

**SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE CHILD  
PROTECTION SYSTEM IN THE NT 2010**

**THEME: WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE ISSUES**

**TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES FACING THE  
CHILD PROTECTION WORKFORCE - CURRENT AND  
POTENTIAL RESPONSES**

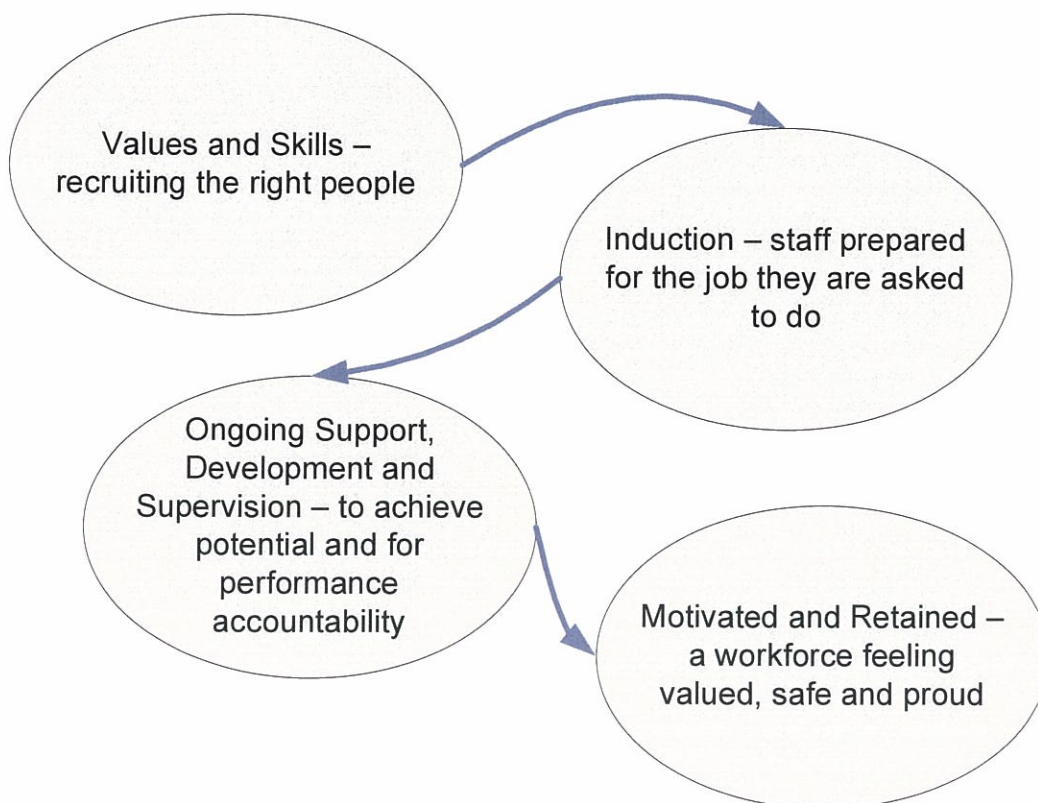
**NTFC CARE AND PROTECTION TRAINING AND  
DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

The NTFC Care and Protection Training and Development Working Group is a sub-group of the NTFC Care and Protection Quality Sub-Committee. The Quality Sub-Committee oversees the development and implementation of policy and strategies to address Quality Assurance issues in NTFC's Care and Protection program.

The Training and Development Working Group is made up of representatives of both the central office and operational areas of NTFC. This Submission is made up of proposals from individual working group members, and is focussed for the most part on training and professional development matters. The Submission does not necessarily reflect the views of all Working Group members or of the Department of Health and Families.

This Submission is structured to provide a short introduction to the topic area, and dot point information on: (1) Issues arising from the topic area that the Working Group believes are relevant to the Inquiry; (2) Relevant action already underway related to that issue; and (3) Suggested remedies that may be considered by the Board of Inquiry in considering this topic area. The Working Group has focussed on remedies that are beyond the scope of current available internal resources.

