



# CHILD FRIENDLY *Alice*

## TECHNICAL REPORT

*About the children and families of Alice Springs 2019*

September 2019

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The accompanying Community Profile is available from Child Friendly Alice and the website.

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*Child Friendly Alice acknowledge the land of Arrernte people here in Mparntwe and recognise the strength, resilience, knowledge, skills and lived experience of all Aboriginal peoples in this land.*

*We pay respect for the ongoing spiritual and cultural connections to the land and to Country held by the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Mparntwe.*

*We acknowledge the First Australians as the traditional custodians of the continent, whose cultures are among the oldest living cultures in human history.*

*We pay respect to the Elders of the community, present and emerging and extend our recognition to their descendants.*

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- Connected Beginnings, Department of Education, Northern Territory Government, funded by the Australian Government
- Larapinta Child and Family Centre, Department of Education, Northern Territory Government
- Strong Kids Strong Centre and Red Cross Australia

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
CALD	Culturally And Linguistically Diverse
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy
NBN	National Broadband Network
NT	Northern Territory
OOHC	Out Of Home Care



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Child Friendly Alice is a community collaboration facilitated by Communities for Children – Anglicare NT, Strong Kids Strong Centre – Red Cross, Connected Beginnings and Larapinta Child and Family Centre – NT Department of Education which aims to ensure every child has the best possible chance in life to grow up healthy and strong. The collaboration led the development of the Technical Report and Community Profile which are both available at <https://childfriendlyalice.weebly.com>.

This Technical Report provides considerably more detail than the Community Profile, in relation to both the 1000 Voices Survey methodology and findings and the other data sourced from external databases. It establishes the rationale for use of indicators, provides links back to data sources, adds reference material for further exploration, and adds data where space was not available in the Community Profile. It is expected that readers of the Technical Report will want to delve more deeply into the data. Hence this Report, while still not exhaustive, allows users to consider sources of data in context.

The Technical Report and Profile are unique, valuing and highlighting community voices alongside statistical data. Together they act as tools for the Alice Springs community, providing information about local conditions with local data, offering opportunities for planning, service delivery and improving outcomes for children. The information tells us that children, young people and adults share many of the same aspirations such as a good education, strong families, equal opportunities, employment and activities for young people. They also share common concerns supported by the data such as crime, racism, alcohol related antisocial behaviours, the need for cultural education and better educational opportunities.

The Technical Report and Community Profile provide a baseline of data that can be used to measure how the children in Alice Springs are faring now. We are not expecting the data to speak for itself. It is open to interpretation and the conclusions that readers draw from the data may be different. However, the power of the quantitative and qualitative information presented here, is in its ability to inform decisions about future directions for policies and programs that affect Alice Springs children and young people.

The documents enable community members to track data over time, to be able to see if the lives of children are improving. They compare achievements in Alice Springs, the Northern Territory and Australia as a whole. The Technical Report and Profile paint a picture of the wellbeing of children living in Alice Springs by focussing on six Wellbeing Areas.

In developing these resources many aspects of community life were considered. Information and feedback were sought from a broad cross section of community members, educators, staff from agencies, children, young people and families as well as population level data where available.

The outcomes from this work will inform the work of Child Friendly Alice and be incorporated into a local Action Plan. The aim is to monitor progress over time, and work towards filling data gaps.



## INTRODUCTION

The Child Friendly Alice Technical Report and the accompanying Community Profile were developed to better understand the important issues for children and young people in Alice Springs. Together, they paint a picture using public data and the voices of people living in Alice Springs. While the intended audience for the Profile is the broad community, the Technical Report is targeted at those who want more detail and who want to see how and why indicators were chosen. It is a useful resource for grant applications, guiding strategic directions and practice, policy advice and strategic policy implementation.

In 2018 a group of people with a commitment to enhancing the wellbeing of children in Alice Springs came together and formed the concept of Child Friendly Alice. Child Friendly Alice is an emerging community collaboration with a whole-of-community approach to addressing complex social issues in communities experiencing vulnerability. By supporting and empowering community to engage in their own wellbeing, facilitating cross-sector collaboration and advocating for system reform, the aim is to ensure that every child has the best possible start in life.

### **Rationale and purpose**

The Technical Report and accompanying Community Profile have several purposes and uses. For children and families in Alice Springs, they provide a snapshot of what they think is important. For service providers, they provide evidence that can be used for more effective program delivery for children, young people and families. For governments at all levels the analysis provides an overview of where the pressing needs are in the community. The Profile's structure provides a framework and an evidence base to develop responsive policies and strategies that can help Alice Springs better meet the needs and aspirations of families, young people and children. Child Friendly Alice sees the potential for service providers, community members and governments to work together on a collaborative local Action Plan.

The Technical Report provides an academic justification for the use of the Profile. It suggests the evidence base on which data can or cannot be used to stand as indicators of wellbeing. It also provides some foundation for the ethical applications of the data and the Profile.

### **How information was collected**

Child Friendly Alice felt that it was important to bring together two sets of information. One was the voices of people living in Alice Springs, a survey which canvassed the views of 470 children and young people and 605 adults. The survey was conducted during the second half of 2018. Child Friendly Alice representatives worked with schools, community groups, the general public and service providers to conduct the survey. It is important to note that this was a community driven and managed process. While every care was taken during the process to engage with people in an ethical manner, the survey was not conducted under the direction of a research organisation and therefore did not include an ethical clearance process.

The other data sources were collected by government departments, research organisations and other experts who could shed light on the numbers. Together the two sets of data tell a story about children and young people in Alice Springs. The majority of the data collected are publicly and freely available from credible and reliable sources such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), Territory Families and other government departments.

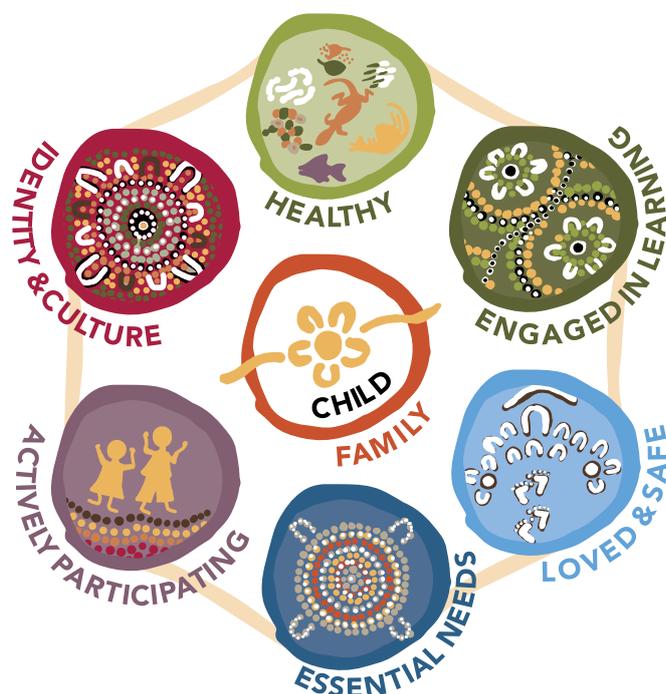
In the presentation of the Report, great consideration was given to mitigating the risk of misuse, ensuring equity, respecting culture, and enhancing the potential benefit of including children's voices. Community groups and potential end users of the Profile were widely consulted to ensure that data would not present people with deficit language. However it is important to acknowledge that some indicators used were developed with a non-Indigenous frame of reference (Guenther et al., 2015b). That is, the 'standard' used to determine a level of wellbeing is often determined from a western majority position rather than based on the assumptions of minority groups. In Alice Springs, the relatively high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the community was an important consideration. Further, there are multiple definitions (Burack et al., 2007; McMahon et al., 2007; Priest et al., 2012; Priest et al., 2009; Young et al., 2013) and frameworks of wellbeing (Cairney et al., 2017; Craven et al., 2016; Gee et al., 2014; McRae-Williams et al., 2018; Osborne, 2013; Prout, 2012; Redman-MacLaren et al., 2017; Togni, 2017; Tsey et al., 2010; Yap & Yu, 2016) that have been developed in Australia from Indigenous Standpoints. These perspectives shaped thinking about what and how data should be presented.



## ARACY Framework and Areas of Wellbeing

The data in this Report are presented using the framework developed nationally by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) for understanding how young people and children are faring (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2014, 2018). This is called the 'Nest Framework' and has been widely used in similar 'State of the Children' reports (Anglicare Tasmania, 2014; Child Youth and Family Alliance Ipswich and West Moreton, 2014; City of Ballarat, 2015; Grow Well Live Well, 2016; St Luke's Anglicare, 2013). The 'Nest' has six groups or 'outcome areas' which are adapted as 'Areas of Wellbeing'. Figure 1 illustrates the layering of support around the child, starting with the family.

Figure 1. Adapted ARACY Wellbeing Framework for Child Friendly Alice



It is important for young people and children to feel loved and safe; to be physically and mentally well; to have basics like enough food or a place to live; to learn well at school, to join in society, and to have a strong sense of belonging to their culture. *The Nest action agenda* (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2014) suggests that the data can be used to advocate for improved wellbeing of children, ultimately leading to improved life expectancy. The action agenda also claims that 'young people's wellbeing impacts on Australia's economic productivity – healthy children mean a healthy economy' (p. 4). The view taken in this Report is somewhat more holistic. Children and young people's wellbeing is a worthy goal in itself. Thriving children and thriving families embody qualities that make strong communities (Craven et al., 2016). These qualities include resilience (Bath & Sieita, 2018), empowerment (Tsey et al., 2005), a strong cultural and personal identity (Craven & Marsh, 2008; Priest et al., 2012), agency (Yap & Yu, 2016), along with good physical, emotional, spiritual and mental health (McEwan et al., 2009; Prout, 2012). Part of the wellbeing picture does relate to future employment and economic participation opportunities (Prout, 2012; Wilson et al., 2018) but it also relates to human rights (Child Rights Taskforce, 2011; Smallwood, 2011), respect

(Langham et al., 2018) and freedom from racial or other forms of discrimination (Chapple & Richardson, 2009) and to some extent depends on the emphasis that context brings (Lamb & Land, 2015).

In summary, while an adapted version of the Nest framework was employed, there are many other frameworks, and the rationales for and definition of child wellbeing are quite extensive. Context is important and to this end Child Friendly Alice has sought to contextualise the Nest framework and the indicators associated with it to make it fit the Alice Springs context.







## METHODOLOGY

The Child Friendly Alice project could be described in terms of ‘mixed methods research’ where qualitative perceptions of community members are informed by quantitative data obtained from reliable data sources (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998)—and vice versa. It could also be described as an action learning process where learnings are applied to an action plan and then an ongoing iterative review process (Stringer, 2014). A third and most important element of the project is that it is participatory (Kemmis et al., 2013) and developmental (Patton, 2011) where solutions are generated collectively. Participatory research is not designed to be objective (Markiewicz, 2010). Rather it engages with the subjective perceptions of all those involved in a community—in this case the community is made up of those who live in Alice Springs.

The solutions generated through this participatory process are inevitably messy as is often the case with participatory processes.

*Yet, it is within this messiness and the associated tensions of shared and differing perspectives, and often at the points of intersections of diverse ideas, new possibilities emerge and new solutions and/or approaches are generated, which, in turn, inspire and lead to transformation. (Rowell et al., 2017, p. 92)*

## Community survey

Three underpinning questions inform the content of this Report.

1. How do community members perceive life for children and young people in Alice Springs?
2. What do community members think should change in order to improve life for children and young people in Alice Springs?
3. What does the available data tell us about how things are (and how they have changed) for children and young people in Alice Springs?

In order to answer these questions, the Child Friendly Alice team firstly embarked on a 90 day community consultation process, which included a community forum and targeted consultations as well as a whole of community survey. The forum and consultations involved over 100 people with a mix of community members and service providers represented. These consultations (August to October 2018) identified a series of ‘Experiences’ under the headings of the Wellbeing Areas (See Figure 1, page 3) which in turn, helped the team prioritise identification of indicators for each Wellbeing Area.

Following the community consultations, the team began a process of surveying adults and young people using a ‘Survey Monkey’ tool.

Children and young people were asked:

1. What’s good about Alice Springs?
2. What’s not good about Alice Springs?
3. What needs to change?

Children and young people were also asked to choose an age group, state their gender, describe their cultural background and where they lived.

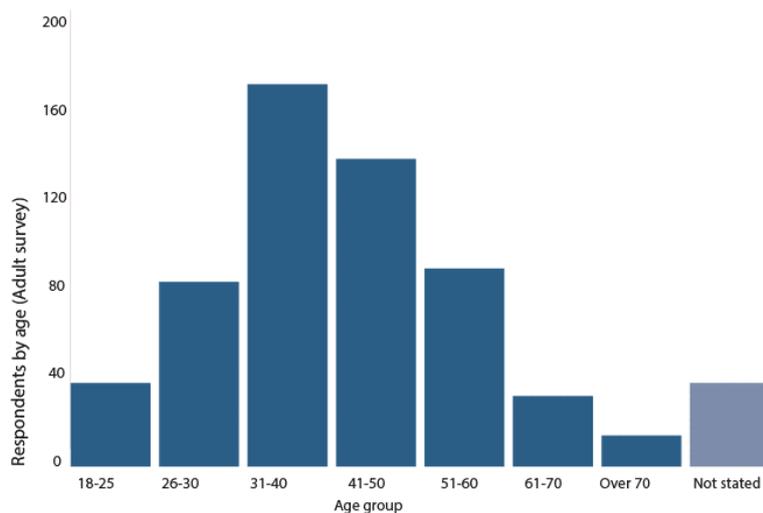
Adults were asked:

1. What are your hopes and dreams for children and young people in Alice Springs?
2. What stops those hopes and dreams from happening?
3. What needs to change?

Adults were also asked to choose an age group, state their gender, describe their cultural background and where they lived. All survey respondents were asked to rank their perception of Alice Springs based on the question: 'On a scale of 1 to 10, where do you think Alice Springs is now?' where 1 was most negative and 10 was most positive.

A total of 470 children and young people, and 605 adults were surveyed. Figure 2 shows the age profiles for adults surveyed. For adults, the largest group of respondents were in the 31 to 40-year age group.

Figure 2. Age profile of adults surveyed



Source: Child Friendly Alice Adult Survey

Table 1 provides additional detail, showing age, gender, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, non-Indigenous and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) status. CALD status here refers to those who identified as from a non-Australian background where the primary language is generally not English. It should be noted that there is some difficulty with these categorisations. Firstly, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people surveyed would speak a non-English language at home. Those identifying as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and some other background, are categorised as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Second, while people who originate from New Zealand, UK, Canada and the United States are likely to speak English, it may not be their first language, so while these people have been labelled non-CALD for the purpose of this analysis, the data in the survey does not clearly distinguish between CALD and non-CALD.

## CHILD FRIENDLY ALICE TECHNICAL REPORT

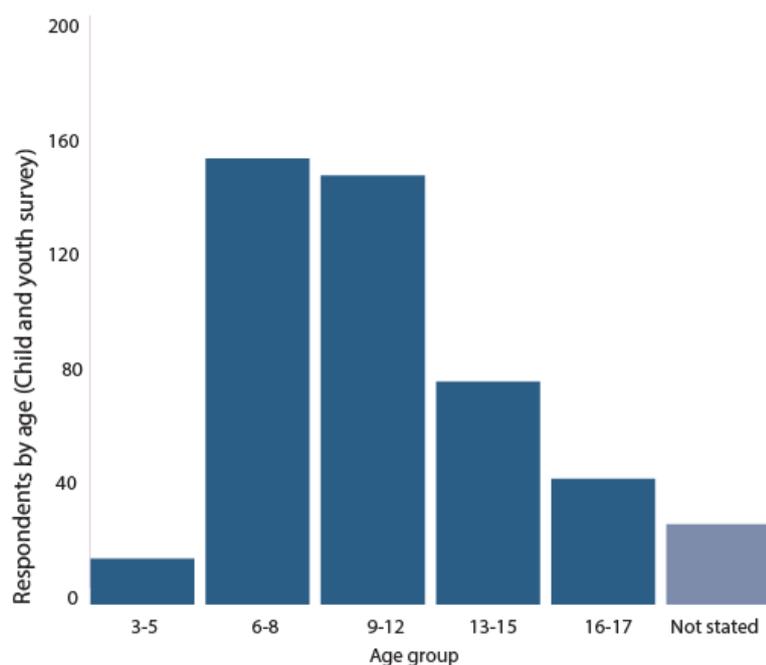
Table 1. Adult survey respondents by age, gender, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and Indigenous status

Age group	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander			Non-Indigenous or not stated, non CALD			CALD			Total
	Female	Male	Not stated/ non binary	Female	Male	Not stated/ non binary	Female	Male	Not stated/ non binary	
<b>18 - 25</b>	14	4		12	5		2			37
<b>26 - 30</b>	38	4	1	25	7	2	6			83
<b>31 - 40</b>	33	13		92	15	4	13	3		173
<b>41 - 50</b>	38	13		68	10	2	7	1		139
<b>51 - 60</b>	25	8		31	17	6	1		1	89
<b>61 - 70</b>	4			20	8					32
<b>Over 70</b>	2	2		9	1					14
<b>Not stated</b>	9	5		3	4	17				38
<b>Total</b>	163	49	1	260	67	30	29	4	1	605

Source: Child Friendly Alice Adult Survey

Figure 3 shows the age profile of children and young people surveyed. The largest group of respondents in this survey were six to eight years of age. More detail is provided in Table 2, which breaks down the total respondents by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, CALD, age and gender. The same caveats applied to the data for adults should be applied to the data for children and youth.

Figure 3. Age profile of children and young people surveyed



Source: Child Friendly Alice Children and Youth Survey

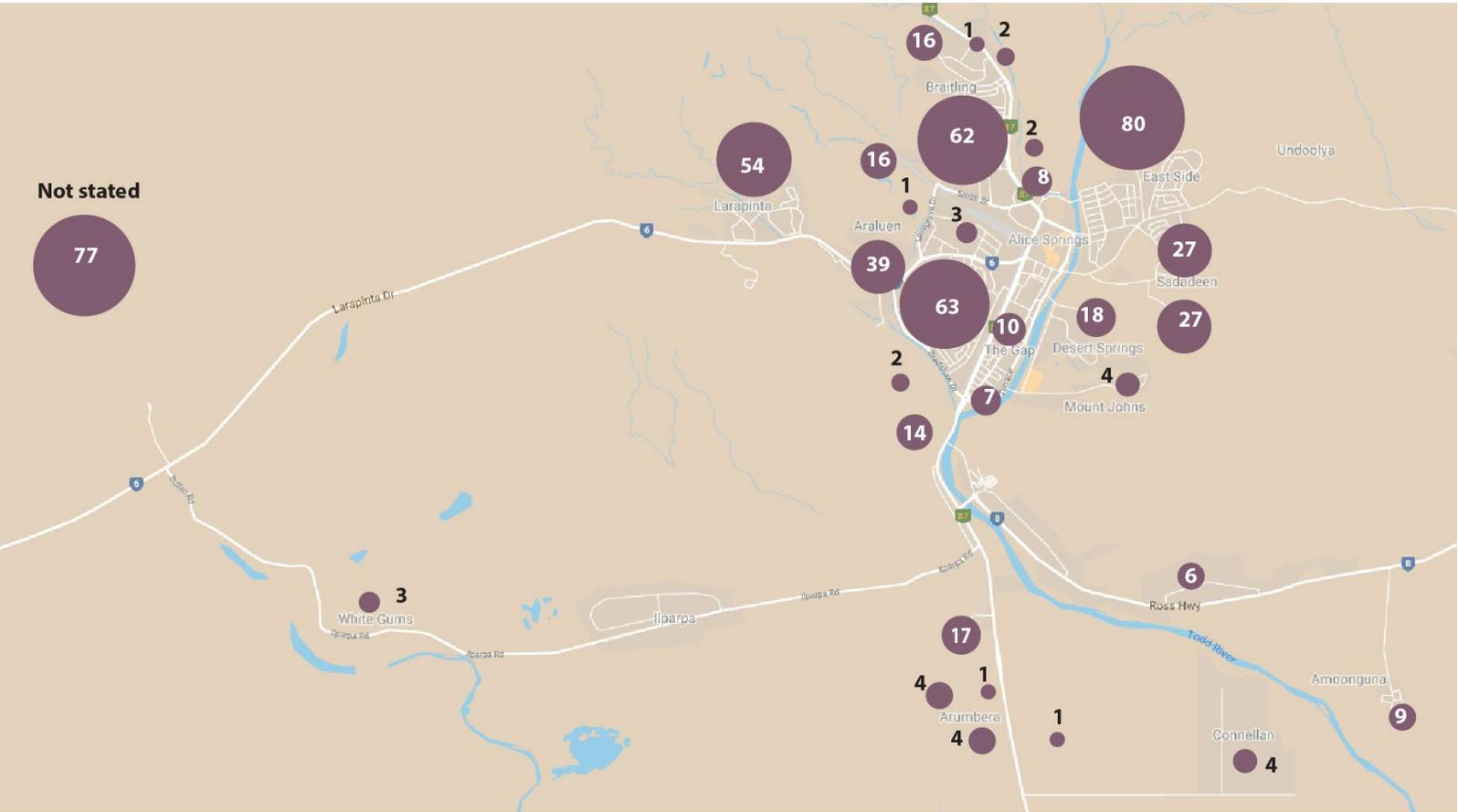
Table 2. Children and youth survey respondents by age, gender, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and Indigenous status

Age group	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander			Non-Indigenous or not stated, non CALD			CALD		Total
	Female	Male	Not stated	Female	Male	Not stated	Female	Male	
3 - 5	3	5		3	3	1	1		16
6 - 8	3	7		23	9	111	2	1	156
9 - 12	26	24	3	38	36	14	2	6	149
13 - 15	28	5	1	28	9	6		1	78
16 - 17	7	9		10	8	7	1	1	43
Not stated	4	1		2	1	20			28
<b>Total</b>	71	51	4	104	66	159	6	9	470

Source: Child Friendly Alice Children and Youth Survey

Figure 4 shows where adults who were surveyed, lived. The largest groups of adults live in East Side (80), Braitling (62) and Gillen (63). Note that 77 adults did not state where they lived.

