

THE EQUALITY INSTITUTE'S

# Northern Territory Strategic Plan

2021 - 2026

The Equality Institute (EQI) acknowledges that the Northern Territory Strategic Plan was written in Mparntwe on Arrernte Country, and pays respects to Elders past, present and emerging. EQI also pays respects to all traditional custodians throughout the lands of what is now called the Northern Territory, where we hope this strategic plan may serve and support the priorities, aspirations and work of First Nations people.

The Equality Institute (EQI) was founded in Naarm (Melbourne) on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country, in the land we now call Australia. We pay our respects to the traditional custodians of this land, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, as well as their elders, past, present, and emerging. We further our respects to the traditional custodians of Country throughout Australia. We further acknowledge traditional custodians of the lands where EQI works around the world. The land we live, work and play on always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities in preventing violence against women throughout Australia. Indigenous people's generosity, hope, and ongoing efforts to prevent violence inspires us. We are committed to listening, learning, and doing this work alongside each other with humility, perseverance, and open hearts and minds. It is our hope that we can be a contributor to a future that is just and free from violence for communities everywhere.

The graphics used throughout this publication have been adapted from artwork by Shirleen Nampajinpa Campbell

**The Northern Territory strategic plan supports The Equality Institute's (EQI) overarching mission to advance gender equality and end violence against women and girls. It aligns with EQI's five-year strategic plan for 2021-2026, contributing to all of the goals, to:**

- 1 Strengthen the prevention of violence against women and girls through ethical and participatory research;
- 2 Expand investment in, and scale-up of, evidence-based and feminist-informed strategies to advance gender equality and end violence against women and girls;
- 3 Inspire a global feminist conversation and ignite social change;
- 4 Nurture stronger and more inclusive organisations, leaders and movements; and
- 5 Continue to build a thriving team and impactful feminist organisation.

The purpose of the Northern Territory (NT) strategic plan is to ensure that EQI has a clear direction and strategic goals for the work undertaken in the NT, which will facilitate decision-making about staffing and projects, and strengthen collaboration between teams and staff members across locations. This will help us deliver on Goal 5: Continue to build a thriving team and impactful feminist organisation.



## The Northern Territory context

The Northern Territory is an extremely beautiful place, stretching from the timeless red desert of the centre to the tropical north, with several iconic national parks, sacred sights and dreaming, and abundant wildlife. The NT has extremely rich and diverse culture, and more than a hundred languages can be heard being spoken fluently every day. People from the Territory – Territorians – have a great sense of identity and pride in their home, however, there are a number of contextual factors that make living and working in the Territory particularly unique and challenging.

The first is that the Northern Territory (NT) is not a state, and this means it does not have the same legislative and fiscal capabilities as other Australian states. The NT is dependent on the Federal Government for its funding, who can also operate unilaterally in the NT. This relationship impacts the domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) sector, as well as housing, the criminal legal system, and other goods, services and agencies. It has also resulted in Federal Government intervention in the NT. One such externally imposed intervention is the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), referred to as ‘The Intervention’, which began in 2007. The NTER was led by the Federal Government in response to allegations of child sexual assault in Aboriginal communities in the NT detailed in the *Little Children are Sacred Report*.<sup>i</sup> The NTER saw the Australian government suspend the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 to make special legislation for Aboriginal people in prescribed zones in the NT and the Australian military were sent into Aboriginal communities to ‘intervene’ to stop alleged child abuse and violence.<sup>ii</sup>

The NTER imposed a range of measures designed to increase the health and safety of Aboriginal communities that had drastic and unintended impacts on the NT, especially on Aboriginal people.<sup>iii</sup> These included mandatory health checks for Aboriginal children, income management, increased policing, and alcohol prohibition and restrictions. Many of these measures and impacts continue today as part of the Stronger Futures legislation introduced in 2012.<sup>iv</sup>

Many of these interventions and contextual challenges disproportionately impact the Northern Territory’s Indigenous population. Overcrowded housing, high rates of incarceration and family violence are just some of the issues that impact Indigenous Territorians. These issues and resulting intergenerational trauma are inextricable from Aboriginal people’s experiences of ongoing colonisation. Much of this state-sanctioned violence is within living memory – for example, the Coniston Massacre in which approximately 100 Aboriginal people were killed<sup>1</sup> occurred

in 1928. This is the last *documented* state-sanctioned massacre in Australian history, and occurred in several locations in the Central Desert region nearby Mparntwe/Alice Springs. The violence of the frontier wars traumatised Aboriginal communities, and this was followed by successive government policies of annihilation, assimilation, neglect, and intervention. Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory have been subjected to forced removals, child removal, and dispossession of land and culture, among other violence committed by the state and successive generations of the non-Indigenous population of the place we now call Australia.