## 1. ISSUES CANVASSED



The Training and Development Working Group focussed on four issues facing the care and protection system in the Northern Territory in developing this Submission:

1. Recruiting people to NTFC with the values and skill base needed for the Northern Territory care and protection context;
2. Ensuring an appropriate process of induction to provide a solid foundation for NTFC workers;
3. Ensuring care and protection workers are developed, supported and supervised to achieve maximum potential and ensure performance accountability; and
4. Keeping care and protection workers motivated and retained including through professional learning and development.

## **2. VALUES AND SKILLS AT THE POINT OF RECRUITMENT**

### ***2.1 RECRUITING FOR VALUES AND RESILIENCE***

Training and development programs can only be successful if participants have the values and resilience to operate effectively in the Northern Territory context.

The Northern Territory offers a unique and rewarding opportunity for recruits from interstate and overseas to work in a culturally rich environment. With close to 80% of NTFC's child protection case load involving Aboriginal children and families, it is fundamental that the NTFC workforce has the strongest cross-cultural skills in Australia and that the values base of this workforce positions staff to work respectfully with Aboriginal people.

Working in the Northern Territory is similar in many ways to international aid work, given the levels of poverty, material deprivation and trauma that may be experienced by children with whom child protection employees work. Recruitment to the NT needs to recognise this context.

A mis-match between expectations and reality will be detrimental to both the new recruit and child protection outcomes.

#### **ISSUES ARISING:**

Working in the NT child protection context is traumatic and requires resilience.
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Working in the NT child protection context requires significant cross cultural skills.
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Working in the NT child protection context requires a value base that respects and acknowledges cultural differences.
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#### **REMEDIES REQUIRING INVESTMENT:**

1. Examine the recruitment strategies of international aid organisations to determine lessons learned in terms of recruiting a workforce with the resilience and values needed to operate in complex and demanding locations.
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2. Undertake relevant, targeted assessments of recruits to measure resilience and values.
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3. Provide 'real life' examples as part of recruitment action to prepare recruits for what they may encounter in their work.
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## **2.2 TARGETED RECRUITMENT**

The Northern Territory holds a powerful competitive advantage in that – contrary to national trends – the Northern Territory's population is not aging. The Northern Territory's abundance of young people are spread throughout regional and remote areas, and remain 'at home' rather than moving to cities, interstate or overseas. This provides a potentially enormous benefit to child protection and family support work in our jurisdiction. However, these young people often have not been provided with basic literacy and numeracy skills, and often may speak a language other than English at home. They often come with low self efficacy in terms of participation in the formal workforce, and also often have family and cultural responsibilities that may require potential employers to have unusually flexible workplace practices if the

employee is to be successful. The Northern Territory's young people, particularly in regional and remote areas, are an enormous untapped potential workforce.

Generation 'Y' employees come to their work with particular expectations and aspirations in terms of their career. Generation 'Ys' from other jurisdictions are attracted to the Northern Territory for an 'adventure' experience.

People who are in the 'autumn' of their career come with a particular experience base and expectations regarding the way in which an organisation will treat them. These mature workers may bring significant experience and skills, and are attracted to recruitment campaigns that tap into their desire to 'make a difference'.

A learning and development strategy that is linked to a purposeful recruitment program targeting particular segments of a potential employee 'market' will support a more effective professional learning and development program and therefore better outcomes for children.

#### **ISSUES ARISING:**

A 'pre employment' learning and development program that provides basic literacy, numeracy and work life skills is needed if NTFC is to tap into the enormous potential of young, local Territorians.

Recruitment programs targeting local young people in regional and remote areas need to demonstrate NTFC's wiliness to invest in and support young people to enter into child protection and family support careers. A very practical way of doing this will be to set out the learning and development program these young people can expect from NTFC.

'Generation Y' recruits expect to move between different employment experiences and to have training and development programs that rapidly provide the skills they need to do their jobs.