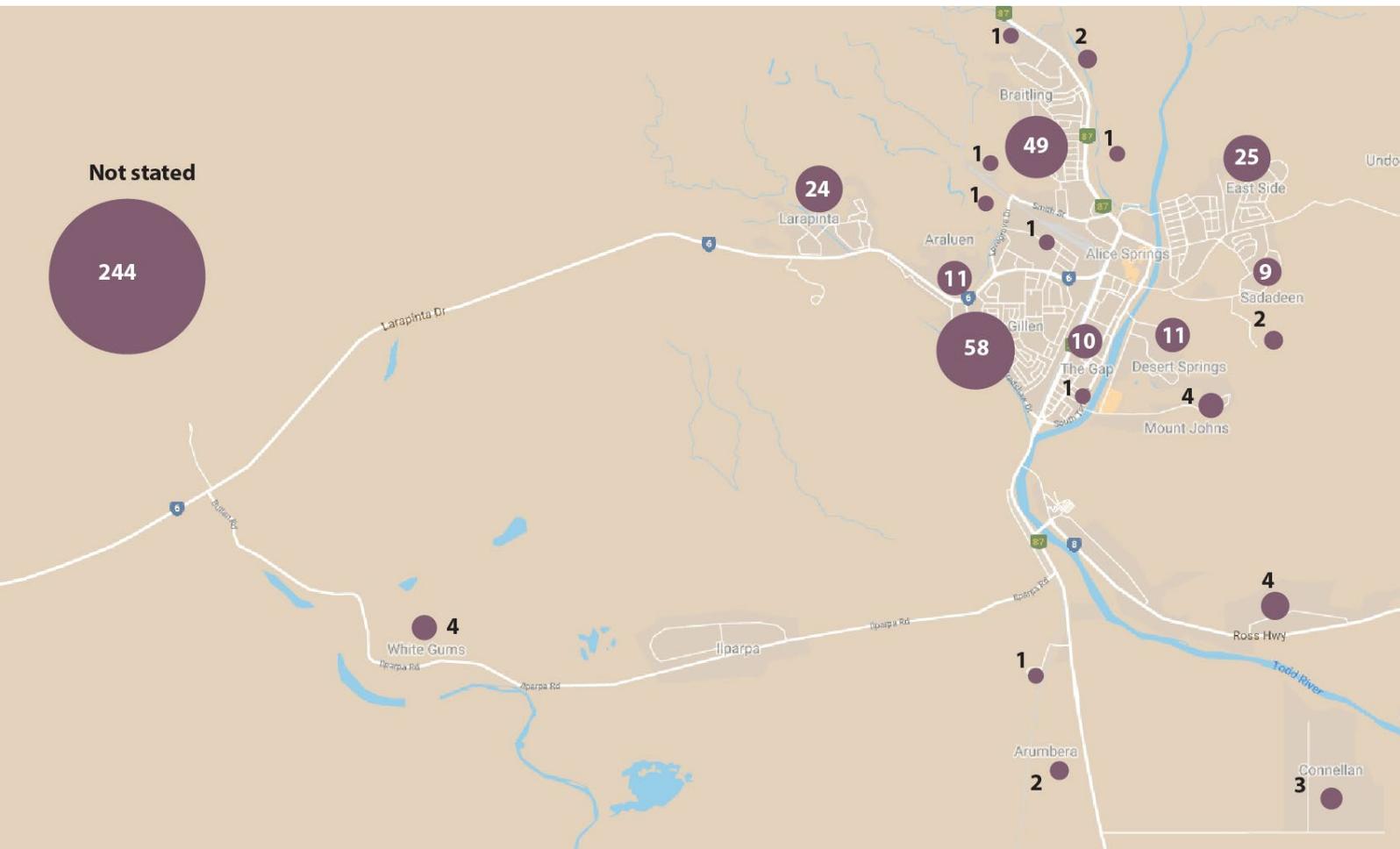
Figure 4. Where adults surveyed, live



Source: Child Friendly Alice Adult Survey

Figure 5 shows where children and young people surveyed, lived. The largest clusters were in Braitling (49) Gillen (58) and East Side (25). However, it should be noted that about half of all children and young people (244) did not state where they lived. Of note is the relatively small proportion of people in both groups who lived south of the Heavitree Gap (14 children and young people, 49 adults).

Figure 5. Where children and young people surveyed, live



Source: Child Friendly Alice Children and Youth Survey

Table 3 summarises additional residential location information. The Tangentyere Research Hub was engaged to gather data in Town Camps to ensure that residents were appropriately represented in the data. Many children and young people were surveyed through their school. Residential location information was not always collected.

Table 3. Residential location of survey respondents

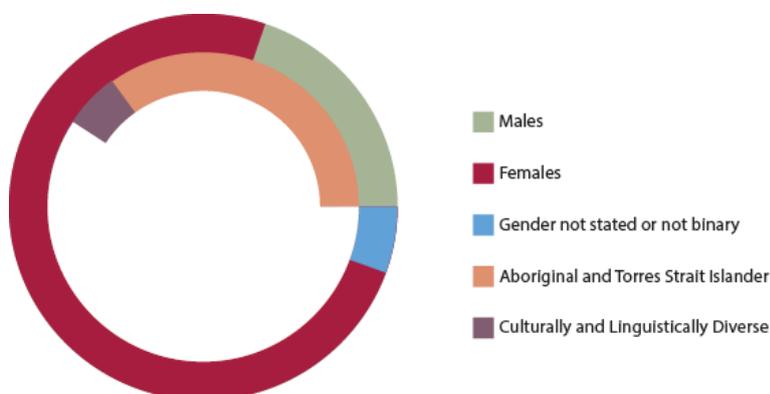
Residential location	Adult survey	Children and young people survey
<b>An Alice Springs suburb</b>	405	214
<b>A Town Camp</b>	116	12
<b>Amoonguna</b>	9	0
<b>Location not stated</b>	75	244
<b>Total</b>	605	470

Source: Child Friendly Alice Children and Youth and Adult Surveys

Figure 6 and Figure 7 show the proportional representation of the sample by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and CALD status for adults and children and young people respectively.

The Adult survey is dominated by women, with 75 per cent of the sample reporting as female (452 respondents). Of the remainder, 120 identified as males, and 33 either did not state their gender or identified as non-binary. One-third of the adult sample (210 respondents) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Just over five per cent (34 respondents) described an ethnic background which was interpreted as CALD. Of the remainder, 304 respondents identified as non-Indigenous and 57 did not state their ethnic background.

Figure 6. Adult respondent mix: gender and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status (n=605)

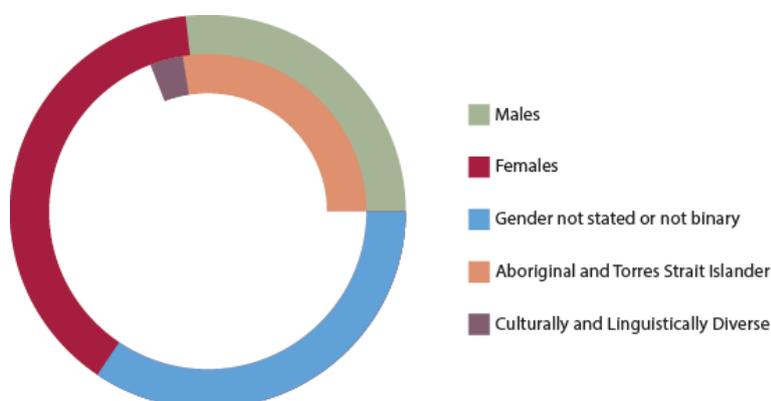


Source: Child Friendly Alice Adult Survey

For children and young people, 27 per cent (128 respondents) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Of the remainder 105 identified as non-Indigenous and 237 did not state their ethnic background. In terms of gender, 39 per cent (181 respondents) identified as female and 26 per cent as male (126 respondents) while 34 per cent did not state their gender (163 respondents). The data from the survey should be viewed with an understanding that the female voices dominate the adult survey. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are slightly over-represented compared to the overall population (18 per cent of the total population) the team made a deliberate effort to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were represented. CALD

children and youth comprised only three per cent of the survey sample (15 respondents).

Figure 7. Child and young person respondent mix: gender and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status (n=470)



Source: Child Friendly Alice Children and Youth Survey

The combined set of survey documents was collated into an NVivo (qualitative analysis software) database, with themes identified under the three research question headings for both the adult and child and youth surveys. This process is typically used for analysing qualitative data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Patton, 2015). Analysis was conducted by an independent qualitative analysis specialist.

Quantitative indicators were selected to fit the Areas of Wellbeing using a set of criteria (see below). The selection of indicators was tested in a series of community forums with stakeholder groups. Child Friendly Alice was conscious that for the Community Profile, it would not be possible to present all the available data.

## Criteria for inclusion of quantitative indicators

While the Nest has been used as an organising framework for the development of the Profile and selection of indicators, as noted earlier, the need to contextualise the indicators to suit the local context was recognised. Data contained in other similar reports were considered also.

The criteria for selection of indicators are as follows.

### Data presented should do no harm

Data is not value neutral and should not be left to tell its own story (Gillborn et al., 2018). Data represents measures that prioritise values, often of the 'majority', leaving minority groups represented in comparison to the majority and its values. Deficit language of some representations of minorities can be harmful. Child Friendly Alice wanted to avoid representations that stereotype or 'other' groups of people in the community who do not conform to what the majority see as 'normal'. It is for this reason that some breakdowns of data into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander versus non-Indigenous are not provided, even where this may be possible.

## **Data should, where possible, reflect the Nest framework and Wellbeing Areas**

Using the Nest means that data is squarely focused on the wellbeing of children and young people aged 0-17 years.

### **Data should be publicly available**

Most of the data used in this report is publicly available. In most cases, people with access to the internet can verify the sources. Data that required ethical clearance to obtain was avoided. There are however, some data from government agencies which are included here. Future comparisons will depend on availability of data. A reliance on future release of information which departments may find sensitive, may inhibit the ability to replicate the Profile and Technical Report into the future.

### **Data should have a point of comparison at a national and Northern Territory level**

In many cases data that can be compared to national level data were selected for inclusion. However, some comparisons with the Northern Territory are meaningless because of the diversity across the jurisdiction. In some cases, it is important to see how Alice Springs is faring, compared with the whole Territory or Australia as a whole.

### **Data should be comparable over time**

To understand how Alice Springs is changing, it is important to be able to plot the trajectory over time. In five years' time it will be important to be able to establish whether actions taken in response to the Technical Report and Profile, have yielded any change.

### **Data should be recent**

Communities change quickly over time. The demographic makeup of Alice Springs is such that people move in and move out regularly. This means that what was true for the community 10 years ago may not necessarily be true today. Therefore, where possible data that is relatively recent (within the last five years) is included in the Profile and Technical Report.

### **Data should be unambiguous and reflect the current context**

Representation and interpretation of the data presented here is deliberately unambiguous. Just because data is available does not mean it should be used.

### **Data gaps should be acknowledged**

There are some areas where data for Alice Springs could not be found. A lack of data enables problems to be masked or hidden and does not allow for the whole story to be told. For example, while some people talk about youth suicide as a problem there is no publicly available data to show the extent of the problem. The same applies to youth crime, participation in sport, provision of support for cultural activities, and several other indicators. Highlighting the missing data enables the community to find ways to ensure that in the future, the data are not hidden.

## Limitations

The data presented here and in the Community Profile are designed for the purposes outlined earlier (see Rationale and purpose, page 1). There are however some cautions and caveats that readers and end-users should be aware of.

While every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of data presented, the work has not undergone a peer review process or an ethical clearance process. It was a community-based process and as such can comfortably be used by the Alice Springs community, but it should not be used for academic purposes.

The sample of over 1000 voices represents a major achievement for Child Friendly Alice. However, it is noted that there may have been an element of self-selection in survey participation, indicated by the high proportion of female participants (see Figure 6, page 12). Further, the initial consultation period, ahead of the survey, was largely driven by organisations that have a vested interest in the outcomes. While this is to be expected, this process could be seen to be biased.

The additional detail for the survey results provided in the Technical Report should be treated with some caution. In many cases the numbers are quite small (for example the CALD and Town Camp breakdowns). The results for these breakdowns should not be seen as representative for these groups in the whole community. Even for the entire sample, the findings may not be representative of the whole community. Less than 10 per cent of all children and young people in Alice Springs were surveyed. Less than five per cent of adults were surveyed.

## Indicators used in the Community Profile and/or Technical Report

Table 4 summarises the indicators, sources and brief reasons for the choice of indicators presented here. References relating to the reasons for selection are also included. All the indicators listed below are reported on in the Technical Report. A selection was chosen for the Community Profile. Because some months elapsed between preparation of the Community Profile and publication of the Technical Report, some data presented in this document reflect more current information.

*Table 4. Rationale for the choices of indicators and their sources*

<b>Wellbeing Area</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Reason for selection</b>
<b>Loved and safe</b>	AEDC social competence vulnerability	Australian Early Development Census (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, 2019)	AEDC domains predict children's later outcomes in health, wellbeing and academic success (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b).
	Family violence, alcohol related assaults and property crime police reports / 100 000 population	Northern Territory Police statistics (Department of the Attorney General and Justice, 2019)	Exposure to family violence and associated traumas are of concern to the wellbeing of children (Bair-Merritt et al., 2015; Richards, 2011).

<b>Wellbeing Area</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Reason for selection</b>
	Out of Home Care (OOHC)	Published for Alice Springs as special data request to Territory Families, Northern Territory Data in Annual Report (Territory Families, 2018)	OOHC rates are a negative indicator of family strength, but are influenced by a range of factors including low socio-economic status, maternal age under 20 and Aboriginal status (O'Donnell et al., 2016). It is an indication of child vulnerability (Redmond et al., 2016).
	Feeling safe walking in your neighbourhood at night	Collected in the ABS General Social Survey, reported in the Social Health Atlas of Australia (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)	Feelings of safety are associated with levels of trust and therefore social cohesion (Mason et al., 2013). Conversely fear of crime may be associated with neighbourhood disorder (Ruddell & Ortiz, 2015).
	Child protection: reports and substantiated notifications	Published for Alice Springs through a special data request to Territory Families, Northern Territory Data in Annual Report (Territory Families, 2019, 2018)	Substantiated notifications are related to issues of neglect and abuse of children (Bilson et al., 2015).
<b>Essential needs</b>	Labour force (non)participation	Census (ABS, 2018a)	Unemployment rates can mask the problem of labour force participation. (Tiwari et al., 2018). The strength of a community is perhaps better reflected in labour force participation rates.
	Overcrowding in housing – dwellings requiring extra bedrooms	Census (ABS, 2018a)	Overcrowding in houses is associated with lower educational outcomes (Silburn et al., 2018) and health outcomes (Zubrick et al., 2004).
	Children in low income, welfare dependant families	Department of Social Services (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)	Welfare dependence is an indicator of socio-economic disadvantage (Perales et al., 2014).
	Public transport services within town (weekdays) and accessibility	Public transport maps and timetables, Alice Springs (Northern Territory Government, 2018)	Access to transport affects access to services and participation in a range of activities (Welch & Mishra, 2013).
	Food affordability and accessibility	Annual Market Basket Survey (Northern Territory Department of Health, 2016)	High food costs disproportionately affect those on low incomes (Pollard et al., 2016).

## CHILD FRIENDLY ALICE TECHNICAL REPORT

<b>Wellbeing Area</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Reason for selection</b>
	Public Housing wait times, housing affordability, rental assistance	Northern Territory Government website (Northern Territory Government, 2019)	Has the effect of pushing people into less affordable or living in housing 'inappropriate for their needs' (Andersen et al., 2016, p. 4).
	Homelessness	Australian Bureau of Statistics Census estimates of homelessness (ABS, 2018e)	Homelessness is associated with several other factors including domestic violence and mental illness (Pawson et al., 2018).
	Income distribution/inequality	Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, (ABS, 2018b)	Income inequality matters because it is likely to have effects, both good and bad, on other outcomes, such as economic efficiency and population health. (Wilkins, 2015, p. 93).
<b>Healthy</b>	AEDC Physical health and wellbeing vulnerability	Australian Early Development Census (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, 2019)	AEDC domains predict children's later outcomes in health, wellbeing and academic success (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b).
	AEDC Emotional maturity vulnerability	Australian Early Development Census (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, 2019)	AEDC domains predict children's later outcomes in health, wellbeing and academic success (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b).
	Infant Death Rate	ABS 2011-2015 (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)	High infant mortality rates reflect a number of other health and wellbeing concerns (Freemantle et al., 2015).
	Percentage of low birth-weight babies	NT Department of Health and Families (2012 to 2014) (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2016)	Low birthweight is associated with other health indicators of vulnerability and disadvantage (Chen et al., 2014).
	Percentage of mothers smoking during pregnancy	NT Department of Health (2012-2014) (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)	Smoking during pregnancy adds health risks to the unborn child and has health implications into adulthood (Hollams et al., 2013).
	Percentage of mothers consuming alcohol during pregnancy	No data is available on this indicator.	Alcohol consumption during pregnancy has been linked to low birth weight, neuropsychological disorders, FASD, pre-term births and disabilities (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017; Stanesby et al., 2018).

<b>Wellbeing Area</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Reason for selection</b>
	Breastfeeding rates	ABS National Health Survey 2014-2015 (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)	Breastfeeding may have a protective effect against childhood obesity (Hansstein, 2016) and other long term health and cognitive benefits for children and mothers (Binns et al., 2016).
	Rates of obesity for 2-17 year old children	ABS National Health Survey 2014-2015 (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)	High levels of obesity are associated with long-term and chronic medical conditions such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease (Sanders et al., 2015).
	Fruit and vegetable intake for children aged 4-17	ABS National Health Survey 2014-2015 (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019). Data is not available for vegetable intake.	'A diet high in fruit and vegetables is a key factor for the prevention of chronic diseases and obesity' (Mihirshahi et al., 2019, p. 83; Wang et al., 2014).
<b>Engaged in learning</b>	NAPLAN Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 Reading	My School (ACARA, 2019a)	NAPLAN scores predict future educational attainment levels (ACARA, 2015).
	NAPLAN Year 3,5, 7 and 9 Numeracy	My School (ACARA, 2019a)	NAPLAN scores predict future educational attainment levels (ACARA, 2015).
	Rates of school attendance	My School (ACARA, 2019a; Northern Territory Department of Education, 2018)	School attendance is an indicator of engagement and participation in learning (ACARA, 2015).
	Enrolment in pre-schools	Special data request, Northern Territory Department of Education	The 'potential of early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs to facilitate positive social, economic and health trajectories has been demonstrated with strongest effect among families living in circumstances of disadvantage' (Leske et al., 2015, p. 109).
	Proportion of 20-24 year olds with Year 12 completion	Census (ABS, 2018d)	Completion of Year 12 facilitates access to employment and higher education (Lamb et al., 2015).
	AEDC developmentally vulnerable in more than one domain	Australian Early Development Census (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, 2019)	AEDC domains predict children's later outcomes in health, wellbeing and academic success (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b).

