ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTRE

Acknowledgement of Country

The Community Justice Centre (CJC) acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the country on which we work and live. We pay our respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the Northern Territory (NT), and to Elders past and present. We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, waters and seas, and their rich contributions to our community.

The CJC recognises Aboriginal Elders, community leaders and mediators who are working for peace in their families and communities.

Interpreter Services

The Northern Territory Government is committed to providing accessible services for Territorians. If language is a barrier to understanding this annual report, you can contact us on 1800 000 473 and we will arrange for an interpreter to assist you.

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Director's Message

I am pleased to present the CJC Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2025. It has been a busy year for the CJC through ongoing relationships with a broad range of stakeholders in government, non-government organisations and the public.

CJC staff and sessional mediators continue to use their experience and diverse skillsets to provide facilitative dispute resolution services to Territorians.

Our mediation services have:

- supported a reduction in anti-social behaviour and engagement with the criminal justice system; and
- empowered participant-led solutions to conflict that foster respect and harmony in our community.

The CJC looks forward to building on this success further in 2025-26 to assist more Territorians to take a proactive approach to resolving conflict.

Yours sincerely,



Peta Yujnovich
Acting Director Community Justice Centre /
Acting Executive Director Justice Services
September 2025

The Community Justice Centre

The CJC has promoted and provided conflict resolution services in the Northern Territory since 2003. The CJC started a pilot program and later became a statutory body operating under the *Community Justice Centre Act 2005*. The CJC was set up to provide mediation services that take pressure off other justice services and achieve greater harmony in the community[1]. The CJC has since offered thousands of Territorians a way of resolving their disputes without going to court.

Core services

Mediation

Mediation is an informal problem-solving process for people in conflict. Our services are free, confidential and impartial and available to all Territorians. The CJC offers mediation services for a wide range of disputes.

Training and accreditation

The CJC is a Recognised Training Provider (RTP) under the Australian Mediator and Dispute Resolution Accreditation Standards (AMDRAS) and provides training services across the Territory. The CJC also offers tailored conflict resolution workshops and professional development sessions for accredited mediators.

Organisational Structure

The CJC is a business unit within the Justice Services division of the Attorney-General's Department. The CJC comprises a small team based in Casuarina and a panel of accredited practitioners across the Territory who provide mediation and training services on a sessional basis.

[1] Department of the Attorney-General and Justice 2014, Review of the Community Justice Centre Act Discussion Paper

Achievements

- Delivered the West Daly Peace Project across Nauiyu, Nganmarriyanga, Peppimenarti and Wadeye in partnership with Thamarrurr Development Corporation and with funding and support from the National Indigenous Australians Agency;
- Coordinated and delivered the Barkly Regional Deal Community Mediation Initiative to support community-led conflict resolution in Tennant Creek, Alekerenge and Elliott;
- Established a formal partnership with Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation and jointly delivered the Town Camp Peace Project;
- Commenced the Mparntwe Peacemaking Project with our consortium partners Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation and Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation in the Alice Springs region;
- Delivered two accredited Practical Mediation Skills workshops in Darwin and Alice Springs;
- Designed and delivered tailored introduction to conflict resolution workshops for Aboriginal Liaison Officers in collaboration with NT Police;
- Opened a CJC project office at Desert Knowledge Australia in Alice Springs; and
- Approved as a Recognised Training Provider under the Australian Mediator and Dispute Resolution Accreditation Standards.

CJC Services

Dispute Assistance

The CJC receives enquiries by phone, email or in person at our Casuarina or Alice Springs offices. Enquiries include disputes relating to:

- Antisocial Behaviour;
- Court matters;
- Family / Interpersonal matters;
- Schools / Young People;
- Business/Consumer issues;
- Minor Civil Disputes;
- Neighbourhood / Community disputes;
- Organisational / Association matters;
- Burial Disputes / Remote Community Conflict;
- Workplace issues;
- Contractors disputes; and
- Tenancy/Body Corporate disputes.

Anyone can make a referral to the CJC . People contacting the CJC have often exhausted other options for resolving their dispute. The CJC seeks to operate as a 'front door' to the service sector linking in with appropriate supports while having information to plan a way forward.