Mature recruits expect to have their previous skills and experiences recognised, and that training and development programs will 'value add' to these capabilities by filling in gaps rather than stepping through the basics.

At this time the department has few male staff, and a purposeful

recruitment program targeting men may provide NTFC with an advantage in the recruitment market place.

**ACTION UNDERWAY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:**

NTFC's Workforce Development Unit is using targeted recruitment action to engender interest in a career in the Northern Territory.

**REMEDIES REQUIRING INVESTMENT:**

4. Initiate a significant project to understand the learning and work skills needs of young people in regional and remote areas to support them to move into child protection and family support work. Invest in this program. A program similar to the accredited Aboriginal Health Worker program is recommended.

5. Develop a purposeful recruitment campaign that targets particular employee segments and generational cohorts, and tailor learning and development programs to suit those employee segments.

6. Gender could be considered when recruiting; given many of the children in families receiving interventions from NTFC do not have male role models.

### **2.3 SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE TRAINING**

Community Welfare Workers in NTFC's professional stream are all required to have a degree level qualification that gives the appointee eligibility for membership of the Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers, Australian Association of Social Workers, Australian Psychological Society, or other tertiary qualifications which, in the opinion of the Chief Executive are appropriate to the duties to be performed.

#### **ISSUES ARISING:**

NTFC is concerned at the quality of case work skills in new graduates from Social Work undergraduate courses.

Increased numbers of new local graduates in Social Work are needed to meet demand in the child protection and family support sector.

#### **ACTION UNDERWAY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:**

NTFC's Workforce Development Unit has commenced discussions with Charles Darwin University to examine options for influencing the coursework for undergraduate Social Work degrees.

#### **POSSIBLE REMEDIES REQUIRING INVESTMENT:**

7. Significantly boost attention in undergraduate Social Work degree content covering child protection, family support and general case work practice.

8. Substantially lift the investment in cadetships and scholarships offered by NTFC for Social Work students, in particular targeting high school students in regional and remote areas via provision of subsidised accommodation to undertake these degrees.

### **3. INDUCTION**

#### **3.1 STRUCTURED, FUNDED INDUCTION PROGRAMS**

The statutory nature of child protection work means that new workers require a significant body of technical information to learn in order to operate effectively.

Backlogs and the complexity of child protection work in the Northern Territory often means that new workers in NTFC find themselves immediately thrust into complex and demanding situations.

This has significant operational and personal impacts.

There is anecdotal evidence that the foundations laid during a new employee's first five days with an organisation influence their ongoing professional practice and their decision as to whether to stay with the organisation over the longer term.

NTFC's very high turnover rate results in a significant proportion of new employees at any one time.

The Care and Protection Recruitment and Retention Working Group have highlighted the importance of effective induction programs as central to improving retention in NTFC.

#### **ISSUES ARISING:**

The induction program of each new worker has to take into account the skills, experience and expectations they bring to the workplace.

The induction program of each new worker has to be structured to deliver skills and information needed on a 'day by day' basis so as not to overwhelm new workers.

The effective induction of new workers requires dedicated resources and should be recognised as an organisational imperative.

Any induction program has to commence before an employee begins with an organisation, and involve ongoing mentoring and feedback processes.

#### **ACTION UNDERWAY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:**

'The First Five Days' Induction Program is under development by NTFC's Workforce Development Unit, for use in NTFC's care and protection program. This will structure the induction program to the information and skills needed by new recruits in the vital first five days of their time with NTFC.

The overall induction program, including pre-commencement induction processes, is being redeveloped by NTFC's Workforce Development Unit.



## REMEDIES REQUIRING INVESTMENT:

**9.** Appoint a dedicated Induction Coordinator within NTFC to support line managers to oversee tailored induction programs for new NTFC recruits.

**10** A structured assessment tool to assess the induction needs of each individual recruit, to be completed before recruits commence.