This history, and the ongoing impacts of colonisation, are some of the key drivers of the NT’s extremely high rates of violence against women. The NT has the highest rates of domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia.<sup>v</sup> Despite the Territory’s small population (approximately 250,000 people), police typically respond to 61 incidents of domestic violence

<sup>1</sup> The number varies between 30-200 people.

every day, or more than 22,000 domestic violence incidents each year.<sup>vii</sup> The NT has the highest rate of domestic and family violence related homicides in Australia and Aboriginal women are hospitalised at 40 times the rate of non-Indigenous women.<sup>viii</sup> Aboriginal women in the NT are among the most victimised groups of people in the entire world.<sup>ix</sup>

Women's experiences of violence are compounded by additional barriers, challenges, and complexities which disproportionately exist in the NT. Lack of services, poor infrastructure, and geographical distance and remoteness, are some of the contextual factors which make it difficult for women experiencing violence to seek help or pursue justice in the Northern Territory, particularly through mainstream and national services.

Mainstream interventions – or those developed for wider Australia – are often inappropriate in remote and Indigenous contexts. Mainstream interventions often place the burden on the woman to end the relationship and find safety for themselves and their children. Crisis responses often take the form of shelters. However, such interventions, whilst important and necessary, rarely account for Aboriginal kinship and relationship structures, and/or connection to family and Country. Moreover, in many regional and remote locations, such services are inaccessible, requiring women to travel large distances, or simply do not exist. National services, like 1800 RESPECT, are linguistically and culturally inaccessible for many women in the NT, and totally inaccessible in large parts of the NT that remain without phone service.

## EQI in the NT

Researching and working in the domestic, family, and sexual violence sector in the Northern Territory requires particular experience and needs a specialised approach that builds upon established relationships and nurtured partnerships. The high rates of violence, history, language and cultural barriers, and challenges of living and working in remote places, are all factors that require a particular skill set. Many of these contextual factors require national attention and support, but the work must be done in the right way. Work in the Northern Territory is relational and based on connections and trust built over time. Partnerships must be based on an appreciation of the context, understanding of the challenges our partners face in their work, and a willingness to be flexible, adaptable and 'to work in a good way'. 'To work in a good way' means to be culturally safe, privilege the voices of people with lived experience, particularly Aboriginal women, deeply listen and understand that we are not always the experts.

EQI began working in the Northern Territory in 2020 and has since completed several projects in partnership with Aboriginal organisations and communities. In 2020, we worked with Apmere Urlte – a transitional housing program for Aboriginal women who have experienced violence in Alice Springs – to develop their project logic and monitoring and evaluation framework. We also partnered with Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation and Larapinta Child and Family Centre to evaluate two primary prevention projects operating in Central Australia. This research was funded by ANROWS and is the first evaluation of primary

prevention projects in the Northern Territory. The *'Rante Rante ampe Mare and Urreye'* report was published by ANROWS in 2021. We have also partnered with World Vision's Channels of Hope for Gender program to adapt the *Hopeful, Together, Strong* framework with Elders in the remote Warlpiri community of Lajamanu. EQI published *'Tarngajuku Pangukujuku Pirrjirdi'* adaptation in 2021.

EQI's Northern Territory strategic plan seeks to build upon these partnerships and the achievements of work completed in the NT to date. It also sets out a vision for our work in the Northern Territory for the next five years, from 2021-2026.



NORTHERN TERRITORY STRATEGIC PLAN

## In the next five years, EQI is a widely known and trusted organisation working in partnership to end violence against women (VAW) in the Northern Territory.

