



# Youth Services Action Plan

National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)

11 October 2024

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past and present.

# Contents

1	The Youth Services Action Plan (YSAP)	1
2	The future state for young people in Central Australia	3
3	Short and long term priorities across the region	5
	Focus Area 1. Family and community: Strengthen governance and community ownership and leadership of youth services.	7
	Focus Area 2. Youth Services: Expand the variety of services across communities and address the needs of under-served groups.	9
	Focus Area 3. Broader system services: Improve coordination with other services including specialist youth services.	11
	Enabler 1. Workforce: Enhance the capability and capacity of youth services to meet young people's needs.	13
	Enabler 2. Infrastructure: Upgrade youth infrastructure and resources.	16
	Enabler 3. Funding models: Support locally led decision making on allocation of funding to support transition to community control.	18
	Enabler 4. Monitoring and Evaluation: Build local capacity to consistently monitor and evaluate activities.	20
4	Background and context for the YSAP	21
5	Journey towards the YSAP	22
6	Taking the actions forward	24
	Appendix A Current investment commitments	25
	Appendix B Overview of WETT funding support	26
	Appendix C Overview of GMAAAC investments in Yuendumu	28

# 1 The Youth Services Action Plan (YSAP)

**Young Aboriginal people in Central Australia represent the future of their communities.**

Young Aboriginal people form a significant proportion of the population of Central Australia: 20 per cent of the region's total population are Aboriginal people under the age of 24. These young people are creative, positive and resilient; grounded in the strength of their culture, lore and land. Many contribute positively to their communities, showing pride in their culture, and demonstrating an entrepreneurial spirit. A number of the oldest living languages and cultures have survived and thrived in Central Australia and continue to be spoken and practiced to this day.

Young people in Central Australia also face challenges. Many Aboriginal communities in the region are small, geographically isolated, and have limited access to essential services. Historical factors and a legacy of colonisation have created gaps in housing, infrastructure, education, healthcare and access to a range of services, especially in more remote communities.

In this context, youth services have a clear opportunity to create a better future.

**The YSAP is a region-wide plan that will enable the consistent delivery of youth services across 26 communities in Central Australia.**

The YSAP exists within the Australian Government's \$250 million commitment to creating a better, safer future for Central Australia, under the Central Australia Plan (CAP). It describes youth service gaps and opportunities across the region to inform more efficient and equitable investment in services for Aboriginal young people across all 26 Central Australian communities. Young people are defined as those aged from eight to 25 years old and all mentions of young people in the YSAP refer to young Aboriginal people.

The YSAP does not intend to cover all services that young people in Central Australia need. The Plan defines youth services as sports and recreational activities designed to entertain and engage young people in a safe space and help them develop life skills, and positive social connections. These services can also be important links to specialist youth services or broader system services, especially where they involve diversionary and healing activities. Specialist services typically require intensive or complex case management and support models. The YSAP aims to have a direct impact on quality of life for young Aboriginal people living in Central Australia and reduce antisocial behaviour that stems from systemic and socio-economic factors.

**The YSAP aligns with and builds on the Closing the Gap (CtG) Priority Reforms and other local and international frameworks.**

Targets 7, 11 and 13 of the CtG Reforms aim to improve youth engagement in employment and education, reduce the number of young people in the criminal justice system, and keep families and households safe. Other international and local frameworks and strategies that outline similar goals for young people also provide important context.

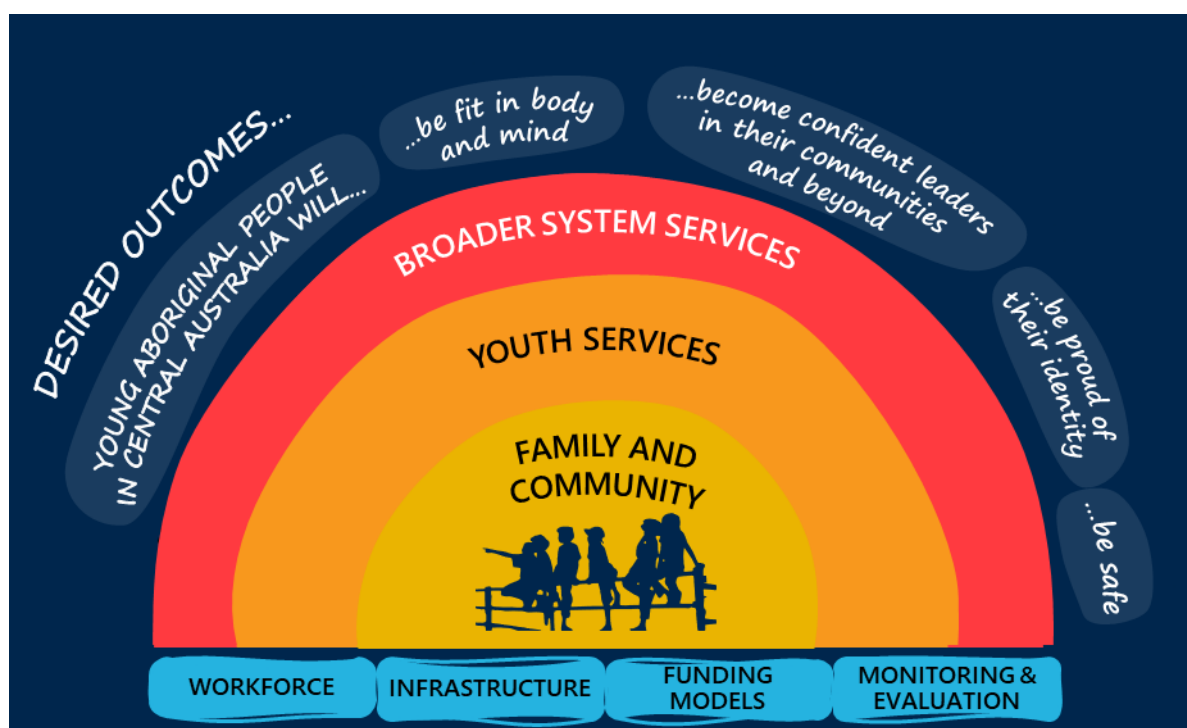
## A new way of working.

