Improved access to mental health services for adolescents
- Improved access to support services in remote communities
- Successful implementation of an interagency case management model for children and youth at risk
- Improved out-of-hours access to youth services in Alice Springs
- Successful establishment of a combined Crisis and Family Support Centre in the Barkly Region



## Key Priority

# Establish collaborative partnerships and links with others

The Department is committed to creating better ways of working together. This includes developing partnerships with all areas of Government and with the Community to ensure the development of quality health and community services for the region.

### How we are going to do it

- Build upon and strengthen current communication initiatives across Government agencies and within the Community sector
- Support regional development initiatives to find local solutions to complex issues and contribute effectively to future directions within the region
- Formalise relationships between the Department, other Government agencies and non-government organisations to promote a common and consistent approach to service delivery and planning

### How we will know this has been achieved

- Demonstrated partnerships and support to regional initiatives such as Barkly Blue Print and Quality of Life
- Demonstrated commitment to the development and implementation of partnership protocols and agreements across Government and the Community sector



## Key Priority

# Demand Planning and Bed Management in our acute setting

The Department is committed to providing world class hospital services. This is supported by the ongoing recruitment of specialist medical staff and the implementation of strategies such as the Specialist Outreach Service. These strategies enable members of the public to receive care in their Community or home with the intent to improve quality of life.

### How we are going to do it

- Implement strategies to increase the utilisation of Tennant Creek Hospital including the number and type of procedures
- Support the reduction of premature admissions to hospital or nursing homes via the ongoing implementation of the Specialist Outreach Services to remote communities
- Support regional coordination between hospital services, remote health, population health services and non-government organisations
- Support the development of initiatives and new ways of working to improve quality of life such as Share Care, Step Down Services and Hospital in the Home Services

### How we will know this has been achieved

- Increased services to the Barkly from Tennant Creek Hospital
- Decrease in the number of premature hospital and nursing home admissions
- Increase in the number of specialist visits to remote communities



## Key Priority

# Preventable Chronic Disease Management across all sectors

The Preventable Chronic Disease Strategy is in place to facilitate better pathways to health care services. This strategy will lead to improved management, screening, surveillance and early detection of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, renal disease and chronic airways disease.

### How we are going to do it

- Provide expert leadership across the Territory health care system to further the successful implementation of the Preventable Chronic Disease Strategy
- Support the development and implementation of best practice chronic disease programs, including screening and surveillance for urban and remote communities
- Work in partnership with non-government organisations to improve pathways to continuity of care

### How we will know this has been achieved

- Demonstrated improved pathways for continuity of care, identifying services and gaps for patients with chronic illness, and improved discharge plans
- Successful establishment of inter-agency working groups to develop best practice and clinical pathways e.g. Discharge for Patients Group, Diabetes Care Group, Access to Allied Health Services Group
- Increased number of staff trained to provide brief interventions for Preventable Chronic Disease patients and carers



## Key Priority

# Facilitate Government and Community responses to social development in Alice Springs

The Department is committed to supporting regional coordination in response to social issues and supports joint Government and Community working groups to address Substance Misuse, Child and Youth Safety Strategy, Employment, Education and Training and Infrastructure and Amenity issues.

### How we are going to do it

- Support and advocate for collaborative cross agency implementation of key initiatives in the Child and Youth Safety Strategy
- Sponsor and promote the whole of Government approach regarding the implementation and planning of Quality of Life in Alice Springs
- Tackle substance misuse in Alice Springs
- Facilitate discussions with the Australian Government and other Territory Government agencies on the feasibility of new funding approaches to the trialing of new initiatives
- Facilitate discussions with the Departments of Employment, Education and Training; Infrastructure, Planning and Environment; and Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs about initiatives requiring cross agency collaboration e.g. school bus services, living skills programs, school based family and child development services

### How we will know this has been achieved

- Demonstrated leadership by the Department towards promoting a high level, whole of Government approach to Quality of Life
- Successful implementation and collaboration of the Child and Youth Safety Strategy across agencies including evidence of additional resources
- Demonstrated implementation of initiatives to address substance misuse such as cannabis and tobacco in Alice Springs





# For further information

Department of Health and Community Services

**Telephone**

(08) 8951 5294

**Facsimile**

(08) 8951 5265

**Central Australia Regional Plan**

[http://www.nt.gov.au/health/corporate/business\\_plans/cent\\_aust.pdf](http://www.nt.gov.au/health/corporate/business_plans/cent_aust.pdf)

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