EQI is the first organisation that comes to mind for research on violence against women, monitoring and evaluation, creative communications, and supporting collective care and strengthening partnerships in the Northern Territory. EQI advises organisations, government and other agencies working to end violence against women. EQI is the provider of choice for government research and evaluation contracts. EQI works with Aboriginal communities to develop and support community-driven holistic initiatives to prevent violence against women. Furthermore, learnings from these prevention initiatives are shared and adapted for different contexts around the world. EQI has established their reputation as being reliable, creative, solutions-focused and adaptive.

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There are five objectives for the next five years.



## 1 To grow a team and cultivate EQI as a known and trusted organisation in the Northern Territory

- EQI's work in the Northern Territory is not based on any one individual, but is sustainable and dependable in the long term.
- EQI employs team members based in the Northern Territory to foster partnerships and feminist leadership, as well as grow the Territory's research, prevention, monitoring and evaluation and communications capacity.
- EQI is known for our values-driven research, prevention, and communications experts, who understand the context of the NT. They are reliable partners, who are flexible, adaptable, and deliver meaningful and impactful work.

## 2 EQI develops and fosters Indigenous-led research in the Northern Territory

- EQI employs, and works with, Indigenous researchers.
- EQI works with, and nurtures, emerging researchers, particularly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- All of EQI's research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people takes an Indigenist standpoint.

### **3** EQI develops partnerships throughout the Northern Territory, in different regional and remote contexts, and with different organisations, services, and government agencies

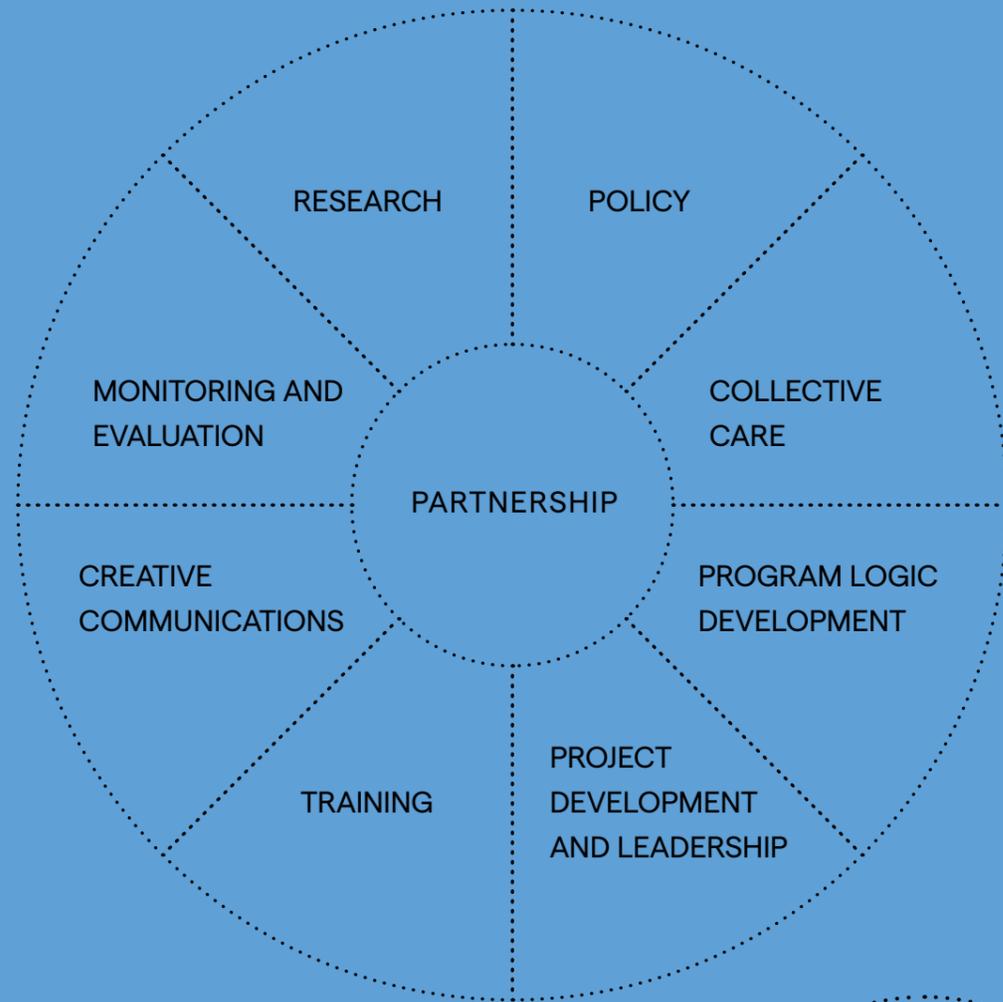
- EQI works throughout the Northern Territory – not just in regional centres – and endeavours to support research and make the evidence base accessible for remote communities.

