

## Community Services

Protecting our children is a priority and Budget 2008 provides new resources to support families in crisis and to target Indigenous disadvantage.

### Integrating Services

The new Department of Health and Families will be established from 1 July and will include NT Families and Children to support Territory families and children by bringing together a range of services including child protection, foster care, youth support and juvenile diversion programs.

Early childhood development and care services will be given greater focus by bringing new and existing resources together in the Department of Employment, Education and Training, providing effective pre-education services.

### New Children's Commissioner

The first NT Children's Commissioner has been appointed.

This important role has been established under the new *Care and Protection of Children Act* passed in the Legislative Assembly in November 2007. The Commissioner will focus on investigating complaints related to protected children and have an active role in monitoring Closing the Gap initiatives as they relate to children.

### Youth at Risk

Budget 2008 will provide an additional \$2.5 million to establish a system to support the new Family Responsibility Program, by building on family and youth support services. This program includes:

- case coordination and management
- intensive youth and family support services
- "safe places" or youth hubs and youth camps in Alice Springs and Darwin

### Supporting Territory Families

Budget 2008 supports Territory families through a range of grant programs including:

- \$12.8 million for pensioner concessions and support for seniors
- \$3.7 million to subsidise the cost of child care
- \$0.2 million for youth and seniors grants programs
- \$70 000 for the Youth Minister's Round Table
- \$0.5 million in addition to the existing \$2.3 million for Child Health programs. The increase will deliver additional child health workers in remote communities

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### Closing the Gap

Budget 2008 provides additional funding for initiatives aimed at closing the gap to protect the most vulnerable:

- \$1.7 million for child protection workers as part of the expanded Child Abuse Taskforce
- \$2.5 million for child protection and out of home care service expansion
- \$1.3 million for Aboriginal child protection services
- \$1 million for sexual assault referral centres
- \$1 million for family violence services in communities
- \$1.5 million for integrated child and family centres and enhanced antenatal services
- \$0.85 million to implement child protection reforms

### Homelessness

In a jointly funded program, the Commonwealth and the Territory Government will provide around \$16 million to construct new homes for the homeless and to provide other support services.

Budget 2008 supports families at risk by providing:

- \$10.2 million for the Supported Accommodation Assistance program
- \$1.9 million for family support services
- \$1.6 million for other crisis support
- \$1.2 million for child and adolescent mental health services

### Disability Services

An Office of Disability has been created to provide a single front door service for the Northern Territory. Budget 2008 provides \$3.7 million to continue implementing recommendations of the Northern Territory Disability Services Review, including:

- an extra \$0.45 million for the Home and Community Care program and the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement
- \$0.28 million for additional beds for young people in residential aged care facilities, jointly funded by the Commonwealth
- an additional \$0.24 million for the Taxi Subsidy Scheme and the Territory Independence and Mobility Equipment Scheme (TIMES)

### Mental Health

Budget 2008 provides funding of \$35.15 million for mental health services.

### Aboriginal Interpreter Service

Aboriginal Interpreter Services and Interpreting and Translating Service NT will receive an additional \$0.35 million to help meet the growing demand for interpreter and translator services.