



MINISTERS' MEDIA CENTRE

Ministers of the Education Portfolio

Joint Media Release

9 May 2023

New investment to support a better, safer future for Central Australia

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The Australian Government and Northern Territory Government are working together to deliver the next stage of the \$250 million landmark plan for a *Better, Safer Future for Central Australia* to improve community safety, tackle alcohol-related harm, and provide more opportunities for young people.

Working closely with the Office of the Central Australia Regional Controller (OCARC), Central Australian communities made it clear they want to be more involved in decision making that affects them.

The 2023-24 Federal Budget delivers the next stage of investments that will strengthen local communities across Central Australia, including Alice Springs.

Better outcomes for children and young people will be a core focus of this investment.

Today, we are announcing the next stage of the plan for a *Better, Safer Future for Central Australia*, including:

\$50 million for Community and Regional Infrastructure

The Australian Government will allocate \$50 million for community and regional infrastructure projects. We will listen to Central Australian communities and work with them to identify priority projects.

\$40.4 million for On-Country Learning to Improve School Engagement

The Australian Government will provide \$40.4 million over two years from 2023-24 to schools in Central Australia to improve school attendance and education outcomes. This measure will prioritise community engagement and locally driven responses in partnership with local community organisations. Schools will work with their local communities to develop tailored solutions to better engage children and young people in school and provide them with the wrap-around support they need to succeed. Education is a driver of opportunity and a critical pathway to further education and employment.

\$23.5 million for Improving First Nations Health Outcomes

The Australian Government will invest \$23.5 million to support the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families in Alice Springs and surrounding communities. This includes \$18.4 million to the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (Congress) to expand their existing Children and Youth Assessment and Treatment Services (CYATS). The funding to expand CYATS aims to meet current demand and increase the availability of early detection and intervention services for neurodevelopmental conditions, including Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Additionally, there will be \$5 million provided to Congress in 2022-23 to support the development of Health Hub in Alice Springs – combining the four current health services into one single centre.

Congress is the largest Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service in the Northern Territory and has a long history providing health services across Central Australia. Expansion of CYATS allows for greater capacity for early detection and treatment of those neurodevelopmental conditions and ensures families are connected to a network of support services. Additionally, increased funding will allow Congress to better respond to the region's disproportionately high numbers of developmentally vulnerable Aboriginal children, including those with neurodevelopmental disorders and young people in the justice system.

\$10 million to enhance digital connectivity

The Australian Government has bolstered its commitment to narrowing the digital divide for First Nations Australians, with an additional \$10 million in funding under the Regional Connectivity Program (RCP). On 20 April, the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications announced the additional \$10 million in funding to enhance digital connectivity for First Nations Australians. This funding has been added to the latest round of the Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) and is dedicated to delivering solutions that improve mobile phone coverage and internet connections in Central Australia. The application period for the RCP was also extended by six weeks to Wednesday 12 July 2023, providing more time for applicants to develop proposals that support First Nations communities and to ensure substantial consultation with stakeholders, including local communities and councils.

\$10 million for Justice Reinvestment

The Australian Government will allocate \$10 million for justice reinvestment initiatives in Central Australia. Justice reinvestment allows First Nations communities to identify the best ways to prevent and reduce contact with the criminal justice system, and empowers those communities to make decisions about the policies, programs and decisions that affect their lives. This funding will be pooled into the National Justice Reinvestment Program, which the Government committed to in the October 2022-23 Budget. Communities in Central Australia will be able to apply for justice reinvestment funding when the National Justice Reinvestment Program opens for applications from mid-2023.

\$9.2 million for strengthening community safety

The Australian Government will invest \$9.2 million to strengthen community safety in Central Australia. This funding will support increased engagement and diversion of 'at-risk' First Nations youth in Central Australia. Funding will be targeted towards delivering youth services to build job readiness, improve access to mental health, drug and alcohol diversion, address drivers of gender-based violence and enhance cultural and community connections.

\$3.9 million for a Youth Services Action Plan

\$3.9 million will be provided over four years to develop a Youth Services Action Plan for Central Australia, and to support the provision of cultural camps for young people at risk to keep them engaged, connected to their culture and communities and to prevent emerging issues from escalating.

In addition to the Youth Plan, the Australian Government will support a series of on-country and youth diversion activities for children aged 8-12 years deemed at risk by law enforcement, child protection agencies, service providers or schools. This may include camps, day trips and other activities that enable children to be connected to country.

\$1.2 million for up to 5 new Junior Ranger sites in Central Australia

The forthcoming junior ranger national open competitive grant round will prioritise up to five new junior ranger sites in Central Australia. Junior ranger activities focus on the intergenerational transmission of First Nations knowledge and customary practice. Projects are integrated with the school curriculum and can also support completion of VET qualifications. Activities are place-based and community-led, with projects designed and delivered by local organisations to meet the needs and aspirations of local communities.

\$7.5 million for effective governance to ensure successful delivery

Strong governance arrangements will be put in place to drive coordination and delivery of the Australian Government's commitments to Central Australia. This includes the establishment of an Aboriginal Leadership Group. Supported by the Australian Government and the Office of the Central Australian Regional Controller, the Leadership Group will work alongside existing community leadership and governance arrangements across the region to provide advice on the next steps for implementing the *Better, Safer Future for Central Australia Plan*.

Local community feedback, including from local government, has been a key part of the process for identifying priorities for the plan for a Better, Safer Future for Central Australia.

We will continue to work closely with communities, and in partnership with the Northern Territory Government, to deliver real outcomes on the ground.