

NT Aboriginal Affairs Framework

2026 - 2028



01 Create Safer Communities

Safe communities enable families to grow and thrive. This priority focuses on:

- Supporting community-level, proactive approaches to safety.
- Developing place-based preventative approaches to addressing family and domestic violence, alcohol and other drugs and social and emotional wellbeing.
- Supporting on-country options for delivering diversion, rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

03 Create Jobs and Business on Country

Economic development in regional and remote areas will drive employment for Aboriginal people. This priority focuses on:

- Accelerating growth in key industries in regional and remote areas (energy, defence, agriculture, mining, and tourism) to generate more employment opportunities.
- Maximising outcomes for Aboriginal people through workforce development, economic participation and collaboration with businesses.
- Strengthening relationships with land councils, Aboriginal organisations, Traditional Owners and local government to progress shared economic priorities.

05 Build Community Foundations

Adequate housing and infrastructure provide strong community foundations. This priority focuses on:

- Investing in community infrastructure and essential services through partnering with the Commonwealth Government.
- Increasing opportunities for Aboriginal people to be involved in decisions about infrastructure investment.
- Building more houses to reduce overcrowding and improve environmental health factors.

REDUCING CRIME

Aboriginal Territories are disproportionately impacted as victims of crime and are overrepresented in the justice system. Addressing the root causes of crime will benefit all Territories.



02 Empower Bush Communities

Supporting community-led solutions and decisions will result in better outcomes for remote communities to strengthen self-determination through place-based governance models that reflect cultural authority, improve access to services and build local leadership. This priority focuses on:

- Providing opportunities for local Aboriginal people to have a more active role in community development and decision-making processes.
- Supporting leadership and capacity-building for Aboriginal Territories.
- Building strong, engaged communities that can determine their own priorities and solutions.

04 Boost Health, Wellbeing and Culture

Improving health and wellbeing, which are inherently connected to culture, accelerates progress against a range of socio-economic outcomes. This priority focuses on:

- Ensuring a broad range of government services, including health services, are culturally responsive.
- Ensuring families are supported to give children the best start in life.
- Supporting Aboriginal languages, cultures, and connections to Country, as protective factors for health and wellbeing.

06 Develop Skills for the Future

Education and training are critical to enable Aboriginal Territories to participate in the Territory's economic future. This priority focuses on:

- Increasing school attendance and participation rates.
- Establishing employment pathways from school to work.
- Developing education and training options in communities to facilitate pathways to real jobs on country and in communities.

RESTORING THE NT LIFESTYLE

The Territory's vibrant Aboriginal cultures, languages and connection to Country are an important part of what makes the Territory unique. Building on these strengths will continue to enrich the Territory lifestyle for all Territories.

REBUILDING THE ECONOMY

Economic participation and self-determination for Aboriginal Territories can generate economic benefits for all Territories, including by activating Aboriginal land and the potential of the Aboriginal workforce.



Vision

“Aboriginal Territorians are supported to lead change through culture, local leadership and strengthened communities.”

The vision recognises the importance of Aboriginal culture, self-determination, and empowerment as cornerstones of a stronger Northern Territory. To achieve this vision, Aboriginal Affairs must be everyone’s business and integrated into how they deliver services, manage resources and measure progress.

Introduction

The Northern Territory Government (NT Government) is committed to improving the lives of Aboriginal Territorians through a strategic and meaningful approach to Aboriginal affairs.

This Aboriginal Affairs Framework (the Framework) provides the overarching vision, priorities, and intent for how the NT Government will engage with Aboriginal Territorians and communities, aligned with the NT Government's policy pillars of *Reducing Crime*, *Rebuilding the Economy*, and *Restoring the Territory Lifestyle* and broader community aspirations.

The Framework complements existing whole-of-government strategies and national commitments such as those within the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, while setting a specific, place-based direction for Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory. The Framework seeks to enable strong partnerships between governments, Aboriginal organisations, land councils, and communities, built on respect, accountability, and shared responsibility.

This Framework is a guide for each NT Government agency on how to consider and integrate Aboriginal affairs in the delivery of its core business. It reinforces that progress in Aboriginal affairs is not the responsibility of one department but a collective, system-wide effort across the NT Public Sector.

