

NUKARA STRATEGY

Weaving a wise, bold and strong
basket to safely hold Aboriginal
children and their families



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre acknowledges the profound and enduring negative impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal people, including abuse, discrimination, inequity and the loss of culture and language. As one organisation and many individuals, we are committed to overcoming and learning from these injustices as we take positive steps to safeguard the rights of current and future generations of Aboriginal children and to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of this document. Special acknowledgment and thanks are extended to those members of the Aboriginal community who demonstrated vulnerability and strength in sharing their stories, which are vital for creating meaningful change and improving the lives of Aboriginal children.

We are especially indebted to Heather Sculthorpe, Chief Executive Officer of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and author of the landmark 2014 report *luwutina mana-mapali krakani waranta*. Without Heather's leadership, insights, dedication and commitment to achieving positive life outcomes and equality for the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, this work would not have been possible.

Nukara was developed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre as part of the Palawa Children's Future Project, supported and funded through the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* and the Tasmanian Government's Closing the Gap Capacity Building Grant Program.

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The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre acknowledges Aboriginal community members who contributed to this report and have since passed away. We thank the families for giving permission to include their photos.

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.

REDUCE ENTRY



THE TIRRI

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Community
Weaving a Wise, Bold and Strong Basket to

The NUKARA STRATEGY

How we make a
STRONG BASKET



Secure funding



Aboriginal workforce
capacity and
capability



Aboriginal child-safe
practices



Lawful
authority



Governance
accountability
data sovereignty

1. Handle

Community
leadership

2. Fibres

Voices for change

Children, parents
held and carried



KANI PAMA MODEL

Community's Approach to Keeping Children Safe
safely hold Aboriginal Children and their Families

3. Design

Systemic support

4. Weavers

Community wisdom

Children and families
held with care

DELIVERING New Programs



Primary contact
through TAC



Expand family
support and IFES



Aboriginal-led
decision making
forum



Expanding care
of Aboriginal children
on safety orders



Culturally safe
legal support



Transformational
change




The Aboriginal basket artworks featured throughout this document are the work of Ruby Moore, a proud Palawa woman and great-granddaughter of Aunty Ida West.

Ruby's work was inspired by the dilly bags and other baskets woven by Aunty Ida and Aunty Lennah Newson.

Other illustrations are the work of Zahra Zainal, a live graphic recorder and illustrator. Zahra attended the consultation forums, sketching visual images of community voices in real time

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When people understand
what you say and what
you mean, they are
more likely to trust and
connect with you.

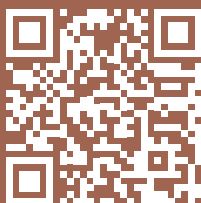
WORDS AND MEANINGS

For ease of reading, please familiarise yourself with some of the words and meanings used throughout this document.

- **Lutruwita** is generally used in preference to Tasmania.
- **Aboriginal people** is used in preference to Indigenous or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, acknowledging Aboriginal people as the First Peoples of Lutruwita.
- **Children** is intended to mean anyone under the age of 18, including older children, such as those aged 12-17, who may otherwise be referred to as young people.
- **Child safety** is intended to mean measures to protect the safety and wellbeing of children.
- **Transfer of responsibility** means the transfer of lawful authority, government funding and other resources.

Palawa kani language

kani pama	(kah-nee pah-mah)	to talk or speak first
ningina	(neeng-ee-nah)	to bring, to get, to give
nukara	(nu-kah-rah)	to make or twine a basket
rrala	(rah-lah)	strong
takariliya taypani	(tah-kah-ree-lee-ya tie-pah-nee)	bringing families together
tirrina	(tee-ree-nah)	basket
tirrina rrala	(tee-ree-nah rrah-lah)	strong basket



Palawa kani audio




Other words and abbreviations

ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, being an organisation that provides services to the Aboriginal community that controls it, through a locally elected board of management
active efforts	affirmative, active, thorough and timely efforts intended primarily to maintain or reunite an Aboriginal child with their family, viewed as the 'gold standard' of practice in applying the <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle</i>
ARL	<u>Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line</u> , which is Tasmania's existing first point of contact for child wellbeing and safety
Bringing them Home report	<u>Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families</u> (1997) exposed the devastating impact of Australia's forced removal policies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
child	any person under the age of 18
child abuse	maltreatment of a child that includes neglect, physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse, and exposure to, or involvement in, domestic or family violence
child-safe	encompasses all the determinants needed to keep children safe and well, including their health, cultural, economic, educational, housing and social needs
child safety system	all child safety services and programs including ARL, Bringing Baby Home, IFES, early years assessment, response, out-of-home care, adoptions, permanency, restoration, after care support, child safety and wellbeing liaisons
child sexual abuse	involvement of a child in any sexual activity that the child does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, is developmentally unprepared for, or otherwise violates the laws or norms of society
Coalition of Peaks	<u>representative group</u> of more than 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, assembled as an act of self-determination to partner with Australian governments in Closing the Gap decision-making
Closing the Gap	<u>National Agreement on Closing the Gap</u>
Commission of Inquiry (or Commission)	<u>Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings</u>
CSS	<u>Child Safety Service (Tasmanian Government)</u>
DECYP	Department for Education, Children and Young People
DMF	Decision-Making Forum (CSS)
IFES	Intensive Family Engagement Service, being a voluntary program currently provided by the Tasmanian Government's Child Safety Service, through which intensive support is provided to families with the aim of reducing safety concerns and risks to children so they may be able to remain safely in their family home

institutional child sexual abuse	child sexual abuse that occurs within, is enabled by or attributable to the premises, action, inaction, activities or operations of a government or non-government organisation and its workers, whether paid or voluntary, in the course of or in connection with their duties, or by any other child or adult on the premises
National Agreement	<u>National Agreement on Closing the Gap</u>
NGO	Non-government organisation
Our Safe and Supported Action Plan	<i>Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026</i>
Placement Principle	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle
self-determination	the ongoing process that ensures that Aboriginal people are able to make decisions about matters that affect their lives, including the essential elements of participation, choice and control
SNAICC	<u>SNAICC – National Voice for our Children</u> (formerly the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care)
truth-telling	the process of openly sharing historical truths so as to move forward in an inclusive, healing and just way, which is an essential element of transformative change





It's time to stop
our kids going into
welfare and get them
back to family and
community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2023, Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre 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.**¹ To achieve this, the Palawa Children's Future project was implemented. The project is being undertaken in two stages:

Stage 1 was to develop the strategy and action plan. This stage is complete and the primary output of this stage is this document: *Nukara*.

Stage 2 will begin once government funding is secured for the statewide implementation and management of the *Tirrina* model, as outlined in the *Nukara* strategy. This should include the redirection of existing funding and resources from both government and non-government sectors.

Strategic direction



Tasmanian Government to **fund the *Nukara* strategy and *Tirrina* model**, supported by a formal partnership agreement and commitment to ongoing future investment, including redirecting existing government and non-government funding and resources.



Establish an Aboriginal designed and managed **first point of contact service** for Aboriginal-led child safety.



Redesign existing **prevention and early intervention services** for keeping Aboriginal families together, ensuring these services are Aboriginal designed and delivered.



Establish an Aboriginal designed and led **decision-making forum that encourages participation** by Aboriginal children and their families.



Expand Aboriginal designed and led **services for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care**, focusing on achieving positive life outcomes and meaningful connections with family, community, culture and country.

INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal children continue to be significantly overrepresented in the child protection systems of Australia's states and territories, including Lutruwita, compared with non-Aboriginal children.²

As part of national efforts to address this problem, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre established the Palawa Children's Future project. Refer to [Appendix 1](#).

The project aims to improve safety and life outcomes for Aboriginal children living in Lutruwita, consistent with the *Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026* (Our Safe and Supported Action Plan).