SupportLink Referrals

In addition to the above enquiries in 2024/25, the CJC receives referrals from the NT Police via SupportLink which often relate to high conflict situations and violent incidents.

Mediation Services

The CJC delivers two distinct streams of mediation services,: court-annexed and a general stream.

The CJC provides mediation in accordance with section 14 of the *Personal Violence Restraining Orders (PVRO) Act 2016*. This year there was a spike in workplace-related PVRO mediations. Neighbourhood cases slightly increased to the year prior and the CJC managed four cases that related to school communities. In many PVRO cases, there have been serious threats of harm and, at times, violent interactions resulting in concurrent criminal matters.

In 2024-25, the CJC received three referrals for mediation in relation to domestic violence orders involving young defendants involved in family violence. One case progressed to mediation and was jointly delivered with Ponki mediators from the Tiwi Islands. The mediation process was overseen by Elders and resulted in a family safety plan that was taken into consideration by the court

The general mediation stream is particularly broad and covers all cases outside of the court-annexed stream.

Community conflict

Cases relating to community conflict are usually large, complex matters relating to burial matters and conflict following the loss of a family member. These cases require extensive engagement with family groups who were grieving their loss, balancing cultural and legal obligations as well as the distress of the conflict.

Adjudication

Section 11(A) of the *Construction Contracts (Security of Payments) Act 2004* interacts with Part 4 of the *CJC Act 2005* that provides for adjudication of a payment dispute by written application to the Director of the CJC.

One determination was made in an adjudicated matter in 2024/25.

Client Feedback

Overall, feedback about our service is positive. The overwhelming majority of participants agree that mediation helps them understand their situation and move forward, that staff were helpful and proficient at explaining mediation steps, participants felt they were treated fairly and that participants would recommend the CJC to others.

Complaints

One formal complaint was received in 2024-25

Barkly Regional Deal Community Mediation Initiative

In November 2023, the Barkly Governance Table endorsed a proposal for the CJC to oversee Deal Initiative 25 to work with Aboriginal Elders, community leaders and other respected community members to co-design a culturally relevant service model for community mediation in the Barky region. The objective of the Initiative was to empower local community members to resolve conflict peacefully, strengthen community safety and relationships, and divert community members from the justice system.

Highlights included:

- In Ali Curung, over 50 community members attended a meeting in October 2024 and expressed a desire to re-establish the Mediation Committee. This led to its re-formation with 21 committee members
- Engaging in widespread consultation including young people to identify conflict drivers and strengthen community ties.
- Conflict Resolution workshops across the region that created safe spaces to explore conflict mapping, the roles of peacemakers, conflict resolution processes and an introduction to mediation practices and skills. The workshops were designed to help inform the design of community-led peacemaking services in the region.
- Tailored dispute resolution processes that focussed on individuals in conflict- please refer to case study section



Conflict Resolution workshop at Ali Curung, CJC Cultural Adviser Tristan Duggie top right



Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking Workshop for Frontline Workers in Tennant Creek, with 21 patrollers, NT Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers, public housing safety officers and safe house staff

West Daly Peace Project

Following the success of the Wadeye Peace Project, in June 2024, NIAA funded its expansion to extend peacemaking activity to Nauiyu, Nganmarriyanga and Peppimenarti. The Project aims to build capability for mediation and peacemaking in the region and create the foundations for regional conflict management planning among community leaders. The project is led by a bi-cultural team comprising two part time accredited mediators and two full time Senior Aboriginal Practitioners.

Highlights include:

- facilitating a range of participatory workshops aimed at reducing conflict through deepening understanding of conflict and exploring local conflict resolution approaches;
- identifying and supporting local peacemakers and groups;
- facilitating community mediation processes between organisations, within and between families, and between individuals in a culturally appropriate, flexible and responsive manner;
- ongoing community engagement that builds trust and rapport, ensuring the work is responsive to the needs of community members and local organisations and services; and
- working with researchers from Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University to prepare a Ground Up process evaluation.

Stakeholder feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, affirming the approach that has been adopted and reinforcing the need to build capability of local peacemakers as the first responders in community conflict.