## CHILD FRIENDLY ALICE TECHNICAL REPORT

<b>Wellbeing Area</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Reason for selection</b>
<b>Actively Participating</b>	People aged 15-19 participating in voluntary work	Census (ABS, 2018d)	Volunteering is seen as a positive sign of civic participation, social capital and social inclusion (Bates * & Davis, 2004; Speevak-Sladowski et al., 2013).
	Parks and playgrounds	Map of available parks, sport and recreation and cultural facilities (Alice Springs Town Council, 2019a)	Beyond health and physical activity outcomes other outcomes, such as enhanced sense of community and a place for family togetherness are possible (Mullenbach et al., 2018).
	Sporting and recreational organisations	Number of available sport and recreation organisations (Alice Springs Town Council, 2019b)	Young people participating in sport tend to gain physical and mental health benefits (Vella et al., 2016).
	Children can safely voice their views and feel heard	No specific data available for this indicator.	Children participating in decision making processes gives them an appreciation for democracy, their agency and responsibility.
	Participation in sport (0-12 years)	No specific data available for this indicator.	'Participation in sport conveys lasting benefits that are considered attributes of a healthy lifestyle' (Telford et al., 2016, p. 406). Participation in sports clubs at age 12 years is associated with lower obesity levels.
<b>Positive sense of identity and culture</b>	Cultural diversity: Adults and children speaking a language other than English	Census (ABS, 2018d)	Multilingual communities are potentially more likely to be tolerant of outsiders, creating a more inclusive environment (Colvin et al., 2015).
	Aboriginal adults and children speaking an Indigenous language	Census (ABS, 2018d)	Higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in schools create opportunities for reconciliation and respectful relationships in a learning environment (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013).
	People who disagree with acceptance of other cultures	ABS General Social Survey (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)	Communities with greater acceptance of other cultures are more cohesive and harmonious (Cantle, 2005).



## **ABOUT ALICE SPRINGS**

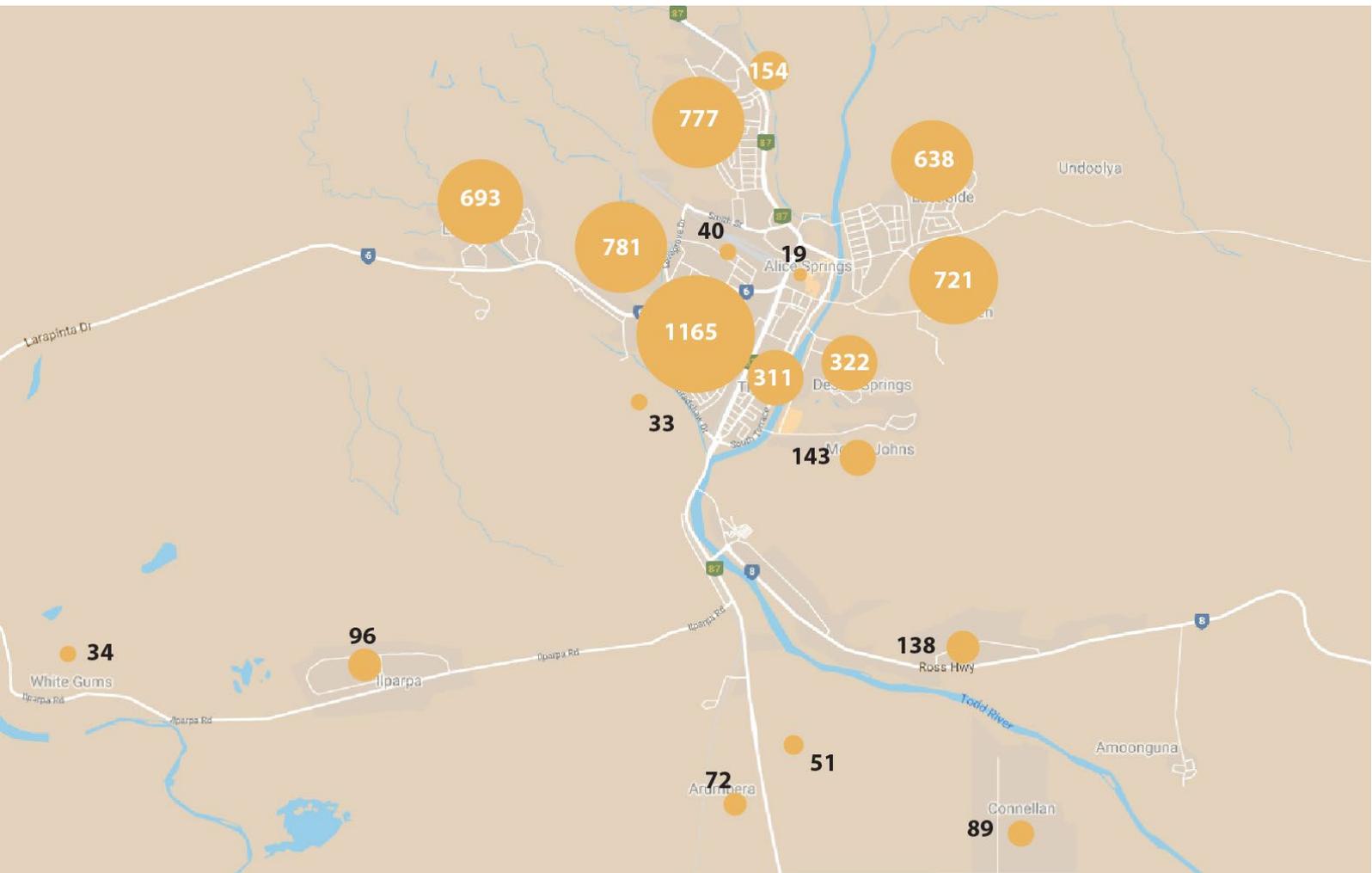
Alice Springs is built on Arrernte Country. Arrernte people have lived in the Alice Springs region for tens of thousands of years. It is a place rich in stories and rich in cultural tradition (Bowman, 2015; Wallace & Lovell, 2009). The rich and long history of Arrernte was interrupted with colonisation when the town was established as the base for the overland telegraph line in 1871 (Austin-Broos, 2009). Since then it has always been a place at the interface—a frontier, if you like (Morrison, 2019)—of many different cultures dominated by western (mostly European) hegemonic powers and systems of law and control.

Alice Springs is geographically isolated and has a challenging environment. It services the central Australian region, covering an area of nearly one million square kilometres.

## Young people and families in Alice Springs

The 2016 Census tells us that 6100 people aged under 18 live in Alice Springs. More than three-quarters of these live in six suburbs: Gillen, Araluen, Larapinta, Braitling, East Side and Sadadeen within easy reach of schools and other services (see Figure 8). More than 500 young people live in the areas south of Heavitree Gap, and may find accessing schools and services more difficult.

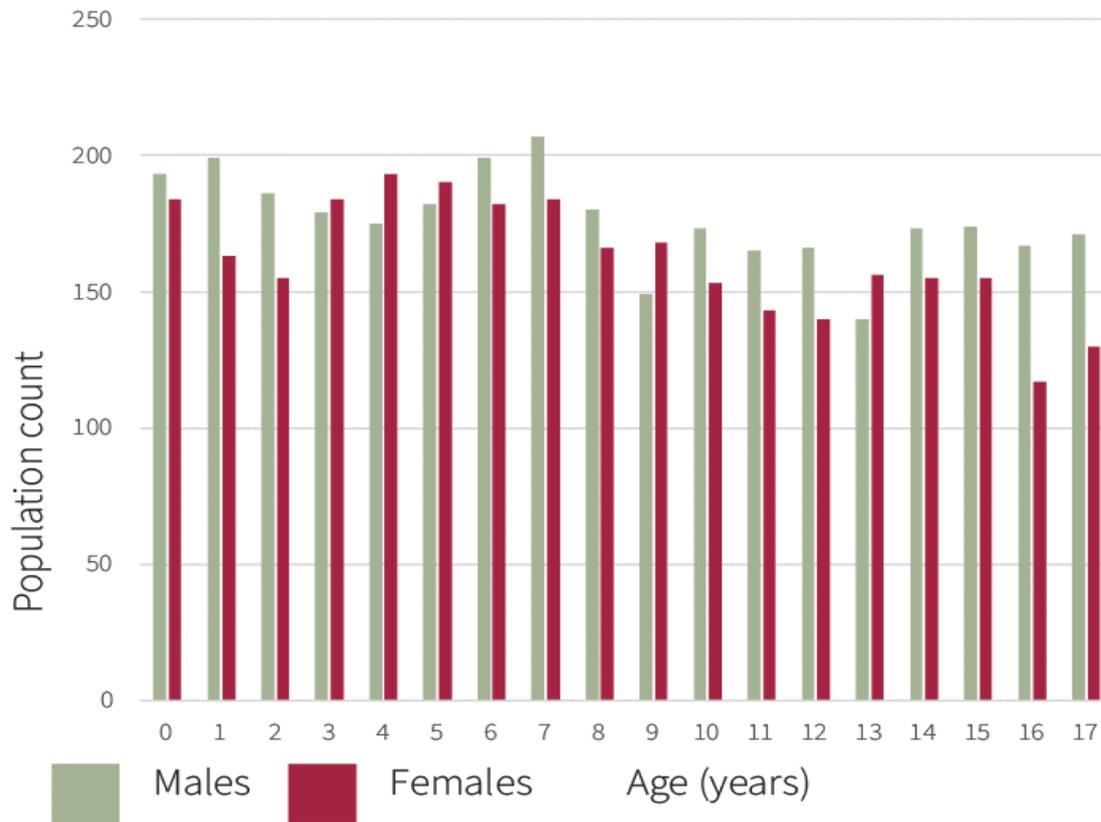
Figure 8. Where people under 18 live in Alice Springs



Source: (ABS, 2018d)

Figure 9 shows the distribution of the Alice Springs population by gender across the ages from 0 to 17. Males outnumber females in every age group except 3 to 5 year olds and 9 and 13 year olds. The difference is greatest in the 16 to 17 year group where there are 91 more males than females. The male population peaks at age 7 and the female population at age 4.

Figure 9. Alice Springs population by age at 2016



Source: (ABS, 2018d)

Table 5 shows the types of families with children in Alice Springs. Nearly half of all families are 'intact' families (those with children who belong to two parents) and whose children are under the age of 15. One in eight families are intact with children aged 15 and over. About one-quarter of all families are single parent families. Less than one in ten families are 'step' or 'blended' families. Less than 100 families have other children present. The patterns of family composition are very similar to those for the whole of Australia.

Table 5. Family types and composition in Alice Springs

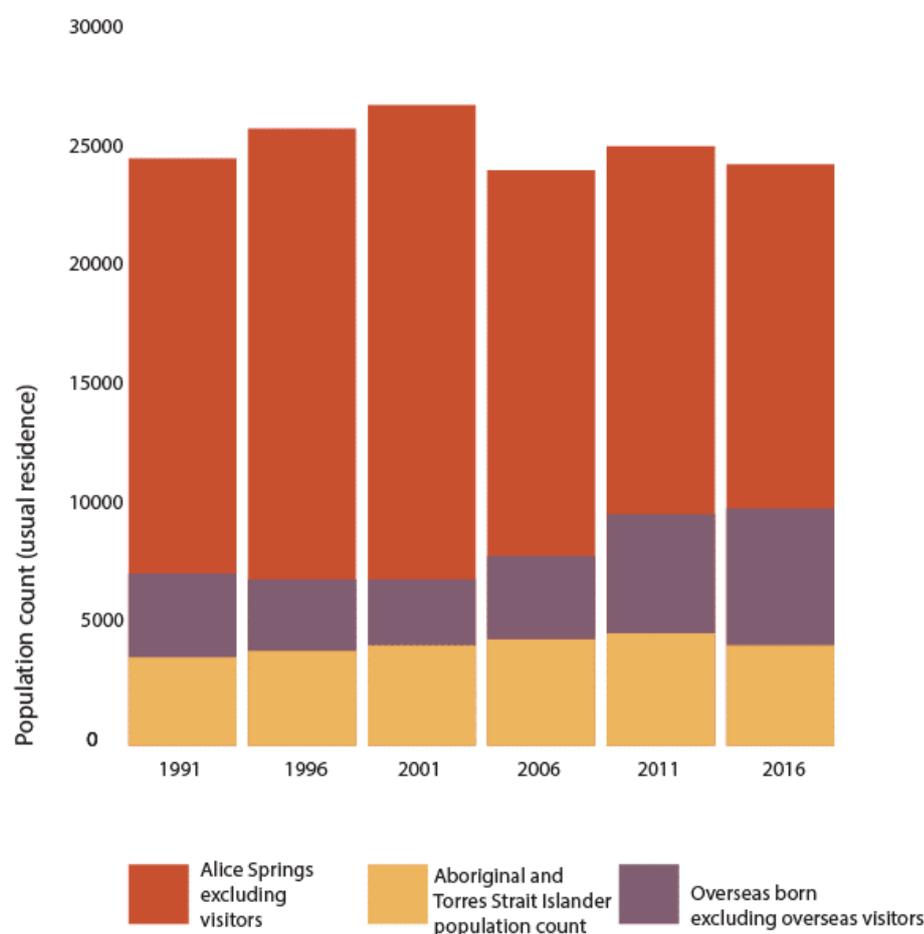
Type of family	Intact family with no other children present	Step family with no other children present	Blended family with no other children present	Intact family with other children present	Step family with other children present	Blended family with other children present	Other couple family with other children only	Single parent or other family	Total
Couple family with children under 15	1691	96	113	40	13	9	27	0	1992
Couple family with no children under 15	449	72	6	5	0	0	4	0	537
One parent family with children under 15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	602	602
One parent family with no children under 15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	334	334
Other family	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	103	103
<b>Total</b>	<b>2140</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1039</b>	<b>3568</b>
<b>Percentage of all families with children</b>	<b>60.0%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>29.1%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Australia comparison</b>	<b>63.5%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: (ABS, 2018d)

## Diversity

While the total population of Alice Springs has remained fairly stable over the last 25 years (Figure 10), it is now a much more diverse community than it was in the early 1990s. In 1991 there were 3423 overseas born people in the resident population of 24749. By 2016 this had grown to 5796 people. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has also grown in that time, from 3708 in 1991 to 4361 in 2016.

Figure 10. Alice Springs population, showing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and overseas born count, 1991 to 2016 Censuses



Sources: (ABS, 2018b, 2012, 2018d, 2003)

Table 6 shows the growth of cultural diversity by country of birth between 2006 and 2016. Of note is the growth of people who were born in India and the Philippines with a combined increase of 988 people over the 10 years. Other groups have also grown significantly, notably New Zealanders increasing by 412 in the 10 years. By contrast those born in Australia, the UK and the USA have all declined in number.

Table 6. Country of birth, Alice Springs 2006 to 2016

	Persons 2006	Persons 2011	Persons 2016	% Change, 2006 to 2016	Change 2006 to 2016
<b>Australia(b)</b>	17,838	17,871	15,930	-11%	-1,908
<b>Canada</b>	52	46	55	6%	3
<b>China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)(c)</b>	17	56	65	282%	48
<b>Croatia</b>	3	0	0	-100%	-3
<b>Egypt</b>	13	13	10	-23%	-3
<b>Fiji</b>	44	79	99	125%	55
<b>Germany</b>	124	121	118	-5%	-6

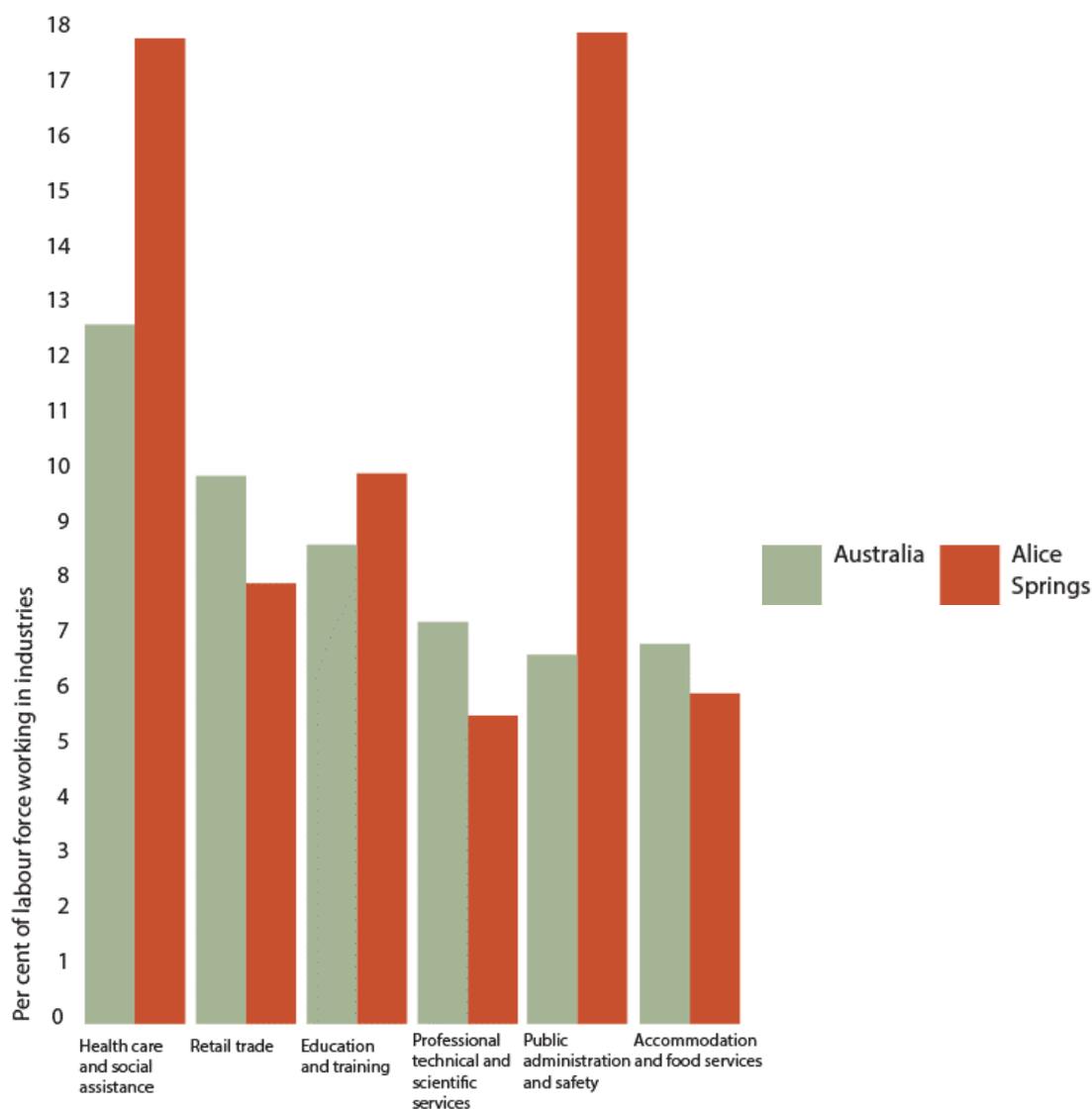
	Persons 2006	Persons 2011	Persons 2016	% Change, 2006 to 2016	Change 2006 to 2016
Greece	16	13	11	-31%	-5
Hong Kong (SAR of China)(c)	16	30	46	188%	30
India	81	432	657	711%	576
Indonesia	21	32	26	24%	5
Iran	10	4	12	20%	2
Ireland	65	94	76	17%	11
Italy	75	72	70	-7%	-5
Japan	32	23	38	19%	6
Korea, Republic of (South)	13	66	40	208%	27
Lebanon	4	10	4	0%	0
Malaysia	44	29	31	-30%	-13
Malta	4	4	10	150%	6
Netherlands	83	79	72	-13%	-11
New Zealand	460	661	872	90%	412
Pakistan	12	22	33	175%	21
Philippines	190	340	484	155%	294
Poland	18	23	12	-33%	-6
Singapore	31	26	29	-6%	-2
South Africa	104	150	144	38%	40
Sri Lanka	42	61	103	145%	61
Thailand	24	35	58	142%	34
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	0	5	7		7
Turkey	4	4	3	-25%	-1
United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man(d)	978	882	800	-18%	-178
United States of America	709	623	678	-4%	-31
Vietnam	39	54	78	100%	39
Zimbabwe	78	187	181	132%	103
Born elsewhere(e)	450	742	863	92%	413
Country of Birth not stated	2,189	2,289	3,017	38%	828
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,888</b>	<b>25,187</b>	<b>24,753</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>865</b>

Source: (ABS, 2018f)

## Employment in Alice Springs

Alice Springs is a service town for the central Australian region. As a result, much of the employment in the town is directed at service provision in health and administration. The proportional difference stands out in Figure 11 where Alice Springs is compared to Australia.