TIRRINA a basket

Our model: Tirrina

Tirrina is the Aboriginal community's model for keeping Aboriginal children safe, symbolised as a Tasmanian Aboriginal basket with enough wisdom, boldness and strength to safely hold and carry our children and their families.

The *Tirrina* model is evidence-based, culturally appropriate and designed to:

- **prevent the entry** of Aboriginal children into the child safety system
- **support the exit** of Aboriginal children from the child safety system.

NUKARA to make a basket

Our strategy: Nukara

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

While the model was designed for seamless adoption by any Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO), the community views the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre as best placed to take on that responsibility on behalf of the Aboriginal community.



Keeping our kids SAFE & WELL in the care of their FAMILIES

How Nukara was developed

In 2014, Heather Sculthorpe³ investigated and reported to government on the experiences of Tasmanian Aboriginal families who 'came to the attention' of the child safety system, noting that children in those families were more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be removed for reasons of neglect or abuse. Sculthorpe's report also found that, once removed, the children were rarely returned to their families.

Ten years on, very little had changed. In 2024, Sculthorpe's findings and recommendations were reconsidered and revalidated at statewide consultation forums held as part of the Palawa Children's Future project.

The clearest and strongest message that continues to be conveyed by the Aboriginal community is that any new model must prioritise the best interests of children and the community by keeping them together. This is the key message that shaped development of the *Tirrina* model.

About this document

This document describes *Nukara* and *Tirrina*, highlighting why, how and what changes are needed for the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre to take on responsibilities for keeping Aboriginal children safe.

To ensure that the implementation process stays on track, our action plan will incorporate multiple 'review and assess' points. In this way, issues and risks will be identified and managed as and when they arise.

What success looks like

Nukara and *Tirrina* mandate Aboriginal designed and led services, strengthened by outcomes-driven, genuine partnerships with government and non-government organisations.

The success of *Nukara* will be measured by:

- timely transfer of all responsibilities for keeping Aboriginal children safe to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre
- full implementation of the *Tirrina* model.

The Aboriginal community in Lutruwita has spoken again. Together, we have developed solutions to realise positive and sustainable change for Aboriginal children and their families.

SYMBOLISM OF TIRRINA: THE MODEL

Tirrina is a unique concept that symbolises the Tasmanian Aboriginal community's approach to keeping children safe.

What is a tirrina?

A tirrina is a culturally significant Tasmanian Aboriginal basket, used to gather, hold and carry items with care. Traditionally woven from native fibres, tirrinas are durable and practical. The intricate weaving process includes deciding which fibres to use, the size of the basket and how tightly to weave the basket.

What the different parts symbolise

The model emphasises the importance of community, culture and country, interwoven with established and new practices and systems, and the commitments and resources of government and non-government organisations.

The **handle** must be strong enough to carry the weight of a fully-laden tirrina. The handle symbolises the work of Aboriginal organisations and leaders, carrying and upholding the voice of the community. The handle will ensure that the model is culturally appropriate, community-led, child-centred and developed in accordance with the *Nukara* strategy.

Fibres are needed to weave a tirrina. The fibres symbolise the resources necessary to make a sturdy and sustainable child-safe basket. The fibres encompass the voices and drivers for change, including the voices of the Aboriginal community and strategic initiatives and action plans at national and state levels.

The pattern of the weave ensures the fibres work together to give the tirrina strength. The weave of the model is founded on the actions established by *Our Safe and Supported Action Plan*, with the fibres carefully interwoven into core streams of action, each designed to safely carry our children and their families.

The weavers are Aboriginal community members, whose role it is to collect the fibres and determine the size and shape of the basket and when it should be woven. The weavers of the model will continue to work closely with children, families and others to ensure that decisions impacting the lives of Aboriginal children and their families are Aboriginal-led and culturally safe, both now and into the future.

Sitting within the tirrina are Aboriginal children and their families who, while lifted up and supported, are encouraged to make decisions about their own journeys, consistent with the principle of self-determination. Our focus is always to ensure safe carriage of the children at the centre of the basket.



DILLY BAG a long-handled loosely woven tirrina

Strengthening the Dilly Bag

A dilly bag is a type of loosely-woven tirrina, with long handles for wearing around the neck, across the body or over the shoulder.

The dilly bag represents the current state of programs delivered by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre through the existing child safety system for more than 40 years. While successful, these programs are limited by inadequate levels of funding, resourcing and community involvement in decision-making. Some programs are also not delivered statewide.

When the *Nukara* strategy is implemented, the dilly bag will be strengthened by adding new fibres of responsibility, resourcing and self-determination.

Strengthening the Dilly Bag will build on the success of existing programs and introduce new programs and responsibilities as the relevant functions and powers are progressively transferred.

In this way, the dilly bag will be transformed into a stronger, more sustainable, child-safe basket.

TIRRINA RRALA a strong basket

Achieving Tirrina Rrala

After the dilly bag is strengthened and tested for durability, the handle of the dilly bag will be shortened, the weave tightened, and the basket fully transformed into a Tirrina Rrala.



You can move, breathe and grow in a tirrina.

You may be held securely within your community's carefully woven fibres, but you can see up, down and out, where you've been and what lies ahead.

You can ask the weavers to add, remove or repair any fibres that unravel.


You can test or trust in the strength of the handle.

You can ask to be carried high or low, fast or slow.

You can make your journey smooth or bumpy.

You can ask to be held tightly or loosely.

You can feel safe and be safe in a tirrina.

A woman with glasses and a black hoodie stands on the left, gesturing with her hands as if speaking. In the foreground, a man with a grey beard and glasses, wearing a traditional Indigenous Australian beanie and a patterned shirt, sits at a table, writing on a document. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and a large screen.

For the Tirrina model to be strong and sustainable into the future, adequate funding and resources must be provided by the Tasmanian Government.

STRENGTHS OF THE TIRRINA MODEL

Handle of community leadership



The effectiveness of the handle relies on strong Aboriginal community leadership, connections with children and families, outcomes-driven genuine partnerships and good governance and management throughout and beyond implementation of *Nukara*.

The handle of community leadership will ensure that *Nukara's* theory of systems change and principles of managing change are applied.

Weave of safety and support



Unacceptably high and increasing numbers of Aboriginal children in Lutruwita continue to be removed from their families and communities. This is neither equitable nor tolerable.

To address these and other issues, the Tasmanian Government is committed to reforming the existing child safety system, including transferring responsibility for keeping Aboriginal children safe, from government to the Aboriginal community.

The priority actions of *Nukara* were developed by the Aboriginal community to support Aboriginal families and keep children safe. Our consultation and research findings were considered alongside national and state targets and strategies to design a strong weave for the *Tirrina* model.

Fibres of growth and renewal



The *Tirrina* model is only as strong as the fibres from which it is made, including the voices and drivers for change. The fibres of growth and renewal must be robust but flexible enough to meet the needs of current and future generations. If one part of the basket is weak or weakens, the whole structure may unravel or become unusable.

For the *Tirrina* model to be sustainable into the future, adequate funding and resources must be provided by the Tasmanian Government.

Wisdom of community



Nukara is the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre's strategy for implementation of the *Tirrina* model and for progressive transfer of responsibilities for keeping Aboriginal children safe.

The Aboriginal community and *Nukara* recognise that:

- the Aboriginal community must be ready and resourced to take on responsibility
- statutory powers and functions cannot be fully transferred until people and systems are in place
- throughout the transfer process, no Aboriginal child should be subjected to unnecessary or additional risk.

FIBRES OF THE TIRRINA MODEL

The eight fibres of *Tirrina* have been localised to reflect and reinforce the eight actions outlined in our *Safe and Supported Action Plan*. They also align with the commitments and work of the Tasmanian Government and the governments of all Australian states and territories.