Mparntwe Peacemaking Project

The Mparntwe Peacemaking Project is establishing Aboriginal-led peacemaking services in Alice Springs and building capacity for community-led conflict resolution in Central Australia. The Project is funded by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (establishment phase) and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department through a Justice Reinvestment in Central Australia' grant. Aboriginal staff and community leaders from partner organisations and from other communities have informed the project design, alongside practice experience on the frontline of conflict.

Highlights include:

- initial recruitment of staff;
- working with the Central Practice Manager of the CJC to identify cultural supports, facilitating supported referrals and co-mediating matters; and
- developing a workshop schedule in partnership with community leaders to identify drivers of community conflict and begin to conceptualise a community-led peacemaking framework for the region.

In 2025/26. Management of the Mparntwe Peacemaking Project will be undertaken by the Aboriginal Justice Unit.

Town Camp Peace Project

In late 2023, Tangyentere Council Aboriginal Corporation and the Community Justice Centre jointly responded to a number of cases involving Town Campers and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to fund a Project Coordinator to manage the Town Camp Peace Project. The Project is designed to work with Town Campers to co-design and implement culturally responsive models for managing conflict in and between Town Camps. The Project is delivered by an Aboriginal Practitioner who also works with the Mpartnwe Peacemaking Project. The focus of the Project has been development and co-delivery of peacemaking workshops in the region.

Training, Accreditation and Professional Pathways

One of the CJC's strategies for promoting peace in the Northern Territory is to deliver mediation and conflict resolution training that is accessible, place-based and can be applied in real world situations. Our courses are practical and participatory and designed to strengthen communication skills on a professional and personal level.

Practical Mediation Skills Workshop

The CJC delivered our flagship 5 day workshop in Mpartnwe/ Alice Springs in November 2024, and in Darwin in May 2025. The courses were open to anyone interested in developing their conflict resolution skills. Our team of trainers expertly blended the theoretical framework and foundational practical skills and tools required to build a strong foundation for the next generation of mediators. Both courses were fully subscribed, with participants from a range of organisations including Aboriginal Controlled Organisations, legal services, Law and Justice Groups, and community and private institutions. These were our final courses which met the requirements to apply for accreditation under the National Mediator Accreditation System which concludes on 30 June 2025.



Practical Mediation Skills Workshop- Darwin 12-16 May 2025

Introduction to Conflict Resolution Workshops – NT Police

In July 2024, the CJC delivered an introduction to conflict resolution workshop for Aboriginal Liaison Officers (ALOs) in Mparntwe/Alice Springs. The one-day workshop was led by trainers Gary Childs and Anna Weekes and involved over 21 ALO's from across Central Australia. The workshop recognised the exceptional skills and specialist knowledge ALOs bring to the role and build on these by skilling members up with mediation skills, techniques and tools for managing and resolving conflicts. Our boutique course offerings are practical and participatory and create a space to talk about the impact of conflict in their communities and the importance of peace.



Scholarships

The CJC remains committed to diversity of the CJC practitioner panel and continued to offer scholarships on our courses to reduce the barriers to becoming a mediator. Across our courses, the CJC provided 3 full scholarships and 8 partial scholarships to Aboriginal registrants experiencing financial barriers to attending the course.

Ongoing Professional Development

The CJC continues to offer regular group supervision and Continuing Professional Development sessions as a forum for practice reflection, peer support and learning.

In 2024/25, CPD sessions included presentations from Aboriginal Interpreting Service and Darwin Community Legal Service. Group supervision sessions focused on topics such as shuttle and online mediations and case reviews.

National Accreditation

The CJC assessed applicants for accreditation and reaccreditation under the national standards and maintains a register of accredited members. In 2024/25, The CJC managed 1 assessment for accreditation and linked candidates with practice groups to help with their preparation. The CJC also provides reaccreditation before making an operational decision to cease our accreditation services due primarily to the administrative load and need to prioritise the delivery of mediation services. The transition to the new Australian Mediator and Dispute Resolution Accreditation Standards (AMDRAS) commencing 1 July 2024 with additional requirements was another factor. Mediators have transferred to other accrediting bodies during this reporting period.

Practitioner Panel

The CJC panel has continued to attract highly skilled practitioners from other services and organisations as well as entry-level mediators. In 2024/25, the CJC made preparations to transition new arrangements for retaining our mediator panel in the coming financial year.