Figure 11. Main industries of employment in Alice Springs compared with Australia, 2016

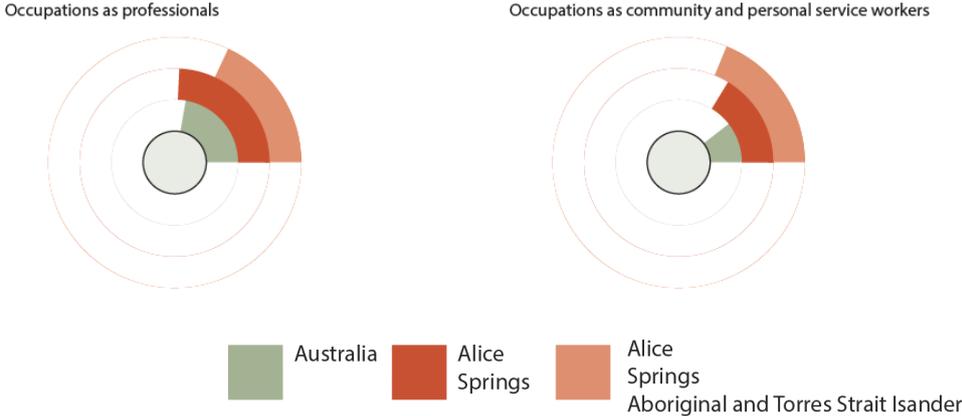


Source (ABS, 2018b)

The difference in occupational profiles also stands out when the proportion of professionals and community and personal service workers in the population are analysed. Figure 12 shows that 24 per cent of people in Alice Springs are employed in 'professional' occupations. While this is higher than for Australia, it is noticeably higher than the figure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Alice Springs (18 per cent). By contrast—reflecting the service delivery focus of Alice Springs. Community and personal service workers make up 11 per cent of Australia's workforce. In Alice Springs,

they make up 16 per cent of the workforce, while 19 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in the town are in this occupational category. Professionals (for example doctors, nurses and teachers) tend to have higher skill levels than personal service workers (for example support workers, child carers, hospitality workers and education aides). For more details about occupations refer to the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ABS, 2013).

Figure 12. Proportion of occupations as professionals and community and personal service workers, 2016

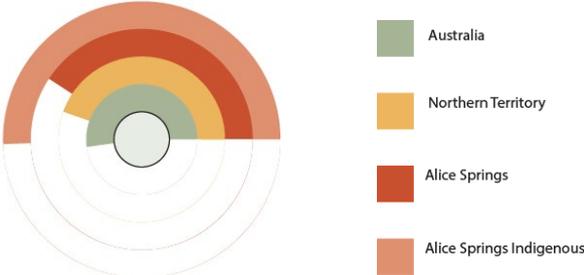


Source (ABS, 2018b)

### Transience

Figure 13 shows the relative transience of the population in Alice Springs compared to the Northern Territory and Australia. Only 41 per cent of the Alice Springs population had the same address five years prior to the 2016 Census. This compares with 45 per cent of the Northern Territory population and 52 per cent of the Australian population. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is not so transient with 51 per cent reporting that they were at the same address five years previously.

Figure 13. Proportion of people reporting living at the same address five years previous to the 2016 Census



Source (ABS, 2018b)

'Transience' or 'mobility' here can have different meanings. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the expression of mobility is not represented by a change of address as much as it is by more frequent movements in and out of communities for cultural, sporting or health reasons (Dockery, 2014; Foster et al., 2005; Taylor & Dunn, 2010).

## 1000 VOICES

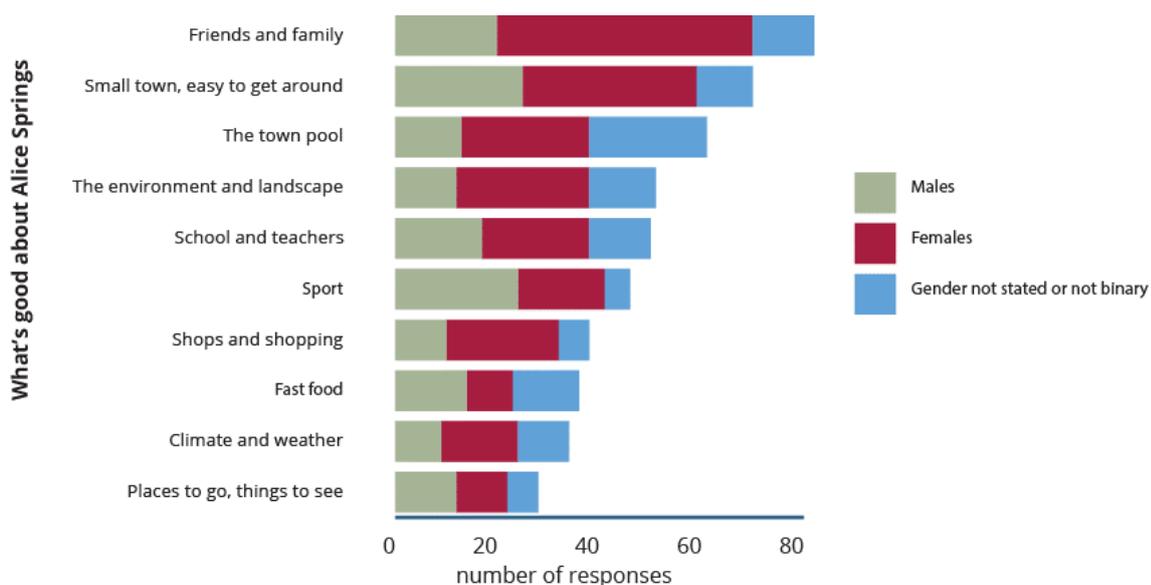
In this section details about the responses given in the survey are provided. Respondents were able to provide as much information as they wanted and in many cases made several different points in the one answer. Each different point raised was counted as a separate response. The graphs shown here only display the top 10 issues. Respondents were also asked to rank where they think Alice Springs is now on a scale of 1 to 10. Summary charts for these responses are also shown. Comments from respondents are reserved for inclusion with the presentation of data as it relates to the Nest framework. Additional information is provided in tables at Appendix 1, from page 141.

### Children and young people's voices

#### What's good about Alice Springs

Figure 14 shows the positive aspects of life in Alice Springs that children and young people identified. 'Friends and family' was the main strength identified, particularly for females. The benefits of living in a small town were also raised, and this was a particularly strong response from males. This made it easy for young people to get around. The town's environment, and the weather were important positives. Opportunities for recreation including sports, shops, places to go, things to see as well as many fast food options, were all considered benefits of living in Alice Springs. For males, sport was seen as a particularly strong positive. The town pool was noted as an important place for recreation. Schools and teachers were also singled out as contributing to positive experiences for young people. Additional details showing responses by gender, age and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status are shown at Appendix 1 in Table 39, Table 40 and Table 41, starting at page 147.

Figure 14. What children and young people say is good about Alice Springs (n=758 responses, multiple responses allowed)

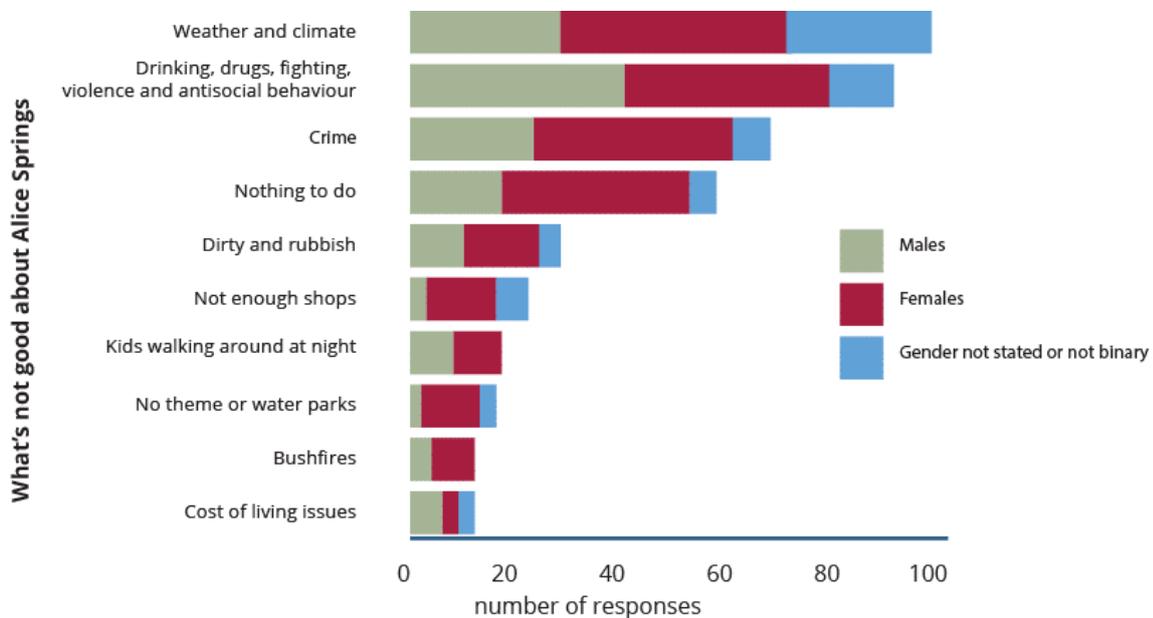


Source: Child Friendly Alice Child and Youth Survey

## What's not so good about Alice Springs?

Figure 15 shows what children and young people thought was not so good about Alice Springs. While weather and climate were seen as positives of living in Alice Springs, the hot summers were identified as not so good for young people. Drinking, drugs, violence and antisocial behaviour were also seen as problematic, particularly for males. Crime (which mainly refers to property crime) was similarly seen as a problem for children and young people. While recreation opportunities were seen as 'good', many young people (more females than males) suggested that there was 'nothing to do', there were not enough shops and there was a need for a water park or theme park. Among the other top 10 issues raised were 'kids walking around at night', bushfires and cost of living issues. Additional details showing responses by gender, age and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status are shown at Appendix 1 in Table 42, Table 43 and Table 44, starting at page 148.

Figure 15. What children and young people say isn't so good about Alice Springs (n=618)



Source: Child Friendly Alice Child and Youth Survey

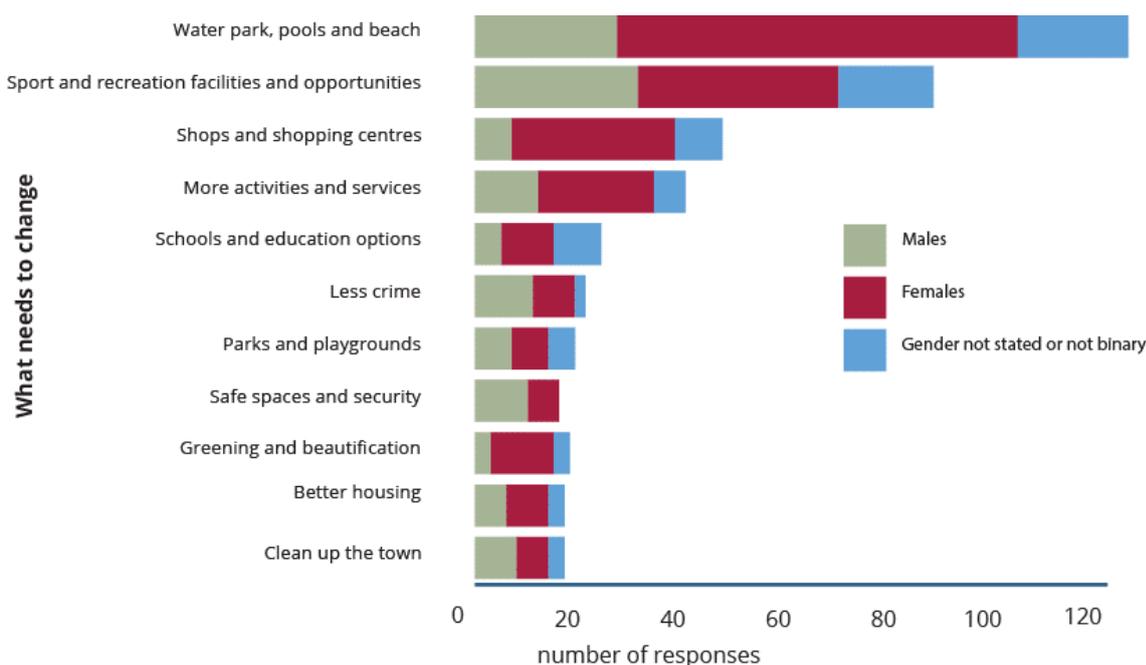
### What needs to change?

Figure 16 shows what children and young people say should change in Alice Springs. Consistent with 'what's not so good about Alice Springs' comments, children and young people offered a number of suggestions about changes they would like to see. Calls for a water park (particularly for females) topped the list. Other sport and recreation opportunities topped the list for males. More generally, shops and shopping centres (a strong point for females), and more activities and services were also requested, along with parks and playgrounds.

Further, the perception of 'dirt and rubbish' (Figure 15), translated into 'cleaning up the town' and 'greening and beautification' efforts. Beyond a call for more safe spaces and security (strongly supported by males), young people were less specific in their response to safety issues raised, instead simply calling for less crime. Interestingly, better housing was raised as a point for change, without a strong corresponding problem identified.

Additional details showing responses by gender, age and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status are shown at Appendix 1 in Table 45, Table 46 and Table 47, starting at page 150.

Figure 16. What children and young people say needs to change in Alice Springs (n=614)

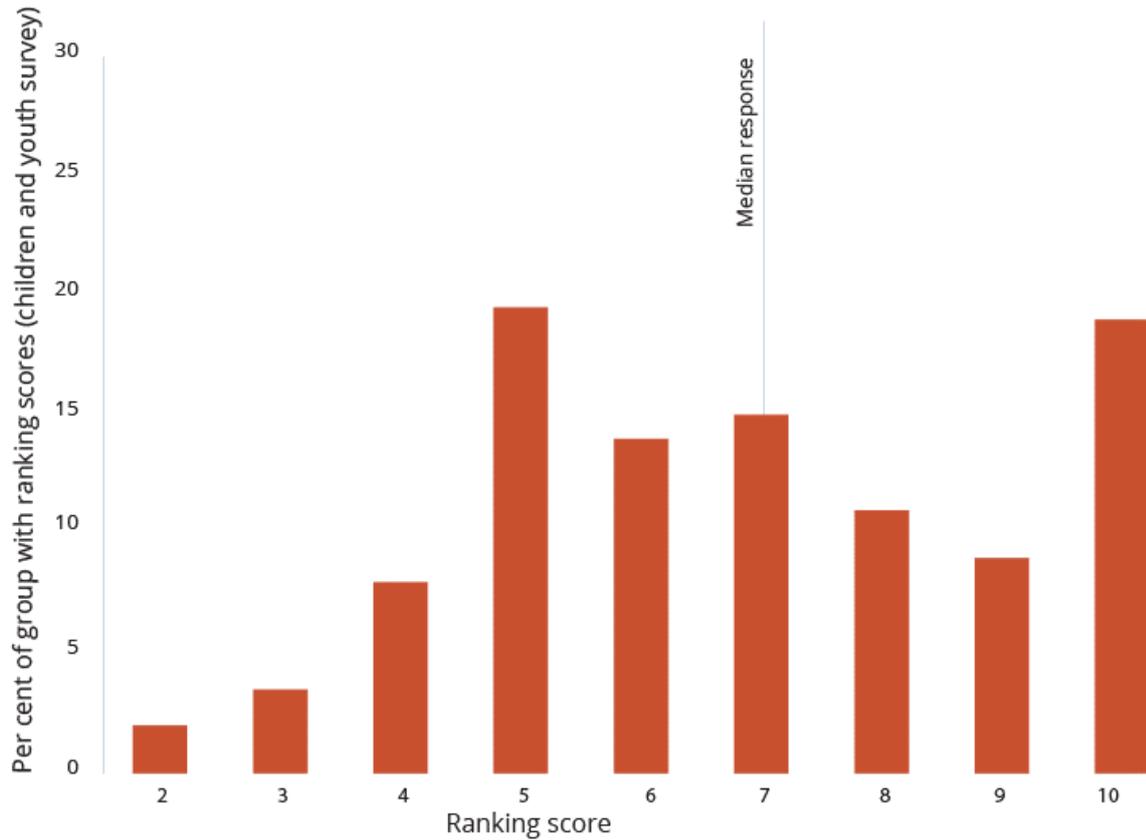


Source: Child Friendly Alice Child and Youth Survey

## Children and young people ranking

Figure 17 graphs the distribution of ranking scores for children and young people about where Alice Springs is now, where 1 was most negative and 10 was most positive. Scores of 5 and 6 could be considered neutral. No children or young people gave a score of 1 and the median rank given was 7, suggesting more children and young people were positive than negative in their opinion of where Alice Springs is now.

Figure 17. Ranking score distribution for children and young people (n=324, excludes respondents who did not give a numerical ranking)



Source: Child Friendly Alice Child and Youth Survey

Table 7 provides additional detail by age and gender. While the overall median ranking was 7, younger children tended to give a higher ranking than teenagers. There was no statistically significant difference between males and females.

Table 7. Children and young people rankings by gender and age group

Age group	Females		Male		Gender not stated		All respondents	
	Median score	Total responses	Median score	Total responses	Median score	Total responses	Median score	Total responses
<b>3 - 5</b>	9	5	9	8	7	1	9	14
<b>6 - 8</b>	8	24	5	12	10	29	8	65
<b>9 - 12</b>	6	62	5	59	10	11	7	132
<b>13 - 15</b>	6	48	5	15	6	7	6	70
<b>16 - 17</b>	5.5	16	5	15	4	7	6	38
<b>Age Not stated</b>	8.5	2	6	1	6	2	8.5	5
<b>Ranking not provided</b>								146
<b>All age groups</b>	7		7		8		7	
<b>Total</b>		166		117		67		470

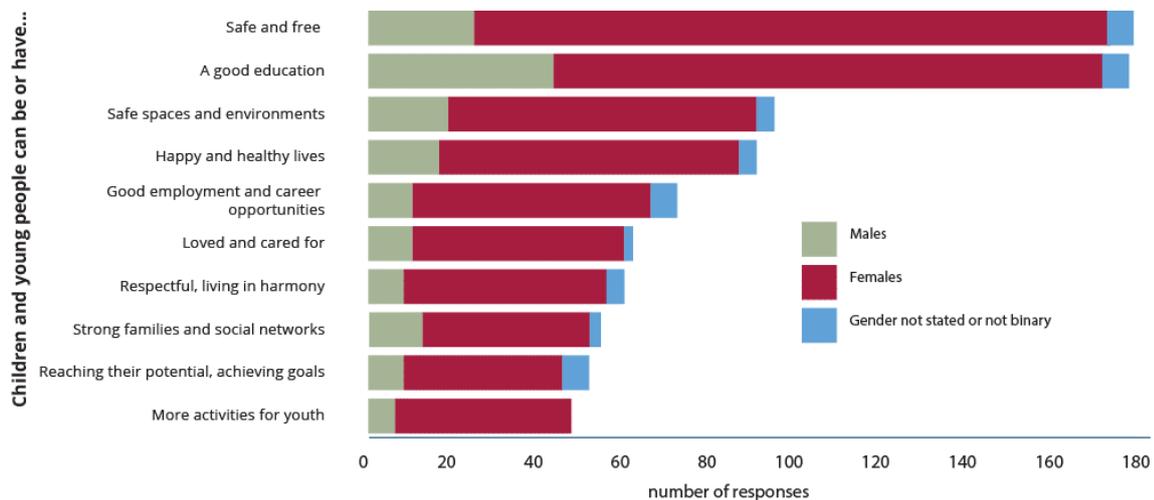
Source: Child Friendly Alice Child and Youth survey

## Adult voices

### Hopes and dreams

Figure 18 shows the top 10 adult survey responses to the question about hopes and dreams for children and young people. Adults surveyed had a strong focus on safety and care of children. They want their children to grow up 'safe and free', 'loved and cared for' in 'safe spaces and environments'. 'A good education' for young people was also a strong aspiration, particularly for males. They also want their children to live 'happy, healthy lives', being 'respectful and living in harmony' with others in the community. They want their children to reach their potential, achieve their goals and have good career and job opportunities. Underpinning these aspirations to some extent is the importance of strong families and activities that young people can actively engage in. Additional details are provided in Appendix 1, breaking down the data by gender, age, location and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, in Table 27, Table 28, Table 29, and Table 30, starting at page 141.