### **4** EQI supports organisations and programs working to prevent VAW throughout the NT with advocacy, research, monitoring and evaluation, and by supporting and creating a culture of collective care

- EQI promotes and supports the monitoring and evaluation of VAW programs in the Northern Territory.
- EQI promotes and supports organisations working to prevent VAW by supporting their collective care, creating safe spaces within events, and leading workshops and retreats.
- EQI advocates for increased investment in the DFSV sector in the NT and raises awareness about NT issues in other parts of Australia.

### **5** EQI shares learning and creates communications products and resources which make the evidence base more accessible for a Northern Territorian audience, particularly for Aboriginal people

- Externally-made, or mainstream, resources are adapted to the Northern Territory context.
- A range of creative communications products are designed and developed specifically for the NT context, which communicate the evidence base to support the development of effective programs, and help to disseminate NT research in ways that are useful and accessible.
- EQI collaborates with partners to develop meaningful communications products that, in turn, also strengthen communications capacity in the Northern Territory.
- EQI seeks to share these lessons with a global audience, to inform the work between Global North and First Nations communities, as well as other contexts that may benefit.



OBJECTIVE ONE

To grow a team and cultivate EQI as a known and trusted organisation in the Northern Territory



**Strategies/  
Actions/Activities**

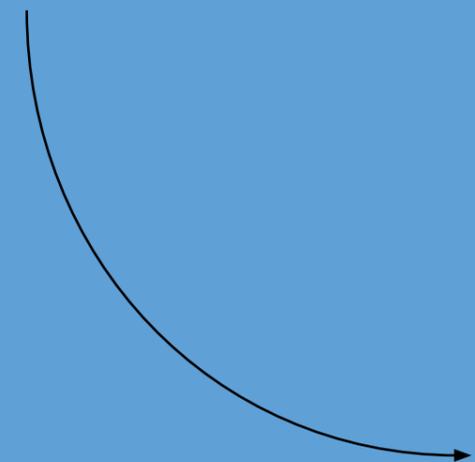
**Outcomes**

**Timeline**

Employ NT-based team members.	EQI has a dedicated team based/working in the Northern Territory, each cultivating their own networks and partnerships.	Research Assistant and Project Coordinator employed 2022-2026.
EQI hosts events in the Northern Territory.	EQI works with other organisations to host and organise events, such as Reclaim the Night and NAIDOC week events, and contributes to community and movement building. This will help to create awareness of EQI among other services, organisations and the general public.	Aim for minimum one event per year, beginning 2022.
Include NT focus/update in the quarterly EQI newsletter.	Improved awareness of EQI's work in the NT among our partners and subscribers.	Beginning 2022.
Staff in the Melbourne, Sydney and Dili office improve their understanding and capacity of the NT context.	EQI staff attend training, workshops, and work alongside the NT team to develop their cultural competency, cultural safety, Indigenous history, working with Indigenous communities, decolonisation, allyship, etc.  Cross-pollination, collaboration, learning, and exchange of skills and expertise between EQI offices.	Ongoing basis.

**OBJECTIVE TWO**

## EQI develops and fosters Indigenous-led research in the Northern Territory



Strategies/Actions/Activities	Outcomes	Timeline
Support Indigenous researchers (such as Tangentyere Research Hub) by working with them on research projects, and including them in data analysis and report writing. EQI can also assist with supporting the Research Hub to secure core funding.	Upskilling Indigenous researchers and supporting current researchers already working in the space in the NT. Deepening the partnership with Tangentyere Council, other Aboriginal Controlled Organisations, as well as other national organisations, such as ANROWS, to support Indigenous researchers.	Ongoing basis.
Employ Indigenous enumerators and researchers in every NT-based project (minimum 50%).	EQI grows research capacity in the NT and supports Indigenous people to conduct research with their own communities.	Ongoing basis.
Provide technical advice and support to Indigenous organisations for monitoring and evaluation, and to Indigenous researchers, when requested.	EQI supports the research agendas, priorities and needs of Indigenous organisations and Indigenous researchers, and helps to facilitate Indigenous-led research in the NT.	Ongoing basis.