The eight fibres of the *Tirrina* model are:

- 1. Lawful authority:** commitment to progressively transferring statutory functions and powers, for keeping Aboriginal children safe, to the Aboriginal community.
- 2. Adequate and ongoing investment and resources:** commitment to adequate, coordinated and ongoing funding and resourcing of Aboriginal-designed and led programs for keeping Aboriginal children safe.
- 3. Data sovereignty:** commitment to establishing policies and infrastructure for the Aboriginal community to be provided with custodianship of existing data, and sovereignty of all data transferred and collected.
- 4. Aboriginal workforce:** commitment to developing and maintaining a sustainable Aboriginal child and family workforce.
- 5. Active efforts:** commitment to implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (Placement Principle) to the standard of active efforts.
- 6. Legal supports:** commitment to improving the availability and quality of legal support for Aboriginal children and families.
- 7. Accountability and oversight:** commitment to establishing and strengthening advocacy and oversight through the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and partnership agreements.
- 8. Social determinants:** commitment to working across portfolios to address the social determinants impacting Aboriginal children and families.

Research findings and more detailed analysis of the fibres are described in the supporting documents.



HOW THE TIRRINA MODEL WORKS

GATHER THE FIBRES FOR WEAVING

FUNDING | GOVERNANCE | ACCOUNTABILITY



ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY WEAVERS

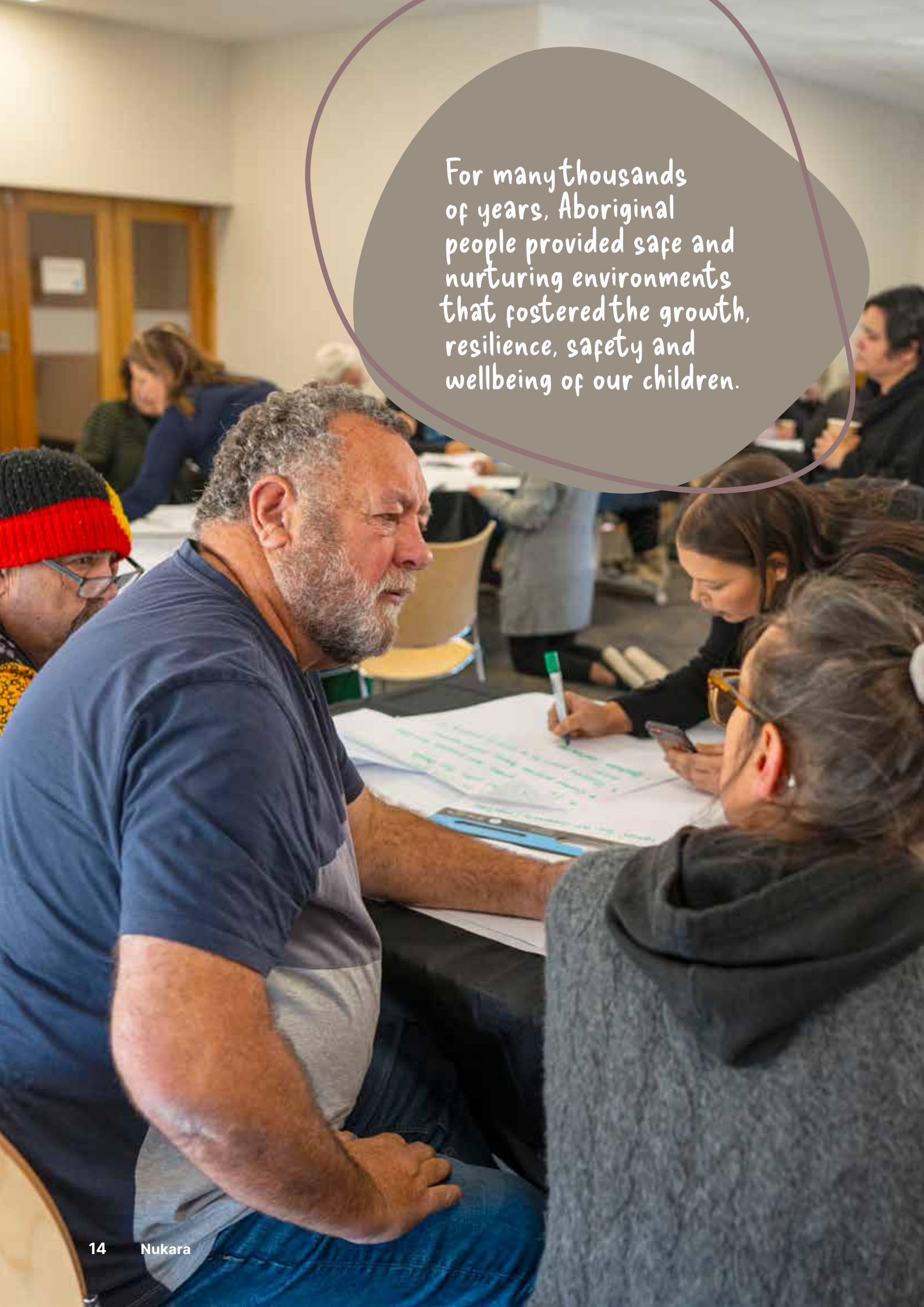
Weaving a wise, bold and strong basket to safely hold
Aboriginal children and their families



PREVENT THE ENTRY INTO AND SUPPORT THE EXIT FROM THE CHILD SAFETY SYSTEM

CLOSING THE GAP TARGET: REDUCE THE OVERREPRESENTATION OF ABORIGINAL
CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE BY 45 PER CENT BY 2031

THE TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY'S VISION IS FOR ALL ABORIGINAL CHILDREN LIVING IN
LUTRUWITA TO BE SAFE AND WELL IN THE CARE OF THEIR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY.



For many thousands of years, Aboriginal people provided safe and nurturing environments that fostered the growth, resilience, safety and wellbeing of our children.

WHY CHANGE IS NEEDED

Legacy of tragedy

For many thousands of years, Aboriginal people provided safe and nurturing environments that fostered the growth, resilience, safety and wellbeing of our children. This history was devastated by invasion and the ensuing extreme domination by white society, as comprehensively documented in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The legacy of this brutal history includes the ongoing impact of intergenerational trauma and shattered connections to community, culture and country. In the face of these, and other forms of systemic discrimination, mistreatment and inequality, the wellbeing and cultural longevity of Aboriginal people and communities were critically damaged.

