

Recommendations of the Inquiry

The Inquiry has categorised the urgency of recommendations with respect to the commencement of actions. The framework used is:

1. Urgent: immediate to less than 6 months,
2. Semi-urgent: within 18 months,
3. Important but not urgent: within 2-3 years

For some of the recommendations implementation should start and finish within the allocated period, whereas for others it will be ongoing.

It should be noted that most of the recommendations are presented in a succinct form that focuses on the action/s required. A full understanding of the recommendations and their intent can only be ascertained by reference to the associated discussion in the Report.

References to 'the Act' are to the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* (NT), the key piece of child protection legislation in the Northern Territory.

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
1.	Chapter 1	1.1	That Northern Territory Families and Children undertakes a process of engaging its entire workforce to commit to a strategic plan which clarifies its mission and includes the articulation of values and principles under which it will operate.	2
2.	Chapter 4	4.1	That the Northern Territory Government develops a clear framework for the inclusion of Aboriginal people in child welfare as the basis of an Aboriginal child safety and wellbeing plan and that measures are developed against each key component of the framework with progress reported annually.	2
3.		4.2	That an Aboriginal Child Care Agency or Agencies be developed in stages, and that such an agency or agencies is funded by Government with a major role in child safety and wellbeing, with consultation to determine how the Aboriginal community should be represented. Alternatively, the agency functions may be developed as part of an existing Aboriginal controlled organisation.	1
4.		4.3	That there is recognition in the <i>Care and Protection of Children Act</i> of the functions of an Aboriginal agency or agencies or other recognised entities.	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
5.		4.4	That the Northern Territory Government funds the development, establishment and ongoing work of an Aboriginal peak body on child and family safety and wellbeing, and child protection. This peak body would support the process of the development of Aboriginal child and family wellbeing and safety, and child protection agencies.	2
6.		4.5	The Inquiry endorses the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and recommends that it is interpreted and applied in such a manner that the safety of the child is paramount.	1
7.		4.6	That in consultation with Aboriginal people including relevant service providers, Northern Territory Families and Children should publish a comprehensive practice guide around the application of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle to be made available to all stakeholders.	2
8.	Chapter 6	6.1	That the planning processes around the development of integrated children and family centres in remote areas specifically address the service delivery needs of vulnerable and at-risk children and families and promote collaborative practice amongst government and non-government service providers relating to these target groups.	1
9.		6.2	That the Northern Territory Government explores with the Commonwealth the (trial) development (or expansion of) existing infrastructure in remote areas (e.g. women's safe houses, day care centres, health clinics) to provide on-community therapeutic residential options for mothers and small children where the latter have been identified as being at risk of removal into foster care because of 'failure-to-thrive', neglect, or otherwise inadequate parenting. The trial of such options would need to include the development of a therapeutic intervention model and staffing /supervision options.	3
10.		6.3	That the Northern Territory Government makes a very significant and sustained new investment in the development (and expansion) of a suite of secondary prevention, tertiary prevention, therapeutic and reunification services for vulnerable and at-risk children, families and communities. The majority of these services should be provided by the non-government sector and administered through an enhanced Northern Territory Families and Children grants program. The investment in such services should involve new rather than redirected funding and within a five year period, should match or exceed the combined Northern Territory Families and Children expenditure in statutory child protection and out of home care.	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
			<p>This investment program should be based on an analysis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reasons that children are coming into contact with the child protection system in the Northern Territory • The regional/community indicators of disadvantage and vulnerability based on Australian Early Development Index results, school attendance rates, sources of notifications, reports of family violence, etc • Service models that may be relevant to the unique cultural, demographic and geographic realities of the Northern Territory • Successful Aboriginal-specific programs and services within the Northern Territory and interstate to inform the service development process • Workforce and training needs in both the statutory and NGO sectors • The development of these services should also be underpinned by the principles outlined in Chapter 6. <p>The suite of service options should include intensive maternal and child support, therapeutic services for children, youth and families, substance abuse treatment, parenting skills development, intensive family preservation, targeted family support, and community development and healing (around issues such as sexual abuse, alcohol abuse, neglect, domestic violence and gambling).</p>	
11.		6.4	<p>That the Northern Territory Government seeks the cooperation of the Commonwealth in undertaking a strategic review of child and family wellbeing services in the Northern Territory. The review should inform the development and implementation of a joint strategic plan around service planning and funding in order to overcome fragmentation, inefficiencies and duplication and to target services where they are most needed.</p>	2
