

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### **Child Safety and Wellbeing Directors' Network**

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Directors' Network has been created to support the Northern Territory Government's child protection system. The Directors' Network responds directly to recommendation 118 of the report *Growing them strong, together* which provides:

*To further the principle that child safety and wellbeing is 'everyone's business', that a senior officer in each Northern Territory Government department be responsible for relevant policy development, as well as the oversight of child safety and wellbeing issues arising in the business of that department.*

### **Objective**

The Directors Network will promote - collaborative practice and develop and implement whole-of-government policy responses to child safety and wellbeing issues arising within government agencies; responsiveness within and between their agencies; and fulfil reporting requirements. The Directors' Network will also provide advice to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in relation to child safety and wellbeing issues.

### **Members**

Senior Officers have been nominated within each of the following agencies to represent their department on the Directors' Network:

#### Permanent Members

Departments of:

Children and Families (Lead agency and Chair)

The Chief Minister

Education and Training

Housing, Local Government and Regional Services

Health

Justice

Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services

#### Impermanent Members

Department of Business and Employment

Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment

#### Expert Information Panel (impermanent member)

The Directors' Network will seek information on collaborative practice, and developing and implementing whole-of-government policy responses to child safety and wellbeing issues from representatives of:

Aboriginal Medical Services Alliances of the Northern Territory

Australian Government agencies

Northern Territory Council of Social Services

National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

Office of the Children's Commission

### **Key Focus Areas**

Broad child safety and wellbeing issues across the Northern Territory; and the seven key reform areas of the *Safe Children, Bright Futures Strategic Framework* -

Keeping Kids Safe: Statutory Intervention and Out of Home Care

Supporting and Strengthening Families: Enhancing family support systems

A Strong and Effective Legal Framework: Legislative change and court reform

Working Together: Community collaboration

Our People: Workforce

Healing, Growing, Walking Together: Aboriginal service sector and community capacity building

Building a Better, Stronger, More Accountable System: Governance and accountability

### **Governance**

The primary responsibility of the Directors' Network will be to ensure high levels of collaboration, cooperation and responsiveness within and between their agencies to address broadly child safety and wellbeing across the Northern Territory, and in the context of the seven key reform areas of *Safe Children, Bright Futures Strategic Framework*, for which DCF is the lead agency.

To fulfil this responsibility, the Directors' Network, through DCF, will report annually to the Chief Executive's Child Protection Taskforce on progress against:

- Improved coordination in the development and delivery of child safety and wellbeing related services, to improve overall service responses
- Facilitated system-level strategic policy responses
- Enhanced collaboration and information sharing
- Improved operation of the child safety and wellbeing system through a common understanding of roles and responsibilities
- Identified gaps, issues and risks, and coordinated responses to rectify these issues
- Providing advice to the Department of Children and Families in relation to reform issues, emerging trends, systems improvements and policy and practice development.

DCF will seek input from the Directors' Network to inform:

- A six-monthly budget review to the Northern Territory Treasury and the Department of the Chief Minister
- An annual child safety and wellbeing plan, aligned to the Strategic Framework 2011-2015.

Each member will take the necessary steps to plan, manage and report on child safety and wellbeing issues to ensure the objective of the Directors' Network is supported and facilitated in their agency, including:

- Ensure the development and delivery of their agency's component of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Implementation Plan in relation to the *Safe Children, Bright*

*Futures Strategic Framework* and broad child safety and wellbeing services across the Northern Territory. The progress of the agencies' contributions to the Child Safety and Wellbeing Implementation Plan will be reported by DCF to the Chief Executives Child Protection Taskforce.

- Provide an agency contact point to address operational matters impacting on successful whole-of-government implementation of the *Safe Children, Bright Futures Strategic Framework*
- Address internal blockages within the agency that inhibit progress in relation to the *Safe Children, Bright Futures Strategic Framework*
- Provide agency content as required for whole-of-government reporting on the Board of Inquiry recommendations and other child protection matters
- Lead and advise on child protection matters within their agency.

Chair - Senior Director, Strategic Reform and Accountability Team, Department of Children and Families

The Strategic Reform and Accountability Team will provide the Directors' Network with executive and project support.

### **External Monitoring**

The Northern Territory Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee will evaluate the Directors' Network as part of its responsibilities to oversee the reform process and implementation.

### **Operating Guidelines**

Members: Membership will be divided by permanent and impermanent members.

Quorum: A minimum of five permanent members

Meetings and attendance: Meetings will be held bimonthly unless otherwise agreed. All permanent members are expected to attend each meeting. The non-attendance of two consecutive meetings will result in the Chair seeking another senior officer be nominated by the given department's Chief Executive. Impermanent members, including the Expert Information Panel, are invited to attend all meetings as observers, and will from time to time be called upon to provide expert information to the Directors' Network.

Information sharing: The Directors' Network has been mandated for all members to share information which supports the enhancement of child safety and wellbeing. For the forum to be successful, participants will be actively encouraged to speak openly and frankly on issues presented.

Confidentiality: All members are bound by the Public Sector Code of Conduct to maintain confidential that information which they obtain in the course of their role with the Directors' Network. Information which is classified as confidential is information which is not in the public arena, and has been provided in circumstances imparting an obligation of confidence.

Decision making: The majority of decisions will be made in-session as long as the quorum is respected. All permanent members will have the appropriate delegation/authority to represent his/her department. In the exceptional circumstances where there are not enough permanent members present to form a quorum, a decision will either be determined out-of-session with the required number of permanent members; or deferred to the next meeting.

Response to public enquiries/concerns: All public enquiries and concerns will be directed in the first instance to the Executive Officer of the Directors' Network.

Response to Government and/or agency enquiries: All Government and/or agency enquiries will be directed in the first instance to the Executive Officer of the Directors' Network.

Provision and circulation of documentation: Each individual member will be responsible for ensuring that he/she has the authority to provide departmental documentation to the Directors' Network. The Executive Officer will circulate documentation to members as required.

External communication: All external communication will be at the direction of the Chair.

Linkages and partnerships with other working groups/committees: Linkages and partnerships are encouraged and will be formalised by the Chair.

Invitations to external parties to attend or present at meetings: All invitations to external parties to either attend a Directors' Network meeting or meetings, or present at a Directors' Network meeting are encouraged and will be issued by the Chair.