

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory

Part 1: Six-Monthly Progress Report

1 January 2013 to 30 June 2013

Contents

Purpose	1
Introduction	1
Outcomes for Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory	2
Life expectancy	2
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey	2
School attendance	3
Alcohol supply data	5
Progress under Stronger Futures Implementation Plans	5
Health	6
Schooling	6
Community safety and justice.....	7
Tackling alcohol abuse.....	7
Child, youth, family and community wellbeing	7
Housing.....	8
Alice Springs transformation.....	8
Municipal and essential services	8
Remote engagement and coordination.....	8
Jobs	9



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Purpose

This report provides an update on progress in implementing the National Partnership Agreement (NPA) for Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory. The report draws on performance monitoring and reporting data and information to provide the public with a transparent account of activity under the NPA, consistent with the requirement under Clause 32 of the NPA which requires the Commonwealth Minister for Indigenous Affairs to release a government report on Stronger Futures. This is the second public report and covers activity during the period 1 January 2013 to 30 June 2013. The first progress report was released in June 2013 for the period 1 July 2012 to 31 December 2012.

Part 1 of the second six-monthly Stronger Futures Progress Report from 1 January 2013 to 30 June 2013 provides an introduction to the Stronger Futures Progress Report, outcome information for Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory in addition to key highlights for each Stronger Futures Implementation Plan.

Part 2 of the Progress Report provides detailed information on the services and activities, performance indicators and benchmarks under each Stronger Futures Implementation Plan. Reports from the Northern Territory Government and Commonwealth Own Purpose Expenses (COPE)¹ provide much of the information for that report.

Please note that this report covers activities delivered under the former Labor Government. Future versions of the report will be shorter and will have a stronger focus on outcomes.

Introduction

Under the National Partnership Agreement for Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory (Stronger Futures), the Commonwealth of Australia is providing \$3.4 billion over 10 years to support Aboriginal communities, families and children in the Northern Territory to live independent, safe and healthy lives. Programmes are delivered by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments. Forty-seven programmes and activities under 10 Implementation Plans support Stronger Futures objectives such as increased school attendance and attainment and increased local Aboriginal employment and economic development.

In many instances, Stronger Futures continues previous investment under the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) and the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement. This includes the continuation of 60 additional police officers and 200 additional teachers, housing upgrades, health services including child hearing and dental health, family support services, additional alcohol and drug workers and strengthening community stores.

The Stronger Futures legislation applies to only a few Stronger Futures measures such as classified material, tackling alcohol abuse and food security and is consistent with the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (RDA). The RDA was reinstated in relation to the NTER on 21 June 2010.

¹ Northern Territory Government Stronger Futures Performance Reports (NPA Part 4, section 30); Stronger Futures COPE Reports (NPA Part 4, section 31)

Outcomes for Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory

Life expectancy

In November 2013, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released updated life expectancy estimates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians:

- Nationally, life expectancy at birth for Indigenous males increased from 67.5 years in 2005-07 to 69.1 years in 2010-12, while life expectancy for Indigenous females increased from 73.1 years in 2005-07 to 73.7 years in 2010-12.
- In the Northern Territory life expectancy at birth for Indigenous males increased from 61.5 years in 2005-07 to 63.4 years in 2010-12 while life expectancy for Indigenous females decreased from 69.4 years in 2005-07 to 68.7 years in 2010-12.
- Life expectancy at birth for Indigenous males in the Northern Territory increased at a slightly faster rate than the national average over this period. The small fall in life expectancy for Indigenous females in the Northern Territory contrasts with a small rise at the national level.

The life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous males in the Northern Territory rose from 14 years in 2005-07 to 14.4 years in 2010-12 while the gap for females rose from 11.6 years in 2005-07 to 14.4 years in 2010-12. This widening reflects the fact that life expectancy for non-Indigenous males and females in the Northern Territory grew at a faster rate than the national average over this period.²

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey

The ABS released the first results from the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (AATSIHS) on 27 November 2013.³ The AATSIHS collects important data on Indigenous health including data on the incidence of smoking and selected health conditions.