12.		6.5	<p>That the Northern Territory Government undertakes a review of the Northern Territory Families and Children grants program and secretariat with a view to ensuring that the provision of service grants aligns with the goals and strategic priorities of Northern Territory Families and Children, that funding grants are determined by way of a transparent process, that all grants include robust quality assurance and accountability measures, that there is a commitment to progressively implementing a three-year funding cycle, and that the grants section is adequately resourced to administer a substantially enhanced program.</p>	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
13.	Chapter 7	7.1	That Northern Territory Families and Children either extends the 'outcome' timeframe from 24 to 48 hours for matters that do not appear to require an immediate response; or retains the current 24 hour target but intake workers make an initial assessment based only on the information to hand, as is the case in some other jurisdictions.	2
14.		7.2	That Northern Territory Families and Children immediately develops and implements a strategy to clear up the backlog of unallocated child protection investigations whilst ensuring all notified children are safe. Furthermore, that Northern Territory Families and Children develop a longer term sustainable approach based on a resource allocation model to ensure that such backlogs do not re-emerge.	1
15.		7.3	That Northern Territory Families and Children formally reviews its internal family support program. This should result in a clear practice framework and accountability measures including the collection and reporting of service data relating to family support.	2
16.		7.4	That Northern Territory Families and Children immediately reviews the response targets for the commencement of investigations for the various risk categories and considers whether other targets may be more realistic. Once updated policies/ guidelines have been agreed, ongoing timeliness data should be calculated on all matters that have been 'outcomed' (processed by Central Intake) not just those for which an investigation has commenced.	1
17.		7.5	That the recommendations from the two reports from the Office of the Children's Commissioner: <i>'Report in respect of Baby BM'</i> and <i>'The Interim Progress Report on Intake and Response Processes'</i> be implemented as a matter of priority, subject to any over-riding proposals from the current Inquiry.	2
18.		7.6	That Northern Territory Families and Children develops guidelines to the effect that professional notifiers with follow-up information on an open case (i.e. a case formally under investigation or a matter that has been substantiated) have the option of directly contacting the relevant regional office rather than needing to be processed through Central Intake.	2
19.		7.7	That Northern Territory Families and Children and the Northern Territory Police review the large numbers of apparently incomplete investigations from CAT North to determine the accuracy of the data and whether action needs to be taken to address the apparent backlog in completing investigations.	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
20.		7.8	That Northern Territory Families and Children ensures that its investigation processes and instruments are sensitive to the possibility that notified children (particularly for reasons of neglect) may be provided with the basic necessities but not be meaningfully bonded with a caring adult or adults, and that they can experience significant developmental harm as a result.	1
21.		7.9	That Northern Territory Families and Children urgently implements an initiative focused on the longer-term safety and wellbeing of infants and young children who come to its attention. This might be modelled on the 'One Chance at Childhood' initiative of the Department of Communities in Queensland but should also include guidelines for case classification at intake as well as ongoing case support and management.	1
22.		7.10	That Northern Territory Families and Children develops an indicator based on the provision of feedback to notifiers to be used in reporting on performance.	2
23.		7.11	That the Northern Territory Government in considering the impact of the phased withdrawal of AFP by the Commonwealth, ensures that adequate planning and funding is in place to respond to the issues of serious abuse in remote areas.	1
24.		7.12	Given that a number of issues have been raised in submissions touching on strategic goals, resourcing, communications and governance, that a joint review of CAT is undertaken by Northern Territory Families and Children and NT Police during the first phase of child protection reforms resulting from this Inquiry.	2
25.		7.13	Given that there has been a significant increase in the number of 'reportable offenders' on the sex offenders register, and that many such offenders are paroled to their home communities, that the Northern Territory Government ensures there are resources available to maintain the effectiveness of the Reportable Offender Management Unit and to implement a community-based 'child protection watch' scheme linked with the development of Community Safety Plans.	2
26.		7.14	That the Northern Territory Families and Children Policy and Procedures Manual be formally reviewed with a view to actively encouraging workers to adopt a collaborative approach to practice with respect to intake assessment, investigations and case planning.	2
27.		7.15	That the Northern Territory Families and Children Policy and Procedures Manual be reviewed and reworded to embed the principle that engagement and collaboration with the family and extended family should be considered part of normal child protection practice where the child's safety is not compromised.	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
28.		7.16	That Northern Territory Families and Children evaluates current intake and assessment functions to determine the skills, qualifications and training that are required and whether these are functions that that need to be performed by P2 classified workers.	2
29.	Chapter 8	8.1	That Northern Territory Families and Children engages in a community consultation process to develop a formal policy on permanency and stability planning and consider whether any legislative changes are required.	2
30.		8.2	That Northern Territory Families and Children reviews its policy relating to the ongoing risk management of open cases (as initially recommended in the High Risk Audit – recommendation 7) in the light of the new Structured Decision-Making risk assessment instruments that are being introduced, with a view ensuring that regular assessments are undertaken, the results recorded, and appropriate action taken.	2