OBJECTIVE THREE

**EQI develops partnerships throughout the Northern Territory, in different regional and remote contexts, and with different organisations, services, and government agencies**

Strategies/Actions/Activities	Outcomes	Timeline
Become a member of NTCOSS and attend specialist DFSV meetings.	EQI becomes a member of the NT’s peak DFSV body, and provides direct advice to the NT Government through specialist DFSV meetings. EQI networks with other NTCOSS members and contributes to the sector’s advocacy, and policy and program development.	2021 and ongoing.
Organise and run a forum for grassroots organisations to share lessons and learnings.	EQI provides platforms for partners to meet, network and share lessons. This helps to disseminate the evidence base, as well as develop relationships with different organisations, services and agencies throughout the NT.	Begins in 2023, then yearly or biannually.

**OBJECTIVE FOUR**

**EQI supports organisations and programs working to prevent VAW throughout the NT with advocacy, research, monitoring and evaluation, and by supporting and creating a culture of collective care**

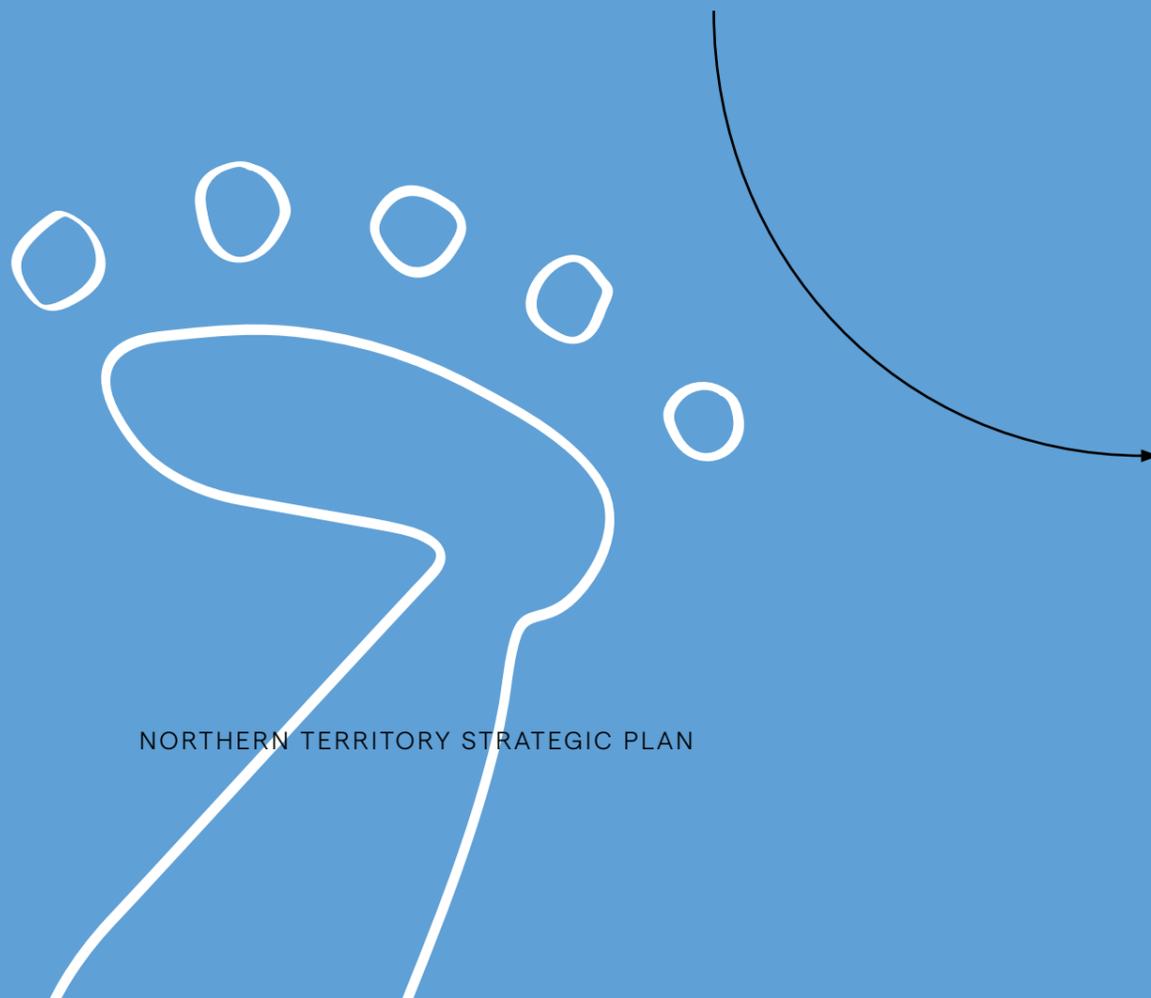
Strategies/Actions/Activities	Outcomes	Timeline
Speak at events, attend conferences, give interviews and otherwise advocate for the DFSV sector and highlight issues in the NT.	EQI advocates for increased funding for the DFSV sector in the NT and raises awareness about issues affecting the NT elsewhere in Australia.	Ongoing basis.
Host collective care retreats for key partners.	EQI supports key partners with strategies for self and collective care, which helps support grassroots leaders and contributes to staff wellbeing and the sustainability of the sector as a whole.	Begin 2021, then yearly retreats.
Safe spaces are created at all EQI events, and collective care resources are created.	EQI helps to create a culture of collective care by creating safe spaces at all events, that will include components on collective care, and by developing resources and strategies on collective care that can be shared with partners throughout the NT.	Ongoing – at all EQI events.