**11.** P2 positions created in all operational offices to focus on: Staff Induction/Staff Mentoring/Staff Reflective Supervision (for 3 months) in conjunction with scheduled supervision, and to act as Practice Advisors (ongoing). These staff would work with all new staff as soon as they commence in an operational office, after they have completed their induction training (out of office). This role will assist the new workers to link the theory obtained at training to the practice (on the job).

**12.** Senior Practice Advisors at the P3 level should be appointed, one for each region, whose role would be to supervise and support the P2 Practice Advisors in their respective regions. The Senior Practice Advisors would also spend time at the work units to assist the Practice Advisors with their roles/functions. Senior Practice Advisors (in conjunction with team leaders and managers) would review complex cases on a regular basis, make recommendations and for QA purposes.

**13.** All operational staff should spend some time at Intake and in each of the teams based in their respective operational offices (commencing with the investigation team) as part of the induction. This would need to be a structured, planned process to ensure it adds value to the staff member and has minimal impact on the respective Work Unit.

### **3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING POLICY AND PROCESSES IN ORDER TO INDUCT SUCCESSFULLY**

The first step for any new employee is to understand what it is they are meant to do.

For many jobs, this will require detailed understanding of policy, procedures and processes.

This is particularly the case in statutory child protection where breaching legislation, policy and procedures have significant consequences for the employee and the client.

#### **ISSUES ARISING:**

NTFC's Care and Protection Policy and Procedure Manual is presently a single 706 page document, and there are over 100 additional documents in the Care and Protection Resource Manual.

The style of the Policy and Procedure Manual makes it challenging for any new or existing employee to quickly understand the policy foundations of the care and protection program.

NTFC has no process documentation. Each office, and sometimes each Supervisor, has been required to draft details of core processes to support new staff understanding of what is expected of them.

As no core process documentation exists, there is significant process variability between NTFC offices. Staff moving between offices are required to learn new processes.

#### **REMEDIES REQUIRING INVESTMENT:**

**14.** Redevelopment of the Care and Protection Policy Manual to improve accessibility.

**15.** Document core care and protection processes, to support effective induction and also as a base for process improvement.

## 4. SUPPORT, DEVELOPMENT AND SUPERVISION

### 4.1 DIRECT ONE-ON-ONE SUPERVISION

The support and guidance of a supervisor is required for effective performance of any employee.

Supervisors in NTFC are often carrying case loads or managing emergent issues, diminishing time available to support case workers.

Effectively supervising people and managing their performance is a specialist skill that requires development in itself.

#### ISSUES ARISING:

Team leaders are carrying large case management responsibilities.

Many supervisors and managers move quickly from a professional role to a leadership role, often without participating in formal supervision training. This sends a signal that supervision is a 'soft' skill and a low priority for the organisation.

Without explicit guidance, inconsistent supervision practice has emerged. In some offices supervision is done very well; in others supervision is neglected in the face of overwhelming workload, furthering a cycle of crisis and staff feeling overwhelmed.

#### ACTION UNDERWAY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:

NTFC's Workforce Development Unit has developed a Supervision and Accountability Framework, and is moving to implement this framework across the Care and Protection Program.

#### REMEDIES REQUIRING INVESTMENT:

**16.** Relieve Team leaders of case management duties and tasks to free them to provide quality support and learning for staff.  
Actively monitor the extent to which this occurs via CCIS reporting.

**17.** Employ a dedicated officer in the Care and Protection Program to support effective supervision practice.

**18.** All staff responsible for supervision should receive formal training in providing reflective practice in supervision (including Directors, Senior Management, Managers and Team Leaders).

**19.** Monitor the extent to which employees supervising other staff have undertaken supervision training.

**20.** Work Partnership Plans and other agreements and proposed Practice and Professional Development Plans should be integrated into a single tool for reviewing and planning professional development and addressing performance.