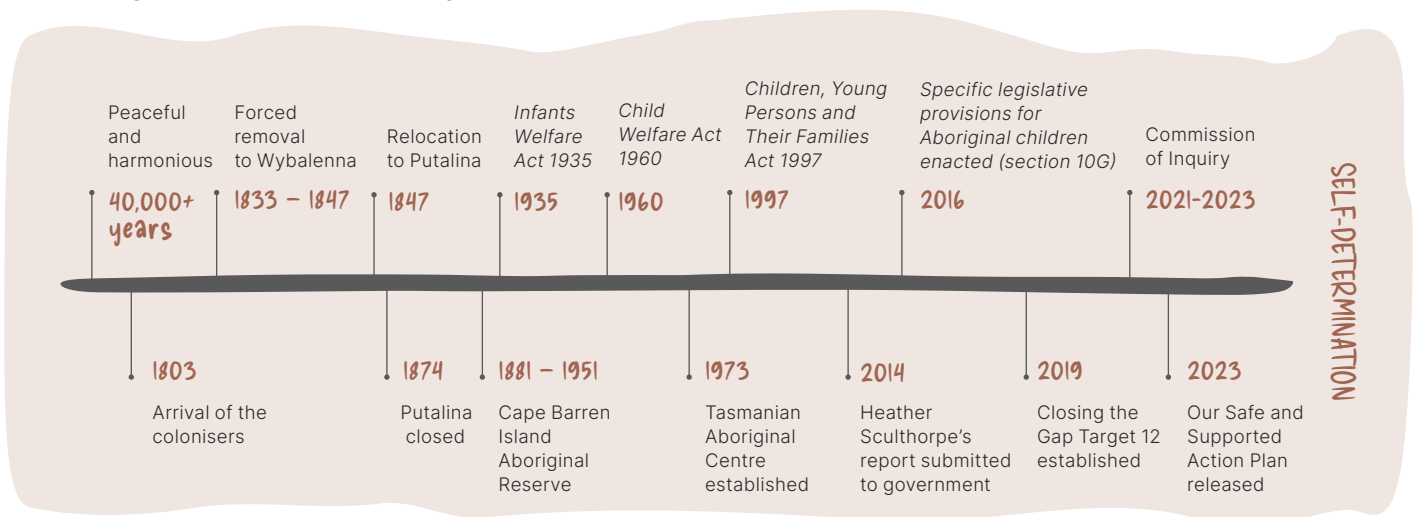
Trauma of separation

Almost 30 years ago, the landmark *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families* was published, drawing national and international attention to the pain and suffering of the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal children who were forcibly taken from their families and communities.

The *Bringing Them Home* report highlighted the need for significant structural change to address the impacts of colonisation and Stolen Generations, including legislating for ACCOs to have decision-making powers in Aboriginal child safety issues, and for the greater involvement of Aboriginal people in designing and delivering the services that affect them. The report unequivocally identified self-determination and accountability as essential aspects of meaningful change.

Despite the recommendations of the *Bringing them Home* report, the findings and recommendations of more recent inquiries and reports, and national and state commitments and strategies, little progress has been made to achieve self-determination and accountability in Lurruwita.

200 years of enforced separation



DRIVERS AND VOICES FOR CHANGE

Keeping our children with us

In 2014, Heather Sculthorpe reported to the (previous) Tasmanian Government on the significant scope of reforms needed to improve the child safety system for Aboriginal people living in Lutruwita.³

After months of extensive research and consultation with more than 150 members of the Aboriginal community, Sculthorpe submitted a comprehensive report *luwutina mana-mapali krakani waranta* for government consideration. This came 23 years after the final report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and 17 years after the release of the *Bringing Them Home* report.

Sculthorpe's report included ten recommendations that aligned with the recommendations of the Royal Commission and *Bringing them Home* including that the Tasmanian Government:

1. accept the wish of the Aboriginal community for the transfer of jurisdiction over child safety issues to the Aboriginal community, and
2. amend the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* to enable [Aboriginal people] to opt to have our matters dealt with under Aboriginal jurisdiction rather than under the Tasmanian legislation.

While none of Sculthorpe's recommendations were formally acknowledged or accepted at that time, the drivers, relevance and substance of those recommendations are still valid.

Community voices

In 2023, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre started work on the Palawa Children's Future Project, with a clear view to progressing and building on Sculthorpe's recommendations.

In partnership with the Aboriginal community, the *Nukara* strategy and *Tirrina* model were developed, reflecting the voices of more than 200 Aboriginal people, heard and recorded during more than 100 hours of conversation. Our voices are echoed in and supported by national and state government commitments and initiatives.

The wrongs of the past inevitably informed our goals for the future, guiding our path towards Aboriginal people regaining control of decisions about the safety and wellbeing of their children and families.

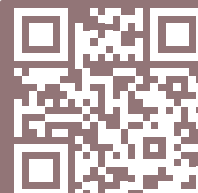
Our community acknowledges that the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre has been supporting and championing the interests of Aboriginal children for more than half a century, working hard to keep families together wherever possible.

One of the loudest, most frequent calls to action we heard during consultation was:

We need Aboriginal-led, designed and delivered services and programs.

Other voices and findings

In 2024, we undertook a comprehensive review of Aboriginal-led child safety models in other Australian jurisdictions and First Nations communities in the United States of America, Canada and New Zealand. The findings of our research were analysed and helped to inform *Nukara* and *Tirrina*.



Giving voices
to children
Ada

Closing the Gap

In 2020, the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* was established to address ongoing inequality and achieve the same life outcomes for Aboriginal people as other Australians. Closing the Gap recognises that more needs to be done, and done differently, to overcome 'entrenched disadvantage, political exclusion, intergenerational trauma and ongoing institutional racism'.⁴

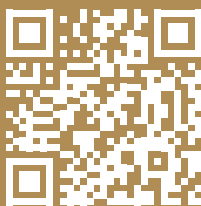
As a signatory to the National Agreement, the Tasmanian Government is committed to working with Aboriginal people and other Australian governments to progress national work on four priorities for changing the way governments work with Aboriginal people.

Priorities and targets for reform

The National Agreement establishes Priority Reforms for changing the way governments work with Aboriginal people by:

- strengthening formal partnerships and shared decision-making
- building the ACCO sector
- transforming government services so they work better for Aboriginal people
- improving and sharing access to data and information to support informed, shared decision-making.

As Lutruwita's Coalition of Peaks member for Closing the Gap, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre works in partnership with the Tasmanian Government to progress this work. Specific targets are used to measure progress, including targets for reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the out-of-home care systems.



Community voice
Natika



Overrepresentation in out-of-home care

Closing the Gap Target 12 is to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent by 2031.⁵

In 2024, the Productivity Commission reported that Tasmania was not on track to achieve this target, with no progress made in 2019-2023.⁶

In 2022-23, Tasmania recorded its **highest ever rate of over-representation of Aboriginal children** in out-of-home care, showing a steady increase over the last decade. Over the same period, Aboriginal children in Tasmania were **5.6 times more likely** than non-Aboriginal children to be placed in out-of-home care or other supported living arrangements.⁷

Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan

Clause 49 of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* requires the development of sector strengthening plans, with initial focus on childhood care and development.

A sector strengthening plan for childhood care and development was developed through Australia-wide consultation. The plan covers many aspects of Aboriginal workforce development in child safety and family support services, including cultural competency, trauma responsiveness and early intervention. The plan also seeks out opportunities to progressively transfer statutory functions and powers to ACCOs. More information is provided at [Appendix 2](#).



Family Matters

Family Matters is an annual publication that holds governments to account for progressing Closing the Gap Target 12.

Family Matters 2024 identifies and reports on 16 recommendations to address systemic issues and foster positive change, including:

- more funding for ACCO-led prevention programs and establishing nationally integrated early years services, ensuring families have access to quality, culturally safe supports
- empowering communities to control decisions affecting children, by directing funding to ACCOs and implementing family-led decision-making models
- ending the adoption of Aboriginal children from out-of-home care, and implementing national standards for the Placement Principle
- enhancing **accountability** by creating peak bodies for Aboriginal participation in decision-making, establishing commissioners for Aboriginal children and improving data practices to better meet the needs of communities.

Family Matters findings for 2024 include:

- Since 2019, Tasmania has seen an **eight per cent increase** in the Aboriginal out-of-home care population.⁸
- In 2022-23, **only 17 per cent** of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care in Tasmania were placed with Aboriginal relatives or kin, well below that year's national average of 32.2 per cent.⁹
- Tasmania continues to demonstrate **very low funding** to ACCOs for family support.
- Child protection systems **continue to fail** Aboriginal children and families, exposing them to ongoing trauma.

A summary of *Family Matters* recommendations is provided at [Appendix 3](#).

Safe and Supported

Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 aims to improve the lives of all Australian children and families experiencing disadvantage, neglect and abuse.

Implementation of the framework is supported by two action plans, including *Our Safe and Supported Action Plan*.

In 2024, Community Service Ministers from around Australia launched the *Safe and Supported Partnership Agreement*, supporting their shared commitment to joint decision-making, oversight and implementation.

