



Department of
TERRITORY FAMILIES,
HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

Senator Paul Scarr
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email:

FirstNationswomenchildren.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Scarr

RE: INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED FIRST NATIONS WOMEN AND CHILDREN

I write to you in response to the Inquiry into Murdered and Missing First Nations Women and Children to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee.

The Senate referred the Inquiry to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee.

The Northern Territory Government provides the attached response to the specified terms of reference.

Yours sincerely

Ken Davies PSM
Chief Executive Officer

30 November 2022

Senate Inquiry into Murdered and Missing First Nations Women and Children

Senate Inquiry into Murdered and Missing First Nations Women and Children

Acronyms	Full form
NTP	Northern Territory Police
NTG	Northern Territory Government
ICRO	Interagency Coordination and Reform Office
ATSI	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander
LTMP	Long Term Missing Person
MPU	Missing Person Unit
NCIS	National Coronial Information
DVO	Domestic Violence Order
DFV	Domestic Family Violence
CRAT	Common Risk Assessment Tool
FSF	Family Safety Framework
WSH	Women's Safe Houses
TFHC	Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities
DFSV	Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence
RAMF	Risk Assessment and Management Framework

Senate Inquiry into Murdered and Missing First Nations Women and Children

The Senate has referred the Inquiry into Murdered and Missing First Nations Women and Children to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee. In response to the terms of reference, the following information is provided by Northern Territory Police (NTP), in consultation with the Northern Territory Government (NTG) Domestic Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV) Interagency Coordination and Reform Office (ICRO).

(a) The number of First Nations women and children who are missing and murdered –

This statistical data is provided by the Missing Persons Unit (MPU) of the NTP. There is a difference of 3 between the 2021 calendar year total '867' and the demographics (males and females) total '864'. The reports had 3 children with unknown gender. 2 in the 0-12 years and 1 in the 13-17 years.

• ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER (ATSI) MISSING PERSONS REPORTS

Data	2021 calendar year		Total Number	
ATSI Missing Persons reported	867		-	
ATSI Missing Persons located	867		-	
Outstanding cases	0		N/A	
ATSI Long Term Missing Persons	0		75	
Demographics	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-12 years	35	12	2	1
13-17 years	65	83	2	1
18-64 years	252	384	51	10
65+ years	17	16	6	1
No age recorded	0	0	0	1

LTMP is an acronym for Long Term Missing Person. The national definition of a LTMP is someone who has been missing for more than 3 months.

The Northern Territory Coroner's office has data recorded from 2000. A search of the National Coronial Information System (NCIS) using the following criteria for case identification has been undertaken.

Date:	Between 1 July 2000 – current (the NCIS commenced data collection on 1 July 2000)
Jurisdiction:	NT
Case status:	Closed
Case type (completion):	Death due to external causes
Intent type (completion):	Assault
Sex:	Female
Age:	All ages (adult and children)

A manual review was undertaken to further narrow the search to persons identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

This data details that there were 97 deaths identified. This number does not include the several open coronial cases that are either subject of criminal proceedings and/or current coronial investigation.

Senate Inquiry into Murdered and Missing First Nations Women and Children

(b) The current and historical practices, including resources, to investigating the deaths and missing person reports of First Nations women and children in each jurisdiction compared to Non-First Nations women and children

In the Northern Territory there is no distinction made in police operational responses to First Nations or Non-First Nations women and children. The response is holistically guided by standard policy documentation as it related to missing persons and homicide investigations.

The Northern Territory Police consider a missing person is:

- anyone who is reported missing to police;
- whose whereabouts are unknown; and
- where there are fears for the safety or concerns for the welfare of that person.

Internal policing policies and practices including definition and categorisation of missing persons and reporting requirements determines how these matters are recorded.

Consistent, clear information on how to report concerns, what information a complainant may be asked to provide, and what the police will do with this information is important in assisting to ensure that there are no unnecessary delays in reporting missing person cases.