31.		8.3	That an Aboriginal Family Group Conferencing model and/or other culturally appropriate decision-making models be developed and progressively implemented to cover all key service regions of the Northern Territory; that the programs are formally evaluated; and that they are funded (in time) as part of the normal budget process.	2
32.		8.4	That Northern Territory Families and Children develops and implements a comprehensive response plan (as detailed in Chapter 8) around the needs of protected young people who come to its attention as recommended in this Report and in the High Risk Audit, including the creation of a new ‘youth at risk’ outcome category for Central Intake.	2
33.	Chapter 9	9.1	That Northern Territory Families and Children undertakes or commissions a comprehensive review of its residential care services with a view to addressing the serious concerns identified in recent internal reports, updating current demand trends, determining the optimal service mix, developing realistic costing models, and clarifying the role of non-government service providers. The review should also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider, in particular, the demand for and approaches to the provision of out of home care for Aboriginal children in remote areas to include safe houses and multi-service approaches that have been established in other jurisdictions that provide for family support and restoration programming as well as out of home care. 	1

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> focus on issues of service quality, covering the development of policy and procedure manuals for services, clear program models, the role of care and behaviour management plans, recruitment requirements, specialist training requirements, physical plant, equipment, the supervision and support of workers, and accountability measures review the data recording protocols to ensure the published statistics account for all children and young people in residential care placements lead to a comprehensive 3-year plan around the development and management of residential care services. 	
34.		9.2	That Northern Territory Families and Children considers partnering with another jurisdiction in the development and implementation of its residential care plan.	2
35.		9.3	That Northern Territory Families and Children reviews the organisational structure of Out of Home Care and Alternate Care services with a view to consolidating and rationalising them into a single policy and practice entity.	2
36.		9.4	That regular 'refresher' courses are held for all staff about the application of legislation, policy and procedures with respect to children in care.	2
37.		9.5	That Northern Territory Families and Children progressively adopts the Looking After Children framework (or an amended version appropriate for Aboriginal children) to provide a comprehensive case management framework for children in the care system, to help ensure their developmental needs are addressed.	2
38.		9.6	That Northern Territory Families and Children develops a charter for children and young people in care.	2
39.		9.7	That Northern Territory Families and Children reviews the roles played by the Aboriginal Community Workers and the recently appointed Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers, to assess whether they might play a more specific role in the case management and support of children in care.	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
40.		9.8	That allowances and other payments to all carers be reviewed and an ongoing process be established, that takes into account: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> that the foster care allowance should be based on the child's level of need, their age and the location of placement that an additional allowance should be made to carers in remote areas in order to account for extra costs required to maintain standards The need for clear guidelines around the use of discretionary payments to reduce the inequitable use of this form of allowance. 	1
41.		9.9	That a validated tool of assessment for children entering out of home care be developed and implemented which will assist with the matching of a child with a carer and will determine the rate of allowance to be paid. The assessment process must provide for review and reconsideration.	2
42.		9.10	That kinship carers be provided with allowances at the same rate as general foster carers.	1
43.		9.11	That where 'Family Way' arrangements are facilitated by Northern Territory Families and Children, the carers are eligible for establishment or discretionary payments and that they be assisted and connected to other financial supports available through the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments. The needs of the children and care providers should be assessed when the arrangement is negotiated.	2
44.		9.12	That a process be developed and implemented which will ensure all allowances/payments to carers are processed quickly and carers receive their entitlements promptly.	2
45.		9.13	That the development of a professional stream for home based carers, who are highly skilled and trained, be considered to provide placements for children and young people with high and complex needs.	3
46.		9.14	That Northern Territory Families and Children immediately acts to address the need for a shift in culture from a focus on carers as providers to carers as partners.	1
47.		9.15	That Northern Territory Families and Children adequately funds Foster Care NT to ensure that the organisation is able to develop an effective mentoring and support role for foster carers and to assist in the provision of foster care recruitment, training and advocacy with the Department.	1

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
48.		9.16	That Northern Territory Families and Children implements measures to monitor quality of practice and decision-making based on existing guidelines (Northern Territory Families and Children Policy and Procedures Manual) for foster and kinship care.	2
49.		9.17	That recruitment strategies continue with an emphasis on Aboriginal carers in remote and rural locations to increase the number of children remaining close to their families. Strategies such as nominating a few carers in the community to provide placements for children at short notice, should be trialled.	2