The CAP includes a commitment to new ways of working, with an emphasis on listening to communities first. The YSAP prioritises the voices of local young people, families, Elders and community members and captures:

- priority actions for youth services in the region;
- priority enablers to achieve the actions;
- desired future outcomes for young Aboriginal people in Central Australia.

Each of these is depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 | Outcomes, Focus Areas and Enablers for the YSAP



### YSAP Focus Areas

1. **Family and community:** strengthen governance and community ownership of youth services.
2. **Youth services:** expand the variety of services available across communities and address the needs of under-served groups.
3. **Broader system services:** Improve coordination with other services including specialist youth services.

### YSAP Enablers

1. **Workforce:** Enhance the capability of youth services to meet young people's needs.
2. **Infrastructure:** Upgrade youth infrastructure and resources.
3. **Funding models:** Trial locally led decision making on funding allocation to support transition to community control.
4. **Monitoring and evaluation:** Build local capacity to consistently monitor and evaluate activities.

## 2 The future state for young people in Central Australia

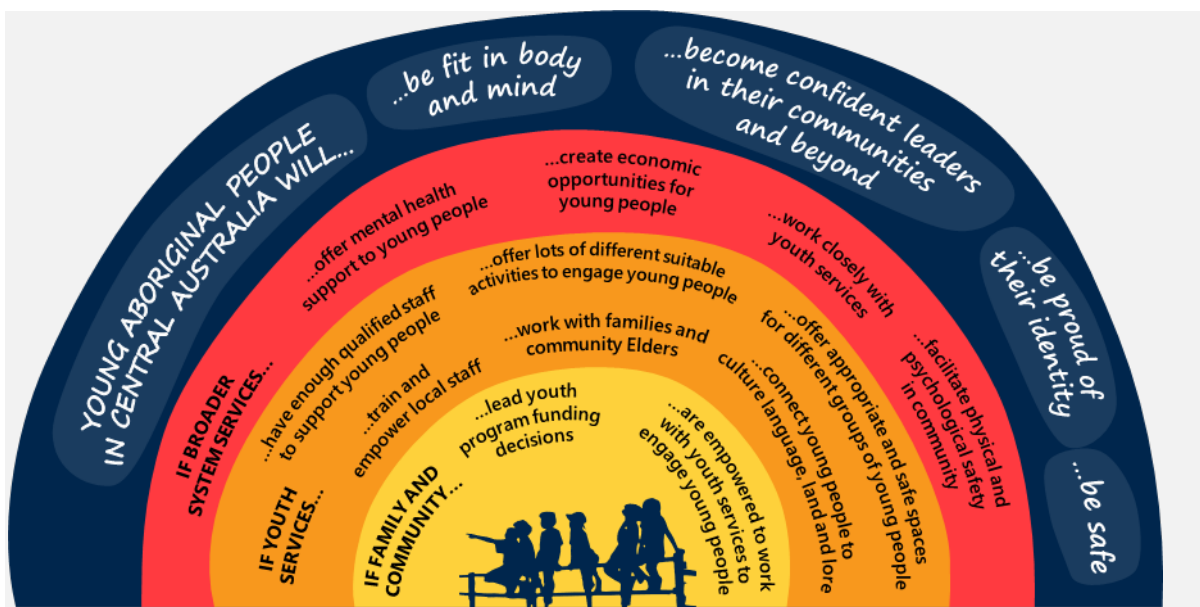
Community members and young people described an ideal future state as one where young people are:

- Fit in body and mind – physically and psychologically well;
- Proud of their identity – grounded in their culture and language;
- Confident leaders in and beyond their communities – equipped with the knowledge and skills to lead by example;
- Safe – free from racism, discrimination and danger.

Figure 2 below captures the outcomes that can be achieved for young Aboriginal people (outer layer), if the actions specified in this plan are taken by family and community, youth services, and the broader system (inner layers). This Theory of Change was designed based on community engagement and validated with representatives from communities across the region.

Figure 2 | Co-designed theory of change for Aboriginal youth outcomes

[The following image is an infographic outlining goals for young Aboriginal people in Central Australia, including health, leadership, safety, and community engagement.]



[Detailed image description:

### Overview

The infographic presents a circular diagram with various goals and aspirations for young Aboriginal people in Central Australia. It is divided into four main sections, each with a different colour and theme.

Young Aboriginal people in Central Australia will be fit in body and mind, become confident leaders in their communities and beyond, be proud of their identity, and be safe...

...if broader system services offer mental health support to young people, create economic opportunities for young people, work closely with youth services, and facilitate physical and psychological safety in community.

...if youth services have enough qualified staff to support young people, train and empower local staff, offer lots of different suitable activities to engage young people, work with families and community Elders, offer appropriate and safe spaces for different groups of young people, and connect young people to culture, language, land and lore.

...if family and community lead youth program funding decisions, and are empowered to work with youth services to engage young people.

End of detailed image description]

### 3 Short and long term priorities across the region

YSAP identified seven Focus Areas and Enablers to achieve the desired future state.

