



NUKARA

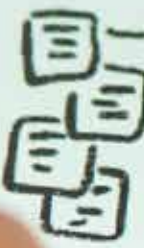
How come we
don't HEAR about it?

PACKAGES FUNDED

→  YOUR OWN WORKER
UP TO 20 WEEKS

→  SPENDING MONEY
CAN COVER HOUSING D

Lots of
reporting



FIBRE 2 INVESTMENT AND RESOURCES

FIBRE 2

Investment and resources: commitment to adequate, coordinated and ongoing funding and resourcing of Aboriginal-designed and led programs for keeping Aboriginal children safe.

Nukara is the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre's community-led strategy and action plan for implementing the **Tirrina** model and transferring responsibility for Aboriginal child safety to the Aboriginal community.

Our vision is for all Aboriginal children living in Lutruwita to be safe and well in the care of their families, proudly connected with and strongly supported by their community, culture and country.

Tirrina is the Tasmanian Aboriginal community's model for achieving this vision.

The eight fibres of **Tirrina** provide a strong foundation for the structure of every part of the model, interwoven with the principles of self-determination and truth-telling. While adapted for local application, the fibres are consistent with the eight focus areas of the Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026 (Our Safe and Supported Action Plan).

CONTENTS

Executive summary	2
Current situation	3
Government expenditure 2023-24	3
Disproportionality ratios 2023-24	4
Current funding and reporting arrangements	5
Service delivery risk assessment	6
Consultation findings and analysis	7
Voices of the weavers	7
Voices of other stakeholders	8
Jurisdictional scan and analysis	9
Alignment with national and state commitments and enablers	10
The way forward	12
Next steps	12

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Investment and resources: commitment to adequate, coordinated and ongoing funding and resourcing of Aboriginal-designed and led programs for keeping Aboriginal children safe.

Evidence shows that institutional interventions consistently fail to keep Aboriginal children safe and well in the care of their families and communities. Current systems fail to address systemic inequality, intergenerational trauma, the impact of historical policies, cultural safety needs and the importance of connections with community, culture and country.

Governments are increasingly recognising that investing in Aboriginal-designed and led programs for keeping Aboriginal children safe delivers a strong return on investment (ROI) by reducing the long-term social and economic costs associated with child safety interventions, out-of-home care and justice system involvement. Culturally appropriate, community-led approaches also lead to more positive life outcomes for children, including improved wellbeing, stronger family connections and greater educational and employment opportunities.

Fibre 2 recognises the Aboriginal community's view that the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) is best-placed to provide statewide services for keeping Aboriginal children safe. A stable and assured commitment to investment is essential to ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of TAC programs. Without adequate resourcing, initiatives and services may be fragmented or short-lived.

By providing ongoing funding and other resources for TAC to deliver an enhanced range of services to reduce the number of children entering, and increase the number of children exiting, the out-of-home care system, the Tasmanian Government can realise significant long-term socioeconomic benefits. Ringfencing this funding will ensure long-term stability and protect these vital programs from changes in government and shifting policy priorities, allowing the Aboriginal community and TAC to plan, implement and sustain services without risks of funding cuts or political interference.

This document summarises the findings of consultation and research, highlighting the importance of establishing a sustainable investment strategy and partnership agreement with the Tasmanian Government to fund the four Aboriginal-designed and led service programs of the *Tirrina* model.

Fibre 2 proposes that the *Nukara* investment strategy and partnership agreement with the Tasmanian Government (Government) must:

- commit the Government to funding implementation of the *Nukara* strategy and action plan
- commit the Government to shifting a proportion of existing funding and other resources from the relevant business units of the Department for Children, Education and Young People (DECYP) and currently-funded non-government organisations (NGOs), and redirect these funds and resources to TAC to support delivery of the four *Tirrina* service programs
- supplement existing and transferred funds and resources where necessary to ensure full implementation and ongoing delivery of all components of the *Tirrina* model
- provide assurance of ongoing Government investment in existing and new TAC child-safe service programs, including strategies to ringfence sources and streams of funding.