## **4.2 WORK TEAM LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The performance of any individual is often dependant upon the extent to which their whole team has clear plans in place, receives structured feedback on performance, and has the opportunity to collectively solve problem, develop and learn new skills.

Employees value receiving information from their direct supervisor. This enables team discussion of issues, and the opportunity to raise issues or concerns in a 'safe' environment. It is therefore vital for the effective functioning of any organisation that each team has processes in place to discuss issues impacting on the team.

### **ISSUES ARISING:**

The overwhelming workload in NTFC's care and protection program provides very little opportunity for staff to undertake collective planning, communication or learning activities.

Collective learning needs of teams (for example, implementation of new procedures or adoption of better case planning practice) can in some circumstances be neglected, impacting upon client outcomes.

The nature of care and protection work often places enormous pressures upon individuals, which can sometimes manifest itself in

dysfunctional interpersonal dynamics between team members. This places an added imperative to include team building activities at the core of NTFC's learning and development activities.

#### **ACTION UNDERWAY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:**

NTFC's Quality Unit has undertaken Work Unit Quality Planning with each NTFC Care and Protection office.

Many teams have put in place arrangements to enable team activities to occur on a regular basis.

The Executive Director sends a weekly all staff email with whole-of-Division information.

#### **REMEDIES REQUIRING INVESTMENT:**

**21.** Offices or Work Units close for 4 hours per fortnight to enable quality support and learning for staff, increased compliance and continuous improvement in service delivery.

**22.** Implement a structured Team Briefing process in NTFC to cascade important information from the Executive Director to each team via a face to face process.

**23.** Strengthen feedback mechanisms. Provide stronger ongoing consultations between Directors/Senior Managers (or representatives) and operational staff regarding decision making for client services and human resource issues.

**24.** Strengthen linkages between policy development and management, and operational management (eg. Policy staff attendance at NT wide management meetings).

**25.** Implement a purposeful team building program across NTFC, that addresses both the business and client needs driving the organisation and effective team functioning and communication.

**26.** Support managers to implement team building days/half days on a quarterly basis as a measure to help learning and support and retain staff.

### **4.3 CORE AND NON-CORE LEARNING**

The statutory nature of NTFC's care and protection work requires that each case worker has a core set of skills prior to being authorised to exercise their statutory powers.

Training and development in these core skills is complemented by a suite of additional training and development programs.

#### **ISSUES ARISING:**

A high staff turnover rate results in an almost continuous demand for core care and protection training. NTFC currently has three professional training positions, with one of these being vacant for the past year despite recruitment efforts.

A learning culture requires explicit attention at all levels of the organisation, so that learning is seen as not an activity pursued through training courses but primarily 'on the job'.

There is a significant amount of re-work that occurs in NTFC, as individuals seek out the information they need from libraries, on line or from others. This critical knowledge is not captured for the benefit of others, as there is no central 'portal' in which it can be held and shared.

Case work is the foundation tool of care and protection work. A recent audit of case plans in NTFC's care and protection program highlighted poor case planning skills. Development of outstanding case planning, case work and case supervision skills is a core learning and development priority in NTFC.

Increasing numbers of child protection notifications may skew perceptions on the nature of NTFC's 'core business' towards statutory investigation. This in turn drives training and

development programs focussed on this area of practice, potentially to the neglect of proactive family support learning and development.

There are a number of critical 'practice areas' in NTFC where substantive 'practice leadership' is required. This needs to form a core of NTFC's learning and development approach. Senior Practice Advisors in the following areas are required in the care and protection program at a minimum: Infants; Young Adolescents; Cumulative Harm; Substance Abuse; Family/Domestic Violence; Aboriginal Cultural Practice; Therapeutic Responses.

Data literacy is an area of key concern in NTFC. This relates not only to practitioner skills in use of the CCIS information system, but also the use of data and information to understand workload, performance and in reporting.

Training in the use of CCIS is provided by the Information Services Division, while other training is delivered via NTFC.