50.		9.18	That a plan be developed around the resourcing and up-skilling of existing carers to assist with the retention of experienced carers.	2
51.		9.19	That Northern Territory Families and Children facilitates the development of a 'charter' for all carers which sets out expectations, rights and responsibilities. A charter will confirm the important role all those involved in out of home care play in the child's life. It can also be used to determine policy, standards and procedures and for training of carers and staff.	2
52.		9.20	That portions of the Northern Territory Families and Children Policy and Procedures Manual pertaining to out of home care be available online to the public.	2
53.		9.21	That Northern Territory Families and Children continues with its implementation of recommendations from recent Coronial Inquests and reports on progress in its annual report.	1
54.		9.22	That Northern Territory Families and Children continues with its implementation of recommendations from the High Risk Audit and reports on progress in its annual report.	1
55.		9.23	That Northern Territory Families and Children continues to support and influence the introduction and implementation of the National Standards for Out of Home Care and reports on progress in its annual report.	1
56.		9.24	That the Northern Territory Families and Children Policy and Procedures Manual is worded to support the requirement that, unless it is demonstrably in the best interests of a child, a child who has been deemed to be in need of care should be placed in a kinship care placement rather than a 'Family Way' arrangement.	2
57.		9.25	That clear policies and procedures be developed to guide staff about the circumstances in which informal 'Family Way' arrangements are acceptable and what continuing case management obligations exist.	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
58.		9.26	That Northern Territory Families and Children develops a detailed practice guide around kinship care recruitment, assessment, support and training that includes the 'enabling' principle, details of support options available to carers, and baseline requirements for all kinship/specific carers.	2
59.		9.27	That Northern Territory Families and Children collects a range of care provider data as outlined in this Report and annually report on progress towards 'closing the gap' in standards of care provided for relative and non-relative care providers.	2
60.		9.28	That Northern Territory Families and Children develops a kinship care unit to assist with the recruitment, assessment, registration, support and training of kinship and specific carers and that consideration is given to progressively outsourcing these functions to local ACCAs as their capacity is developed.	2
61.		9.29	That the provision of intensive family support to prevent unnecessary placements be prioritised by the Northern Territory Government and that services are developed and funded accordingly.	2
62.		9.30	That where reunification is the intended outcome, then support and therapeutic services to birth families should be provided whilst their child is in placement to enable this outcome to be realised.	2
63.		9.31	That if it is clear that reunification is going to be the goal, this should be written into the case plans from the start to help determine the nature of the support services needed by the parent/s and to provide clarity and focus for the foster carers.	2
64.		9.32	That if reunification is a goal of a child's case plan and this changes for any reason, a case conference involving the child's family must be held to discuss and formulate a new plan.	2
65.		9.33	That a unit or group of staff within out of home care be created to focus on developing reunification services and strategies and to provide expert advice to work units across the Northern Territory.	2
66.		9.34	That Northern Territory Families and Children develops and appropriately funds specifically therapeutic options for children and young people with high needs such as therapeutic residential care, secure care, therapeutic foster care and a range of therapeutic counselling and treatment services (including Tier 3 services).	2
67.		9.35	That negotiations for fee for service placements should be conducted by specialist staff within the out of home care unit in order to centralise and standardise this function to staff who have relevant knowledge and expertise.	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
68.		9.36	That in consultation with a child's extended family and cultural advisors, all children who are recognised within the category of being under 'Ambiguous guardianship' are urgently and thoroughly assessed and that resolutions are finalised as soon as possible in relation to their guardianship.	1
69.		9.37	That there is specific guidance in the Northern Territory Families and Children Policy and Procedures Manual to issues arising in work with children who have a disability.	2
70.		9.38	That a review be undertaken of children with a disability in out of home care focusing on the reasons for entry into this type of care and the appropriateness of Northern Territory Families and Children, rather than Aged and Disability, providing for their needs.	2
71.		9.39	That proposals for interstate transfers be assessed by a panel in the relevant Northern Territory Families and Children office comprising at least the Interstate Liaison Officer, the caseworker, and where appropriate, family members and current foster or kinship carers.	2
72.		9.40	That an independent body is auspiced to review investigations into allegations of 'abuse in care' undertaken by the Department of Health and Families. The Office of the Children's Commissioner would be an appropriate body to take on this role.	2
73.		9.41	That the newly developed transition from care policy be implemented consistently with respect to all young people leaving care and a formal reporting program on After Care Services and compliance with legislation and policy be developed.	2
74.		9.42	That transition plans be developed jointly with the young person, their case manager and the relevant out of home care staff member.	2
75.		9.43	That specific training for all out of home care staff be made available to ensure best practice in transition from care.	2
76.		9.44	That the After Care Service including a mentoring scheme be moved, when appropriate, to the non government sector.	3