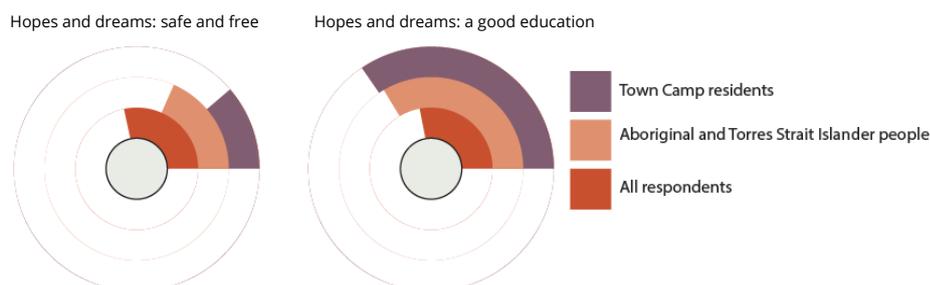
Figure 18. Top 10 hopes and dreams for adults by gender (n=1335 responses)



Source: Child Friendly Alice Adult Survey

Figure 19 breaks down the top two aspirations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents and Town Camp residents, compared to all respondents. Town Camp residents and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents are less likely to describe 'safe and free' as their aspiration for children and young people, but more likely to hope for a good education than the whole survey sample.

Figure 19. Hopes and dreams: safe and free and a good education: comparisons

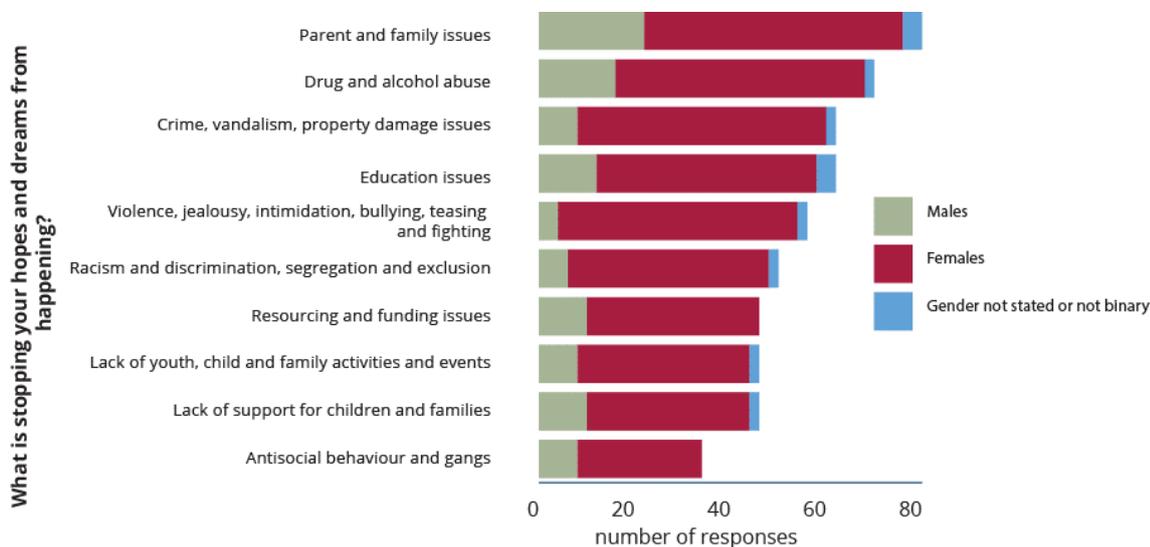


Source: Child Friendly Alice Adult Survey

### What stops your hopes and dreams from happening?

Figure 20 shows the top 10 responses to the question about what inhibits hopes and dreams for young people. The threats to safety appear strong on the list of key factors—drug and alcohol issues, crime, violence, racism and antisocial behaviours. While ‘strong families’ was seen to underpin hopes, respondents also saw family issues and lack of support for families, and a lack of family friendly events as barriers. Similarly, while educational aspirations were strong, educational issues were often described as inhibiting those hopes and dreams. Funding and resourcing issues was also seen as a barrier. Additional details are provided in Appendix 1, breaking down the data by gender, age, location and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status in Table 31, Table 32, Table 33 and Table 34, starting at page 143.

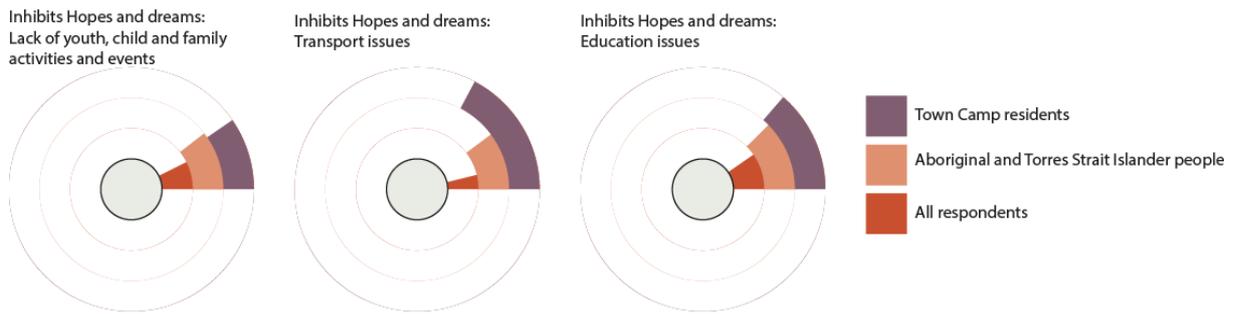
Figure 20. Top 10 adult responses to what is preventing hopes and dreams from happening, by gender (n=1069)



Source: Child Friendly Alice Adult Survey

There were some differences worth noting for different groups in the community. A lack of youth, child and family activities and events was identified as more of an issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents. Transport issues, which did not rate in the top 10 concerns, was quite a significant concern for Town Camp residents. And consistent with the detail for education shown in Figure 19, Town Camp residents and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responders identified education issues as a barrier to their children achieving their hopes and dreams.

Figure 21. Inhibits hopes and dreams: selected comparisons

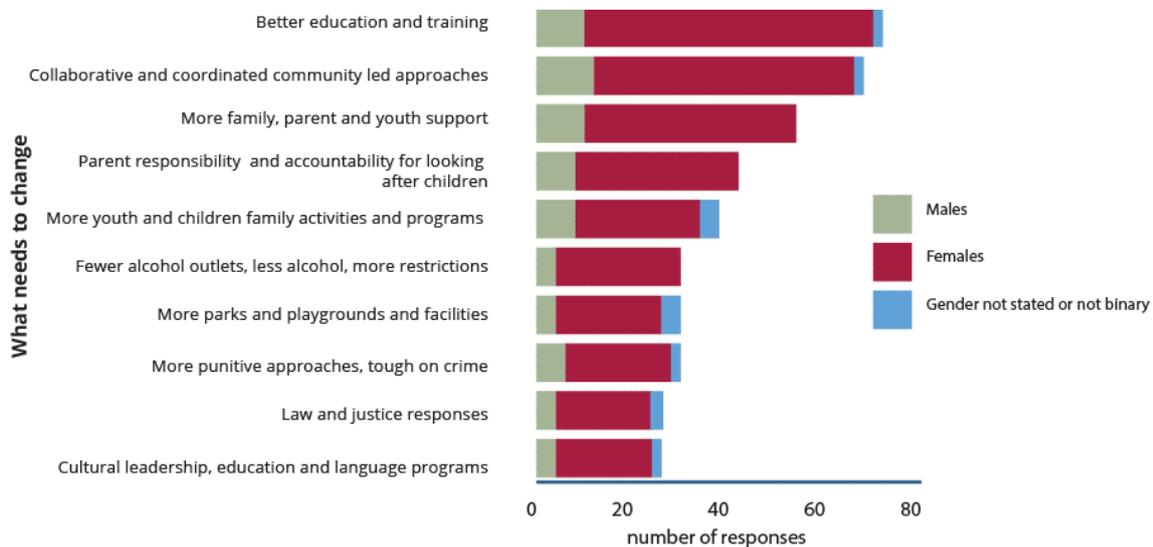


Source: Child Friendly Alice Adult Survey

### What needs to change?

Figure 22 shows the top 10 responses from adults about what needs to change. The earlier narratives involving safety, education and families come through in terms of what needs to change. Law and justice responses, tough on crime approaches and more alcohol restrictions were themes for many respondents. Education was another response, both in terms of 'better education and training' generally, and more specifically, 'cultural leadership education and language programs'. Family, parent and youth support programs were also called for, along with greater parental responsibility and accountability. Some respondents also wanted to see more parks, playgrounds and facilities. Additional details are provided in Appendix 1, breaking down the data by gender, age, location and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status in Table 35, Table 36, Table 37 and Table 38, starting at page 145.

Figure 22. Top 10 adult responses to changes needed, by gender (n=834)

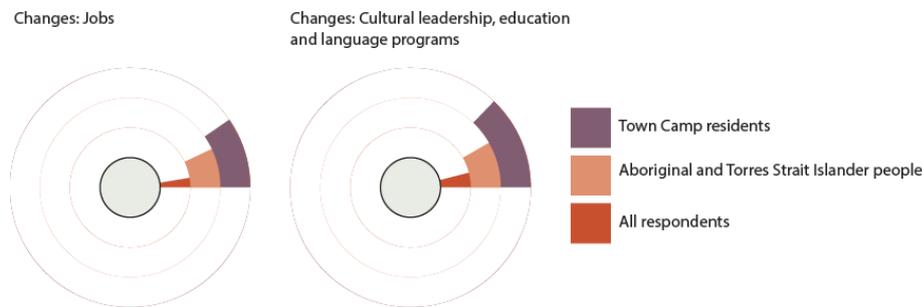


Source: Child Friendly Alice Adult Survey

Figure 23 shows changes that adults would like to see, for Town Camp residents and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents, compared with the whole sample. The need for jobs, while not making it to the top 10 list shown at Figure 22, is clearly a priority for Town Camp residents. The need for cultural leadership, education and

language programs is similarly a priority for many Town Camp residents (see also Appendix 1, Table 36).

Figure 23. Changes: selected comparisons

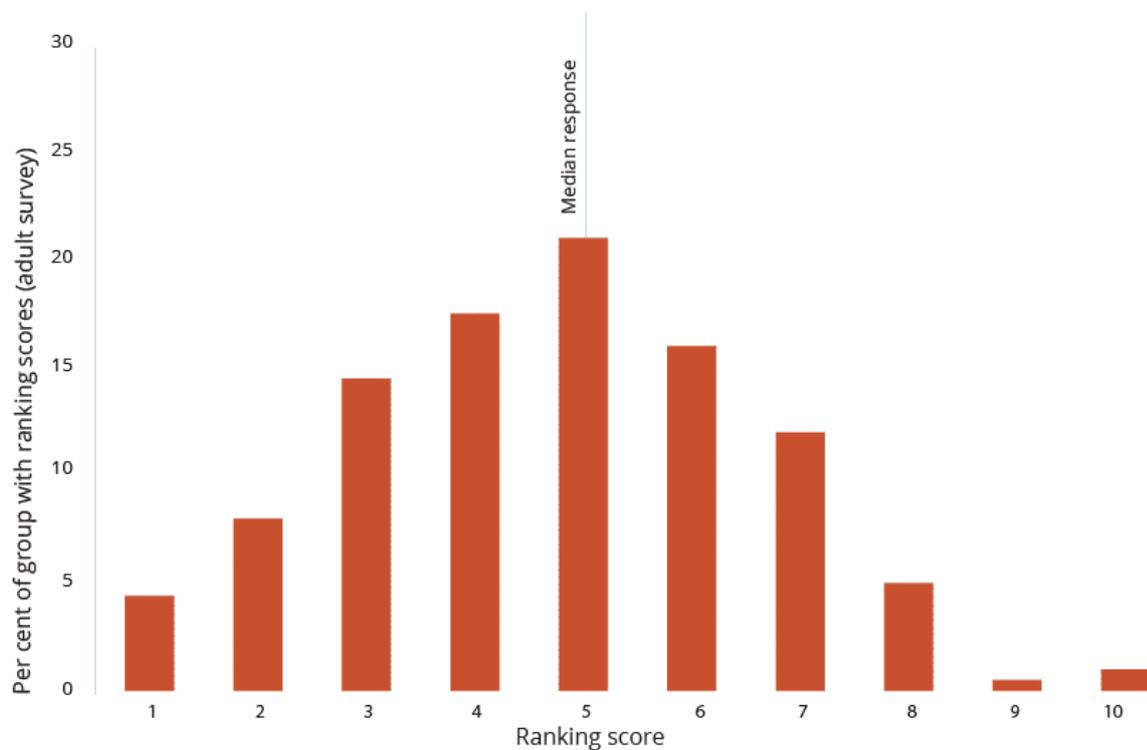


Source: Child Friendly Alice Adult Survey

### Adult ranking

Figure 24 shows adult responses to the question about ranking. Compared to Figure 17, which showed children and young people’s responses, these responses are more normally distributed around the median score of 5. The lower ranking may suggest that adults are less positive about Alice Springs than children and young people, and does suggest they are fairly neutral in their views about where Alice Springs is now.

Figure 24. Ranking score distribution for adults (n=583, excludes respondents who did not give a numerical ranking)



Source: Child Friendly Alice Adult Survey

The detail provided in Table 8 shows a fairly consistent ranking response by age group and generally little difference between males and females. Note that differences that do appear should be treated with caution because of the small numbers involved.

Table 8. Adult rankings: Median scores by gender and age group (where ranking was given)

Age group	Females		Male		Not stated/ non binary		All respondents	
	Median score	Total responses	Median score	Total responses	Median score	Total responses	Median score	Total responses
18 - 25	4.5	28	6	9			5	37
26 - 30	5	68	5	11	3	2	5	81
31 - 40	5	136	5	31	5.5	3	5	171
41 - 50	5	110	5	24	6	2	5	136
51 - 60	4	54	5	25	4	7	5	86
61 - 70	4	23	6	8			4	31
Over 70	6	9	3	3			5	12
(blank)	2	7	4.5	6	6	16	5	29
<b>Total</b>		435		117		30		583







## AREAS OF WELLBEING

Attention is now given to a detailed presentation of indicators as they relate to the ARACY Framework, discussed earlier (see page 2). In presenting the data, community voice is also given priority.

As with the Community Profile, the following sections start with a brief summary, highlighting community aspiration, together with strengths and challenges as they are reported in the community survey data and the external sources.

Comments from respondents are woven into the discussion of each indicator with children and young people's responses indicated with , and adult comments indicated with . Different comments from those shown in the Community Profile have been included in the Technical Report.

Each Area Of Wellbeing concludes with some commentary about the interpretation of the data.



Where there is a data gap, this symbol is used to highlight the lack of information available.



## LOVED AND SAFE



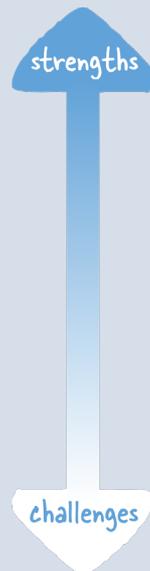
Children have a right to grow up in loving and safe environments. Children are vulnerable and if the right caring environments are not there, they face more risks and challenges than children who are nurtured and encouraged to meet their potential.

### Community aspiration:

*For young people to be safe and free*

#### COMMUNITY VOICE

- friends and family a strength
- concerns about parenting and family issues
- concerns about drug and alcohol abuse
- concerns about violence, jealousing, bullying, teasing and fighting
- kids walking around at night, introduce curfews, lack of support for children and families
- need for safe spaces in the community
- concerns about parenting and parent accountability



#### SUMMARY OF DATA

- reducing levels of early childhood social vulnerability
- high levels of alcohol related violence, substance abuse
- high levels of property crime, need law and justice responses
- high levels of DV related assaults

### How are we doing?

The themes identified in the surveys and the other data examined show more challenges than strengths in this Area of Wellbeing.

Of all the hopes and dreams that adult participants discussed, the desire to see their children be 'safe and free' was the most important. They talked about aspirations for 'safe environments', and to live 'happy, free lives'. They wanted 'young people of this town to be accepted by their family and by the community', to be loved and cared for.

The challenges presented here affect the whole community, and for many, the hope for young people to be safe and free is a response to the challenges they see in the community.

### Key indicators

- Domestic violence related assaults
- Feeling safe walking in your neighbourhood at night
- Developmental vulnerability (social competence)
- Child Protection notifications and substantiations
- Young people in Out of Home Care
- Alcohol- and drug-related assaults
- Property crime

# Children live in safe and supported homes

Many children and young people in the survey spoke positively about their family life. Friends and family was the theme that emerged most frequently about what is good about Alice Springs, as shown in Figure 14 (page 29).

 It's good because all my family is here, & it has a lot of family events.

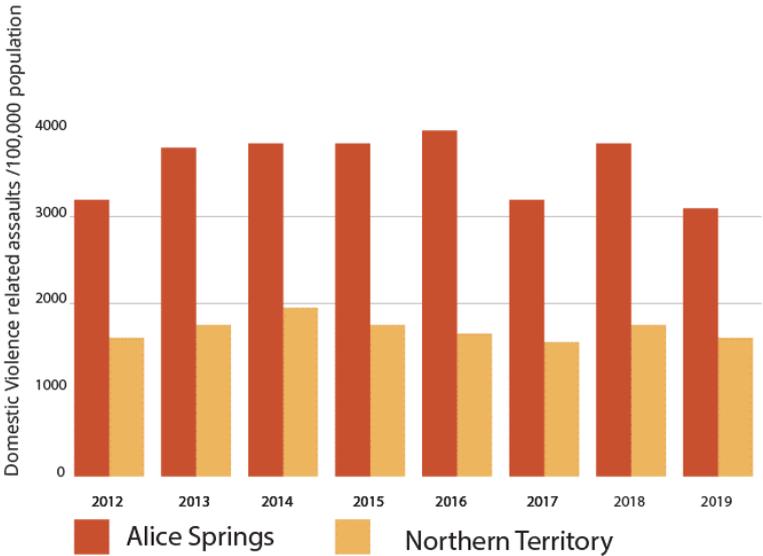
## Safe at home—Domestic violence assaults

Only one young person spoke about family violence in response to what's not good about Alice Springs. Only 13 adults discussed domestic violence specifically in their survey responses, mostly in relation to what stops their hopes and dreams from happening, and mostly as one of many factors:

 Anti-social behaviour from youth and adults. Exposure to crime and domestic violence. Alcoholism. Not enough attendance at schools.

Police statistics (Department of the Attorney General and Justice, 2019) show relatively high levels of domestic violence assaults in Alice Springs, compared to the Northern Territory as a whole. Figure 25 shows Alice Springs rates compared with the Northern Territory. Alice Springs rates (3108 per 100 000 population at March 2019) are about twice the Northern Territory rate (1613 per 100 000 population at March 2019).

Figure 25. Trends in domestic violence related assault rates: Alice Springs compared with the Northern Territory (yearly statistics to March 2019)



Source: (Department of the Attorney General and Justice, 2019, 2016)

Regional comparisons for the period from 2014 to 2019 (Table 9) show that Alice Springs Domestic Violence assault rates have been four to five times that of Darwin and Palmerston, comparable to Katherine, but half to one third the rate for Tennant Creek. The 2019 rate for Alice Springs, shown in Table 9 is the lowest in the series.