Strategies/Actions/Activities	Outcomes	Timeline
Apply for NT government research tenders and seek out other relevant opportunities.	EQI is the key VAW research organisation in the NT and actively contributes to building the evidence base, and feeding findings directly back to key stakeholders.	Ongoing.
Specific support for SRFV grants evaluations.	EQI contributes to building the evidence base about what works to prevent and address violence in the NT.	Advertised/ posted 2022, then every year with release of grants.



**OBJECTIVE FIVE**

**EQI shares learning and creates communications products and resources which make the evidence base more accessible for a Northern Territorian audience, particularly for Aboriginal people**



Strategies/Actions/Activities	Outcomes	Timeline
Dissemination strategies and plans for all EQI research projects that are tailored, specific and meaningful.	EQI's resources, research, and communications products are widely shared in the NT and are used to inform program and policy development.	Ongoing.
Produce resources specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences, especially in remote communities.	EQI shares the evidence base in ways that are accessible and meaningful to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, facilitating their access to information, research findings, and recommendations.	Ongoing.
Develop communications capacity in the NT.	EQI collaborates with partners to develop communications products, so that they are meaningful for communities, and grows communications capacity in the NT. EQI shares communications strategies, knowledge and skills with our partners.	Ongoing – on all communications products in the NT.

Strategies/Actions/Activities	Outcomes	Timeline
Seek opportunities to share these learnings with a global audience.	EQI shares the lessons learned through partnerships in the NT with a global audience, and informs partnerships between Global Northern and First Nations communities elsewhere.  EQI supports our partners, particularly Indigenous people, to attend national and international events to share these lessons.	Ongoing.

<sup>i</sup> Altman, J., & Hinkson, M. (2007). *Coercive Reconciliation: Stabilise, Normalise, Exit Aboriginal Australia*. North Carlton: Arena Publications Association & Wild, R., & Anderson, P. (2007). *Report of the Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred": Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse*. Darwin: Northern Territory Government.

<sup>ii</sup> Perche, D. (2017, June 26). Ten years on, it's time we learned the lessons from the failed Northern Territory Intervention. Retrieved from *The Conversation*: <https://theconversation.com/ten-years-on-its-time-we-learned-the-lessons-from-the-failed-northern-territory-intervention-79198>

<sup>iii</sup> Altman, J., & Hinkson, M. (2007). *Coercive Reconciliation: Stabilise, Normalise, Exit Aboriginal Australia*. North Carlton: Arena Publications Association & Wild, R., & Anderson, P. (2007). *Report of the Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred": Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse*. Darwin: Northern Territory Government.

<sup>iv</sup> Australian Government, 2012. *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory: a ten year commitment to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory*. Australian Government, Canberra.