77.		9.45	That the Northern Territory Government makes a clear policy commitment to the progressive implementation of the outsourcing of significant elements of the out of home care program.	1

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
78.		9.46	That Northern Territory Families and Children develops a plan which determines which parts of the out of home care system would benefit from outsourcing, what type of organisations will provide services (e.g. non-government agencies, private organisations or companies), mechanisms for regulation and monitoring of services, risk-management strategies, how funding levels for services will be determined etc.	1
79.		9.47	That given the rapidly increasing costs associated with the placement of children in fee for service placements and the varying levels of placement oversight that are entailed, the plan around outsourcing needs to include a strategy (with targets and timelines) to shift the current fee for service arrangements to negotiated grant-based service agreements with approved providers.	1
80.	Chapter 10	10.1	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to make clear what powers, rights and responsibilities are included as part of 'daily care and control' and 'parental responsibility'.	2
81.		10.2	That the <i>Act</i> provide for parental responsibilities to be divisible with some parental responsibilities able to be retained by parents while other parental responsibilities are able to be assigned to other people.	2
82.		10.3	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to provide for a division within the orders. That is, a distinction in the order between daily care and control and parental responsibility. Parental responsibility should not include daily care and control.	2
83.		10.4	That the <i>Act</i> enshrine as a principle that only in the most extreme circumstances should parents be excluded from exercising all parental responsibilities and that the making of such an order should be a last step and only granted when it is clear that reunification is not possible and that the child is to remain in out of home care permanently.	2
84.		10.5	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to provide that the Court must not make an order allocating parental responsibility unless it has given full consideration to the principles set out in Sections 7 to 12 and is satisfied that any other order would be insufficient to meet the needs of the child or young person.	2
85.		10.6	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to provide that a protection order may only be granted if the Court is satisfied that the granting of the order would ensure the resulting standard of care of the child would overall be significantly higher than the standard presently maintained in respect of the child.	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
86.		10.7	That regulations relating to the convening of Court ordered mediation be made and that both CEO and Court ordered mediations form an active part of the child protection system across the Northern Territory.	2
87.		10.8	That a senior officer of Northern Territory Families and Children, or their legal representative, be a permanent member of the Local Court Users Group.	2
88.		10.9	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to provide that the Court can make an order that a child has contact with a parent or other person significant to the child.	2
89.		10.10	That the introductory clause of Section 12(3) of the <i>Act</i> be amended to read 'An Aboriginal child should, as far as practicable, and consistent with Section 10, be placed with a person in the following order of priority...'	2
90.		10.11	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to allow undertakings by parties to proceedings to be recorded by the Court.	2
91.		10.12	That Subdivision 3 of Division 4 of Part 2.3 of the <i>Act</i> clearly distinguishes between short-term and long-term protection orders and specifies that the focus of a short-term order is reunification with the family.	2
92.		10.13	That the <i>Act</i> more prominently recognises the importance of reunification in Part 1.3 of the <i>Act</i> and expressly states that the Court must have regard to the principles in Part 1.3 in making orders.	2
93.		10.14	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to include the concept of 'safety' in the definition of 'wellbeing'.	2
94.		10.15	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to provide that short-term orders be made for a maximum of two years, with one possible extension of one year, and that care plans submitted to the Court should include detailed reunification planning.	2
95.		10.16	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to provide that if, at the end of the period of the short-term order(s), reunification is not possible, then a long-term order shall be made for out of home care with the care plan to reflect this.	2
96.		10.17	That the <i>Act</i> provide for Aboriginal children or young people to have a report prepared by a culturally appropriate person for inclusion in the care plan, detailing how the child or young person's connection to their community, culture and spirituality is to be maintained.	2
97.		10.18	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to provide that, in the absence of any application having been made under Sections 136 or 137, a short term protection order under Subdivision 3 of Division 4 must be reviewed by the Court annually, or at any lesser interval determined by the Court.	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
98.		10.19	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to provide for the Court review of any long-term order in the discretion of the Court, and having full regard to the protected child's need for stability.	2
99.		10.20	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to remove the prohibition on the Department from taking a child into provisional protection if a protection order or temporary protection order is in force for the child.	2
100.		10.21	That the Court consider making practice directions in relation to situations where parental consent is relied on, to ensure that information provided to parents is accessible, comprehensive, timely and consistent with the provisions of the <i>Act</i> .	2
101.		10.22	That the Court consider making Practice Directions in relation to obtaining informed consent from parents where English is not a parents' first language.	2