CURRENT SITUATION

In June 2023, TAC received a grant through the *Closing the Gap Capacity Building Grant Program* to develop a strategy and action plan for the transfer of responsibility for Aboriginal child safety to the Aboriginal community. The transfer of responsibility must be enabled by investment in the *Nukara* strategy and action plan, and ongoing funding for delivery of the service programs required to support the full range of responsibilities, including statutory powers and functions transferred.

Government expenditure 2023-24

According to the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) Annual Report 2023-24 and the Australian Government’s *Report on Government Services 2024 (ROGS)* relevant Tasmanian Government expenditure for the 2023-24 financial year included:

DECYP Annual Report 2023-24

Expense by Output Group 4.1 Services for Children and Families (*includes Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL), Child Safety Service (CSS) and out-of-home care services*)

- 2023-24 Actual expenditure \$188,571,000

Services for Children and Families Grants

- Family Intervention and Support Capability \$22,294,000
- Out of Home Care Capability \$19,836,000

ROGS 2024 Table 16A.8

▪ Protective intervention services	\$35,127,000
<i>(Government services that receive and investigate notifications, make referrals to family support and other services, and intervene to remove children from families)</i>	
▪ Care services (provision of out-of-home care)	\$114,903,000
▪ Intensive family support	\$16,512,000
▪ Family support services	\$31,609,000
▪ Per child expenditure (rounded to the nearest dollar)	
- Protective intervention services	\$309
- Care services	\$1,010
- Intensive family support	\$145
- Family support services	\$278

Note: Unlike all other Australian jurisdictions, Tasmania does not record the indigenous status of children receiving intensive family support; Aboriginal children receiving support through TAC's Intensive Family Engagement Service (IFES) would be included in the figures above.

Disproportionality ratios 2023-24

The Australian Government's [Report on Government Services 2024](#) (ROGS) includes the disproportionality ratios of Aboriginal children to non-Aboriginal children in contact with child safety services in all Australian states and territories. The 2023-24, Tasmania's disproportionality ratios include:

▪ Notifications:	2.27
▪ Finalised investigations:	3.13
▪ Substantiations:	3.30
▪ Care and protection orders:	3.69
▪ Out-of-home care:	3.69
▪ IFS	no data

Note: Any number over 1.0 demonstrates an overrepresentation proportionate to the population.

Comparative breakdown of numbers of children in Tasmania's child safety system (30 June 2024):

▪ All children in out-of-home care	940	
- Non-Aboriginal	529	(56%)
- Aboriginal	395	(42%)
- Unknown status	16	

Comparative breakdown of all children in the Tasmanian population (31 December 2023):

▪ All children in population	113,774	
- Non-Aboriginal children	100,769	(89%)
- Aboriginal children	13,006	(11%)

Family Matters 2024 reported that in 2022-23, Tasmania had the second highest proportion of expenditure directed to intensive family support and family supports (includes family violence counselling services) of all states and territories (25.4%) but the lowest spend to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) (2.6%).

2022-23 real recurrent child safety (protection) expenditure to ACCOs:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| - Family support | 1,130,000 (2.6% of total real recurrent expenditure) |
| - Protective intervention | nil |
| - Out-of-home care | nil |

It is significant to note that 39 per cent of children in out-of-home care in that year were Aboriginal.

Current funding and reporting arrangements

Current funding is insufficient to meet current and projected future demand. Existing funding arrangements and agreements are overly complex, and reporting arrangements are onerous and inconsistent.

Aboriginal Liaison Officers (ALOs)

The Tasmanian Government currently provides TAC with funding of around \$247,000 per annum for two ALO positions (salaries and on-costs) in the Southern and Northern regions.

TAC Intensive Family Engagement Service (IFES)

Government funding for TAC's IFES program is currently just over \$597,000 per annum (16 × 12-week packages at \$33,359 per package). Funding is supported by two-year funding agreements. Agreements include onerous reporting obligations that require TAC to submit service delivery reports on each child/family receiving IFES support every month. The current agreement expires in June 2025.