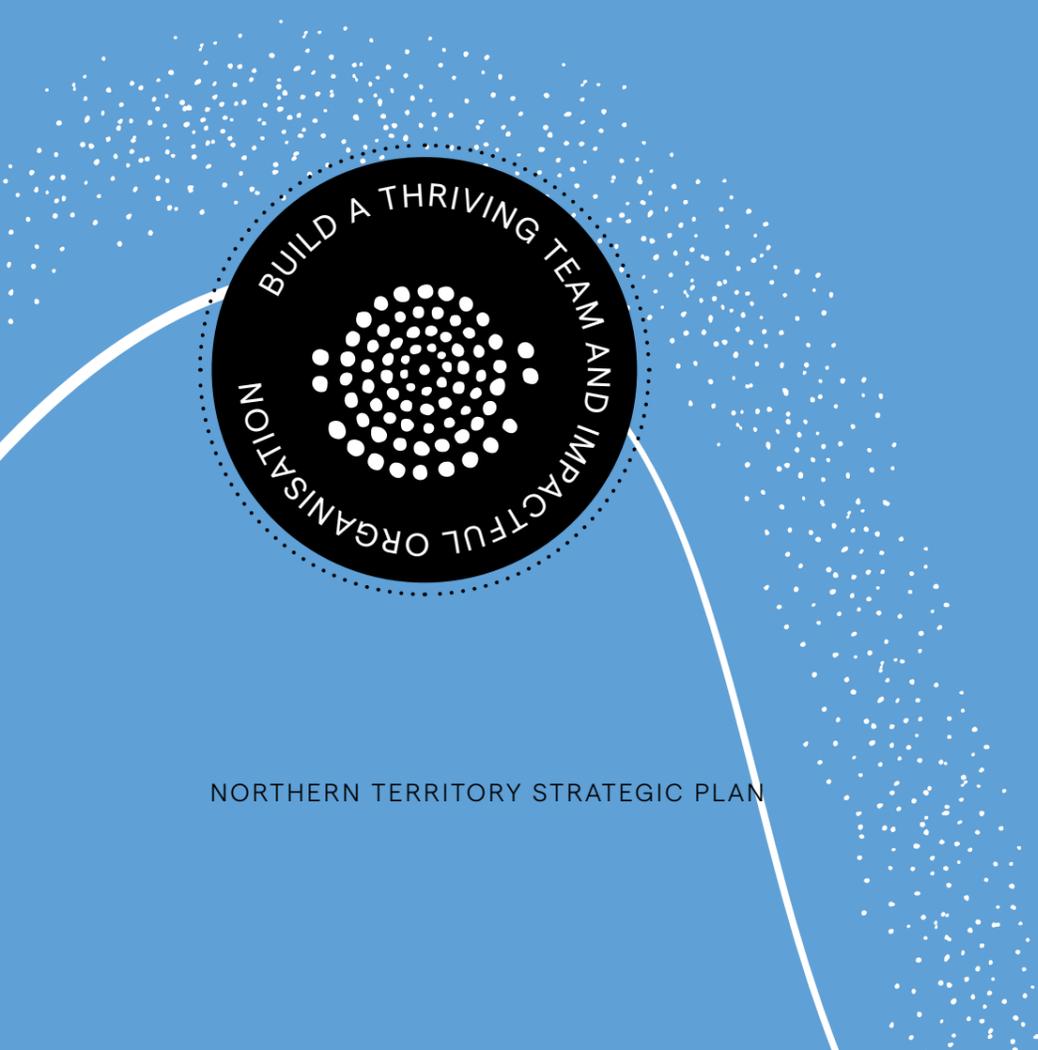
<sup>v</sup> Watson, I. (2009a). In the Northern Territory Intervention, What is Saved or Rescued and at What Cost? *Cultural Studies Review*, 15(2), 45-60.