Our Safe and Supported Action Plan guides and aligns the collective efforts of all stakeholders to achieve Closing the Gap Target 12. More information is included at [Appendix 4](#).

Commission of Inquiry

In 2023, the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings (Commission) examined and reported on responses to incidents and allegations since the year 2000, focusing on systemic issues and recommendations for reform.

The Commission specifically acknowledged the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care, highlighting the fact that the removal of Aboriginal children from their families and communities can expose these children to even greater risks of child abuse, such as institutional child sexual abuse and institutional betrayal.

The Commission found that Aboriginal children who were institutionally abused in out-of-home care did not receive culturally appropriate support or care.

The Commission also heard that many Aboriginal families do not trust child safety services, are worried that their parenting will be unfairly judged or that children will be removed from their care.¹⁰

All the Commission's findings and recommendations were accepted by the Tasmanian Government.



' The Tasmanian Government needs to recognise how historical mistreatment of Aboriginal people has contributed to the present-day increased risk of ... [institutional] ... child sexual abuse of Aboriginal children. It needs to invest in Aboriginal-led programs that will keep children safe and work to divert them from out of home care and the youth justice system to support them to live safely in the care of their families.' "



Recommendations for reform

The Commission's report includes specific recommendations to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care, including to provide them with culturally appropriate support and care.

The Commission's recommendations align closely with the principles and actions of Closing the Gap and *Our Safe and Supported Action Plan*. The recommendations of all these initiatives are underpinned by the need for Aboriginal self-determination, including:

- investing in Aboriginal-led programs to keep children safe and support them in living safely within the care of their families and communities
- more funding to ACCOs to better support Aboriginal children and families, with particular focus on funding for early, targeted and culturally safe supports
- giving greater power to ACCOs, including through models that transfer responsibility for Aboriginal child safety to the Aboriginal community
- pursuing active efforts to implement all elements of the Placement Principle

- appointing a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People to monitor the experiences of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care and youth detention
- ensuring active involvement of the Aboriginal community in the child safety reform process.

The Tasmanian Government's draft strategy for responding to the Commission's recommendations assigns specific resources and timelines. These are expected to be tracked and reported on by the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor.

Bringing it all together

Through the Palawa Children's Future Project, we collated and analysed findings from the voices and drivers for change. These provided the foundation for designing and developing *Nukara* and *Tirrira*.

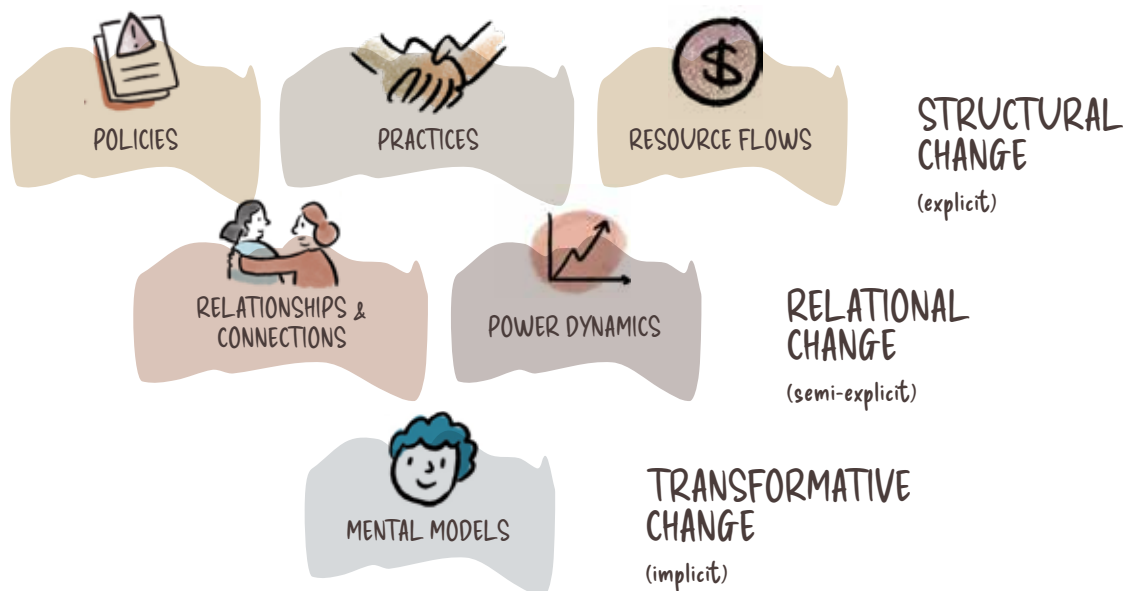
Research findings and more detailed analysis are summarised in the supporting documents. Refer to Appendix 5 for a list and links to more information.



TAC involvement
Jual



NUKARA'S STRATEGIC APPROACH



Theory of systems change

Nukara adopts a systems change approach founded in *The Water of Systems Change*¹² theory and framework. To achieve enduring, transformational change, **the six conditions that 'hold the problem in place' must also be transformed.** This will only happen if we establish genuine committed partnerships, with all parties working together to remove visible and invisible barriers that may be holding the problem in place.

In practice, this means changing **structures and relationships**: the policies, practices, legislation, resources, connections and power dynamics of organisations and individuals.

Truly transformational change will not be achieved unless the **mental models** of individuals and organisations are also changed. This has the greatest impact but poses the greatest challenge, as mental models include the implicit or unconscious beliefs, values and ways of thinking that influence the way people behave, work and make decisions. Unless we work hard to implement change at this level, full systems change will only be temporary or incomplete.¹³

Principles for managing change

In researching and developing Nukara, we learned how important it is for everyone involved in the implementation process to respect and abide by four community-designed principles:

- **Self-determination:** the principles and practices that guide self-determination should underpin all decisions.
- **Aboriginal voice:** always hearing and considering the needs, priorities and readiness of the Aboriginal community.
- **Commitment:** recognising that successful implementation requires dedication and a strong commitment to collaboration and truth-telling at all levels.
- **Continuous improvement:** learning together, gathering evidence and using that evidence to improve what we do and how we do it.

Nukara has adopted and embedded these principles as the foundation of our approach to transformational change.

Applying theory to practice

In applying our principles and the conditions of systems change to the structural weaves of *Nukara*, seven action areas were developed. These are the basis of the *Nukara* action plan.

Action Areas

- 1. Establish the Palawa Children's Future Project Stage 2:** to secure funding and implement *Nukara* and *Tirrina*.
- 2. Build Aboriginal workforce capacity and capability:** strengthen the Aboriginal child-safe workforce and services. This action area includes securing ongoing funding and resources.
- 3. Establish Aboriginal child-safe practices:** establish new practices and ensure existing systems are considered and improved to support new ways of working.
- 4. Enable the transfer of lawful authority:** establish legislation and policies that enable the progressive transfer of responsibilities, while keeping children safe from harm.
- 5. Establish robust governance, accountability and data sovereignty:** ensure structures are in place for all parties to work together and transparently to achieve shared goals.
- 6. Provide access to culturally safe legal support:** ensure ready access to quality, culturally safe legal support and services.
- 7. Embed transformational change:** overcome systemic issues through truth-telling and encouraging better understandings of the strengths and importance of Aboriginal community, culture and country.



Two phases of implementation

In honoring the voices of the Aboriginal community, *Nukara*'s approach envisages two distinct phases:

- 1. Strengthening the Dilly Bag:** enhancement of programs and approaches to allow progressive transfer of responsibilities for keeping Aboriginal children safe in the care of their families.
- 2. Achieving *Tirrina Rrala*:** readiness for full transfer of statutory functions and powers to the Aboriginal community.

Tirrina Rrala envisages a future in which self-determination is embedded in theory and practice, and the Aboriginal community has lawful authority over all matters involving the safety of Aboriginal children.