There are three core Focus Areas:

- **Family and community** – Strengthen governance and community ownership and leadership of youth services.
- **Youth services** – Expand the variety of services across communities and address the needs of under-serviced groups.
- **Broader system services** – Improve coordination with other services including specialist youth services.

Family and community is the first priority area in recognition that they play the most important role in the lives of young Aboriginal people. Achieving the vision for the future laid out in the YSAP requires a transition towards community control of services and programs, and growing the Aboriginal Community Controlled Youth Services sector, consistent with the CtG Priority Reform Areas.

The core Focus Areas are supported by four Enablers:

- **Workforce:** Enhance the capability and capacity of youth services to meet young people's needs.
- **Infrastructure:** Upgrade youth infrastructure and resources.
- **Funding models:** Trial new funding models that support a locally led sector.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Consistently monitor and evaluate youth services.

**Change to youth services will take place over a 10-year time horizon.**

Implementing the priorities outlined above and achieving the future vision will take time and requires collective effort and leadership from Aboriginal community leaders, cultural authorities, and Aboriginal-owned organisations, supported by youth service providers and philanthropic organisations, as well as all levels of government including the Australian, Northern Territory and local governments.

In the short term (1-3 years), actions will focus on building the capacity of the youth service system in a targeted way. In the longer term (4-10 years) actions will enable a more significant transformation of the sector. Table 1 below summarises the key actions across both time horizons, with more detailed long- and short-term actions described under each priority area.

Table 1 | Overview of YSAP timeframe

Short term (1-3 years)	Longer term (4-10 years)
<p>In the short term, actions focus on building system capacity across the region by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• giving communities greater decision-making authority over youth services;</li> <li>• providing avenues for family and community engagement;</li> <li>• increasing the range of activities available for young people in communities;</li> <li>• better connecting youth services with other services including specialist youth and broader system services;</li> <li>• addressing critical gaps in workforce and infrastructure;</li> <li>• trialling new funding approaches and investing in monitoring and evaluation.</li> </ul>	<p>In the longer term, once immediate gaps have been addressed, actions focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creating a thriving network of local and community-controlled youth service providers across the region;</li> <li>• enhancing the quality and availability of youth services informed by evidence;</li> <li>• continuing to grow the local workforce.</li> </ul>

**The YSAP seeks to address gaps in specific regions and communities but recognises the need for some sharing of resources.**

Central Australia is geographically dispersed and culturally diverse. Consultations indicated that there are differences in how youth services are operating across the region, including gaps in infrastructure and staffing in some regions. Some communities also have more established mechanisms for Local Decision Making (LDM) and have a wider range of locally run youth activities and programs. The actions in the YSAP seek to build on local strengths and address regional and community-level gaps.

Across the region, smaller communities tend to have a lower level of infrastructure and there are also opportunities for resources and infrastructure to be shared between groups of communities to create efficiencies.



Grouping of communities should be guided by a combination of those sharing the same language groups and consider geographic proximity and accessibility between communities.





## Focus Area 1. Family and community: Strengthen governance and community ownership and leadership of youth services.

	Short term actions (1-3 years)	Long term actions (4-10 years)
<b>Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish mechanisms for young people and community leaders to make decisions on youth service delivery in their communities, in addition to current engagement with local authorities.</li> <li>Encourage community involvement with youth services, including hosting events for the whole family, having spaces for families to sit and watch younger children, engaging families in resolving conflicts between young people, and actively engaging local community leaders and Elders to deliver services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition all core youth services in remote communities to be run by local providers.</li> <li>Enable local providers or LDMs to contract more specialist providers from outside of community.</li> </ul>
<b>Community-level and regional considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grant local groups formal authority to guide the delivery of youth services in their communities in regions with LDM agreements such as in Ltyentye Apurte and in Papunya, Amunturangu and Ikuntji.</li> <li>In areas lacking formal LDM agreements, grant local cultural authorities like Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation (MCAC) in Mutitjulu the authority, or establish dedicated groups of community members, to steer youth services.</li> <li>Expand on the current youth councils at MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC)'s youth services, providing them with additional opportunities to influence service delivery.</li> <li>In communities where youth councils do not exist, establish mechanisms that empower young people to have a say in the direction of program activities.</li> </ul>	

<b>Related Enablers</b>	<b>Workforce</b> <b>Funding models</b>  	
-------------------------	---	--

Family and community play a critical role in shaping the experience of young Aboriginal people. Their support and guidance are essential for young peoples’ development and success. They are the first point of call for young Aboriginal people before accessing formal services.

Elders and family members want to support meaningful change for their young people; and they possess the cultural authority, knowledge and language to guide young people. Elders, community members and young people across communities want more cultural activities, particularly bush trips to connect with culture, country and language, and for Elders to be involved in delivering these activities.

In consultations, community members and local staff said that families are not often given opportunity to get involved in youth services, apart from becoming youth workers themselves. Community members also expressed a desire for greater control over the youth services provided in their communities and how funds are allocated.

There is opportunity to build on existing programs and good practice across the region. Most youth service providers engage with local authorities in their communities to seek guidance on youth activities, however these services are not always seen as responsive by the community members. Many communities also have youth councils or meetings where young people can share their views on the activities that they want to take part in, but this is not uniformly practiced. Finally, although a range of ACCOs operate in the region to serve young people, this is predominantly in larger communities, with local councils still delivering most activities.

Progress will also be influenced by the leadership of LDM groups in each community. Some communities and regions have established decision-making bodies that have formal agreements with the Northern Territory and Australian Governments, such as in Ltyentye Apurte, and the Western Desert communities including Papunya, Amunturangu and Ikuntji. Other communities are at varying stages of establishing and formalising LDM groups. In the interim, local authorities may serve as an appropriate body to make local decisions, in line with the current framework.