Background and Intent

The Framework has been developed to articulate the NT Government's strategic vision for Aboriginal Territorians and outline the shared responsibility for the delivery of that vision. The Framework was developed throughout 2025 with contributions from across NT Government departments and non-government Aboriginal stakeholders.

The intent of the Framework is to:

1. Provide a strategic platform for the NT Government's Aboriginal affairs agenda.
2. Articulate priorities that align with both the NT Government's policy pillars and the aspirations of Aboriginal communities.
3. Define shared agency responsibility and accountability, ensuring Aboriginal affairs is embedded in government planning, budgeting and performance frameworks.
4. Position Aboriginal self-determination and cultural authority as enablers of improved outcomes.
5. Enable integrated delivery across agencies, ensuring each department's work complements and strengthens the collective effort.

The Framework provides a practical guide for agencies to deliver outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians as part of their core business. By embedding Aboriginal affairs priorities into agency operations, resourcing, and accountability systems, the NT Government can achieve its priorities to *Reduce Crime*, *Rebuild the Economy* and *Restore the Territory Lifestyle* while delivering on the aspirations of Aboriginal Territorians: safe, thriving communities with strong culture and economic opportunity.



Partnerships and Delivery

Partnerships are fundamental to achieving these priorities. Successfully delivering this framework will come from working with Aboriginal peak bodies, governance groups, land councils and local government to co-design delivery across each of the priorities.

The NT Government remains committed to implementing the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement) including the Priority Reforms through the delivery of this Framework.

The Priority Reforms of the National Agreement are embedded throughout this Framework as both guiding principles and delivery mechanisms:

- 1. Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision-making;** All agencies will establish, where appropriate, decision-making arrangements that ensure Aboriginal Territorians, organisations, and governance bodies have genuine participation in the design, delivery and evaluation of programs and policies that affect them.
- 2. Building the Aboriginal Community-controlled Sector;** Where appropriate, agencies will work with Aboriginal organisations to expand their capacity and role in service delivery, ensuring investment builds long-term capability.

- 3. Transforming Government Organisations;** Each NT Government agency is responsible for ensuring its systems, policies and culture are culturally responsive, safe and transparent. This includes revising internal governance, data, and workforce practices to enable effective delivery.
- 4. Shared Access to Data and Accountability;** The NT Government commits to sharing data and evidence with Aboriginal communities and organisations where appropriate, to support community-led decision making and local accountability.

The Framework will be operationalised through:

- a.** Integration of the Framework priorities into agency strategies and corporate plans.
- b.** Use of the existing National Agreement implementation architecture to track, measure, and report progress.
- c.** Oversight by the NT Government's Deputy CEO Coordination Committee, and supported through the Regional Coordination Committees, to maintain alignment, to maintain alignment, transparency and shared accountability.

This approach means that the Framework is not a standalone document, rather it is part of a living and collaborative governance system that aligns to NT Government policy, Commonwealth investment and community priorities.



How to use this Framework

This Framework is a guide for every Northern Territory Government agency; providing a shared vision, set of priorities and an approach to delivery.

Step 1: Understand the Shared Vision and Strategic Priorities

Agency staff at all levels should familiarise themselves with the Framework's vision and six strategic priorities. These describe what government is collectively working towards and how each agency's actions contribute to safer and stronger communities and a culturally safe public sector.

Step 2: Align your Agency's Core Business

Use the Framework to reflect and align. Where appropriate align your agency's strategies, programs and budget decisions to reflect the intent of this framework.

Identify where work aligns with the six priorities and where adjustments are needed to strengthen Aboriginal participation, leadership, and outcomes. Aboriginal affairs is everyone's business – all agencies are accountable.

Step 3: Partner with Aboriginal Governance and Leadership

Apply the principles of formal partnerships and shared decision making. This means engaging early with Aboriginal land councils, community governance groups and local government.

Where possible and appropriate, co-design decisions and programs, and share authority through existing or new partnership mechanisms.



Strategic Priorities

The Framework identifies six interconnected priorities that reflect government's objectives. Each priority contributes directly to at least one of the NT Government's policy pillars.



1. Create Safer Communities

Policy connection: Restoring the Territory Lifestyle Strategy and Reducing Crime Strategy

Creating safe communities that enable families to grow, participate and succeed.

Government will:

- Develop place-based preventative approaches to family and domestic violence, alcohol and other drug misuse.
- Expand on-country diversion rehabilitation and reintegration programs.
- Strengthen local safety partnerships with Aboriginal organisations and community leadership.