Governance and management

The success of *Nukara* ultimately relies on the strong commitment of all parties, backed by a formal partnership agreement between the Tasmanian Government and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre.

An Aboriginal-led steering committee will be established to enable timely implementation and provide sound strategic direction. Proposed governance and management arrangements are included at [Appendix 6](#).

STRENGTHENING THE DILLY BAG

Strengthening the Dilly Bag involves progressive delivery of the four service programs of the *Tirrina* model.

Service programs

Program 1

Kani Pama (talk first)

Development of a new first point of contact for keeping Aboriginal children safe, to be delivered through the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre. This service will be an alternative to the existing first point of contact (ARL).

Objective: to provide early, culturally safe support for children and families.

Program 2

Ningina (to bring, to get, to give)

Expansion of existing family support and Intensive Family Engagement Service (IFES) programs.

Objective: to provide culturally appropriate prevention and early intervention services to prevent or reduce escalating concerns about child safety.

Program 3

Palawa Partnership Team

Development of a new Aboriginal-led decision-making forum, working with Child Safety Services to promote the use of culturally informed practices and to ensure active efforts are made to implement the Placement Principle.

Objective: to establish a respectful team that ensures culturally safe decision-making.

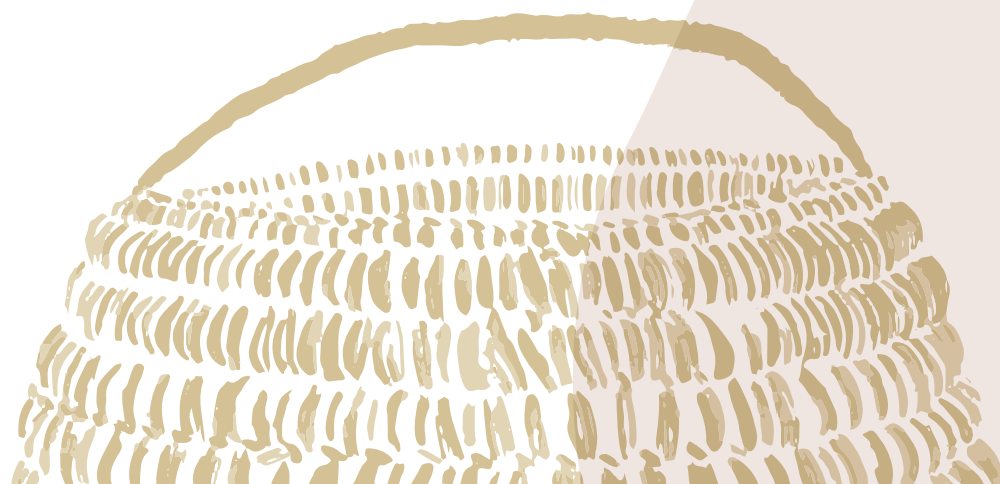
Program 4


Takariliya Taypani
(bringing families together)

Strengthening and expanding the existing program, delivered by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, that provides care for Aboriginal children on child safety orders.

Objective: to meet each child's needs by prioritising connections to family, community, culture and country.

Strengthening the Dilly Bag is scheduled to commence at the beginning of the 2025-26 financial year. More information on the service programs is provided at [Appendix 7](#).





Another problem is the
Aboriginality process. It's too
political. Some people say they
are Aboriginal when they're
not, and at the same time our
Aboriginal kids are being lost
in the system. It's wrong.

Appendix 1: Palawa Children's Future Project

Palawa Children's Future Project	
Project structure	The project is to be undertaken in two or more distinct stages.
Funding source	<i>Closing the Gap Capacity Building Grant Program</i> (administered by the Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet).
Vision	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.
Project objective	<p>The project objective is to develop, pilot and successfully implement an evidence-based and culturally appropriate model for Aboriginal child safety and wellbeing, designed, controlled and managed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stage 1: COMPLETED development of the model, supported by a strategy and action plan to guide Stage 2 of the project, in alignment with the <i>Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2026</i>. ▪ Stage 2: NOT COMMENCED implementation involves establishing the foundations and progressively implementing the strategy and action plan, including critical evaluation/refinement of the model developed in Stage 1.
Project outcomes	<p>Specific outcomes against which overall project success will be measured are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ anecdotal and statistical evidence of better overall child safety and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal children in Lutruwita ▪ reduction in the over-representation and number of Aboriginal children in the child safety system ▪ deliverables that contribute to the achievement of positive life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at national and state levels.
Stakeholders	<p>Primary: Tasmanian Aboriginal children, families and community.</p> <p>Secondary: Department of Premier and Cabinet; Department for Education, Children and Young People; Combined Peak and Government Closing the Gap Working Group; SNAICC - National Voice for our Children; Safe and Supported Leadership Group.</p>

Stage 1 Project Completion Report			
Commencement	June 2023	Completion	March 2025
Stage 1 objective	To design an evidence-based, culturally appropriate, Aboriginal community-led model for Aboriginal child safety in Lutruwita and to develop an implementation strategy and action plan to guide the work to be undertaken in Stage 2 of the project, including for the transfer of responsibility for control of the model to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.		
Stage 1 outcomes	<p>The outcomes used to measure the success of Stage 1 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ project deliverables that evidence the findings of statistical, academic and anecdotal research, are designed to uphold the rights of children and young people and aim to deliver better life outcomes for Aboriginal children ▪ meaningful and productive engagement with key stakeholder groups, in particular with a range of Aboriginal community groups, representatives of government and non-government organisations ▪ a model, strategy and action plan that are legally and culturally robust, and align with and support achievement of the target outcomes and objectives of relevant national and state strategies and initiatives ▪ progress towards achieving Target 12 of the Closing the Gap National Agreement, being to reduce the rate of overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care ▪ progress towards improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, through the delivery of a strategy and action plan for ensuring implementation of an Aboriginal community-controlled, culturally appropriate child safety model. 		
Stage 1 risks	<p>Critical risks were identified as:</p> <p>a) the final model/strategy will not be fit-for-purpose, and</p> <p>b) suitability skilled resources will not be available to help develop these outputs.</p> <p>To mitigate these risks, an extension of time was approved under the grant deed, allowing time for more rigorous research and input from subject matter experts.</p>		
Stage 1 outputs	<p>A. Combined model – strategy – action plan: <i>Strong, connected and together</i> (including progress draft/s of the model and options for consultation) .</p> <p>B. Detailed supporting documents – as identified below.</p>		
Other outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Summary report on research into academic/statistical evidence and similar, successfully implemented national/international models, legal frameworks and instruments, with particular focus on delegated authority/authorisation. ▪ Summary of outcomes and recommendations of Stage 1 stakeholder engagement and consultation . 		

Methodology	<p>Stage 1 was undertaken in four distinct, sometimes overlapping phases.</p> <p>The project plan included specific actions to support project delivery, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ undertaking rigorous, evidence-based research ▪ engaging specialist staff to develop the strategy and action plan ▪ undertaking intensive community engagement and consultation.
Phase 1: Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identified relevant international and national First Nations' service models and analyse enablers, risks/benefits/disadvantages/barriers/opportunities. ▪ Researched legal impediments of transfer of legislative responsibility. ▪ Identified themes: What's interesting? What adds value? What to avoid? ▪ Consulted with a range of organisations and Aboriginal community leaders.
Phase 2: Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developed options paper, including potential service model. ▪ Liaised closely with Aboriginal-led organisations in other jurisdictions to compare and contrast the features of relevant models. ▪ Consulted with community and key thinkers.
Phase 3: Refinement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consulted further with Community on draft service models. ▪ Incorporated feedback and refined the model and enabling arrangements.
Phase 4: Finalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finalised model, strategy and action plan. ▪ Endorsement and publication.