(c) The institutional legislation, policies and practices implemented in response to all forms of violence experienced by First Nations women and children –

The Northern Territory Government recognises that rates of family violence are higher among marginalised women including First Nations women, women living in regional, rural and remote areas and women with disabilities, compared with the general population. It is a mandatory obligation to report that is placed on anyone who comes to know or have knowledge of domestic violence incident.

In all cases the investigating police are guided by legislative requirements, police General Orders, and the specific frameworks and mechanisms implemented to address violence experienced by anyone including our First Nations women and children.

The NTG has a broad suite of policy and legislative frameworks and processes to prevent and respond to DFSV. These include:

- Domestic & Family Violence Act 2007 – specific legislation defining domestic relationships, domestic violence, domestic violence orders (DVO) is and what the subsequent offences are if the DVO is breached;
- Care and Protection of Children Act;
- Sexual Offences (Evidence and Procedures) Act;
- Northern Territory Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV) Reduction Framework 2018-2028: Safe, respected and free from violence - articulates a shared vision and commitment for a future where women and children are safe, respected and free from violence, and includes action plans to implement activity under the Framework;
- In October 2018, the NTG amended the Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Act to provide for a new DFV Information Sharing Scheme, enabling information about people experiencing or committing DFV to be shared without consent in certain circumstances.
- As part of these amendments the Risk Assessment and Management Framework (RAMF) has been developed and implemented, to increase the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors of DFV who are at imminent risk of serious harm or death, and increase accountability of people who commit DFV.

Senate Inquiry into Murdered and Missing First Nations Women and Children

- The Common Risk Assessment Tool (CRAT), an evidence-based tool to assess and respond to DFV risk has been developed and implemented since 1 February 2021.
- Since 2021, 44 RAMF training workshops have been held, with 724 people trained from NTG agencies, non-government organisations, in both urban, regional and remote locations.
- Family Safety Framework (FSF) – a multi-agency risk management and response to victim survivors identified as being at serious and imminent risk of domestic and family violence harm or death. The success of the framework is based on the commitment of the stakeholders to take affirmative action to support the safety and survival of a victim. The use of both the Northern Territory DFV RAMF along with the CRAT are also critical elements of the FSF.
- The DFSV ICRO – a newly developed 12 month coordinated interagency response to Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. There is a critical need to strengthen coordination across all government agencies to ensure we are sharing responsibility, maximising investment, and giving this critical issue the attention it deserves. Preventing and responding to DFSV is a responsibility that is shared across all government agencies, non-government organisations, and the community, and requires cross agency and cross community responses.
- SupportLink, which is a centralised referral management system designed to identify victim-survivors and intervene early.
- There are a total of 28 women's safe houses (WSH) in the Northern Territory, with 16 operated by non-government organisations and 12 operated by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC). WSH provide a number of services to complement crisis and transitional housing, including counselling, critical intervention outreach services, frontline services, children and youth specialist services, men's outreach assessment and referral services, as well as providing flexible support packages to support the client.
- The NTG supports community-based approaches to address domestic, family and sexual violence under the DFSV Reduction Framework 2018-2028, including:
 - Aboriginal women's safety and advisory groups to develop community-led initiatives to prevent and respond to DFSV in rural and remote areas.
 - Locally driven cultural approaches to prevent DFSV with remote Aboriginal communities, including to address technology-facilitated abuse, respectful relationships, community capacity building to understand and respond to DFSV.
 - Partnerships between Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and specialist DFSV services, to strengthen service delivery for Aboriginal women and children.
 - Remote workforce RAMF training to support specialist service connection and develop shared community responses to DFSV in Aboriginal communities.
 - Funding to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to deliver community-based DFSV services and programs for Aboriginal communities, including women's safe houses and crisis accommodation, flexible support packages, perpetrator programs and primary prevention initiatives.
 - The establishment of an Aboriginal Advisory Board on DFSV expected to be operational in early 2023.