

Policy Context

[Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Changes for Children and Families 2018-2023](#) was developed as the Northern Territory (NT) Government's response to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT and outlines a series of reforms to better support children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability, particularly in the child protection and youth justice systems.

Two of the four key focus areas identified in *Safe, Thriving and Connected* involve efforts under the Alcohol Harm Minimisation Action Plan and the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework to minimise alcohol related harm, provide community education, prevent and reduce domestic, family and sexual violence, and expand support services to women and children.

As the Commission would be aware, the NT Alcohol Harm Minimisation Action Plan 2018-19 sets out the policy and legislative reforms, enforcement and compliance activities and harm management strategies and services the NT Government has committed to delivering to prevent and minimise harms associated with alcohol misuse in the NT.

The [Safe, Respected and Free from Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028](#) is the NT's strategy to reduce domestic, family and sexual violence. The Framework supports a long term commitment and comprehensive approach to the prevention and reduction of domestic, family and sexual violence and acknowledges the negative relationship between alcohol and domestic, family and sexual violence. The harmful use of alcohol and or drugs increases the risk of violence, with alcohol a feature in a significant number of call-outs to family violence, and correlated with a higher number of, and more severe, incidents of violence against women.

The Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (the Department) Programs and Services

Actions under the Violence Reduction Framework reforms being progressed by the Department in the Barkly region include:

- Appointment of a Barkly Regional Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFS) Coordinator whose role includes development of an integrated and specialist domestic, family and sexual violence hub in Tennant Creek.
- Implementation of the NT Government [Domestic and Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework](#) for workers and services to provide a consistent and evidence-based way to identify, assess, respond to and manage domestic and family violence risk across the NT. An orientation to the Risk Assessment and Management Framework will be provided for a local DFS Reference Group in Tennant Creek.
- Increased focus and resourcing for community education and prevention at the local level. The Department provides funding towards the Catholic Care NT No More program in Tennant Creek, which aims to decrease violence and increase women and children's safety and wellbeing through provision of community information and education, group work and individual support.
- The establishment of a specialist DFS hub in Tennant Creek is a priority actions for 2020-21.

In addition to care and protection services, the Department provides family support services in the Barkly region, which are accessed either through the Families and Children Enquiry &

Support line NT (a referral and information phone service connecting families to support services in their area), or Child Protection/Youth Justice services.

The Department's Intensive Family and Parenting Support program and services are provided in Tennant Creek through Catholic Care NT. The program provides parents with intensive in-home support to prevent their children coming into care, and or support for them when children are returning to their care.

Since 2018, the Department's Barkly Office has operated youth outreach night patrols in Tennant Creek, through the Youth Justice and Re-engagement Teams program, for three hours a night, seven days per week, providing proactive youth outreach and support, and collaborative case-management for young people and their families to address the young person's needs.

Recent anecdotal observations by staff indicate that young people are not routinely observed with alcohol related behaviours on the street. However, on occasions young people have been observed affected by volatile substances such as aerosol deodorant, and referrals were made to Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Central Australia. Some adults appearing to be alcohol affected in public have been attended to by night patrol teams.

The Department funds two service providers to operate the Back on Track youth diversion program in Tennant Creek. Providers have advised that some community members and families feel uncomfortable with the presence of authorities outside bottle shops checking identification during COVID-19 restrictions. The lines to purchase alcohol from 3 pm to 7 pm have increased substantially (including drive through orders), predominantly on Thursday to Saturday. Some young people have indicated that if they are looking for parents or family in the afternoon, they would walk to the bottle shops.

Impact of Alcohol Reforms

The data provided at Attachment A does not show any marked change in child protection notifications and investigations substantiated since the commencement of varied takeaway trading conditions of liquor licences on 12 June 2018. It is suggested that the impact of any community education programs committed to under the NT alcohol reforms may take some time to change behaviours, given the complexity of factors involved. Similarly, the positive impacts of the economic and social initiatives to be delivered through the [Barkly Regional Deal](#) may take time to be realised.

Informal local feedback indicates a need for therapeutic treatment services in the Barkly region that are culturally safe, trauma informed and have a spiritual aspect. The 2019 Report, Demand Study for Alcohol Treatment Services in the NT, identifies the need for further work on the delivery of treatment services (Refer to https://alcoholreform.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/703268/demand-study-report-2019.pdf).