In Alice Springs and Town Camps, where the population of young people accessing youth services is more diverse, including non-Aboriginal youth, the focus is on creating more opportunities for the youth voice and supporting the creation of additional ACCOs to deliver services to Aboriginal young people.



## Focus Area 2. Youth Services: Expand the variety of services across communities and address the needs of under-served groups.

	Short term actions (1-3 years)	Long term actions (4-10 years)
<b>Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build life skills for young people through youth services, by introducing daily programs such as cooking nutritious food, using technology; connecting them to leaders and mentors who can help them navigate 'both worlds', support the development of entrepreneurial skills, and encourage them to act as role models to younger people in their community.</li> <li>• Fund and deliver programs and activities specifically for teenagers and separated for young men and young women in all communities, with a strong preference for programs led and delivered by local Aboriginal organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to expand the variety of services and programs available guided by local leaders and young people.</li> </ul>
<b>Community-level and regional considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the range of activities for teenagers and pre-teens in larger communities such as Ltyentye Apurte, Ntaria, Yuendumu and Papunya.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable youth services from larger communities to explore offering activities for teenagers in other communities in their regions.</li> </ul>
<b>Related Enablers</b>	<p><b>Workforce Infrastructure Funding models</b></p>	

Youth services in the region play a critical role in engaging young people in fun activities and building their life skills. When implemented well, youth services and their workers can play a huge role in supporting, engaging, influencing and upskilling young people.

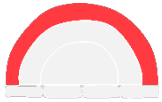
Except a handful of very small communities, youth services operate in communities across the region. Larger communities, such as Santa Teresa, Ntaria and Papunya, have the infrastructure,

facilities and scale to deliver a range of activities for young people. Other smaller and more remote communities such as Finke, Kintore and Pmara Jutunta face limitations due to factors such as staffing and available space for youth services and activities. In these communities, activities that can cater to large groups, such as sport and disco nights are most common.




In addition to current activities, community members and young people want recreational and skill-based activities in areas such as art, music, cooking, and IT. However, services need to be adequately equipped with the necessary resources to provide these. They also need to cater to a range of groups: older and younger youth (considered here as those aged eight to 15, and 16 to 25 respectively), and males and females. In all communities there were few activities specifically for older young people who would particularly benefit from activities, tools and skills that support social and emotional wellbeing, employment and education during this transitional life stage.

Expanding the variety of activities delivered at youth services depends on two key enablers: workforce and infrastructure. The workforce may be limited by the number of youth workers available to run daily activities for diverse groups of young people, the presence of male or female youth workers to conduct certain activities for young people in a culturally appropriate manner, or the skills and expertise of individual youth workers. Infrastructure limitations include the ability to offer separate spaces for different groups of young people, the quality of the sporting facilities, or availability of vehicles and equipment. These are addressed in Enablers 1 (Workforce) and 2 (Infrastructure) respectively.

In Alice Springs, delivery can be fragmented due to the diversity of young people in the region, in particular the different needs of young people from Alice Springs and those from remote communities. While Alice Springs is situated on the land of the Arrernte people, it also serves as a hub for people from surrounding communities and language groups to gather in town and in the Town Camps. This cultural diversity needs to be considered in delivering culturally safe youth services.



### Focus Area 3. Broader system services: Improve coordination with other services including specialist youth services.

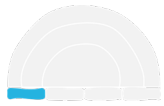
	Short term actions (1-3 years)	Long term actions (4-10 years)
<b>Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively support service providers with service mapping information on the specialist youth and broader system services operating in the region and their scope.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fund additional youth worker roles or caseworkers to refer young people with complex needs to other services (schools, clinics, youth justice system or NDIS) and connect with families, with a preference for locally recruited workers.</li> </ul>
<b>Community-level and regional considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide opportunities for service providers to meet regularly and jointly plan for coordinated delivery of activities, starting in Titjikala, Aputula and Ltyentye Apurte.</li> <li>Review the effectiveness of current casework models to identify opportunities for wider implementation in the delivery of activities particularly in the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) communities Kaltukatjara, Mutitjulu, Imanpa and Aputula.</li> </ul>	
<b>Related Enablers</b>	<b>Workforce Funding models</b>  	<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b> 

To successfully support young people across Central Australia, youth services must work in partnership with specialist youth services and broader system services in their communities, such as education, health, and employment services. In many remote communities, access to support from broader system services can be limited. Communities want improved access to education services, jobs and pathways that cater to local community needs and create economic opportunities. There is also a need for additional access to specialised services such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), mental health, and Alcohol and other Drug (AoD)

services, which are often based in Alice Springs and delivered through specialist youth service providers or targeted programs.

Youth services can play a central role in identifying and referring young people to relevant services in the community. Locally recruited workers, a strength of the current system, can extend their roles to formalise relationships they already hold with other workers in their communities. There are also opportunities for formal mechanisms to help young people navigate the broader system and access referrals to specialist services in Alice Springs, building on the work currently undertaken by caseworkers in some communities. However, services need to be better equipped to take on this additional role, which is resource intensive.

In Alice Springs there are a wider range of services but coordination among these services is more challenging and requires better shared information among service providers about the extent and scope of other services operating in the community.