Effective learning and development strategies are hampered through the absence of clearly defined processes that make clear the roles and responsibilities of different categories of NTFC workers. A further consequence of this gap in documented processes is that there is no matching between the required skill levels for particular categories of work. Professionally qualified staff may therefore be undertaking work that does not require their professional skills, while unqualified staff may be asked to undertake work or make decisions for which they are unqualified.

Defining core required capabilities (or competencies) for each category of NTFC worker will facilitate the match of skills to work being undertaken, and assist in the targeted of learning and development activities.

There is scope to substantially lift the training and development programs specifically directed to para professional staff.

### **ACTION UNDERWAY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:**

NTFC's Workforce Development Unit is in the process of redeveloping the core skills training program, with an emphasis on flexible delivery methods.

A new Learning and Development Framework has been finalised by NTFC's Workforce Development Unit.

NTFC's Workforce Development Unit is actively pursuing e-learning functionality to support the provision of timely training and development across the Northern Territory.

Ten new Information Officers have been funded to lift data literacy in NTFC, as well as to improve data integrity.

The Workforce Development Unit is finalising a Capability Framework to (1) document required skills for relevant work levels; and (2) support the transition of NTFC workers from the P1 to P2 level, and to transition Aboriginal Community Workers through the AO 4, AO 5 and AO 6 levels.

### **REMEDIES REQUIRING INVESTMENT:**

**27.** Increased resources are required for learning and development in NTFC, in the form of additional Professional Trainers and to support implementation of the NTFC Learning Development Framework and associated strategies to address training.

**28.** Access to conferences, seminars and 'experts in the relevant fields' needs to increase for all staff (including management) because of isolation issues in the NT.

**29.** In-house or on-site training needs to be introduced as part of learning development strategies to enable higher levels of participation in training.

**30.** The frequency of delivery of NTFC core training units needs



to be increased and the resources provided to enable this.

**31.** On-line learning programs should be developed to support self-paced learning in NTFC.

**32.** A central 'knowledge portal' should be funded for NTFC to host best practice examples of work (eg. Case plans; Court reports) and to share 'tips and techniques'.

**33.** Redevelop NTFC's case practice framework, with an emphasis on the way in which new employees can be effectively inducted into good case practice, and so that case practice skills are a topic of regular 'refresher' programs for existing staff.

**34.** Energy is currently biased towards servicing the needs of running a defensive social work system. The Level 4 management tier focuses their efforts upwards and does not sufficiently address operational team matters. An approach which focuses on client based outcomes is likely to have more success. There should be less emphasis on writing a good court report than on keeping families out of the welfare system in the first place.

**35.** Change Level 4 Managers into positions where they focus on specific arenas of welfare practice (eg Parenting Skill development or Family Management Strategies for Adolescents) and let the Managers manage their teams without having to service the level 4 Managers.

**36.** Substantially lift NTFC's focus on information management and CCIS training.

**37.** Staff training should consider core competency thresholds for specific arenas of welfare practice. When these competencies are linked to coaching and supervision strategies, skill development in staff will be enhanced

**38.** Family Support Workers should be supported and trained to develop their skill base so as to become a valued local resource for NTFC in supporting families. They should not be seen as 'transport

workers' but staff employed to help to improve the quality of life in families and reduce the number of notifications and removals.

## 5. MORALE AND RETENTION

The work of NTFC staff is extraordinarily demanding. Attracting and retaining staff is a major challenge in this area.

### ISSUES ARISING:

Other 'hard to recruit to' sectors such as the Northern Territory Police Force provide powerful incentives to their staff, including provision of housing across the Northern Territory.

Morale of NTFC child protection workers is often negatively impacted by media reports.

The psychological wellbeing of child protection workers is often vulnerable due to the nature of their work.

Supervisors and managers are not provided with a budget explicitly designed to support the occupational health and safety of their teams.

The issue of bullying and harassment in workplaces has been raised on a number of occasions in NTFC. Modelling of inclusive and respectful practices from the top of the organisation to front line workers is critical if respectful relationships with clients are to be achieved.