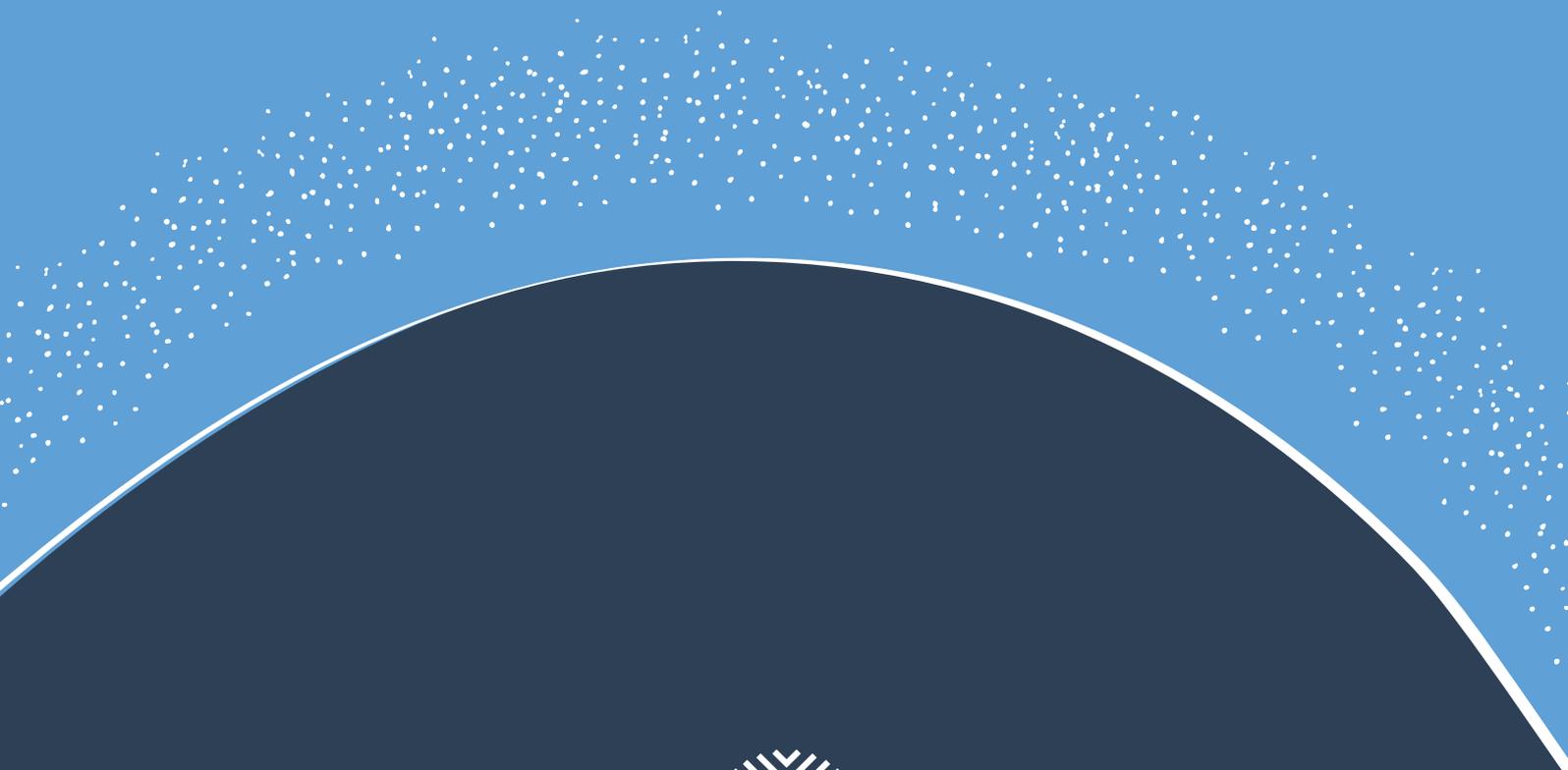
<sup>vi</sup> The Northern Territory Government (2018). *The Northern Territory's Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028: Safe, respected and free from violence*. Darwin: The Northern Territory Government.

<sup>vii</sup> The Northern Territory Government. (2017, May). *Issues Paper: Northern Territory Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review*. Retrieved from Department of Health, The Northern Territory Government : <https://digitallibrary.health.nt.gov.au/prodjspu/bitstream/10137/1281/1/Northern%20Territory%20Alcohol%20Policies%20and%20Legislation%20Review%20-%20Issues%20Paper.pdf> & The Northern Territory Government (2018). *The Northern Territory's Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028: Safe, respected and free from violence*. Darwin: The Northern Territory Government.

<sup>viii</sup> The Northern Territory Government (2018). *The Northern Territory's Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028: Safe, respected and free from violence*. Darwin: The Northern Territory Government.

<sup>ix</sup> *ibid*





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