TAC Family Support Service

Government funding for delivery of TAC's Family Support Service is currently around \$273,000 per annum. Funding is supported by two-year funding agreements. Agreements require six-monthly qualitative and quantitative reports. The current agreement expires in June 2025.

Reporting requirements include:

- a completed Annual Grant Financial Accountability Report signed by two office holders ... to the effect that the grant provided ... was received and disbursed for the purpose for which it was given
- a certificate signed by an Approved Auditor to the effect that the Annual Grant Financial Accountability Report is properly drawn up and records presented give a true and fair view
- provision of receipts and other evidence relating to expenditure ... including internal management information or extracts of reports from ... financial management information systems, if requested.

TAC Takariliya Taypani (current offerings)

Government funding for TAC's existing Takariliya Taypani service program is currently around \$500,000 per annum. The program is currently only offered in Nipaluna / Hobart.

Under the program, Aboriginal children in out-of-home care are identified and supported by TAC to build closer family and cultural connections and keep them safe and support families to explore restoration possibilities. A child cannot be formally accepted into the program until TAC provides CSS with a plan and a quote for providing the supports specified in the plan. When the plan and quote are approved, TAC can officially begin working with the child in accordance with the plan.

While funds are provided in accordance with plans and on a fee-for-service basis, TAC cannot submit invoices until **after** services are provided. Invoices may be submitted monthly in arrears, but this involves a heavy administrative burden for both TAC and CSS. TAC currently submits detailed invoices every three months as per each child's plan and quote. In effect, that means TAC may work intensively with a child for more than three months before any payment is received. In addition, TAC's experience is that plans are often underquoted, so any additional supports outside the scope of the child's plan must be delivered free-of-charge. Payment in arrears is also extremely problematic for TAC because workforce planning for permanent staffing of the program is virtually impossible. This means that a child may be supported by different staff at different times, which can disrupt the continuity of support, care and trust between children and workers.

Under the current arrangement, individual reports on the progress of each child are required. The type and frequency of reports vary, as these are set by and must be submitted to the responsible CSS child safety officers.

Service delivery risk assessment

The current situation presents significant and ongoing risks involving service gaps and detrimental outcomes for children and their families.

Despite the current low levels of government investment in Aboriginal-led, culturally appropriate prevention and early intervention services, TAC remains committed to prioritising this work, recognising that timely and appropriate support is invaluable in helping to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in contact with the government-run child safety system.



CONSULTATION FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Voices of the weavers

Community voices

Throughout the *Nukara* consultation process, community expressed a strong desire for TAC to receive adequate, ongoing funding for Aboriginal-designed and delivered service programs that help to prevent Aboriginal children entering – and support their exit from – the government-run child safety system, with the objective of reunifying them with family and community.

Community identified that the child-safe services currently offered by TAC should be statewide. Building on and expanding TAC's existing workforce and service offerings is seen as critical to achieving this goal.

In working together to develop *Nukara* and *Tirrina*, the community highlighted the risk of service gaps and personal risks to the safety of Aboriginal children if TAC service programs are not adequately supported by sufficient, sustainable government investment and streamlined funding and reporting arrangements. Family support services are viewed by community as essential for the safety and wellbeing of children and their families. Community expressed a strong desire for TAC to employ more workers, in more programs, in all areas of the state.

Community members in all regions were shocked to learn that TAC does not receive funding for programs run outside school hours and in school holidays. Community emphasised the importance of these programs in building child-worker trust and relationships, which provide critical foundations for developing a strong sense of cultural identity, personal resilience, self-worth and connection with community.

TAC staff voices

In consultation forums, TAC staff identified investment in family support service programs as the highest, most urgent priority, noting that most of their time is currently spent on reactive crisis response, rather than preventative grassroots family support.

Staff consider that existing funding is insufficient, and that current arrangements for requesting and receiving funds and reporting on expenditure are unsuitable and onerous. The view of workers is that fragmented and inconsistent funding leads to unequal access to services, with children and families who need it most are potentially at risk of 'missing out'.