Nationally the proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 18 and above who smoke each day fell from 50% in 2004-05 to 43.8% in 2012-13 and this fall was statistically significant. In the Northern Territory the Indigenous smoking rate (aged 18 and above) fell from 53.7% in 2004-05 to 52.9% in 2012-13, however, this small fall was not statistically significant.⁴ At 52.9% the Indigenous daily smoking rate in the Northern Territory is considerably higher than in any other state or territory. This is comparable to the national Indigenous smoking rate of 53.2% in 2012-13 for those living in very remote areas.⁵

In 2012-13, 48.1% of all Indigenous adults in the Northern Territory (18 and above) reported that they had consumed no alcohol in the previous 12 months up from 47.9% in 2004-05, however this

² The Northern Territory has a relatively mobile population with 25.7% of non-Indigenous usual residents in 2011 having lived in a different state five years earlier (compared to less than 10% in other states) (ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2011). This high level of mobility could have a compositional impact on estimated life expectancy for non-Indigenous people in the Northern Territory

³ More detailed data will be released by the ABS during 2014

⁴ ABS (Unpublished) AATSIHS, 2012-13 (2012-13 NATSIHS component) and (unpublished) NATSIHS, 2004-05

⁵ This is not surprising given that around 80% of all Indigenous people in the NT live in remote or very remote areas. Nationally, Indigenous smoking rates in very remote areas (53.2% in 2012-3) are considerably higher than they are in regional areas and the major cities (38.9% in 2012-13)

change is not statistically significant. This proportion is considerably higher than in any other state or territory. While Indigenous Australians are considerably less likely than non-Indigenous Australians to drink alcohol those Indigenous Australians who do consume alcohol are more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to consume alcohol at risky levels.⁶

The proportion of Indigenous adults who consumed alcohol at risky levels at least once per week fell from 16% in 2004-05 to 14.7% in 2012-13, however this fall is not statistically significant. Unfortunately, data for all remoteness areas in the Northern Territory are not available for 2004-05; however data for 2012-13 suggest that Indigenous people in very remote parts of the Northern Territory are considerably more likely to abstain from alcohol (62%) than Indigenous people in outer regional areas in the Northern Territory (20.2%).⁷

In 2012-13 Indigenous adults in the Northern Territory were considerably less likely to be either obese or overweight than Indigenous adults in any other state or territory. In addition, in 2012-13 Indigenous people in the Northern Territory were less likely to be obese or overweight than non-Indigenous people in the Northern Territory which is the reverse of the pattern in every other state and territory after controlling for age differences. On the other hand Indigenous adults in the Northern Territory are considerably more likely to be underweight than Indigenous people in every other state or territory.⁸ Unfortunately it is not possible to compare data on body mass index from 2004-05 with data for 2012-13 as the 2012-13 data are based on measured height and weight whereas the 2004-05 data are based on height and weight as reported by respondents.

Indigenous employment

The target to halve the employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade is assessed using data on the employment rate which represents the proportion of people of workforce age (15-64) who are employed.

The Indigenous employment rate in the Northern Territory fell from 50.8% in 2008 to 44.0% in 2012-13.⁹ In assessing trends in Indigenous employment, it is important to take account of changes in the number of Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) participants, noting that the ABS treats CDEP participants as being employed. In addition, the agreed policy goal is to increase mainstream employment not to increase the number of CDEP participants.

The non-CDEP Indigenous employment rate in the Northern Territory rose marginally from 33.4% in 2008 to 34.7% in 2012-13.¹⁰

School attendance

As new enrolment and attendance processes were introduced in Term 1, 2013, attendance data for 2013 should not be directly compared with data from previous years. In Term 2, 2013, the average school attendance rate for Indigenous students in government schools in very remote parts of the Northern Territory was 54.8%.

⁶ ABS (Unpublished) AATSIHS, 2012-13 (2012-13 NATSIHS component) and (unpublished) NATSIHS, 2004-05

⁷ ABS (Unpublished) AATSIHS, 2012-13 (2012-13 NATSIHS component) and (unpublished) NATSIHS, 2004-05

⁸ ABS (Unpublished) AATSIHS, 2012-13 (2012-13 NATSIHS component)

⁹ ABS (Unpublished) AATSIHS, 2012-13 (2012-13 NATSIHS component) and (unpublished) NATSISS, 2008

¹⁰ Derived from ABS (Unpublished) AATSIHS, 2012-13 (2012-13 NATSIHS component) and (unpublished) NATSISS 2008

Community safety

It is difficult to assess trends in community safety as reported crime has been affected by the provision of around 60 additional police in remote communities in the Northern Territory since 2007.

While Stronger Futures does not include priority communities or prescribed areas, the geographic footprint of Stronger Futures is similar to that of the NTER. For this reason, data reported in this report refer to the same remote communities used for reporting under the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory reports.