## Enabler 1. Workforce: Enhance the capability and capacity of youth services to meet young people’s needs.

	Short term actions (1-3 years)	Long term actions (4-10 years)
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund youth worker roles in communities where there is no youth worker, or where the staffing numbers are inadequate to provide diversity of services.</li> <li>• Improve employment pathways for young people in community by supporting them to get Ochre cards and allowing teenagers to undertake casual work at youth services.</li> <li>• Train all youth workers to understand child development and trauma-informed care, equipping them with the skills needed to work with children, teenagers and young adults, including those with complex needs.</li> <li>• Provide increased funding, support and training for providers with a record of good service delivery in the short term, with a preference for local Aboriginal providers. This should target capacity and capability development of locally recruited workers; including literacy, numeracy, digital, and leadership training.</li> <li>• Provide cultural competency training tailored to the local community for non-local workers.</li> <li>• Encourage and preference non-local workers who are committed to staying in, learning about and investing in communities over longer periods, and explore workforce models pairing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth workers to enable ‘both ways’ learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow the youth services workforce across the region with a focus on local staff skilled to work with teenagers and young people with complex needs.</li> <li>• Support Aboriginal youth workers with flexible pathways to gain accredited qualifications in youth work.</li> </ul>
Community-level and regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit a youth worker in Wallace Rockhole, or two part-time youth workers (one male and one female).</li> </ul>	

<b>considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase recruitment of local youth workers to address current gaps particularly in the Warlpiri communities, (Willowra, Yuendumu, Nyirripi), NPY communities (Imanpa, Mutitjulu, Aputula and Kaltukatjara) as well as Wilora, Nturiya in the Ti Tree area.</li> </ul>	
-----------------------	---	--

Youth services need a workforce that is large enough to meet the needs of young people in their communities and has the knowledge and skills to deliver daily activities and services to young people across communities.

The number of youth workers required in each community will vary according to the population size and the service mix. The Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service (CAYLUS baseline model) for youth services specifies that at a minimum, a sustainable youth service includes:

- A team leader
- Two full-time youth workers (one male and one female)
- A team of supporting staff who work together to fill three full-time positions.

The only exception would be very small communities with a population under 100 people, where a team leader may be supported by one youth worker and up to two full-time supporting staff. All communities should have one female, and one male youth worker available for the duration the service is operating.

Some communities employ a large team of casual workers, which may suit the needs of local staff, while others have a full-time workforce.

To expand the range of activities available for hard-to-reach groups such as teenagers, additional youth workers would be required in most communities. Some communities and regions have larger workforce gaps than others; in particular Willowra, Yuelamu, Yuendumu, Nyirripi, Kaltukatjara, Imanpa, Wilora and Nturiya as well as Wallace Rockhole, where there is no youth program and therefore no youth workers.

For sustainable youth services to be delivered in each community, the workforce should ideally be locally recruited and trained. Local employees play a key role working with young people in language and understand the cultural context of their communities. In all communities, there are local youth workers present. In some communities where MRC delivers youth services, team leaders or acting team leaders are also locally employed. Over time, youth services have the potential to create employment and leadership opportunities, and pathways for young people across the region. However, practical barriers to local employment, such as obtaining Ochre cards, need to be addressed.

Youth service workers who work with young Aboriginal people require a knowledge of child development, of providing trauma-informed care, and a deep understanding and knowledge of the local community context. If they are from outside the community, they require cultural competency to work safely with Aboriginal people. They should demonstrate a willingness to stay and invest in the community and would ideally be set up to work in bicultural pairs that



support 'both ways' learning. Congress's paper It's About Time (2021) expands on effective practices that support this model.

Broader work is being undertaken in Central Australia by the NT Government's Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (DITT) and the Australian Government's Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to work actively with communities to identify employment gaps, train and upskill people from remote communities for a range of roles, and create economic opportunity across the region.



## Enabler 2. Infrastructure: Upgrade youth infrastructure and resources.

	Short term actions (1-3 years)	Long term actions (4 -10 years)
<b>Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate access to more transport for youth services to support bush trips and allow sharing of recreational infrastructure across communities.</li> <li>Make upgrades to recreational halls including air conditioning and extensions to provide a range of activities beyond sports for different ages and genders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure at least one AFL oval with lights and one swimming pool or water park is accessible in each region.</li> <li>Invest in community football clubs as a key way of engaging older male youth, and in separate spaces for older female youth to engage in activities of their choice.</li> <li>Provide appropriate accommodation for visiting services and workers in communities to better support sharing of services across communities.</li> <li>Provide funding for water parks or swimming pools across communities or regions that do not have access to water-based activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Community-level and regional considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade or repair recreational halls in Nyirripi, Willowra, Atitjere and Kaltukatjara.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trial sharing of infrastructure across communities in the region at larger communities like Papunya and Ltyentye Apurte and Ntaria.</li> <li>Invest in an AFL oval with lights for a community in the Atitjere and Engawala area.</li> <li>Invest in a swimming pool or water splash pad in the Ti Tree area and the Atitjere and Engawala area.</li> </ul>

A key limitation to delivering a range and mix of youth services and programs, especially in small remote communities, is the limited infrastructure. Many communities including Atitjere, Engawala, Pmara Jutunta, Imanpa and Willowra do not have a multipurpose shared recreational hall space for young people to gather after school. This makes it challenging to deliver a broad

mix of activities targeted at different groups of young people that are age-and gender-appropriate.

Youth services are accessible, safe spaces for some young people in communities, and a minimum level of investment is required for repairs and basic upgrades to ensure they remain open and accessible.

Considerable infrastructure investments may not be practical, particularly for smaller communities. Solutions may include sharing facilities with the school or other youth service providers, as well as with nearby communities. This requires all youth services to be well resourced with vehicles and good quality roads between remote communities. It also necessitates community leaders coming together to encourage sharing of infrastructure and resources between nearby groups of communities.