102.		10.23	That Northern Territory Families and Children reviews its policies and procedures concerning communications with parents, kinship carers (and others) who do not have English as their first language. This should result in directives around the use of interpreters and the provision of written materials in different formats and languages, to ensure that the intentions, proposals and actions of NTFC are clearly understood, particularly where these involve the obtaining of consent.	1
103.		10.24	That Northern Territory Families and Children reviews all placement arrangements facilitated by case workers and, where children are found to be in improperly arranged 'Family Way' placements, their circumstances are assessed and they should either be returned to their parents or have their placement arrangements formalised.	1
104.		10.25	That Northern Territory Families and Children takes immediate action to ensure that no officers participate in any placement arrangements that might be considered contrary to the intent and provisions of the <i>Act</i> .	1
105.		10.26	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to provide that each protection order must be reviewed by the Court within 3 months but not less than 1 month prior to the date on which it would otherwise cease to be in force (and that the order remains in force until the review has occurred).	2
106.		10.27	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to provide that, subject to the Court's review, upon a protection order ceasing to be in force, Northern Territory Families and Children must return the child to his or her parent(s).	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
107.		10.28	That, if necessary, the <i>Act</i> be amended to provide that in all cases, children cannot be removed from the Northern Territory with the intention of residing interstate without the consent of their parent(s). Where this consent is not forthcoming or the parents cannot be contacted, an order of the Court is required for such removal.	2
108.		10.29	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to make it clear that the removal interstate of children in care for purposes of holiday, schooling, sporting or medical care does not require parental consent or a court order.	2
109.		10.30	That CCIS be modified to enable care plans with a fundamental and mandatory structure and content to be quickly and easily produced by practitioners.	2
110.		10.31	That Northern Territory Families and Children annually reports on compliance with Sections 70, 71, 73, 74 and 76 of the <i>Act</i> with respect to care plans.	2
111.		10.32	That the Northern Territory Government establishes a single court with jurisdiction to hear and determine both child protection and youth justice matters in isolation from adult courts.	2
112.		10.33	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to provide that Northern Territory Families and Children can accept a notification of concern about an unborn child and make provision for the immediate care and protection of the child when born.	2
113.	Chapter 11	11.1	That the <i>Act</i> be amended to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. provide a workable framework that permits and encourages the exchange of information between public sector organisations, between these organisations, the non-government sector and, where appropriate, individual community members, where that exchange is for the purpose of making a decision, assessment, plan or investigation relating to the safety and/ or wellbeing of a child or young person; and 2. provide that, to the extent that provisions are inconsistent, the <i>Information Act</i> (NT) should not apply. 	2
114.		11.2	That where government-funded agencies providing for safety and/ or wellbeing of children or young people develop codes of practice in accordance with privacy legislation, their terms should be consistent with the new legislative provisions and consistent with each other in relation to the discharge of the functions of those agencies.	3

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
115.		11.3	That Northern Territory Government agencies work with the non-government sector to jointly develop information sharing principles to guide the development of legislative amendments and inform practice changes.	2
116.		11.4	That government agencies and non-government organisations work jointly to develop cross-sector operational guidelines around collaborative practice and information sharing, and that related training programs reflect these guidelines. The guidelines should be publicly available, including on government agency websites.	2
117.		11.5	That the Northern Territory Government immediately moves to implement the major reforms outlined in the body of this Report (Chapter 11) around the delivery of child safety and wellbeing services and interagency collaboration. These include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of a 'dual pathway' process for the referral and assessment of vulnerable children and families 2. Creation of Community Child Safety and Wellbeing teams for the 20 Growth Towns, and elsewhere. 3. Expansion of the scope of the current and planned children and family centres to include targeted and indicated services for at-risk children and families 4. Development of further children and family centres (as child safety and wellbeing centres) in areas of need. 5. Establishment of interagency, hospital based Child Safety and Wellbeing teams in urban areas 6. Enhancement of the child safety and wellbeing roles of other government agencies and personnel. 	1
118.		11.6	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. Further, that the precise child safety and wellbeing roles of these officers be negotiated with the implementation unit to be established following this Inquiry and should include the promotion of collaborative practice.	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