Appendix 2: Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan

In summary, **objectives** of the national *Sector Strengthening Plan: Early Childhood Care and Development* are to:

- increase the service delivery coverage, capacity, quality and resources for ACCOs
- develop dedicated, reliable and consistent funding models for relevant ACCO sectors
- increase Aboriginal workforces in early childhood education and care, child protection and family support
- increase the relevant qualifications and skills of the Aboriginal workforce, alongside professional recognition of the cultural knowledge, skills and relationships that are essential to effective service delivery
- support ACCOs' ability to attract, support and retain adequate workforce capability to meet current and future needs.

The relevant **measures of success** are:

- increased number, coverage and capacity of Aboriginal integrated early years services
- increased number of qualified Aboriginal early educators, including diploma and degree levels
- increased number and qualifications of Aboriginal workforce in early childhood care and development ACCOs
- increased proportion of government funding directed towards early intervention and prevention services delivered by ACCOs
- increased number of mainstream organisations facilitating transfer/transitioning programs, resources and funding to ACCOs to support Aboriginal families and manage child protection cases Increased number of ACCOs designing, managing and delivering programs, resources and funding to support Aboriginal families and manage child safety cases
- data on ACCO sector and workforce needs and progress is available to peak bodies and sector
- ACCO early childhood care and development stories of success are captured, told by the ACCO sector and made available to inform program and service development.

Shared responsibility for progressing areas for action under the plan is allocated to the Australian Government, in collaboration with the Tasmanian Government, other Australian state and territory governments and sector representatives.

Area for action	Goal
Workforce	A dedicated and identified Aboriginal workforce, with specialist skills and training relevant to the sector, with wage parity.
Capital infrastructure	Capital infrastructure needs identified and consistent funding stream.
Service delivery	Clearly defined standards and requirements for service delivery.
Governance	Governance of individual organisations, including compliance with sector-specific regulatory systems.
Consistent funding model	Across the early childhood care and development sector, funding for organisations is available/predictable and supports organisations to be responsive to the needs of those receiving the services.
Peak body	ACCOs that deliver common services are supported by a peak body.

Appendix 3: Family Matters Foundations

Family Matters is founded on a roadmap of interrelated building blocks, underpinned by evidence, ethics and human rights. The **four building blocks** involve:

1. access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services that enable children to thrive
2. community participation in and control over decisions that affect their children
3. culturally safe and responsive child and family welfare laws, policy and practice
4. accountability of governments and services for children and families.

The *Family Matters 2024 Report* identifies and reports against 16 recommendations to address systemic issues and foster positive change. In summary, these recommendations are:

1	Increase the availability of universal and targeted prevention and early intervention support by: a) increasing investment in prevention and early intervention support programs delivered by ACCOs b) setting targets for the percentage of family support and intensive family support services funding directed to ACCOs in each jurisdiction and each region to be equivalent to the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection services, including setting annual targets to reflect ongoing progress towards this goal.
2	The Australian Government should commit to leading the design and implementation of a national, systematic and sustainable approach to funding ACCO-led integrated early years services, with a focus on ensuring equitable access and coverage across the country.
3	Develop and resource a joint state- and Commonwealth-funded national program for ACCO-led integrated family support services.
4	Set investment and commissioning targets for the proportion of funding for child protection and family support services directed towards ACCOs to be equivalent to the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children involved in child protection systems in each jurisdiction and each region.
5	Establish, resource and support independent ACCO and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-led decision-making models in every state and territory, across all regions and supported by legislation, for all families across all significant child protection decision-making points.
6	Expand and appropriately fund the transfer of authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations for statutory child protection functions across Australia, ensuring ACCOs are fully resourced to perform statutory roles.
7	Develop community-based, youth-led models for participation of children and young people in matters that affect them, as part of mechanisms for partnership and shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
8	End adoption of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from out-of-home care.
9	Legislate requirements that ACCOs must approve permanent care orders for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and partner with ACCOs to create alternative, culturally safe approaches to promoting stability and permanency, including ensuring ACCOs have information and roles to support ongoing cultural connections for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on permanent orders.

10	<p>Establish national standards to ensure family support and child protection legislation, policy and practices adhere to all five elements of the Child Placement Principle to the standard of active efforts, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) nationally consistent standards for implementation of the Child Placement Principle to the standard of active efforts and linked jurisdictional reporting requirements under Safe and Supported b) increased representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and communities at each stage of the decision-making process, including through independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-led decision-making in every jurisdiction c) comprehensive, active and dedicated efforts to connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC to family and culture, through cultural support planning, family finding, return to Country, and kinship care support programs d) reform of legislative barriers that inhibit or restrict self-determination, in line with the Child Placement Principle.
11	<p>Increase investment in reunification services to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not spending longer in out-of-home care than is necessary due to inadequate planning and support for parents and increase investment in support services for families once children are returned to support sustained reunification outcomes for children and families.</p>
12	<p>Establish ongoing initiatives to improve practice, knowledge, responsiveness and accountability to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in government agencies, in accordance with Priority Reform 3 under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) applying the Family Matters Reflective Practice Tool on a regular basis to assess agencies' progress with regard to cultural safety, support for shared decision-making and self-determination, staff capability and safe and effective practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families b) identifying and eliminating racism—by assessing capability to understand, apply and promote anti-racism c) employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in both identified and nonidentified roles at all levels d) commitment to increasing capability and practice improvement to ensure culturally safe engagement with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders including service users, partner agencies and staff e) partnering with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, deliver services, promote truth telling and ongoing healing and to improve service delivery by government and non-indigenous agencies f) improving engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with transparent feedback processes and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership of these processes.
13	<p>Establish and resource peak bodies that support and enable equal participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in shared decision-making and partnership for policy and service design and in the oversight of systems impacting children, in accordance with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reform 1.</p>
14	<p>Establish Commissioners for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children nationally and in every state and territory, in accordance with the UN Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions, empowered and resourced by legislation.</p>
15	<p>Establish partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and governments to guide the design, collection, interpretation and use of data relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. As a priority, we call on all jurisdictions to address data gaps identified throughout this report.</p>
16	<p>Change the definition and counting rules for out-of-home care to include children on permanent care orders.</p>

Appendix 4: Safe and Supported Action Areas

The *Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026* (Safe and Supported Action Plan) was developed in collaboration with the [National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing](#), comprising more than 200 non-government and research organisations committed to advancing the national campaign on child safety in Australia.

The plan focuses on eight action areas (not in order of priority), which are:

Action 1 Delegated authority

commit to progressive systems transformation that has First Nations self-determination at its centre.

Action 2 Investing in the community-controlled sector

shift toward adequate and coordinated funding of early, targeted and culturally safe supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Action 3 Data sovereignty

build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infrastructure for sovereignty of data and improve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base.

Action 4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

develop a national approach to continue building a sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family sector workforce.

Action 5 Active efforts

implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) to the standard of active efforts.

Action 6 Legal supports

improve availability and quality of legal support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families engaged with child protection systems.

Action 7 Advocating for accountability and oversight

establish and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioners and similar roles.

Action 8 Social determinants of child safety and wellbeing

work across portfolios impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Appendix 5: Supporting documents

Nukara is supported by a suite of documents summarising the findings of consultation research and analysis. These were developed as part of the Palawa Children's Project: Stage 1 and are available for viewing and download from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre's website: <https://tacinc.com.au>.