Staff note that, to be effective in delivering positive outcomes, all TAC child-safe programs must be suitably and consistently resourced. TAC staff are passionate in advocating for proportionate and targeted investment in prevention and early intervention programs that prioritise keeping Aboriginal children safe in the care of their families and community.

'Our families are bubbling away in and out of crisis. More support is needed.'

Voices of other stakeholders

Other stakeholders recognise that there must be strong investment in Aboriginal-led support programs that help to divert children and families away from the child safety system.

At the consultation forums, it was noted that Life Without Barriers has made commitments to step away from providing care for Aboriginal children and to advocate for government investment in the service programs offered by ACCOs. Life Without Barriers has already approached TAC to discuss the transfer of case management for Aboriginal children in Lutruwita when the Takariliya Taypani program is expanded through implementation of the *Nukara* strategy and *Tirrina* model.



JURISDICTIONAL SCAN AND ANALYSIS

Victoria and Queensland have been working on models to support the transfer of lawful authority and responsibility for keeping Aboriginal children safe for approximately ten years. Both states are the most advanced jurisdictions, in terms of system design and staged implementation. The Palawa Children's Future Project Stage 1 extensively researched and analysed the experiences of Victoria and Queensland. Learnings from this research informed development of the *Nukara* strategy and *Tirrina* model, including the service programs that will support TAC's role in exercising statutory powers and performing statutory functions.

Analysis of the experiences of Victoria and Queensland highlights the importance of transitioning relevant and proportionate funding and resources from government services and NGOs to ACCOs. The resources transitioned must also be supplemented by the additional funding and resources required to take on the full range of responsibilities for keeping Aboriginal children safe.

Review of Victoria's experience revealed the complexity of transitioning child safety workers from the government sector to ACCOs, and the importance of workforce planning to support this process. Issues such as employment awards and conditions, leave entitlements and other benefits may present challenges. Other challenges include attracting, retaining and increasing the skills and ability of non-Aboriginal workers to provide culturally-safe services.

The experiences of other jurisdictions demonstrate the importance of establishing genuine partnerships between ACCOs, government and NGOs. The Australian Government Department of Social Services recently engaged Families Australia to research potential impact on the NGO sector when a portion of child and family services funding is transferred to ACCOs. The outcomes of this research will be monitored and incorporated into collaborative liaison and discussion with stakeholder organisations throughout the *Nukara* implementation phase.

Victoria's Yoorrook Justice Commission has called for an immediate, substantial increase of investment in ACCOs for prevention and early intervention service programs. The Commission deemed this to be the most effective, sustainable and empowering opportunity to divert Aboriginal children away from the child safety system.

Alignment with national and state commitments and enablers

The *Safe and Supported* initiative, along with other Australian Government and national programs, offers a clear pathway for national and state governments to invest in the Aboriginal-designed and delivered programs of ACCOs, with robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms to monitor progress and outcomes. While new investment is necessary to enable the implementation of *Nukara* and *Tirrina*, **the redirection of existing streams of funding**, currently allocated to government and NGO service providers, is also critical.

The Tasmanian Government has made formal commitments to *Safe and Supported* and other significant national and state agreements and initiatives to invest in an array of child-safe service programs designed and delivered by ACCOs, particularly programs that focus on prevention and early intervention. The most relevant of these are summarised in the table below.