119.	Chapter 12	12.1	<p>That Northern Territory Families and Children develops a comprehensive workforce strategy based on clearly stated values and principles that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflects the required progressive move to a strong early intervention focus and service provision that covers the continuum of universal, secondary and tertiary services; • involves the employment and continued training of well qualified, culturally aware and competent child safety and protective personnel who can identify risk and work in situations where there is significant risk to children as well as being able to utilise community development approaches for early intervention and preventative services; • promotes an Aboriginal workforce employment and engagement strategy developed in partnership with Aboriginal advisers and agencies that creates 'on-country' employment, education, training and employment development pathways for Aboriginal people working in family support and protective services from volunteer through to postgraduate level • is characterised by a strong partnership engagement with the non-government sector in planning and implementation. 	2
120.		12.2	<p>That Northern Territory Families and Children develops a model of workforce and resource planning in partnership with the Northern Territory Treasury, Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment and relevant discipline groups at Charles Darwin University, Batchelor Institute, Centre for Remote Health and other relevant training organisations around child safety and wellbeing services.</p>	2
121.		12.3	<p>That Northern Territory Families and Children's Workforce Development Unit be reviewed in the light of other recommendations, restructured and accordingly resourced in order to enable a culture of excellence.</p>	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
122.		12.4	<p>That Northern Territory Families and Children re-shapes its workforce by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing a transparent resource allocation methodology across Northern Territory Families and Children; • undertaking a comprehensive analysis of roles and functions required and a review of current position descriptions in order to determine the appropriate and most effective role and function for service delivery, paying attention to the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of personnel • Skills, qualifications and disciplines of personnel • Level of knowledge and skills required • Professional development needs of workers • Training and education provision • Developing a range of new positions to meet the requirements of the new model of service delivery • Ensuring the presence and visibility of multiple entry points to and pathways through service delivery for a range of people at various stages of their education and development. 	1
123.		12.5	<p>That Northern Territory Families and Children reviews the specific demands of urban, regional and remote area service delivery and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishes benchmark caseload ratios to enable acceptable staff levels and appropriate and manageable caseloads • formulates specific ratios for the three practice areas noting the current benchmarks that have not been calibrated for jurisdictions that include remote area practice - Out of Home Care 1:15; Family Support 1:10 to 1:20; Child Protection 1:6 to 1: 15. • develops specific proposals for remuneration and innovative performance and incentive based strategies (such as provision of housing, rental subsidies, travel allowances, retention bonuses, salary packaging, etc) and that proposals for remote practice are equitable for people regardless of their original domicile. 	1

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
124.		12.6	<p>That in conjunction with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, Northern Territory Families and Children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews all locations where there is a 'higher than usual' turnover of staff and immediately reviews the circumstances in that region or office. • Maintains regular monitoring of staff turnover utilising a mechanism for obtaining regular staff feedback, with a view to setting performance targets for reducing turnover. 	2
125.		12.7	That Northern Territory Families and Children reviews and evaluates the overseas and interstate recruitment strategies.	2
126.		12.8	That Northern Territory Families and Children reviews and implements the Northern Territory Families and Children Learning Development Framework and associated strategies to address induction, training, supervision and support needs of the workforce and ensures that induction is compulsory and is conducted before practice staff commence duties.	2
127.		12.9	<p>That Northern Territory Families and Children adopts a model of cross sectoral and cross disciplinary education and training to promote collaboration, relationships and continuity of care that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education for education, justice and health staff working with children about the role of Northern Territory Families and Children • Education for Northern Territory Families and Children staff about the role of child and family health nurses and Aboriginal health workers • The utilisation of funded cadetships and traineeships. <p>Further, that the Department of Health and Families considers making a joint appointment with the Discipline of Social Work in the School of Health Sciences at Charles Darwin University in order to encourage practice support and research between the two organisations and facilitate the development of career pathways.</p>	2
128.		12.10	That the Department of Health and Families organises for an independently conducted morale survey with all Northern Territory Families and Children staff (possibly to be conducted in conjunction with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment) and establish performance measures by which to calculate the improvement of staff morale and use as a benchmark for regular re-assessments.	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
129.		12.11	That Northern Territory Families and Children undertakes exit interviews of all departing staff and that these are audited by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.	2
130.		12.12	That an independent review of Northern Territory Families and Children is conducted with a focus on care and support of workers, work conditions, treatment of staff and workplace protection.	2
131.		12.13	That a mentorship program with senior members of Department of Health and Families staff is developed and 'implanted' to promote a supportive work environment for new or junior members of Northern Territory Families and Children.	3