The quality of leadership impacts upon the morale and performance of workplaces.

### ACTION UNDERWAY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:

The NTFC Workforce Development Unit has identified a range of strategies to support improved morale of care and protection workers. These include 'stress busting' initiatives such as meditation.

## REMEDIES REQUIRING INVESTMENT:

**39.** Provide each NTFC team with an explicit budget designed to support the psychological well being of staff, for activities designed to reduce stress and support cohesive teamwork.

**40.** Introduce small monetary bonus schemes for staff, for example a Christmas bonus for all staff (sliding scale based on years of service if the monetary option is preferred) or an annual monetary bonus for years of service based on a sliding scale, or a 2 or 3 yearly bonus for workers with continuous service.

**41.** Provide parity with other hard-to-recruit to sectors by providing housing allowances for all staff.

**42.** Provide non monetary incentives for NTFC staff, for example bi-annual air tickets to a capital city of choice.

**43.** Introduce annual awards and recognition (eg “Child Protection Worker of the Year”).

**44.** Provide a specialist allowance for P2 clinicians due to the higher expectations of qualifications and specialist experience.

**45.** NTFC Values and Vision Statement sets a tone for respectful, ‘power-with’ practices. Internal relationships, structures and management practices must reflect these values if we are to attract, retain, support and grow our workforce. Modelling the Values and Vision of the organisation can enhance service delivery. Staff values should be considered at recruitment as these influence practice, outcomes for clients and retention of staff.

**46.** NTFC has adopted a strengths approach to working with clients but does not have a strengths approach to staff matters so management strategies need to change to reflect a strengths perspective with employees.

**47.** Performance of workers at Team Leader and Management

levels needs to be reviewed annually and training provided to meet identified learning needs.

## 6. A PARTICULAR IMPERATIVE: CROSS CULTURAL COLLABORATION AND COMPETENCIES

The profile of NTFC's client base, and the extent to which communities across the Northern Territory remain connected to strong Aboriginal cultural practices, make it an imperative that the organisation is focussed on ensuring all staff have outstanding cross cultural collaboration and competency skills.

### ISSUES ARISING:

The Department of Health and Families' endorsed Cultural Security Policy has clear expectations with respect to Aboriginal cultural security.

There is evidence NTFC does not fully comply with this Cultural Security policy.

A particular gap is the extent to which employees understand the powerful outcomes that could be achieved through cross-cultural problem solving of issues facing children, young people and families in the NT.

Examples exist in other jurisdictions and policy areas of the power of asking employees to self-rate their confidence in certain core competency areas, such as working respectfully and effectively with Aboriginal people, and using these processes to design appropriate learning and development opportunities that address critical gaps in skills and competencies.

### ACTION UNDERWAY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:

NTFC's Workforce Development Unit has reviewed its Cultural Skills training program and is committed to further development of programs that raise cross cultural collaboration skills.

#### REMEDIES REQUIRING INVESTMENT:

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| <p><b>48.</b> Undertake a full Census of the extent to which NTFC employees have confidence in their cross cultural skills.</p>   |
| <p><b>49.</b> Use the results of this Census to target programs to improve cross cultural collaboration and competency skills.</p>  |
| <p><b>50.</b> Undertake an audit of the extent to which NTFC's training and development programs comply with DHF's endorsed Cultural Security Policy.</p>   |
| <p><b>51.</b> Invest in a comprehensive cross cultural collaboration program that builds the use of cross-cultural problem solving in NTFC. The Department of Education and Training has developed a local program that could be translated to operate in NTFC.</p> |

## 7. DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS IN PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children makes it clear that protecting children is 'Everybody's Business'. The effectiveness of NTFC's Learning and Development strategy must therefore be measured not only in terms of the development of our internal workforce, but also of the sector working with us to protect children and strengthen families.