INITIATIVE	COMMITMENT
<i>Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026</i>	<p>Action 2:</p> <p>Invest in the Aboriginal community controlled (ACCO) sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop a National Child and Family Investment Strategy b) Co-design ACCO sector strengthening plan c) Develop a market strategy to support ACCO capacity and transition approaches d) Develop jurisdictional framework and plans for recommissioning family support services to achieve quarantined, proportionate funding directed to ACCOs e) Develop community-led commissioning models to increase local control over funding priorities and allocations for ACCOs f) Implement new commissioning models in each jurisdiction g) Reform funding models and procurement policies to direct proportionate funding and address systemic barriers to growth
<i>Commission of Inquiry report findings and recommendations</i>	<p>Recommendation 9.15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement all elements of the Placement Principle <p>9.15(a): Increase investment in Aboriginal-led targeted early intervention and prevention services, including family support and reunification services to a rate equivalent to the representation of Aboriginal children in the Tasmanian child safety system</p> <p>9.15(e)(iii): Invest in ACCOs' capacity to ensure they are fully resourced and their workforces fully equipped and supported to participate in child safety and out-of-home care decision-making processes for Aboriginal children, and to manage any transfer of decision-making authority</p>

INITIATIVE	COMMITMENT
<p><i>Closing the Gap</i></p> <p><i>National Agreement reforms, targets and sector strengthening plans</i></p>	<p>Priority Reform 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build the ACCO sector, including government commitment to increasing the proportion of services delivered by ACCOs <p>Target 12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent by 2031 <p>Clause 113:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By July 2023, review and identify current spending on Aboriginal programs and services to identify opportunities for reprioritisation to ACCOs <p>Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A8: Cultural competency and trauma responsiveness: proportionate investment in prevention and early intervention and prevention services ... delivered by ACCOs
<p><i>Family Matters</i></p>	<p>Recommendation 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase investment in prevention and early intervention delivered by ACCOs <p>Recommendation 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish national approach to funding ACCO-led integrated early years services <p>Recommendation 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish joint federal and state government funded, national program for ACCO-led integrated family support services <p>Recommendation 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set investment and commissioning targets for proportionate funding for child safety and family support services directed towards ACCOs, equivalent to the proportion of Aboriginal children within the child safety system in each jurisdiction <p>Recommendation 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase investment in reunification services to ensure Aboriginal children are not spending longer in out-of-home care than is necessary due to inadequate planning or support Increase investment in support services for families post reunification

THE WAY FORWARD

Significant and ongoing investment of ringfenced funding and other resources is required to implement the *Nukara* strategy and action plan, including the four service programs of the *Tirrina* model. Without this investment, TAC and the Aboriginal community of Lutruwita will be unable to meet the financial and other resource demands associated with keeping Aboriginal children safe.

Funding must be flexible, allowing TAC to respond promptly to the unique needs of each family. As an interim measure, TAC's funding submission to the Tasmanian Government for consideration in State Budget processes for the 2025-26 financial year included a request for block funding and more funds for the delivery of family support services. TAC has also applied for a grant under the *National Child and Family Investment Strategy – Innovation Fund* to support the anticipated transition of resources from the NGO sector.

Fibre 2 proposes development of a comprehensive *Nukara* investment strategy and partnership agreement with the Tasmanian Government (Government) that includes:

- agreement by the Government to fund implementation of *Nukara*
- commitment by the Government to shifting a proportion of existing funding and other resources from the relevant business units of DECYP and currently-funded NGOs and redirecting these funds and resources to TAC to support delivery of *Tirrina* service programs
- supplementation of existing and transferred funds and resources where necessary to ensure full implementation and ongoing delivery of all components of the *Tirrina* model
- assurance of ongoing Government investment in existing and new TAC child-safe service programs, including strategies to ringfence sources and streams of funding.

Next steps

- Confirm formal in-principle Government commitment to fund the Palawa Children's Future Project Stage 2, including the release of funds reserved for TAC through *Closing the Gap Capacity Building Grant Program (Round 2)*.
- Establish the Palawa Children's Future Project Stage 2 to initiate implementation of *Nukara*.
- Identify and allocate specialist project resources to cost all elements of the *Nukara* strategy and *Tirrina* model, in collaboration with Government representatives.
- Draft the *Nukara* investment strategy and partnership agreement, including the level of funding required over the Forward Estimates and beyond, to establish and deliver the four service programs of the *Tirrina* model.



©Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre
198 Elizabeth Street
Nipaluna / Hobart 7000
Phone: +61 (0)3 6234 0700

Nukara 2025