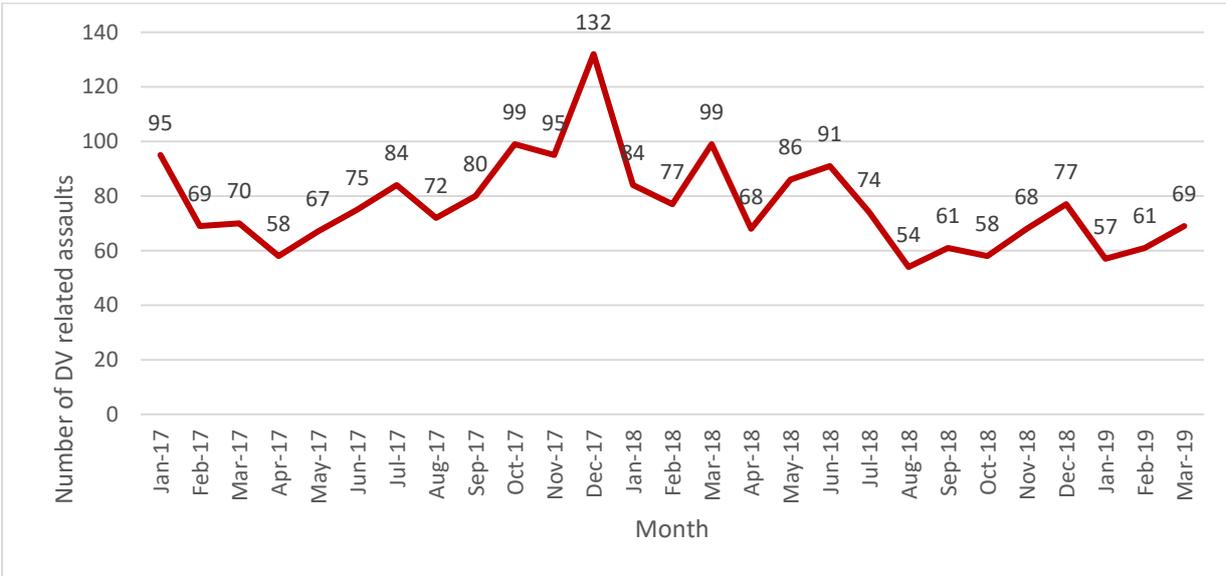
Table 9. Regional data comparisons for DV related assaults, 2014 to 2019

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019*
<b>Northern Territory</b>	1,905.5	1,727.4	1,649.4	1,582.4	1,755.6	1,613.1
<b>Alice Springs</b>	3,845.2	3,226.6	3,868.8	3,224.5	3,847.5	3,107.6
<b>Darwin</b>	847.3	879.9	793.1	801.0	886.3	882.4
<b>Palmerston</b>	847.4	771.5	618.1	733.3	902.5	782.8
<b>Katherine</b>	3,995.2	3,616.0	3,011.4	3,007.2	3,460.2	3,902.5
<b>Tennant Creek</b>	13,690.8	5,923.8	4,970.1	6,622.3	8,341.0	5,630.8
<b>Nhulunbuy</b>	1,568.0	2,132.6	2,199.8	1,599.8	1,495.3	1,436.4
<b>NT Balance</b>	1,990.1	2,062.9	1,927.7	1,864.4	1,912.4	1,827.8

\* statistics to March 2019  
 Source:(Department of the Attorney General and Justice, 2019)

The chart at Figure 26 shows number of Domestic Violence related assaults from January 2017 to March 2019. The numbers for the first three months of 2019 are just over one-quarter lower than for the same time in 2018 and one-fifth lower than for the same time in 2017.

Figure 26. Monthly Domestic Violence related assaults (January 2017 to March 2019)



Source:(Department of the Attorney General and Justice, 2019)

Comparisons with Australia are difficult due to different reporting requirements and standards in each state. However, offender rates and victimisation rates for a selection of states are available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2019a, 2019b).

Table 10. Jurisdictional comparisons of domestic violence offender and victimisation rates

Jurisdiction	Domestic Violence Offender Rate per 100 000 people aged 10 years and over	Victimisation Rate per 100 000 people
Northern Territory	1404.4	1762.4
Western Australia	355.4	684.1
New South Wales	351.8	374.3
Victoria	283.7	Not reported
Tasmania	280.8	272.2
Queensland	Not reported	Not reported
Australian Capital Territory	164.1	205.7

Source: (ABS, 2019a, 2019b)

### Children have access to safe spaces

Several young people commented on the need for safe spaces as part of what needs to change in Alice Springs (Figure 16, page 31). They also gave plenty of clues as to why this was important in their responses to what’s not so good about Alice Springs (Figure 15, page 30), including concerns about ‘kids walking around at night’ and ‘crime’. They also commented frequently about drinking, drugs, fighting, violence and antisocial behaviours.

While only 14 adults commented directly about young people’s need for safe spaces, they alluded to this in several other ways. From some adults there were calls for a youth curfew:

 A place where they can go to spend time with their friends. A youth centre. Curfew for young children during school week.

Others saw the need for more youth diversion programs, coupled with greater support.

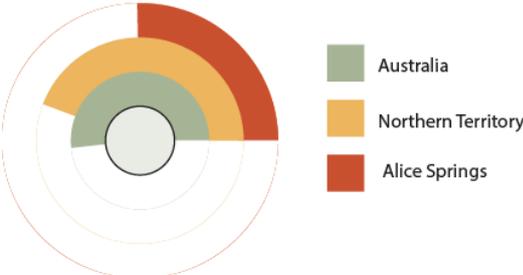
 Diversion programs, greater parental supervision of youths, more beds in youth detention, more social workers.

### Feeling safe walking in your neighbourhood at night

General Social Surveys (see ABS, 2015a) conducted every few years by the Australian Bureau of Statistics ask participants to say how safe they feel walking alone in the local area. Figure 27 compares proportions of people in Alice Springs, Northern Territory and

Australia, who feel safe walking in their neighbourhood at night. While across Australia 52 per cent of all people surveyed feel safe (Northern Territory 43 per cent), in Alice Springs, only 25 per cent feel safe. While these data are for adults, they have implications for children and young people and they suggest that what was found in the survey is mirrored more generally in the Alice Springs community.

Figure 27. Adults feel safe or very safe walking in their neighbourhood at night, 2014



Source: (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

### Children have positive safe and secure relationships

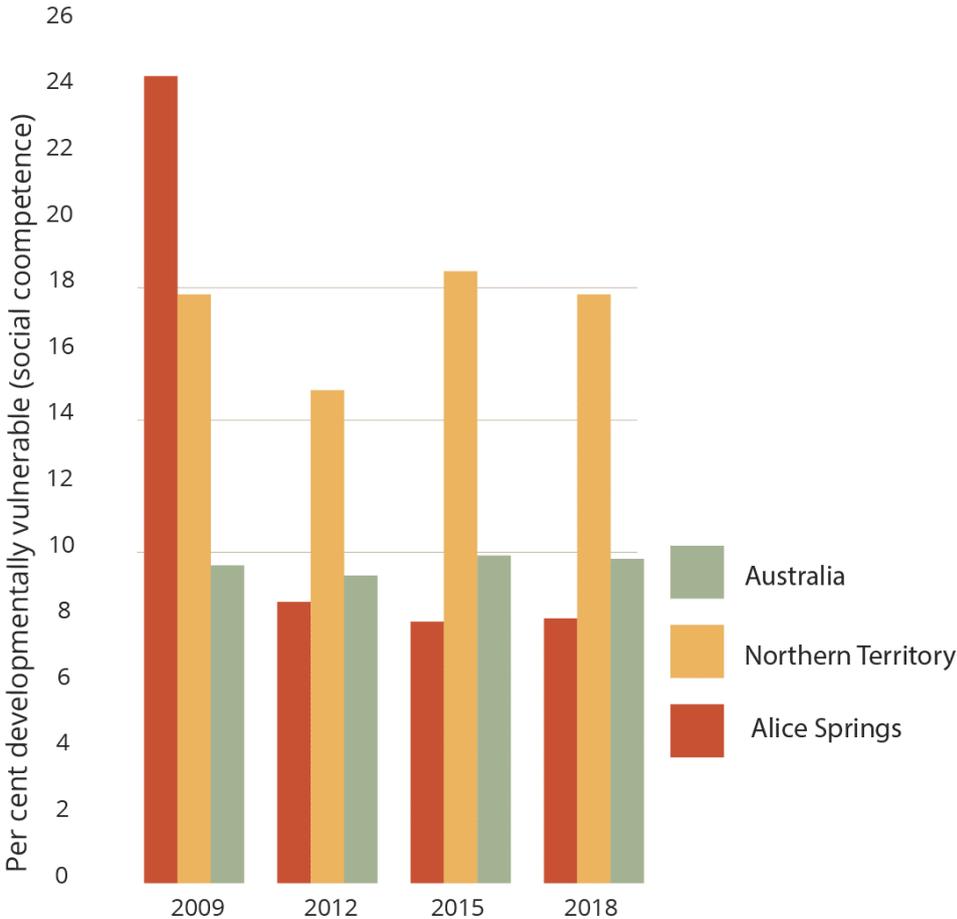
An important part of young people being ‘safe and free’ is growing up with safe and secure relationships. It was noted earlier that families and friends were highly valued among children and young people in Alice Springs. The strongest theme emerging from the adult survey in response to what is stopping hopes and dreams from happening, was about parent and family issues (Figure 20, page 35). Adults who responded this way generally were concerned about the support that children and young people needed. In response, an adult commented:

 Unfortunately many children are not loved or safe and it is not fault of theirs but more so generational trauma that continues to make families struggle.

### Relationships—Social Competence (AEDC Developmental Vulnerability)

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) captures information about the vulnerability of children in their first year of schooling; in the Northern Territory this is the year of Transition. Alice Springs is making small gains in the Social Competence domain. Figure 28 shows that in 2018, children living in Alice Springs were less than half as likely to be developmentally vulnerable in the Social Competence domain compared to the Northern Territory average (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019). They appear to be less vulnerable in this domain than children across Australia, though the proportion at risk is higher for Alice Springs than either the Northern Territory or Australia (see Table 11). The data on developmental vulnerability is somewhat surprising given the concerns raised by the community, but it may be that the assessment of children’s social competence does not fully capture or does not reflect the extent to which relationships children have are safe and secure—or not. Additional information comparing domains over time is shown at Appendix 2, page 152.

Figure 28. Relationships: AEDC Social Competence Developmental Vulnerability, Alice Springs compared with Northern Territory and Australia, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018



Source: (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, 2019)

Table 11. Developmental vulnerability, social competence, risk and on track, 2018, Alice Springs, Northern Territory and Australia

	Alice Springs	Northern Territory	Australia
<b>Developmentally vulnerable %</b>	8.0	17.8	9.8
<b>Developmentally at risk %</b>	22.3	17.4	14.4
<b>Developmentally on track %</b>	69.7	64.8	75.8

Source: (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019)

**Within families—child protection notifications**

While very few survey respondents talked directly about child protection services or reporting requirements, many did talk about the reasons why notifications might be necessary in a non-specific way, for example as follows:

 Too few resources to support the most in need; Family Support and Parenting Services (culturally appropriate to meet the multicultural need in this town); early intervention services for children identified with additional needs. Housing shortage. The impacts of alcohol on the community in general.

The requirement to report is a legal responsibility under the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007.

*In the Northern Territory, you must make a report if you reasonably believe a child has been harmed or exploited, or that a child is likely to be harmed or exploited.*

*This is a legal responsibility under the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 and is called mandatory reporting. (Northern Territory Government, 2015)*

Mandatory reporting may result in multiple reports of concern about a particular child by several individuals. Notifications then, are about the number of reports, not the number of children.

**Notifications.** *These consist of contacts made to an authorised department by people or other bodies alleging child abuse or neglect, child maltreatment, or harm to a child. The National Child Protection Data Collection does not include reports that are not classified as child protection notifications. A notification can only involve 1 child. Where it is claimed that 2 children have been abused, neglected or harmed, this is counted as 2 notifications, even if the children are from 1 family. Where there is more than 1 notification about the same 'event' involving a child, this is counted as 1 notification. Where there is more than 1 notification for the same child between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018, but relating to different events, these are counted as separate notifications. (AIHW, 2019b, p. 21)*

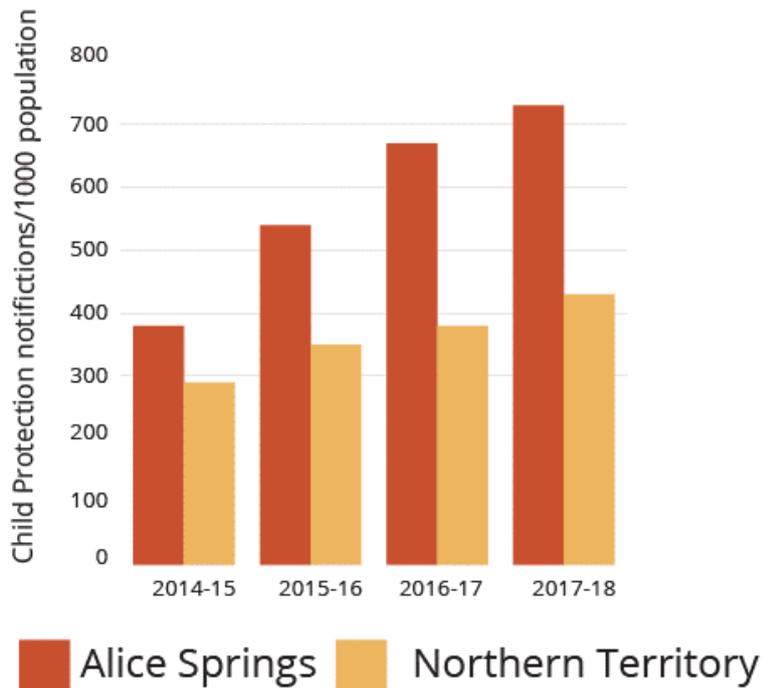
Data collected by Territory Families shows that there were 4462 notifications of harm in the year to June 2018 (see summary information in Table 12, page 53). The notification rates shown in Figure 29 for Alice Springs are more than 70 per cent higher than the Northern Territory as a whole. In the four years shown in the chart, notifications in Alice Springs have increased by 77 per cent. The increase in notification rates is not necessarily an indication of increased harm though. A number of factors contribute to notification rates including mandatory reporting requirements and increased public awareness:

*Legislative changes, increased public awareness, and inquiries into child protection processes, along with real rises in abuse and neglect, could*

*influence increases in the number of notifications and substantiations, and the children who were the subject of them.*

*Additionally, recent increases could be related to an increased focus on providing statutory responses to those who are most likely to need intervention and protection. This might have resulted in a more targeted approach to investigations, and a rise in the number of children who were the subjects of substantiations. (AIHW, 2019b, p. 33)*

Figure 29. Trends in child protection notification rates: Alice Springs compared to the Northern Territory



Sources: (Territory Families, 2019, 2018), population based on 2011 and 2016 Census data for 0-17 year olds, Place of Usual Residence

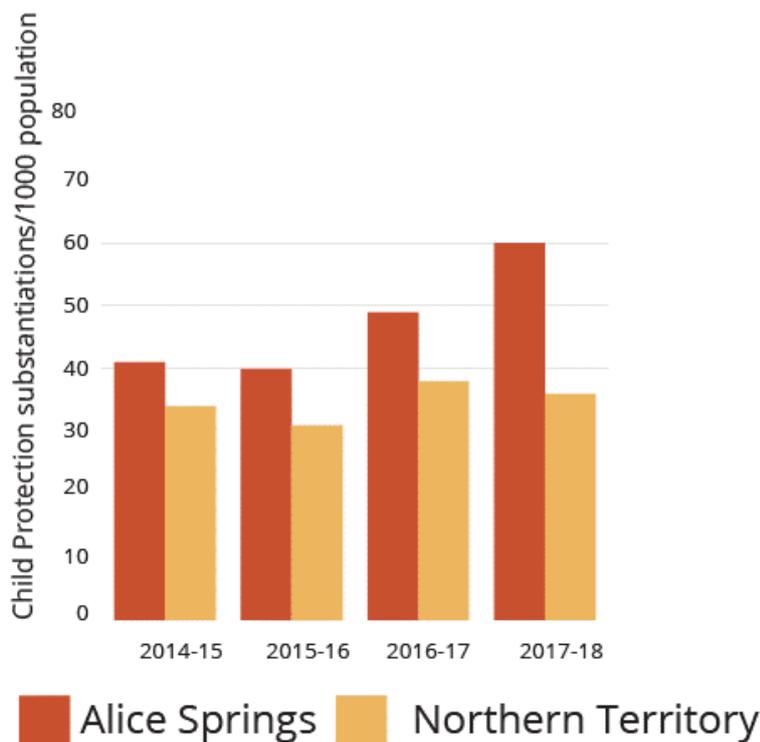
### Within families—child protection substantiations

Substantiations follow investigations in response to notifications. Substantiations of harm are much lower than the notification rates because not all notifications result in the need for further action.

**Substantiations**—Substantiations of notifications received during the current reporting year refer to child protection notifications made to relevant authorities during the year ended 30 June 2018 that were investigated, for which the investigation was finalised by 31 August 2018, and for which it was concluded that there was reasonable cause to believe that the child had been, was being, or was likely to be, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. Substantiations might also include cases where there is no suitable caregiver, such as children who have been abandoned or whose parents are deceased. (AIHW, 2019b, p. 21)

Increases in the number of substantiations in Alice Springs have not matched the growth in notifications, up by 37 per cent in the period shown at Figure 30. Nevertheless, the substantiation rates are 65 per cent higher than for the Northern Territory, which in turn tends to validate the concerns that many respondents have about parent and family issues (Figure 20).

Figure 30. Child Protection substantiation rates: Alice Springs compared to the Northern Territory



Sources: (Territory Families, 2019, 2018), population based on 2011 and 2016 Census data for 0-17 year olds, Place of Usual Residence (ABS, 2018d)

## Within families—Out Of Home Care

**Residential care**—Children are placed in a residential building whose purpose is to provide placements for children, and where there are paid staff.

**Family group homes**—Children are placed in homes provided by a department or community-sector agency that have live-in, non-salaried carers, who are reimbursed and/or subsidised for providing care.

**Home-based care**—Children are placed in the home of a carer, who is reimbursed (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement) for expenses for the care of the child. This is broken down into: relative/kinship care, foster care, third-party parental care arrangements, and other home-based out-of-home care.

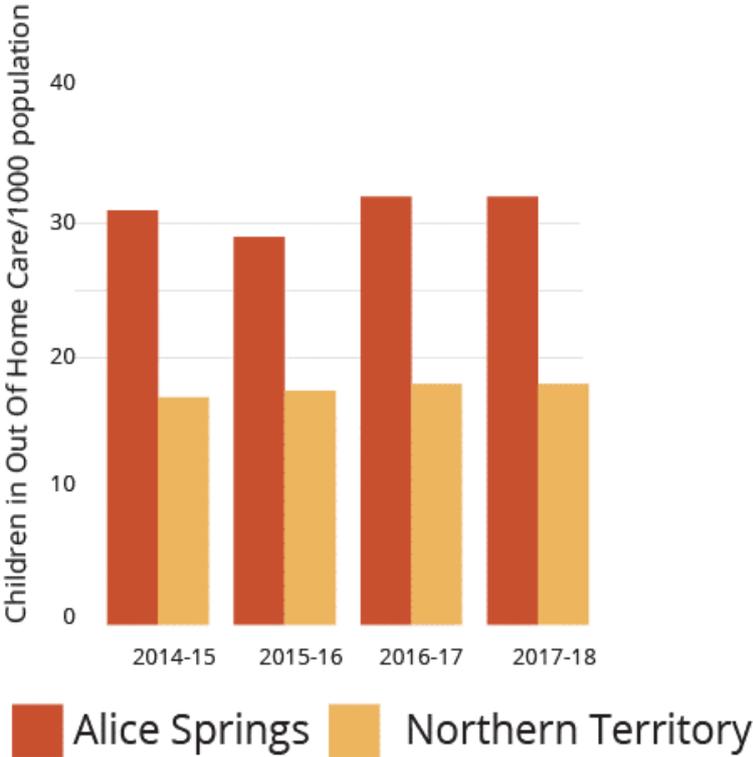
**Independent living**—This includes private board and lead tenant households.

**Other**—This includes placements that are not otherwise classified, and unknown placement types, such as boarding schools, hospitals, hotels/motels, and defence forces. (AIHW, 2019b, p. 47)

Out of Home Care is often a temporary measure while more permanent placements such as kinship or foster care is sourced. Out of Home Care is only a long-term option in the absence of any other suitable placements. Out Of Home Care includes several different kinds of care arrangements.

Based on the data shown at Table 12 (page 53), the information shown in Figure 31 again demonstrates substantially higher rates of placement in Alice Springs (31.8/1000 population in 2017/2018) compared to the Northern Territory (18.2/1000 population in 2017/2018).

Figure 31. Children in Out Of Home Care trends: Alice Springs compared to Northern Territory



Sources: (Territory Families, 2019, 2018), calculation of rates based on 2011 and 2016 Census data for 0-17 year olds, Place of Usual Residence (ABS, 2018d)

Table 12. Child protection and OOHC summary data

Period	Notification of Harm		Substantiation of Harm		Number of Children in Out of Home Care (Residential Address)	
	Alice Springs	Northern Territory	Alice Springs	Northern Territory	Alice Springs	Northern Territory
2014/15	2526	17032	267	2075	207	997
2015/16	3397	20465	265	1907	189	1020
2016/17	4097	22313	304	2265	197	1049
2017/18	4462	24743	366	2366	194	1061

Sources: (Territory Families, 2019, 2018)

### Alcohol and drug related assaults

Children and young people were quite vocal in their concern about alcohol and drug abuse in Alice Springs.