The total number of incidents involving one or more offences¹¹ decreased in 2012-13. While the number of assault incidents increased in 2012-13, the number of assault and aggravated assault incidents remains below the 2008-09 peak.

The number of assault cases lodged with the courts increased by 255 or 36% from 2011-12 to 2012-13. The number of resulting assault convictions increased from 410 in 2011-12 to 593 in 2012-13. This increase is at odds with the data on the total number of assault incidents and the assault incident rate which was considerably lower in 2012-13 than in 2008-09.

This apparent discrepancy could be due to the fact that in April 2012 the Northern Territory Police introduced a policy of zero tolerance to domestic violence. Under this policy, when police respond to an incident where a victim has obvious signs of having been assaulted but is unwilling to press charges, the police are authorised to charge the offender and take the incident to court. Prior to April 2012, except for unusual circumstances, the police would not press charges if the victim did not initiate the charge.

The number of domestic violence incidents continues to increase. However, this could be related to the introduction of mandatory reporting in March 2009 that requires all adults to report domestic violence if they believe another person's life is in danger or they believe a person has caused or is about to cause serious harm to another in a domestic relationship.¹²

The number of incidents with one or more offences attached and flagged as 'alcohol related' decreased in 2012-13 to 1,569 and remains much lower than the 2009-10 peak.

Police and justice data are located in [Appendix B](#).

Hospitalisations for assault

Data on hospitalisations for assault provide another useful source for measuring trends in violence at the community level. While these data are not directly affected by the number of police or police reporting practices, in general, only serious assaults will require hospital treatment.

The age standardised¹³ hospitalisation rate for assault for Indigenous people in remote and very remote parts of the Northern Territory remained unchanged between 2006-07 and 2010-11 (latest

¹¹ It is important to note that not all incidents are associated with offences and for those that are associated with offences, the offences included may be of a different nature to the incident category recorded. The Northern Territory Police assess each incident as to whether it was 'alcohol related', 'drug related', 'volatile substance abuse related' and 'domestic violence related' based on the reasonable belief of police at the time

¹² http://childrenandfamilies.nt.gov.au/Domestic_and_Family_Violence/The_Law/index.aspx

¹³ Age-standardised rates are hypothetical rates that would have been observed if the populations being studied had the same age distribution as the standard population, while all other factors remained unchanged. This is important when

data available). In addition, no significant change was evident over this period for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory as a whole.

In 2010-11, Indigenous people in the Northern Territory were 17 times more likely to be hospitalised for assault than non-Indigenous people. The hospitalisation rate for assault for Indigenous people in remote and very remote parts of the Northern Territory was roughly twice as high (1.9 times) in 2010-11 than for Indigenous in outer regional areas (Darwin).

Alcohol supply data

In December 2013, the Northern Territory Department of Business released alcohol supply data for 2012. This data shows that per capita alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory rose in 2012 after declining in each year from 2005 to 2011.

It is also worth looking at where the increase in 2012 is concentrated. When this is done it is clear that the increase was not uniform. There were declines in total alcohol supply from 2011 to 2012 in Alice Springs (2.2%), Katherine (3.9%), and Nhulunbuy (6.4%). At the same time, there were increases in Darwin (3.7%), Palmerston (6.6%) Tennant Creek (1.1%) and the Northern Territory balance (4.0%).

The estimated per capita consumption of pure alcohol in the Northern Territory rose from 13.2 litres of pure alcohol per person (aged 15 and above) in 2011 to 13.4 litres in 2012. At 13.4 litres per person consumption is lower than the equivalent figure of 13.4 in 2010.

The increase in alcohol supply in 2012 was largely accounted for by sales in Darwin and Palmerston, with Tennant Creek and the Northern Territory balance accounting for much smaller sales.

Longer-term trends can be assessed by looking at the average annual change in alcohol supply. From 2004 to 2007, alcohol supply in the Northern Territory grew at an average annual rate of 1.7% a year (note this does not control for population growth unlike the per capita data). From 2007 to 2012, supply fell at an average annual rate of 0.2% per year. In the Northern Territory balance (mostly remote communities), supply grew at an average rate of 2.9% from 2004 to 2007 but fell at an average annual rate of 1.3% per year from 2007 to 2012.