CAP funding has already been committed to infrastructure upgrades across communities. Other investments are being made through the Aboriginal Benefit Account grant funding and through local organisations and councils. These investments are detailed in Appendix A. However, some gaps remain in smaller communities like Wilora and Orrtipa-Thurra. There is no AFL oval with lights in Atitjere, Engawala Orrtipa-Thurra. Atitjere, Engawala Orrtipa-Thurra and the Ti Tree region also do not have accessible swimming pools or water splash pads.



### Enabler 3. Funding models: Support locally led decision making on allocation of funding to support transition to community control.

	Short term actions (1-3 years)	Long term actions (4-10 years)
<b>Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund locally-owned organisations to run youth activities, including cultural activities aimed at engaging hard-to-reach groups. These groups include teenagers (13-19) and older youth (20-25) with complex needs or those at risk of interacting with the justice system. Funding should be consistent over multiple years to support ongoing learning and improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure LDMs are fully directing their youth services funding across the region.</li> <li>• Encourage and support service providers to identify and draw on local funding (e.g. royalties), where available, and on philanthropic organisations to improve investment in the sector, strengthen community control and secure its long-term sustainability.</li> </ul>
<b>Community-level and regional considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish formal mechanisms for young people and LDMs to direct youth services funding, starting with communities that have formal LDM agreements, such as Ltyentye Apurte, Papunya, Amunturangu and Ikuntji.</li> <li>• Establish mechanisms for local cultural authorities, such as MCAC in Mutitjulu, to direct youth services funding where there are pending or no formal LDM agreements.</li> <li>• Identify and invest in local and community run activities by local young Aboriginal people, particularly in Areyonga and Amoonguna, where there is a presence of passionate and capable young people and youth workers.</li> </ul>	

Funding is a critical enabler of youth services as it determines the resources youth services access in each community, and how those resources are utilised. Despite the existence of youth boards in some communities and engagement with local authorities, community members do not feel they currently have sufficient say in how youth services funding is being spent. Funding allocations are also based on size of community, which limits providers' ability to deliver a baseline level of service in very small communities.

Prioritising funding to locally-owned and run Aboriginal enterprises in communities to deliver services for youth will facilitate the development of a locally-led youth services sector in the region.

In the longer term, a transition to community control across the region can be better facilitated with support from local funding sources, such as through royalties earned by Traditional Owners and philanthropic investment. Some Aboriginal leadership and governance structures like the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT) and the Granites Mine Affected Area Corporation (GMAAAC) already make significant investments into youth programs and infrastructure. They oversee multi-million-dollar investments in youth programs and infrastructure for youth in the Tanami desert as outlined in Appendix B and Appendix C. Beyond the Tanami, Aboriginal community leaders are also investing in youth programs and infrastructure supported by the Central Land Council's (CLC) Community Development (CD) Unit.



## Enabler 4. Monitoring and Evaluation: Build local capacity to consistently monitor and evaluate activities.

	SHORT TERM ACTIONS (1-3 years)	LONG TERM ACTIONS (4-10 years)
<b>Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support local youth workers and LDMs across the region to consistently collect data on outputs such as when programs are open, number and types of activities delivered, and worker and youth attendance numbers; and outcomes for young people. These should be guided by the community-based theory of change and in line with Indigenous Data Sovereignty.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate the effectiveness of current youth service models and early effectiveness of new approaches.</li> <li>Centralise data across youth services to enable better coordination and monitoring, while making local data available to youth workers and LDMs.</li> </ul>
<b>Community and region level actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build on the application used in communities where MRC runs youth services to standardise data collection across the region.</li> </ul>	

Apart from contract management data collected by the NIAA and some targeted evaluations funded by CAYLUS in the past, there is limited monitoring and evaluation of youth services and their impact at present. This is a critical gap in the system as it limits understanding of what works in supporting young Aboriginal people in remote contexts and the ability to measure the impact and effectiveness of youth services over the longer term.

NIAA, as a key funder of youth services in the region is well positioned to set up a monitoring and evaluation framework that is practical and achievable, and to measure it through its contract management and reporting requirements.

## 4 Background and context for the YSAP

**The CtG Priority Reforms and other key strategies seek to address needs and challenges for young people.**

The CtG Priority Reforms seek to address key needs of Aboriginal young people, including those in Central Australia. Targets 7, 11 and 13 aim to improve youth engagement in employment and education, reduce the number of young people in the criminal justice system and keep families and households safe. Other international and local frameworks and strategies also outline similar goals for young people. The Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people (2007) stipulate the right of Indigenous peoples to have equitable access to all social and health services, and to grant young Aboriginal people the right to all forms of education. Territory Government strategies such as the 10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the NT 2023-33 and the NT Youth Strategy include domains consistent with the CtG including connecting young people to culture, ensuring they have access to basic materials and housing, and access to education and employment pathways. The YSAP aligns with and builds on these.

**Youth services include sports and recreational activities that entertain young people and support development of life skills and positive connections.**

Youth services can refer to a broad range of activities. Many focus on sports and recreational activities designed to entertain and engage young people in a safe space and help them develop life skills and positive social connections. In Central Australia, these services are delivered by local councils such as: MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC), Central Desert Regional Council (CDRC) and Alice Springs Town Council; and Aboriginal service providers such as NPY Women's Council, Tangentyere Council, Atyenhenge Atherre Aboriginal Corporation (AAAC) and Waltja. Others, such as Congress, Creating a Safe Supportive Environment (CASSE) and WANTA also deliver services and case management for young people with more complex needs in specialist areas like youth diversion, AOD, mental health and disability support (NDIS). Young people also engage with broader system services like health, education and employment services.