This priority acknowledges that when individuals and families feel safe it enables the whole of community to thrive.



2. Empower Bush Communities

Policy connection: Restoring the Territory Lifestyle Strategy and Reducing Crime Strategy, Rebuilding the Economy

Supporting community-led solutions and decision-making to strengthen self-determination, governance, and cultural authority.

Government will:

- Support place-based decision-making reflecting cultural authority.
- Build local leadership and capacity.
- Ensure service planning and delivery enables communities to set their own priorities.

This priority reinforces that empowering communities is not optional, it forms the foundations for safer, more resilient and more self-reliant regions.



3. Create Jobs and Business on Country

Policy connection: Rebuilding the Economy Strategy

Economic development in regional and remote areas is key to building wealth and jobs for Aboriginal Territorians across the Territory.

Government will:

- Strengthen Aboriginal employment and economic participation.
- Support Aboriginal economic opportunities through energy, defence, agriculture, mining and tourism investments.
- Partner with land councils, Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations and local government to advance shared economic priorities.

This embeds Aboriginal economic development within the NT Governments' core economic growth agenda.



4. Boost Health, Wellbeing and Culture

Policy connection: Restoring the Territory Lifestyle Strategy and Reducing Crime Strategy

Safety and wellbeing are core enablers for thriving communities.

Government will:

- Deliver culturally responsive health services and early childhood support.
- Strengthen support for Aboriginal languages, culture, art and connections to Country as protective factors for wellbeing.
- Integrate wellbeing and cultural safety across all service systems.

This priority recognises that connection to culture, language and country are essential to long-term health and wellbeing.



5. Build Community Foundations

Policy connection: Restoring the Territory Lifestyle Strategy and Reducing Crime Strategy

Adequate housing and infrastructure are essential for physical and emotional wellbeing and safety.

Government will:

- Partner with the Commonwealth to deliver adequate housing and infrastructure.
- Work with Aboriginal communities and local governments on decisions about infrastructure investment.
- Reduce overcrowding and improve environmental health factors through partnering with the Commonwealth to secure sustained funding.

Housing and infrastructure are enablers of social stability. Without strong community foundations, progress in education, health and justice will stall.



6. Develop Skills for the Future

Policy connection: Rebuilding the Economy Strategy and Restoring the Territory Lifestyle Strategy

Education and training are critical to enable Aboriginal Territorians to participate and succeed in the economy.

Government will:

- Improve school attendance and student retention.
- Establish pathways from school to work.
- Create and expand regional based training and education options.

This ensures Aboriginal Territorians are equipped to participate in the economy and strengthens local workforces to support growing industries and new projects.

Measuring Progress

Progress across outcomes in Aboriginal lives is already rigorously measured through the National Agreement architecture. The Framework will use existing reporting mechanisms to reflect on progress.

Reporting will be captured through the Productivity Commission's National Partnership Annual Data Compilation Report and the NT Implementation Plan report which is tabled in the Legislative Assembly with an annual statement on Aboriginal Affairs.

Through the annual statement, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will give an update on how progress across the National Agreement and this Framework is tracking in the Northern Territory.

The indicators that will support measurement of progress for inclusion in the annual statement are:

1. Increased Aboriginal representation in governance and leadership roles.
2. Increased Aboriginal school attendance rates, Year 12 completions and workforce transitions.
3. An increase in Aboriginal-owned businesses and Aboriginal employment.
4. Reduced overcrowding and improved infrastructure.
5. Safer communities with lower rates of offending, reoffending, family violence and alcohol and other drug harm.
6. Greater wellbeing, supported by culture, languages and strong families.

Accountability and Next Steps

The Aboriginal Affairs Framework sets a clear vision and guides whole-of-government effort to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians in line with our commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the NT Government's policy pillars of *Reducing Crime*, *Rebuilding the Economy* and *Restoring the Territory Lifestyle*.

This Framework establishes the expectation that Aboriginal affairs is built into the core business of all agencies.

Oversight of the Framework will be provided by the NT Government Deputy CEO Coordination Committee, with support from the Regional Coordination Committees, ensuring accountability and progress.

The Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet will be responsible for the tracking and reporting on the Framework.

The Framework will be reviewed every two years to ensure it remains responsive to the needs and expectations of Aboriginal Territorians.