The Northern Territory Government has recently issued updated wholesale alcohol data for the 2012-13 financial year. According to these data, per-capita consumption of alcohol in the Northern Territory dropped to 12.84 litres per person in 2012-13 from 13.36 per person in 2011-12.¹⁴ This is the lowest estimated consumption value recorded for the Northern Territory since 2001-02 which is the first year for which per capita consumption has been calculated.¹⁵

Progress under Stronger Futures Implementation Plans

In 2012-13, \$119.4 million (including prepayments totalling \$26.9 million made in June 2012) or 98.0% of the \$122.2 million of National Partnership Payments were paid to the Northern Territory.

comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians as Indigenous Australians are younger, on average, than non-Indigenous Australians

¹⁴ The Northern Territory drinking population is estimated as the resident and tourist population aged 15 and over

¹⁵ <http://www.dob.nt.gov.au/gambling-licensing/liquor/Pages/alcohol-data.aspx>

In the first six months of 2013-14, \$89.5 million or 48.0% of the \$185.0 million of National Partnership Payments were paid to the Northern Territory.

Health

Between January and June 2013, 289 health professionals were placed under the Remote Area Health Corps programme helping to meet critical primary health care workforce shortages in remote areas. In each year of the programme, the number of placements has exceeded the contracted maximum under the funding agreement.

One-hundred per cent of Commonwealth funded primary health care clinics are now participating in continuous quality improvement activities to improve the sustainability, quality and accessibility of Indigenous health services.

The 38 reported Commonwealth funded Remote Health Centres provided 254,237 episodes of care for this period. Within the remote setting there is evidence of increased sustainable and equitable health outcomes for Indigenous people living in remote communities in the Northern Territory. This is being achieved by increasing their access to high quality, culturally appropriate and comprehensive primary health care services. This is publicised in the bi-annual Northern Territory Key Performance Indicators (NTKPI), National Key Performance Indicators (NKPI) and annual Activity Service Reporting.

Between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2013, hearing health services provided 1,807 occasions of service and 500 children received complex case management.¹⁶ Dental health services provided 3,224 occasions of service, 4,317 fissure sealants, 103 occasions of surgery under general anaesthetic and 2,258 fluoride varnish applications.

At 30 June 2013, 92 community stores were licensed with 40 monitoring assessments of community stores and two formal community consultations regarding potential new store licensing during this reporting period.

Schooling

The School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) was rolled out between March and June 2013 to Alyangula, Angurugu, Katherine, Katherine Town Camps, Milyakburra, Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Numbulwar, Umbakumba, Wadeye and Wallace Rockhole. SEAM supports Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents and carers to ensure their children are enrolled in and attending school regularly through linking attendance to the receipt of income support.

Approximately 3,000 breakfasts and 5,500 lunches were provided in 67 schools through the School Nutrition Programme.

In the period January to June 2013, 40% of parents contributed to the cost of providing meals for their children through the School Nutrition Programme, up from 35% in the period October to December 2012. This is the first increase recorded since the implementation of the programme.

The target for the construction of teacher housing was not met on account of delays in finalising Northern Territory land reform and the negotiation of leases over Aboriginal land.

¹⁶ Based on additional data for 2012-13 supplied by the NT Government Department of Health on 26 November 2013

Community safety and justice

At Gapuwiyak, a new police complex was completed in January 2013. The new police complex at Ramingining is scheduled for completion in September 2013, with both complexes to be officially opened on 20 November 2013. The complexes provide suitable facilities for police personnel to undertake their duties in relation to engagement, confidentiality and safety procedures for individuals, families and prisoners and also provide a place for the community to seek refuge in emergencies such as cyclones.

The Northern Territory Police are facilitating the development of Community Safety Action Plans (CSAPs) at 52 remote communities throughout the Northern Territory, including the 18 remote priority communities. CSAPs identify actions to improve safety, with a focus on community ownership.

Community night patrols continue to operate in 80 communities to help address violence and disturbances in communities. The Darwin Night Patrol will continue to operate from 1 July 2013.

Tackling alcohol abuse

The *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory (Alcohol Management Plans) Rule 2013* came into effect on 25 February 2013. This legislative instrument prescribes the minimum standards that Alcohol Management Plans (AMPs) must satisfy.

At the end of August 2013, 19 communities were developing an AMP with 17 plans in final draft at the community agreement stage.

Across the Northern Territory, 250 of the old NTER blue and white alcohol and prohibited material highway signs have been removed and replaced with 49 strategically positioned redesigned and respectfully worded signs. Twelve redesigned community signs have been erected.