Youth services have been defined here as primarily sports and recreational activities, however, the YSAP recognises that these youth services alone cannot meet the needs of young people alone and must work closely with broader and more specialist services.

**Youth services have a clear opportunity to create a better future.**

Youth services must be designed and implemented in partnership with communities and guided by the CtG Priority Reforms to deliver culturally appropriate support services, educational and economic empowerment, improved health and a stronger connection to culture. Addressing these domains will have a direct impact on quality of life for young Aboriginal people living in Central Australia and reduce antisocial behaviour that stems from systemic and socio-economic factors.

## 5 Journey towards the YSAP

The voices of Aboriginal Leaders, young people and community members have been prioritised.

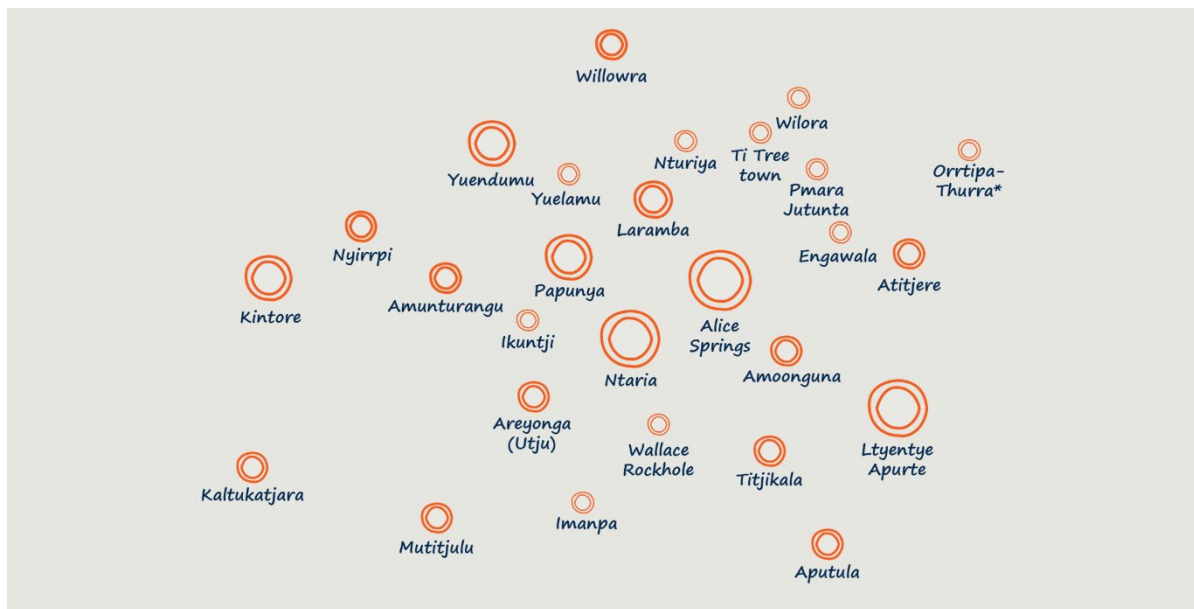
The Central Australian Aboriginal Leadership Group closely guided the development of the YSAP with the support of the CAP Youth Roundtable.

To ensure the voices of young people, community members and Elders from across all 26 Central Australian communities were heard, 33 local leads from the communities being visited were engaged to provide guidance on cultural considerations and make connections with people from the local community.

The YSAP was developed through three phases of engagement.

- In Phase One, youth service providers in the region, Territory and Australian stakeholders, along with local governance bodies were engaged to map the current state of youth services across Central Australia.
- In Phase Two, engagement was undertaken in **26 communities** (Figure 3 below) with **over 750 people**, supported by the local leads.
- In Phase Three, a series of workshops were held to develop the Action Plan in partnership with local leads, cultural authorities, youth service providers, and government stakeholders.

Figure 3 | Communities included in the YSAP





Presented here is a snapshot of the engagement undertaken through this work:






- 20 providers of youth services were consulted through the project.
- 52 youth workers were consulted in community site visits.
- 78 broader system service workers, including clinic nurses, CDP workers, school teachers, principals, and community safety patrol workers, were also consulted.
- 33 local leads facilitated engagements in their respective communities.
- 120 family and community members were engaged during site visits to communities.
- 628 young people aged 8-25 were engaged across Alice Springs and remote communities.

To further validate findings and inform the action plan, six workshops were undertaken throughout Phase Three of the project with local leads, youth service providers and governmental stakeholders.

**Engagement was guided by five key principles.**

All stakeholder engagements were guided by five principles outlined in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4 | Engagement principles**

Culturally safe	Appropriate	Trauma-informed	Empowering	Ethical
				
Aboriginal researchers led stakeholder engagements in community. Local Leads were employed to assist in connecting with younger Aboriginal people.	Engagements were customised to be age-appropriate to the needs and literacy levels of the target audience.	Consultations were conducted in a supportive manner with care taken to frame questions in a strengths-based approach.	Engagements prioritised the voice of young Aboriginal people to guide the YSAP.	Local stakeholders and authorities were informed about the project, its purpose and how consultations would take place.

## 6 Taking the actions forward

The YSAP represents a new and more collaborative approach across the system to delivering youth services in Central Australia. Taking these actions forward, and achieving the vision outlined here requires all stakeholders to work together, and to take on and respond to learnings along the way.