 I don't like seeing drunken people in the streets or fighting up town!

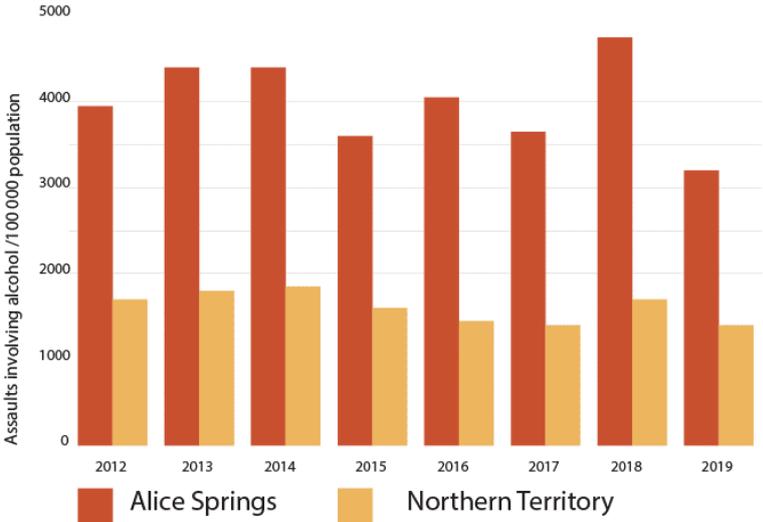
Similarly, many adults surveyed had concerns about the impact of alcohol on people in the town. They identified alcohol and drug abuse, second on the list of issues that were

stopping their hopes and dreams from happening (Figure 20, page 35). However, it was not alcohol on its own that was identified as a problem. Rather it is the antisocial behaviours associated with the excessive consumption of alcohol that leads people to argue for restrictions and penalties. Some form of treatment and education is seen as a solution to the problem. Rightly or wrongly, many adults assume that fixing the alcohol problem will fix a perceived parenting problem.

 Ban alcohol as this is clearly a huge issue here, hopefully parents would be able to care, supervise and support their children.

Based on police crime statistics, Figure 32 shows the trends in alcohol and drug related assaults for Alice Springs and the Northern Territory. Overall, the results for Alice Springs are reasonably steady over the eight years shown, except for the decline evident in the 12 months to March 2019. However, the rates are more than double those for the whole Northern Territory. Again, these data validate the concerns of survey respondents.

Figure 32. Trends in alcohol and drug related assault rates: Alice Springs compared with the Northern Territory (2012 to March 2019)



Source: (Department of the Attorney General and Justice, 2019, 2016)

Table 13 provides a regional comparison for alcohol related assaults for the period 2014 to March 2019. As for Domestic Violence related assaults shown at Table 9 (page 45), the results for Alice Springs in the 2019 year (to March) are the lowest in the series, though still nearly three times the rate for Darwin.

Table 13. Regional data comparisons for alcohol related assaults, 2014 to 2019

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019*
<b>Northern Territory</b>	1,873.7	1,633.2	1,485.9	1,415.7	1,694.2	1,401.5
<b>Alice Springs</b>	4,490.8	3,648.1	4,058.9	3,634.1	4,751.0	3,220.7
<b>Darwin</b>	1,281.7	1,358.9	1,193.7	1,102.7	1,254.7	1,152.8
<b>Palmerston</b>	730.3	700.8	509.9	672.2	883.5	684.9
<b>Katherine</b>	4,687.2	3,902.7	3,067.3	3,129.4	3,488.4	3,790.5
<b>Tennant Creek</b>	14,403.9	6,217.0	5,868.3	6,834.0	8,066.0	4,984.6
<b>Nhulunbuy</b>	1,678.4	2,343.6	2,734.8	1,811.0	1,953.0	1,894.9
<b>NT Balance</b>	1,104.9	1,076.6	914.4	883.5	1,020.5	918.3

\* statistics to March 2019  
 Source:(Department of the Attorney General and Justice, 2019)

### Property crime

Children and young people ranked crime as the third most serious issue that is ‘not good’ about Alice Springs (Figure 15, page 30). By ‘crime’ they were generally referring to property offences, for example one young persons stated, in response to what’s not good about Alice Springs:

 The crime. I’m scared of break ins.

Another commented on:

 [The] increasing visibility of crime. Graffiti.

Adults were similarly concerned about crime, vandalism and property damage (Figure 20, page 35). But coupled with this concern, was a view that little was being done to prevent it.

 There is currently too much crime in town, with seemingly little in the way of intervention or potential solution.

The solution for some adults surveyed was adopt 'tough on crime' punitive approaches accompanied by stronger law and justice responses (Figure 22, page 36), for example:

 A consistent hard line

Other people suggested more nuanced responses, for example:

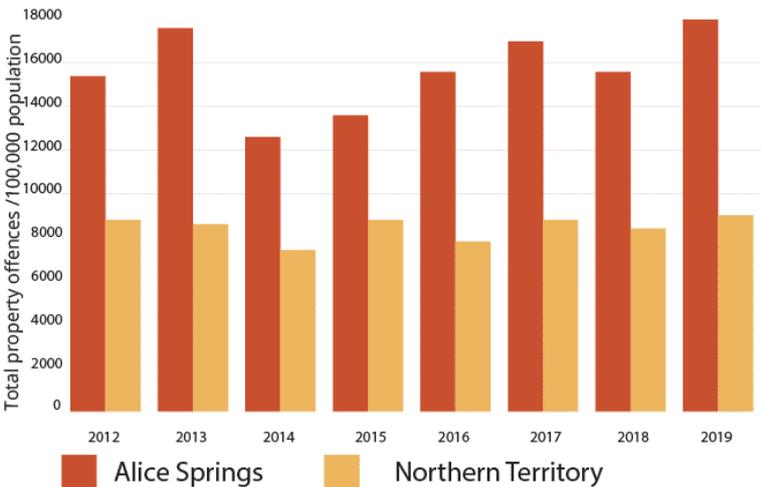
 Somehow engage the youths who are currently committing unsafe behaviour at night. Provide engaging activities/places for youth to go... currently town is 'boring' and kids are making their own fun in negative ways.

While some people identified 'more alcohol restrictions', 'law and justice' and 'tough on crime' approaches to these challenges, more people recognised the complexities involved with the problems they identified. These people often talked about the need for 'all community members to respectfully listen to each other' and 'better collaboration between service providers' so the whole community is 'working for the same goal'.

 [We need] a community education program to educate members of the community about trauma informed care and practice, so [we] can work together to help the youth rather than just complain about them.

Property offence rates shown at Figure 33 show a decline in the three years to 2014 followed by an increase back to the rates of 2013. While a similar pattern has occurred for the Northern Territory the rates for Alice Springs are about double those of the whole Territory.

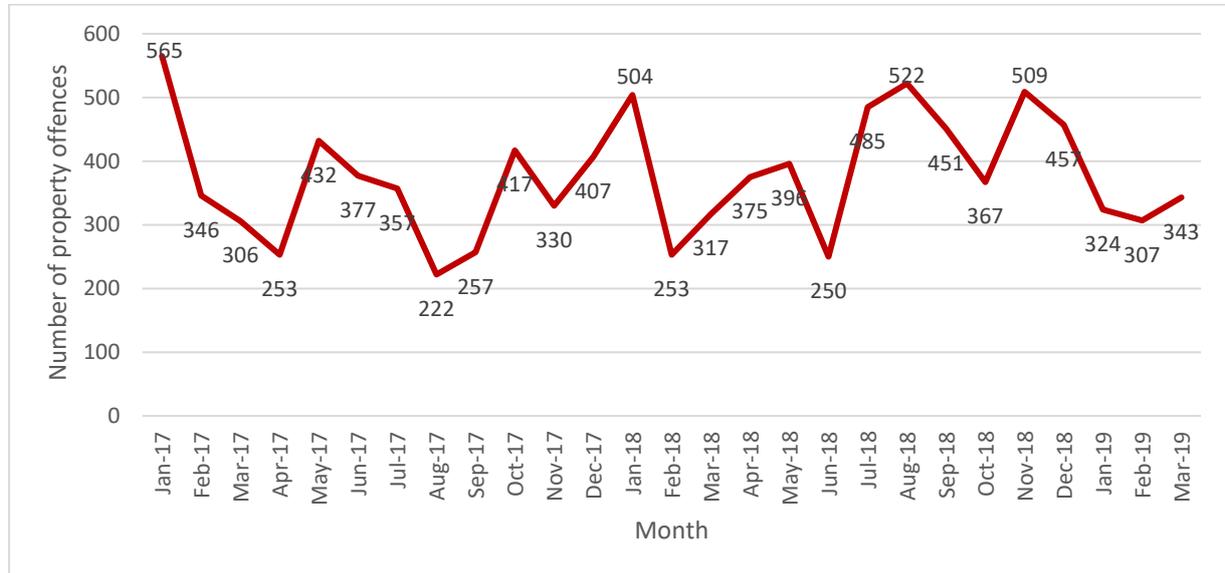
Figure 33. Trends in property offence rates: Alice Springs compared with the Northern Territory, 2012 to March 2019



Source: (Department of the Attorney General and Justice, 2019, 2016)

Figure 34 provides monthly detail about property offences in Alice Springs. There is considerable fluctuation in these monthly figures without a significant trend in any direction.

Figure 34. Property offences for Alice Springs, January 2017 to March 2019.



Source:(Department of the Attorney General and Justice, 2019)

## Interpreting the data

On balance, the data shown in the Loved and Safe Wellbeing Area paint a sobering picture of the many challenges faced by children growing up in Alice Springs. There are some hopeful signs that violence associated with domestic violence and alcohol has begun to decline, but whether there is a sustained trend remains to be seen. However, while many of the trends and comparisons are of concern, as a community, we must not lose sight of the fact that most children live in stable, loving and caring families which nurture them and provide opportunities and hope for the future. For most children growing up in Alice Springs the hope of 'growing up safe and free' is realised. That said, those children who experience domestic violence, crime, trauma, neglect or abuse, require a compassionate and caring response. This is the challenge for the whole community, not just for the families who are struggling. The data show the impacts of trauma affect everyone, not just children, and the causal linkages between the various symptoms indicated by the data shown here represent something of the complexity of the challenges the community faces.

Bus Stop No. 1072



300  
301

The Gap and Ross  
Interchange-Palm Court-NRT Hall of Fame  
-Yirara College-Gap Rd-Interchange

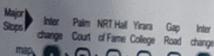


**NO SMOKING**

Tobacco Control Act 2002 Penalties Apply

300  
301

The Gap and Ross



**Monday to Friday**

300	7:00	7:10	---	7:18	7:27	7:40
300	8:00	8:10	---	8:18	8:27	8:40
301	8:45	8:55	9:06	9:11	9:18	9:26
301	10:15	10:25	10:36	10:41	10:48	10:56
301	11:45	11:55	12:06	12:11	12:18	12:26
301	1:00	1:10	1:21	1:26	1:33	1:41
301	2:30	2:40	2:51	2:56	3:03	3:11
300	4:00	4:10	---	4:18	4:27	4:40
300	4:45	4:55	---	5:03	5:12	5:25
300	5:30	5:40	---	5:48	5:57	6:10

**Saturday**

301	8:00	8:10	8:21	8:26	8:33	8:41
301	9:30	9:40	9:51	9:56	10:03	10:11
301	11:00	11:10	11:21	11:26	11:33	11:41
301	2:00	2:10	2:21	2:26	2:33	2:41

Timing points are estimates only and are subject to traffic and weather conditions.

There are no bus services on Sundays, Public Holidays, Good Friday and Christmas Day.



Public Transport can be contacted by phone on 08 8924 7946 between 8:45am - 4:30pm Monday to Friday and 8:00am - 1:00pm Saturday or at [www.nt.gov.au/publictransport/](http://www.nt.gov.au/publictransport/)  
(Effective August 2016, version 9 (page revision 3))

300  
301

Bus route map



Please Note: Timing points are estimates only and are subject to traffic and weather conditions.

- Legend**
- Bus Route
  - Direction
  - Bus Stop
  - Bus Number
  - Health
  - School
  - Educational institution
  - Shopping Centre

Where's my bus?

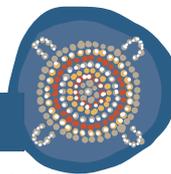
Learn how to use the app with your phone or visit your phone store to download the NT Bus Tracker app

For Police assistance  
10111

TIO  
Traeger  
Park Oval

Welcome to

## ESSENTIAL NEEDS ARE MET



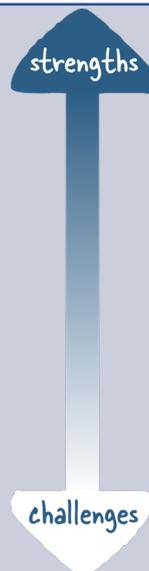
Essential needs are those fundamental building blocks that every child needs to thrive. Having money to buy food, having a house to live in with bedrooms for everyone, having a job and access to transport are all vitally important to families bringing up children.

### Community aspiration

*For young people to fulfil dreams and achieve their goals*

#### COMMUNITY VOICE

- limited transport for Town Camps •
- high unemployment in Town Camps, need more jobs •
- many low income Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families •
- concerns about housing, need more infrastructure investment •
- concerns about income inequality •



#### SUMMARY OF DATA

- reasonable transport options
- low unemployment
- low housing stress
- few jobless families

### How are we doing?

The surveys and the data from other sources show different results for different groups of people in the Essential Needs Area of Wellbeing. While for most people living in Alice Springs there are good job opportunities, low housing stress and relatively good transport options, for those living in Town Camps, issues of transport, employment, housing quality and provision of basic infrastructure are all significant concerns. For many, the things that got in the way of their hopes and dreams were inequalities, disadvantage and poverty.

Many people who come to Alice Springs, come for work, particularly professional people. Their higher incomes mean that their families' essential needs are most likely fully met. For other families though, the story is different. Many young people surveyed talked positively about the opportunities they had to get jobs, licences, training and good pay because they live in Alice Springs. Some young people also spoke positively about Alice Springs because that was where their home was—they liked their homes.

### Key indicators

- Dwellings requiring extra bedrooms
- Food affordability
- Welfare dependent families
- Labour force participation
- Access to public transport
- Households receiving rental assistance
- Homelessness
- Low income households
- Income distribution

# Families have access to appropriate long-term and affordable housing

Children and young people surveyed commented often about the need for 'better housing' (Figure 16, page 31) and this was often part of a wish list:

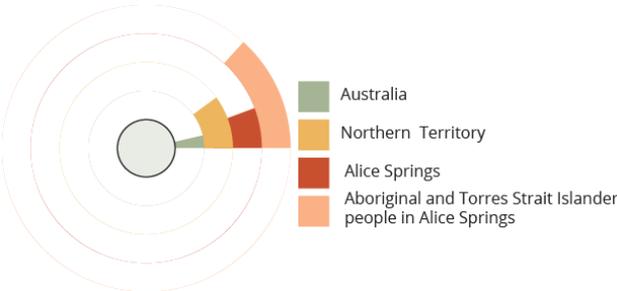
 Better quality shops. More houses for people with no homes. More opportunity for young people. Less racism. Free services for young people

Housing issues or solutions were less frequently commented on among adult respondents. As with young people, for those who did comment, housing was identified as one of many solutions to some of the problems they identified.

 Increased family support and parenting services; increased early intervention services; improved housing/other accommodation options; increased/alternative alcohol restrictions

Data from the 2016 Census (ABS, 2018c) tells us how many houses require more bedrooms to accommodate all the people living in the household. Figure 35 shows the proportion of dwellings that require extra bedrooms. Across Australia, 3.7 per cent of houses require extra bedroom(s) while for Alice Springs the figure is 5.7 per cent. However, for households flagged as 'Indigenous' by the ABS, this figure rises to 13.2 per cent. The impact of this, coupled with environmental and social factors on children can be profound, for example when disturbances in large households interrupt sleep patterns. Overcrowding in houses is also associated with lower educational outcomes (Silburn et al., 2018) and health outcomes (Zubrick et al., 2004).

Figure 35. Proportion of dwellings requiring extra bedrooms, 2016 Census



Source (ABS, 2018c)

Public housing is in high demand in Alice Springs with wait times projected to be between four to six years by Territory Housing (Northern Territory Government, 2019). Many of those that are waiting for public housing will be either forced to pay higher rents in private rentals or stay with families in houses that are fully occupied.

Table 14. Wait times, wait list and allocations for public housing in Alice Springs (July 2019)

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3+bedroom
<b>Expected wait time</b>	4-6 years	4-6 years	4-6 years
<b>Wait list</b>	496	305	345
<b>Public housing allocations, July 2018 to June 2019</b>	46	45	57

(Northern Territory Government, 2019)

## Appropriate food is affordable and accessible to children and families

Food affordability, insecurity or inequality issues were seldom raised by survey participants. Those adults who talked about food described 'unhealthy eating habits' more than food affordability. And there may be some justification for these comments given the children and young people's response to what's good about Alice Springs, where 'fast food' was ranked in the top 10 themes (Figure 14, page 29), for example:



Food affordability, however, was identified as a key issue in the community consultations conducted by the Child Friendly Alice Project Team, ahead of the surveys. The affordability of food depends on several variables, for example the price of groceries, the type of food purchased, the income of the person buying the groceries, how many people that person supports and the costs of other essential needs such as housing.

*Food inequality is only visible when the differences in people's capacity to access food is measured. Food insecurity is the common measure of the outcome of food inequality. The contributors to food security in Australia are articulated as resulting from a complex interaction between food, the food supply as a result of the food and nutrition system and food access factors as a result of social and economic determinants. (Pollard et al., 2016, p. 90)*

While not addressing this complexity, the Annual Market Basket Survey conducted for the Northern Territory Department of Health compares the costs of a Healthy Food Basket for remote and urban contexts. The 'basket' comprises items that would meet the average energy and recommended nutrient needs of a hypothetical family of six for a fortnight. The latest available data (Northern Territory Department of Health, 2016) suggests that in Alice Springs supermarkets, the cost of a Healthy Food Basket is \$576. This compares with \$644 for Darwin and \$606 for urban supermarkets in the Northern Territory.

Comparisons are difficult because of different income profiles across regions. However, what is clear is that for those on low incomes the proportion of income (see also, page

69) required to purchase a Healthy Food Basket is a lot higher than for those on average or higher incomes. It should also be noted that not everyone will buy a Healthy Food Basket. The Market Basket Survey suggests that in Alice Springs the Current Diet Basket costs \$672. The Current Diet Basket represents what people actually buy rather than what is considered 'healthy'. This implies that if people could be persuaded to buy a healthy basket, they could save nearly \$100 per shop.

**Families can provide for their children**

Families who can provide for their children have adequate incomes, stable employment, nutritious food and can access what they need in the community. They are able to fulfil their aspirations for children: 'for young people to fulfil dreams and achieve their goals'.

**Welfare dependent families**

Children and young people surveyed did not refer to issues of welfare dependence. Rather, some young people spoke positively of the opportunities in Alice Springs:

 Great job opportunities.

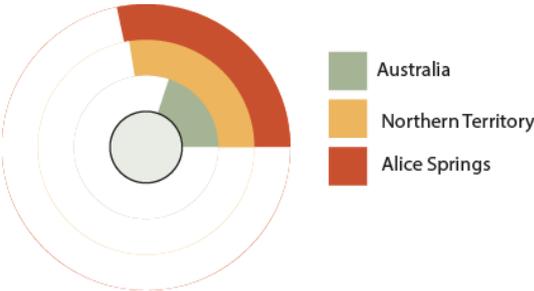
 Work is available.

Adults discussed related issues of poverty and disadvantage and related issues as problems, for example blaming:

 Regressive social policies, poverty and inequity, ongoing impacts of colonisation.

The impact of unequal income distribution on children can be profound. One of the key reasons for the low incomes of Aboriginal people is welfare dependence. Figure 36, (see also Table 15) based on 2017 Department of Social Security data shows higher proportions of children in welfare dependant families in Alice Springs (28 per cent), than is usual for Australia (21 per cent).

*Figure 36. Proportion of children in low income, welfare-dependent families, 2017*



Source: (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

Table 15 also shows other indicators of welfare dependence. Compared to Australia, Alice Springs has substantially higher proportions of low-income welfare dependent families with children, higher proportions of female sole parent pensioners, and Health Care Card holders. The proportion of low-income households and low-income households under mortgage or rental financial stress is lower for Alice Springs.