Child, youth, family and community wellbeing

The Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers (RAFCWs) continue to be well connected to their respective communities. RAFCWs supported 50 community-strengthening sessions (43 community events and seven community workshops). Referrals increased from 355 in July to December 2012 to 420 in this reporting period with 86% (363 out of 420 cases) of family support involving other service providers. Ninety-seven per cent of RAFCWs completed induction training in the period and further training to familiarise themselves with the position.

There was a significant increase in the number of women and children accessing the Northern Territory Government managed Women's Safe Houses, with evidence suggesting that women are starting to use the Women's Safe Houses more often but staying for shorter periods to prevent violence as opposed to escaping violence.

In June 2013, Ninti One was selected as the Stronger Communities for Children (SCfC) Quality Service Support Panel provider to assist communities in establishing their local leadership groups or local community boards. Local community boards are supported to identify local community service needs and priorities with both government and non-government service providers to give parents skills to ensure that their children grow up in a safe and healthy environment.

A new crèche opened in Lajamanu with a strong start to use of the service.

Between 1 January 2013 and 30 June 2013, there were 18,873 incidents of youth participating in early intervention, prevention or diversion activities.¹⁷

Housing

The Australian and Northern Territory Governments continue to negotiate voluntary long-term leases with traditional owners. As at 30 June 2013, 55 communities have agreed to long-term leases. Leases are yet to be agreed in a further 10 communities.

Asbestos and asbestos-containing material is being removed in line with the Capital Works Schedule agreed in 2013-14. By 30 June 2013, 12 replacement houses in three communities had asbestos removed.

Alice Springs transformation

During the reporting period, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC) Safe and Sober Support Service had 179 referred Aboriginal clients accessing programmes and services. CAAC conducted 30 case conferences and 434 case discussions¹⁸ as part of the collaborative and integrated service delivery model.

To improve school enrolment and attendance in Alice Springs, 90 families are participating in the Passport Programme. The programme encourages participants to arrive at school in time, stay in class and follow instructions.

Municipal and essential services

In the 12 months to 30 June 2013, 32 service providers received \$18.37 million in funding to undertake municipal and essential service works in 430 locations across the Northern Territory.

The Homeland Programme Guidelines developed by the Northern Territory Government support the delivery of municipal and essential services to ensure obligations are met in relation to community engagement, consultation and community service delivery performance information.¹⁹

Remote engagement and coordination

As at 30 June 2013, 23 Indigenous Engagement Officers and 34 Government Engagement Coordinators were employed in 50 communities, including homelands and town camps.

A training and development framework is being established to provide distinct and supported career pathways for Indigenous Engagement Officers so that over time, they have the opportunity to undertake a range of roles in the Australian Government, including as Government Engagement Coordinators.

¹⁷ The total number of youth assisted is less than this as some participants attend multiple activities over a six-month period

¹⁸ A case conference is a discussion with a service provider or range of service providers about a particular client to manage the spectrum of those clients' issues. A conference may involve various stakeholders and focus on the delivery of client care

¹⁹ Detailed programme and service delivery information on municipal and essential services is now available from the [Northern Territory Government's website](#)

Ten Aboriginal Interpreter Service interpreters graduated with a Diploma of Interpreting during 2012-13 and a further 12 interpreters obtained credentials from the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters.

The total hours of interpreting undertaken by Aboriginal Interpreter Service interpreters during the period 1 January to 30 June 2013 was 15,112 hours, an increase of 1,807 hours from the period 1 July to 31 December 2012. Of these hours, 5,923 or 39% were undertaken by qualified or accredited interpreters.

In June 2013, 33 organisations in the Northern Territory received funding for 38 activities over three years to develop business plans, upgrade IT systems, and strengthen organisations' boards and governance arrangements.

Jobs

A clearer picture of Aboriginal employment in Stronger Futures activities is emerging as more data becomes available and services expand. During 2012-13, 1,357 persons were employed in the delivery of Stronger Futures services. It should be noted that this estimate is likely to be lower than the true level of Stronger Futures employment as data is missing for several large areas of employment, namely schools and health services.

Progress towards employment targets is encouraging, with many exceeded. For example, 93% of community night patrol staff are Indigenous – exceeding the 90% target.

An overarching Aboriginal Workforce Development Strategy is being developed to support the recruitment, training and retention of Aboriginal employees in work that is being funded through Stronger Futures. Sector-based workforce development strategies are being explored for some elements of Stronger Futures.