The detailed project documentation comprises:

Fibre 1: Lawful authority

Fibre 2: Investment and resources

Fibre 3: Data sovereignty

Fibre 4: Aboriginal workforce

Fibre 5: Active efforts

Fibre 6: Legal supports

Fibre 7: Accountability and oversight

Fibre 8: Social determinants

Appendix 6: Proposed Governance

Steering Committee - Draft Terms of Reference

Purpose and role	<p>The purpose of the Aboriginal-led Steering Committee is to champion and provide high-level strategic direction for implementation of the <i>Nukara</i> strategy and <i>Tirrina</i> model.</p> <p>The Steering Committee's role includes ensuring that representatives of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, Tasmanian Government agencies and non-government organisations are active contributors to the timely transfer of responsibility for Aboriginal child safety to the Aboriginal community. The Steering Committee provides strategic direction and leadership for new and amended laws, principles, practices and frameworks to help remove the barriers to transformative change.</p>
Membership	<p>The steering committee should comprise senior Tasmanian Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal representatives, including senior government executives with current leadership roles and responsibilities for Safe and Supported deliverables and the current child safety system.</p>
Functions	<p>The functions of the Steering Committee are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ champion and support the <i>Nukara</i> strategy and <i>Tirrina</i> model▪ oversee successful implementation of the strategy and action plan▪ ensure and oversee the appropriate and ongoing allocation of Government funding and resourcing to implement all the structures, services and systems that comprise the model, with clear focus on:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- expanding and supporting the resources of and services delivered by ACCOs, including workforce development strategies- increasing ACCO capacity and capability for child safety decision-making- enabling the progressive transfer of legislated functions and powers▪ ensure Tasmanian Government representative participation in critical national and state initiatives, including the two-way communication of activities and progress relevant to Closing the Gap, Safe and Supported and Family Matters▪ gather and share information in accordance with the principles of Aboriginal data sovereignty▪ champion, sponsor and enable the progressive transfer of statutory child safety decision-making to the Aboriginal community▪ encourage and embed truth-telling principles across and within all Tasmanian Government and non-government agencies, initiating and supporting efforts to improve knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal cultural heritage, strengths, values and ways of doing▪ ensure accountability, rigour and transparency across all parts and phases of the implementation process.

The proposed steering committee must adhere to the guiding principles and the theory and practice of systems change embedded in *Nukara*. Steering committee members must understand where *Nukara* fits within national and state commitments to ensuring safety and equity for Aboriginal children.

The purpose and functions of the steering committee may be accommodated within an existing or new child safety governance structure, contingent on the compatibility of terms of reference and the presence of executive-level membership.

Project management

The *Nukara* project manager and project team will sit within and be appointed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre.

The **project manager will be a member** of the steering committee and report to that group on project status, milestones, risks and critical issues as they arise.

The project manager will lead, coordinate and report on the status of all project and sub-project activities, ensuring that all activities are undertaken in accordance with *Nukara's* theory of systems change and principles of change management.

Sub-project teams, working groups and reference groups will be established, as and when required, to support aspects of implementation.

Appendix 7: Tirrina Service programs

Program 1: Kani Pama

Current state

The Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL) is currently the first point of contact for concerns or reports involving the abuse or safety of all children in Lutruwita. Any child identified as Aboriginal is then referred to an Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) for initial assessment.

In June 2022, a report published by the Tasmanian Auditor-General found that ALOs 'have wide coverage and limited capacity and are not resourced to deliver fully all aspects of their role'. Limitations and challenges of current ALO arrangements include:

- capacity and resourcing issues
- no decision-making powers
- time delays in receiving notifications from ARL
- ALOs are not located statewide.

Future state

When established, Kani Pama will be the first point of contact for concerns and reports involving the abuse or safety of Aboriginal children in Lutruwita. Initial referrals may pass through the ARL or be received directly from any person or organisation, including any member of the Aboriginal or broader Tasmanian community, staff of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre or a government or non-government organisation, including interstate child safety agencies.

The service program will feature:

- meeting with the family and discussing their needs
- assessing the child's safety against an Aboriginal child-safe practice framework (to be developed as part of Kani Pama)
- involving the family in the assessment process.

Potential pathways after initial referral are:

1. **Advice:** brief, focused interaction, with no further action required at the time

OR

2. **Onward referral:** to the Ningina program, Palawa Partnership Team, another authorised ACCO or back to the ARL.

Program 2: Ningina

Current state

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre currently provides family support and IFES programs for Aboriginal children statewide.

Limitations and challenges of the current state include:

- limited funding, despite evidence that culturally informed early intervention is critical to preventing escalating issues
- tightly controlled budgets, with onerous reporting requirements
- referrals to IFES require children and families to have an 'open' file with ARL and the Child Safety Service
- children and families frequently have to tell their story multiple times to many different workers.

Future state

Ningina will provide an enhanced program of Aboriginal-designed and delivered support services for prevention and early intervention, with the aim of preventing Aboriginal children entering the child safety and out-of-home care systems. Ningina will also allow Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre workers to focus more on service delivery and less on administrative tasks.

Ningina will enhance existing programs to:

- encourage and provide opportunities to families to take the lead in decision-making
- nurture a family-centred approach
- advance culturally informed and trauma-informed approaches
- offer a holistic, wraparound service program for families covering physical, mental, emotional and cultural health, intensive in-home support, parenting, housing and brokerage

- personalise the allocation of Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre workers to children and families. A worker may be allocated to more than one family but, wherever possible, each family is allocated only one worker
- provide ongoing support to families whose children are in out-of-home care, such as enrolment in parenting programs, coordination of family visits, support for reunification and family-finding.

Potential pathways are:

1. **Ongoing:** families will be provided with holistic support opportunities/services until that support is no longer required

OR

2. **Onward referral:** if concerns are unresolved and child safety concerns escalate, the family will be referred to the Palawa Partnership Team for further assessment and decision-making, while Ningina support will continue to be provided.

Program 3: Palawa Partnership Team

Current state

The Child Safety Service currently makes statutory decisions about child safety risks and family reunification through a structure known as a Decision-Making Forum (DMF).

When working with Aboriginal families, the Child Safety Service should do everything practical and possible to make sure the child is safe and stays connected to their family, culture and community.

Limitations and challenges of the current state include:

- a pattern of excluding or delaying invitations to Aboriginal families and Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre representatives to attend meetings

- voices of non-Aboriginal foster carers are frequently prioritised over the voices of children, families and Aboriginal community representatives
- there is a lack of adherence to departmental policies for application of the Placement Principle
- inconsistent approaches to shared decision-making
- current and historical information about children's circumstances is not always shared with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre.

Future state

The Palawa Partnership Team will demonstrate an authentic, Aboriginal-led and culturally informed approach to decision-making and take active efforts to apply the Placement Principle.

The Palawa Partnership Team will work together to ensure that:

- the Child Safety Service engages actively and productively with this team when statutory decisions are to be made that involve Aboriginal children
- the Team is supported by an Aboriginal legal service or team
- a strong cultural lens is applied to all decisions made.

Potential pathways are:

1. **Ongoing:** If child safety concerns are ongoing, decisions involving the child's safety remain with the Palawa Partnership Team and Ningina support will continue to be provided

OR

2. **Referral:** If a child safety order is required, the family will be referred to Takariliya Taypani.

Program 4: Takariliya Taypani

Current state

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre currently runs a program to identify Aboriginal children in out-of-home care who are eligible for the program. After being identified, children are invited to join the program, which supports them to set and achieve short and long-term goals, and to build closer family and cultural connections and keep them safe.

Future state

Takariliya Taypani will build on existing structures and resources, strengthen the program's capability to provide children with the best possible support for achieving positive life outcomes and meaningful connections with family, community, culture and country.

Potential pathways are:

1. **Ongoing:** children (and families) will continue to participate in the program on a voluntary basis until they are no longer subject to family safety orders

AND/OR

2. **Onward referral:** participants may be referred to the Palawa Partnership Team if statutory decisions are required.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (2023) TAC Annual Report 2023-2024. Source: <https://tacinc.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/TAC-Annual-Report-23-24-1.pdf>
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