At a region-wide level:

- The Central Australian Aboriginal Leadership Group has guided the development of the plan and will continue to guide the first year of implementation, supported by the CAP Youth Roundtable, including guiding decision makers.
- The Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government will play critical roles as funders and contract managers of youth services, ensuring implementation is aligned with the direction of this plan, supporting Aboriginal-led organisations to build capacity and capability for service delivery, and continuing to convene forums for the sector to collaborate. They will also play a role keeping community leaders and service providers updated on future investments supporting the YSAP and continuing to seek community input to support implementation.
- Philanthropic organisations have an opportunity to grow their presence across the region in providing funding and delivering youth services and activities in alignment with this plan.

At local level:

- LDMs and local authorities will guide ongoing implementation in their communities.
- Councils and current service providers will continue to engage with their communities and young people to implement the plan and build capacity and capability in youth services in the short term with a view to transition services to community control and community-led organisations over the long term.
- Community members and families will play an active role in on the ground implementation in their communities and engaging in the YSAP monitoring and evaluation process.

## Appendix A Current investment commitments

Table 2| Communities where infrastructure funding has been committed

**Titjikala** – construction of a new BMX track, a new canteen space at the youth centre.

**Aputula** – establishment of youth worker accommodation for NPY staff.

**Willowra** – minor upgrades to the youth recreational hall, an enhanced AFL oval with new grandstands and a new community farm.

**Yuelamu** – multiple upgrades at the youth recreational centre including new toilets and a canteen, refurbishment of men’s shed, new visitor camps, and enhanced AFL oval facilities with changerooms and grandstands.

**Yuendumu** – repairs to improve safety and utility of youth centre, and construction of a cultural centre.

**Laramba** – upgrades to basketball court with a new shade cover over the court.

**Nyirripi** – upgrades to basketball court with a new shade cover over the court.

**Nturiya** – a purpose-built youth recreational hall, upgrades to basketball court with a repaired surface and a new shade cover over the court.

**Ti Tree Town** – construction of a cultural centre.

**Atitjere** – upgrades to basketball court with a refurbished concrete surface and a new shade cover over the court.

**Engawala** – new toilets and a canteen space with hand-washing facilities at the youth centre.

**Kaltukatjara** - establishment of youth worker accommodation for NPY staff.

**Imanpa** – upgrades to basketball court with a new shade cover over the court, construction of youth worker accommodation for NPY staff.

**Ntaria** – upgrade of the youth centre storeroom to a canteen, construction of splash pads to allow for fun water-based activities.

**Ikuntji** – youth centre will feature new toilets and canteen space.

**Kintore** – the current youth centre will be replaced by a new multi-purpose youth recreational centre.

**Papunya** – construction of splash pads to allow for fun water-based activities.

## Appendix B Overview of WETT funding support

Project	Partner	Amount
<p><b>Learning Centre Program 2023-24</b></p> <p>This Project provides the Communities (currently Nyirrpi, Willowra and Lajamanu) with a space to engage in formal and informal learning, access computers, the internet and library resources, a space to teach and celebrate Warlpiri Language and culture, and store cultural materials.</p>	Batchelor Institute	<p>\$698,314.00 Nyirrpi Budget in 2023</p> <p>\$698,314.00 Willowra Budget in 2023</p> <p>\$735,489.70 Nyirrpi Budget in 2024</p> <p>\$735,489.70 Willowra Budget in 2024</p>
<p><b>Yuendumu, Willowra and Nyirrpi Youth Support Project</b></p> <p>Employment of two part-time youth workers to support youth programs.</p>	CAYLUS	\$274,817.40 Budget in 2024
<p><b>Willowra Early Learning Centre Program 2023-25</b></p> <p>Program provides the Willowra community with Two-Way early learning services for children 0-5 years old and their families.</p>	World Vision Australia	\$1,191,495.80 Budget across 2023-25
<p><b>Unlock Literacy Program WETT Funding Contribution 2024-25</b></p> <p>Funding supports Unlock Literacy Program in Willowra, Nyirrpi and Lajamanu.</p>	World Vision Australia	\$220,000.00 Budget across 2024-25
<p><b>Manyu Wana video production</b></p>	Paw Media and Communications	\$99,000.00 Budget

Creation of seven episodes of Many Wana, a Warlpiri literacy and numeracy series.		
<p><b>Footy for Future Leaders Program</b></p> <p>Youth-focused AFL themed activities, programs and competitions. This engages Warlpiri young people in health education, wellbeing programs, leadership opportunities and educational opportunities.</p>	AFL NT	\$794,000.00 Budget across 2024 - 2025

## Appendix C Overview of GMAAAC investments in Yuendumu

Project	Partner	Amount
<b>PAW programs 2023-24 / 2024-25</b> This funding supports Yuendumu's video program, music program and the language and culture program.	PAW Media and Communications	\$713,643 in 2023-24 \$845,267 in 2024-25
<b>Yuendumu Jingtanka Wangkajaku Project</b> Pilot project where young men go on wellbeing camps to support their mental health.	Red Dust Role Models	\$107,352
<b>Learning in Country Program 2023 and 2024</b> Funding provide to support bush trips at Yuendumu school.	Yuendumu School	\$248,017 in 2023 \$281,600 in 2024
<b>Yuendumu Pool management and maintenance 2023-25</b>	The Y	\$1,503,241
<b>WANTA youth program 2022-24</b>	WANTA	\$880,000
<b>WANTA youth program 2024-25</b>	WANTA	\$598,325
<b>Southern Ngalia Dance Camp 2023-2</b> Bi-annual traditional dance camp for young women.	Incite Arts	\$508,702
<b>Beautiful Yuendumu Public Murals Project 2023-24</b>	Red Hot Arts	\$307,923