#### ISSUES ARISING:

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| <p>Learning and development in the sphere of child protection, wellbeing and family functioning is fractured across government, non government and for profit agencies working in the field.</p> |
| <p>Gathering the best programs to support good practice across the sectors requires a national as well as Northern Territory focus.</p>  |

#### **ACTION UNDERWAY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:**

NGOs are invited to participate in training programs delivered by NTFC's Workforce Development Unit. There are a number of NTFC programs delivered in which NGOs participate strongly.

#### **REMEDIES REQUIRING INVESTMENT:**

**52.** Fund and establish a central Protecting Children Learning and Development Calendar and website, incorporating learning and development opportunities across sectors and agencies.

**53.** Examine options to tap into national programs that may be relevant across all sectors.

## **8. OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY THE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

The following recommendations made by members of the Training and Development Working Group do not specifically relate to training and development matters:

#### **REMEDIES REQUIRING INVESTMENT:**

**54.** Develop Family Support Teams that focus on providing early intervention and prevention strategies; working directly with families re parenting issues, stress management, budgeting, hygiene etc, and advocate for families' access to resources and service provision within the community.

**55.** Increase the number of Therapeutic Services clinicians (x 5) to add value to CPS decision making and increase behavioural support offered to carers who are caring for children exhibiting behavioural problems due to developmental trauma. This increase would allow for expansion of the service into Katherine and Tennant Creek.

- 56.** Introduce specialist positions into field teams such as an education officer who works with schools to ensure kids in care remain in the school system or an Early Childhood specialist who provides skills to parents of children under seven, in order to avoid CP intervention.
- 57.** There needs to be a dramatic increase in the funding provided for basic community supports: culturally appropriate parenting programs, youth programs, family support programs.
- 58.** The Non-Government sector needs to mature, grow and expand in NT. Well established NGO's from other jurisdictions need to be encouraged to develop NT offices to further develop the sector (eg Berry St, Brotherhood of St Laurence)
- 59.** Local Aboriginal community services such as Balunu need to be encouraged, supported and funded to provide a greater range of services for families and children.
- 60.** CCIS needs a comprehensive review to make it less cumbersome.
- 61.** Legislative change needs to be considered that allows for a new category of 'child concern'. Registering a 'child concern' would occur when there are considerable and pressing issues and support needs in the family. It would give NTFC the legal mandate to work with the family (or outsource to NGO) until the 'child concern' is resolved. This would allow for involuntary family support. This could be the result of a substantiated or unsubstantiated report or be raised directly at the intake level when the issues are obvious but unlikely to meet the statutory threshold for abuse and neglect. In this way, early intervention and prevention work could be done with families where there are clear needs. This would reduce the amount of rework done every time a new intake has to be processed and provides a strong opportunity to prevent abuse and neglect.

**62.** Compulsory, comprehensive training needs to be introduced for all foster carers including Departmental, kinship and purchased placements.

**63.** There needs to be an increase in permanent positions in operational offices

## **9. CARE AND PROTECTION TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP AND CONTACTS**

- Michelle Brown – Chair
- Paul Weir – Secretariat and Coordinator
- Anthony Barnes
- Dee Lehman
- Jennie Guinane
- Joy Simpson
- Mark Schuster
- MiangWang Seah-queenoy
- Rhiannon McKenzie
- ShMaya Houtman
- Sophie Tory
- Stuart Davidson
- Tina Lambert
- Wayne McCashen

### **Contacts:**

Michelle Brown: 08 8999 2727 or [michelle.brown@nt.gov.au](mailto:michelle.brown@nt.gov.au)

Paul Weir: 08 8922 7451 or [paul.weir@nt.gov.au](mailto:paul.weir@nt.gov.au)

Wayne McCashen 08 08 8922 7344 or [wayne.mccahen@nt.gov.au](mailto:wayne.mccahen@nt.gov.au)

Tina Lambert 08 8922 7408 or [tina.lambert@nt.gov.au](mailto:tina.lambert@nt.gov.au)