132.		12.14	That the Department of Health and Families endorses and resources the proposed Northern Territory Families and Children supervision policy and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that time is allocated to supervision and training of staff by allocating service closure times • Monitors its application by inviting regular feedback from all staff • Includes a CCIS staffing marker regarding worker supervision which is used in management reports • Ensures that aggregated information from supervision is recorded and conveyed to dedicated senior personnel who can utilise it for the refinement of policy, practice, training and workforce development • Ensures that all staff in senior/supervisory positions have the advanced qualifications and experience to fulfill their role and meet organisational performance requirements • Instigates a program of supervision training for all senior staff – including team leaders, managers and directors • Augments supervision with a mentorship model that sends a strong message that staff are valued, supported and assisted to do the work they are required to do • Develops a comprehensive mechanism for cultural competence that includes an ethical and values framework and that is cross-sectoral, cross divisional and cross departmental • Ensures that team leaders do not carry case management responsibilities so that they can support staff learning and performance and the development of quality services. 	1

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
133.		12.15	That Northern Territory Families and Children develops and implements the role of Practice Advisors in all operational offices.	2
134.		12.16	That direct efforts and resources to support Aboriginal Employment Strategy initiatives are implemented.	2
135.		12.17	That Northern Territory Families and Children develops Key Performance Indicators to demonstrate the goals of Aboriginal workforce planning, with annual reporting on achievements.	1
136.	Chapter 13	13.1	That the Northern Territory Government reviews the roles and functions of the Children's Commissioner in the light of this Inquiry with a view to amending the Act to address the needs for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An 'own motion' investigation capacity • The extension of his/ her advocacy and complaint management responsibilities to other identified groups of vulnerable children in Northern Territory Government-funded care • Specific powers for the Children's Commissioner to obtain documents, examine persons, or carry out any type of investigations as part of his/ her monitoring functions • A broader role in monitoring the implementation of Northern Territory Government decisions arising from any inquiries in relation to the child protection system or the wellbeing of children under the <i>Inquiries Act</i>. 	1
137.		13.2	That the Northern Territory Government ensures that the Children's Commissioner is adequately funded to carry out any additional functions.	1
138.		13.3	That the Office of the Children's Commissioner be funded to employ an Aboriginal person dedicated to investigating issues raised by and affecting Aboriginal children in particular. This position needs to be resourced in addition to roles currently undertaken by the office.	2
139.		13.4	That the Northern Territory Government reviews the terms of reference of the Northern Territory Families and Children Advisory Council and its access to data so as to enhance its capacity to advise the Minister.	2
140.		13.5	That Northern Territory Families and Children establishes mechanisms for regularly listening to the voices of children and young people regarding their experiences in the care system, for determining their needs, and for implementing improvements to the standard of care and support that is provided.	2
141.		13.6	That a community visitor model be implemented to involve a sampling of children in out of home care (OOHC) with a view to informing the Children's Commissioner about OOHC issues from the perspective of the visitor, and also from the children being visited.	2

No.	Chapter	Number	Recommendation	Urgency
142.		13.7	That Northern Territory Families and Children develops an effective complaints management process for clients of the service (and others affected by decisions) that provides for the speedy resolution of complaints. The procedural guidelines for the process should be made available on the Northern Territory Families and Children website.	1
143.		13.8	That Northern Territory Families and Children develops an appeals process (either as part of the internal complaints process or separately) that provides for an appeal process for professional decisions independent of the normal line management structures. The procedural guidelines for the appeal process should be made publicly available on the Northern Territory Families and Children website.	1
144.		13.9	That the Northern Territory Government funds the development of an advice and support program for vulnerable families who come into contact with the statutory services of Northern Territory Families and Children in both the Top End and Central Australia. This might be developed as part of the service offered by an Aboriginal Child Care Agency, family service or legal agency.	2
145.		13.10	That a framework involving performance measures in the domains of input, process, outcome and impact is adopted and appropriately resourced.	2
146.	14 – The Way Forward	14.1	<p>That the Northern Territory Government develops and implements a comprehensive community education strategy to highlight key messages about child protection and child wellbeing and to accompany the service delivery enhancements contained in this Report. The strategy should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have at least a five-year life span, • must be multi-modal (involving radio, TV, printed materials, training programs and discussion forums) • use materials translated into local languages, and • address a range of issues relating to child safety and wellbeing. <p>The strategy should include a review of the various child wellbeing/protection education programs currently in place with a view to preventing fragmentation and duplication. The strategy should include an ongoing impact evaluation component.</p>	1
147.		14.2	That the Northern Territory Government creates a planning, coordination and implementation unit (or team) to be responsible to the Chief Executive of the Department of the Chief Minister, in order to develop, drive and coordinate the reforms in the manner proposed in Chapter 14 of this Report.	1