Table 15. Low income families, Alice Springs compared with Northern Territory and Australia

	Alice Springs	Northern Territory	Australia
Children in low income, welfare-dependent families (June 2017) %	28.2	27.5	20.9
Low income welfare dependent families with children (June 2017) %	15.4	16.4	9.0
Female sole parent pensioners (June 2017) %	5.7	4.8	3.6
Health Care Card holders (June 2017) %	8.3	9.6	7.3
Low income households (2016) %	33.3	43.2	40.5
Low income households under financial stress from mortgage or rent (2016) %	24.5	20.4	28.4

### Labour force participation

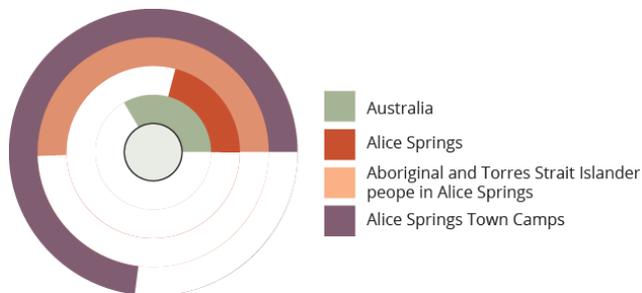
Noting the earlier comments from young people about work, it is important to be careful not to assume that these opportunities are equally distributed across the community. Some adults recognised this unequal distribution as prejudice or discrimination.

 There is a lot of our people with certificate for plumbing, maintenance & other jobs but still can't get jobs. They don't get the opportunity like the people in mainstream.

Unemployment rates do not include those who are not looking for work and therefore not in the labour force. Unemployment rates can mask the problem of labour force participation (Tiwari et al., 2018). There is, however, a strong link between participation in the labour market and the capacity of families to meet the needs of children. Figure 37 shows that for Alice Springs as a whole, labour force participation across the whole community is strong compared to the rest of Australia. However, the figures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Town Camp residents are quite different. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Town Camp residents (74 per cent) are not participating in the labour market, while for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander people in Alice Springs, the figure is 51 per cent and for the town as a whole only 21 per cent are not in the labour market. Across Australia, in 2016, 33 per cent of all people were not in the labour force. The impact on children is significant as patterns of labour force participation are often repeated across generations.

Figure 37. Proportion of adults not in the labour force, 2016 Census



Source: (ABS, 2018b)

### Access to public transport

Children and young people generally did not see transport as a problem. Instead, many saw that getting around easily was a major benefit of living in Alice Springs (Figure 14, page 29).



*It's small and easy to get around and you can make friends with anyone.*

However, many adults, often from rural areas or some Town Camps recognised transport issues as a problem. For example:



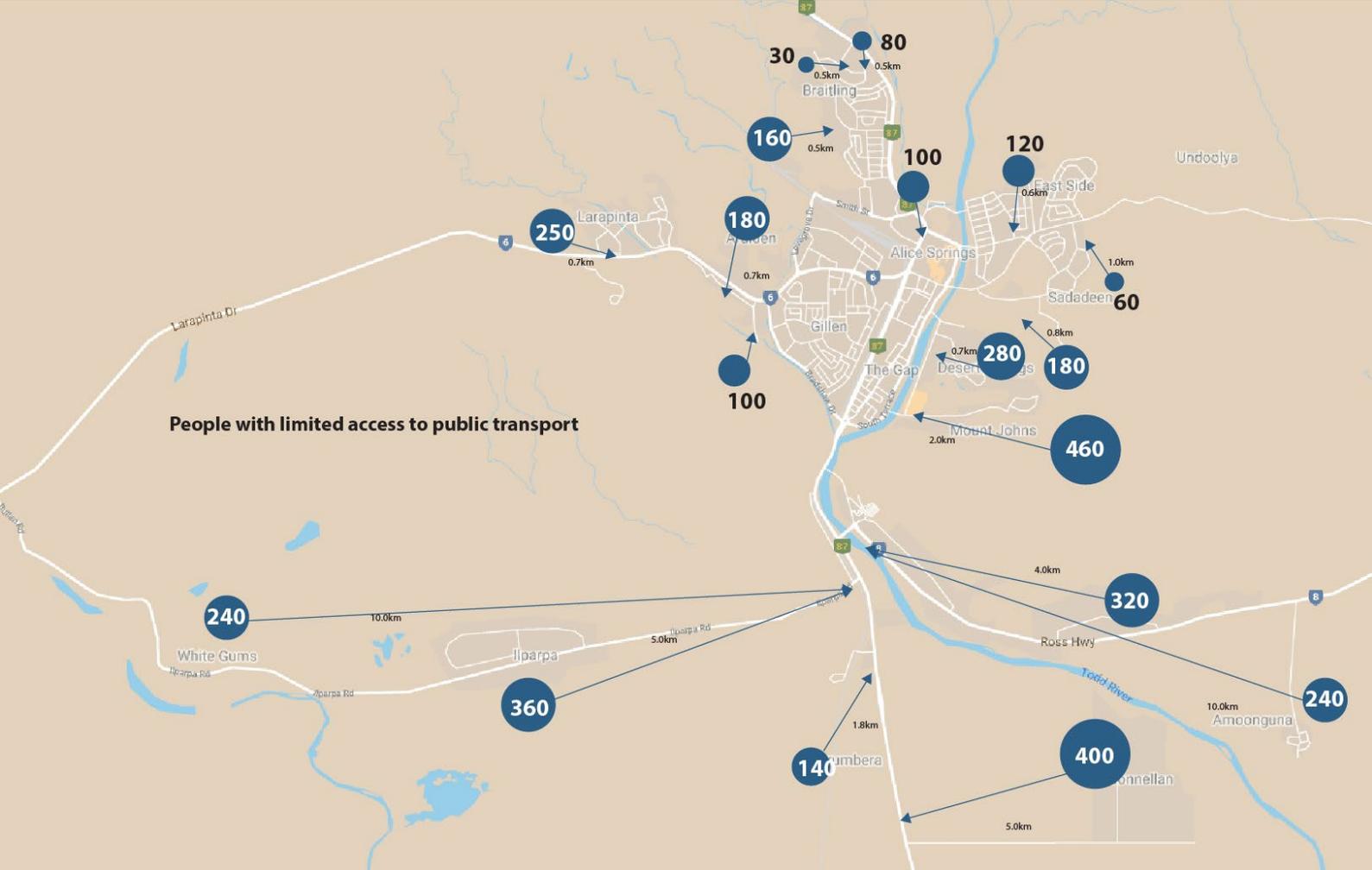
*There is no way to get home except for taxis which are expensive, or Night Patrol, but they don't service the Camps enough anymore.*

ASBUS is the Northern Territory's public bus service provider in Alice Springs. During the week, ASBUS runs 42 services along five main routes that mostly run through suburbs, though not into Town Camps (Northern Territory Government, 2018). One route extends south of the Heavitree Gap to the Transport Hall of Fame, but this route does not include the rural areas or Amoonguna. Public transport services are not available at night or on Sundays.

Figure 38 shows an estimate of the number of people who are effectively out of reach (0.5km or more from the closest bus stop) of the ASBUS service. People living south of the gap are disproportionately represented, with about 1700 people living 1.8km or more from the nearest bus stop. Overall, about 3700 people living in Alice Springs have limited access to public transport.

While most households in Alice Springs have access to a private vehicle there are many—particularly those on low incomes—who have no access to a private vehicle. Access to transport affects access to services and participation in a range of activities (Welch & Mishra, 2013) and is therefore important for health, educational and employment reasons.

Figure 38. People living 500m or more away from an ASBUS bus stop.



Source, based on timetables and route maps: (Northern Territory Government, 2018)

### Households receiving rental assistance

Rental assistance is an element of what makes housing affordable (see Families have access to appropriate long-term and affordable housing, page 60).

*Rent Assistance is a non-taxable income supplement payable to eligible people who rent in the private rental market or community housing. Pensioners, allowees and those receiving more than the base rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A may be eligible for Rent Assistance. (Department of Social Services, 2019a)*

Figure 39 shows the proportion of households receiving rental assistance, based on data reported by the Department of Social Services Department of Social Services (2019b).

The proportion of households in Alice Springs receiving rent assistance (13.9 per cent) is lower than for Australia (16.2 per cent) but higher than the Northern Territory (10.7 per cent). While the data here appear to indicate a relatively benign housing rental market, they reflect the relatively high incomes of private renters. Low income earners are not likely to have access to the private rental market.

Figure 39. Proportion of households receiving rent assistance, 2017



Source: (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

Table 16 adds additional information about housing. The proportion of dwellings rented from a government housing authority or from a housing cooperative is more than double the Australian average and reflects a greater diversity of housing arrangements in the town, compared to other places in Australia. That diversity is greater across the whole of the Northern Territory.

Table 16. Selected housing indicators, Alice Springs, Northern Territory and Australia

	Alice Springs	Northern Territory	Australia
<b>Households in dwellings receiving rent assistance from the Australian Government (June 2017) %</b>	13.9	10.7	16.2
<b>Dwellings rented from the government housing authority (2016) %</b>	8.0	11.9	3.6
<b>Dwellings rented from a housing co-operative, community or church group (2016) %</b>	1.4	2.1	0.6
<b>Rented dwellings (2016) %</b>	34.5	39.9	28.5
<b>Dwellings owned with a mortgage (2016) %</b>	29.1	24.5	32.3
<b>Dwellings owned outright (2016) %</b>	17.6	16.5	29.6

Sources (ABS, 2018c; Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

## Homelessness

Homelessness is a major concern in the Northern Territory. According to NTShelter, about one-third of homeless people are children and young people and 90 per cent of youth live in 'severely overcrowded houses' (NTShelter, 2018). Homelessness is associated with several other factors including domestic violence and mental illness (Pawson et al., 2018). Homeless young people are more likely to have drug and alcohol issues, have challenging social behaviours and have often been involved with the child protection system (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016). Conversely, factors that can impact positively on family homelessness include: belong to a family, parenthood as an opportunity to create a new family and achieving the right balance between self-reliance and social support (Conroy & Parton, 2016, p. 24). Having a sense of independence and fostering positive interpersonal relationships can also make a difference.

Many survey respondents recognised housing and homelessness as a concern. For example, one adult stated that a cause for concern was:

 No houses! Long wait list, private rent not affordable.

Others saw the complexity and multi-layered nature of the problem.

 Families where substance abuse is common means kids don't feel safe there so they roam streets & learn life skills from peers. Alcohol abuse. Overcrowded houses. Intergenerational trauma & poverty

Table 17 shows homelessness estimates for 2011 and 2016 based on estimates modelled from the Census. The estimate of 490 homeless people in Alice Springs represents about two per cent of the Alice Springs population down from about three per cent in 2011. The rate is much higher than for Australia where the 116427 homeless people represents less than 0.5 per cent of the population. The rate for the Northern Territory by contrast is about five per cent of the population.

Table 17. Homelessness estimates, Alice Springs, Northern Territory and Australia

	Alice Springs	Northern Territory	Australia
<b>Homeless persons (2016)</b>	490	13727	116427
<b>Homeless persons (2011)</b>	740	15337	102439

Source: (ABS, 2018e)

## Low income households

Cost of living concerns were raised by young people as one of their top 10 issues about what isn't good about Alice Springs (Figure 15, page 30); for example:

 Some things in general are expensive.

 Costs of town pool entry.

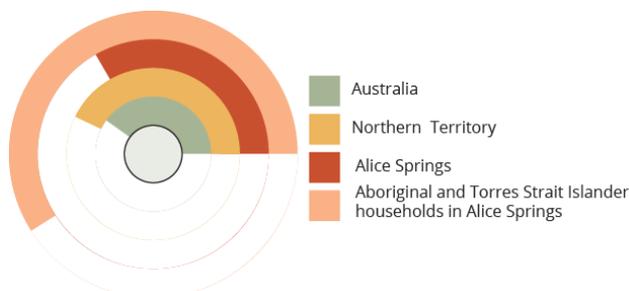
Cost of living issues were also raised by some adults, with concerns raised about the cost of airfares, childcare, and the cost of participating in sport. Others were less specific:

 Very expensive living and activity costs.

Those who have higher incomes—and there are many in Alice Springs in this category (see Figure 41, page 69)—are unlikely to recognise cost of living issues as a problem. But low income households are often those that are welfare dependant (see Welfare dependent families, page 62). It was noted earlier that young people did not describe poverty as a significant concern, but many adults surveyed did talk about poverty, income inequality and disadvantage as issues they were worried about.

Low income households are defined by the ABS as 'households in the bottom 40% of the income distribution (those with less than 80% of median equivalised income)'. For the Northern Territory, the median equivalised<sup>1</sup> income is \$1004 per week, but the figure varies from place to place. For Alice Springs the proportion of households classified as 'low income' households (Figure 40) is about 33 per cent (see also detail and comparisons in Table 15, page 63). For households flagged as 'Indigenous' by the ABS, the proportion is 59 per cent. This points to significant income inequality.

Figure 40. Proportion of low-income households: selected comparisons, 2016



Source: (ABS, 2018c; Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

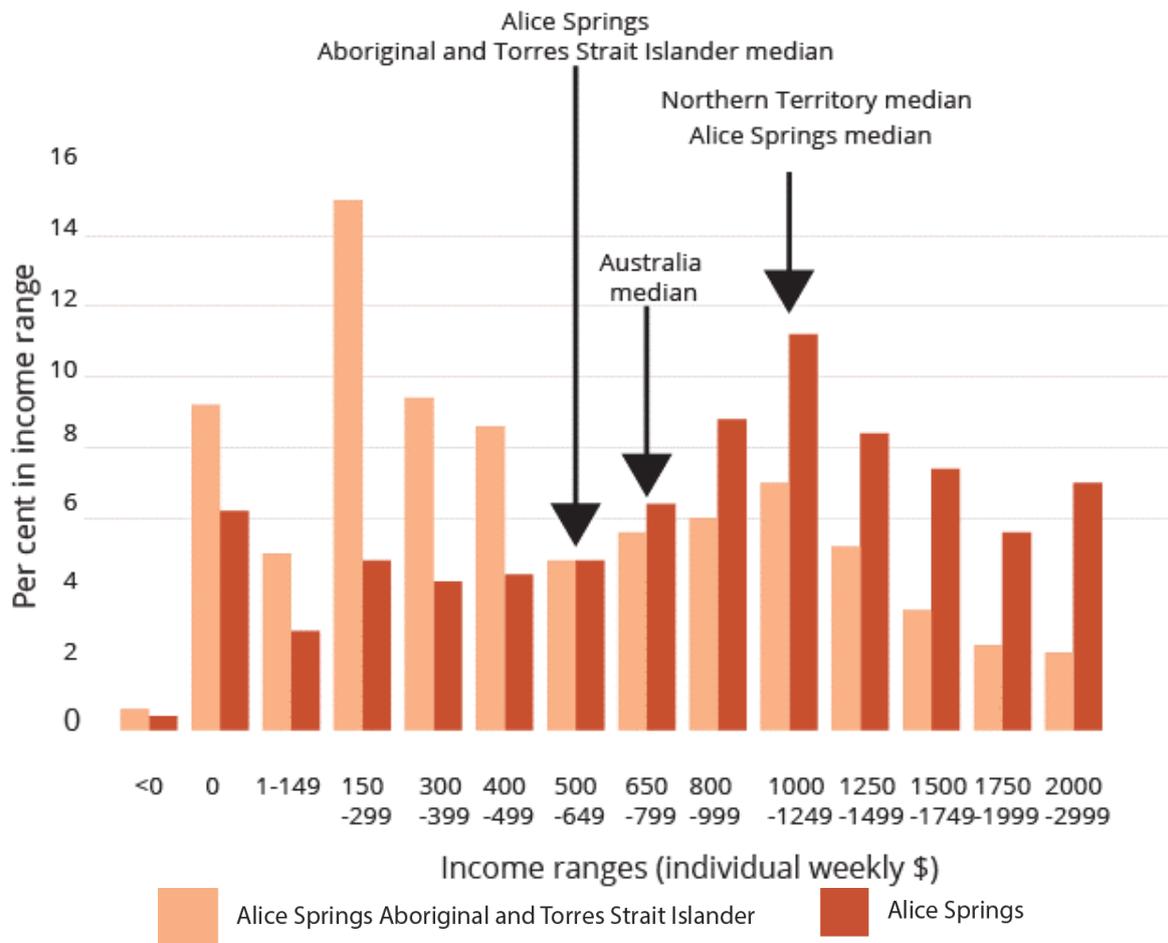
<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2901.0Chapter31502016>

## Income distribution

*Measures of income inequality provide the primary information on how the benefits of economic activity are distributed among the members of the community.... But inequality also matters because it is likely to have effects, both good and bad, on other outcomes, such as economic efficiency and population health. (Wilkins, 2015, p. 93)*

Figure 41 shows income distribution in Alice Springs at the time of the 2016 Census. The darker bars represent the whole community, while the lighter coloured bars represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents. Also included are points that represent the median income range for the Northern Territory, Australia, Alice Springs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents in Alice Springs. The Alice Springs median is consistent with the Northern Territory, but slightly higher than the Australian median and substantially higher than the median for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents. As with Figure 40 the data here point to considerable income inequality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the balance of the population in Alice Springs.

*Figure 41. Income distribution for Alice Springs and Alice Springs Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with median weekly individual income also shown for Australia and the Northern Territory, 2016 Census*



Source: (ABS, 2018b)

Many adult respondents recognised income inequality as an issue that prevented young people from achieving their hopes and dreams. For example, this survey respondent recognised connections between income inequality, racism, justice and mental ill-health as contributing to a problem for many young people.

 The complexities of life – inequities in our society/colonial and racist attitude and policies that negatively influence achievements. Inequality in employed income, house & education, accessibility justice, poor mental wellbeing.



## Interpreting the data

The data presented under the Essential Needs Are Met Wellbeing Area point to two quite different groups in the community—those who are employed (who therefore have access to resources to adequately provide for their children) and those who are not in the labour force, and therefore do not have access to the same set of resources. Low income families are more likely to be found among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households, particularly in Town Camps. While for most families in Alice Springs, food, transport and housing are all easily accessible and affordable, for those at the margins (economically) this is not the case.

Many young people see Alice Springs as a place of opportunity and do not necessarily recognise some of the issues raised by adults as concerns. Many adults surveyed recognised the complex challenges faced by families and were able to see beyond a simplistic presentation of poverty to a set of factors built on colonisation, intergenerational trauma and discrimination.

The data reviewed suggests that for some parts of the Alice Springs community finding the resources required to provide for children and meet their basic needs, is a significant challenge. It may be ironic that those parts of the community that are doing well in Alice Springs, are doing so because they are helping to meet the needs of those who are not, providing professional health and community support services.





Our children are our future. Being physically, mentally and emotionally well is important for everyone, but for children starting out in life being healthy sets them up for a strong future.

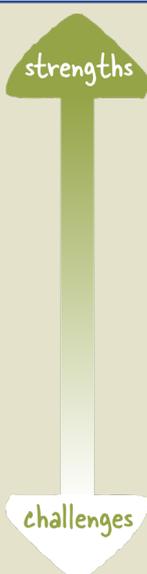
## Community aspiration

*For children to lead happy healthy lives*

### COMMUNITY VOICE

camping and going out bush •

need for more sport and recreation facilities •  
need for more restrictions on alcohol availability •



### SUMMARY OF DATA

- relatively high rates of breastfeeding
- reducing early childhood emotional maturity vulnerability
- reducing early childhood physical vulnerability
- immunisation rates comparable to national rates
- relatively high infant death rate
- relatively high percentage of low birth weight babies
- high levels of obesity
- high levels of smoking during pregnancy

## How are we doing?

In the minds of survey respondents, health did not figure prominently as an issue, adults tended to aspire for their children to 'lead happy, healthy' lives. There were other factors that also have a potential health impact such as 'camping and going out bush' as a positive and the need for more 'recreation and sporting facilities' and 'more alcohol restrictions' as things that need to change. The other sources of data paint a mixed picture of strengths and challenges.

In terms of strengths, there is some encouragement in the signs that young children are showing less vulnerability in the Australian Early Development Census data. The high rates of immunisation and relatively high rates of breastfeeding are also positive. The challenges are serious. High levels of obesity, smoking during pregnancy and high infant death rates are worrying.

## Key indicators

- Smoking during pregnancy
- Alcohol consumption during pregnancy
- Infant death rate
- Low birth weight babies
- Breastfeeding rates at 6 months
- Obesity
- Fruit and vegetable intake
- Developmentally on track (physical health and wellbeing)
- Developmentally on track (emotional maturity)
- Immunisation

# From pregnancy, children are healthy, remain healthy and thrive

## Smoking during pregnancy

As with other concerns about Alice Springs, young people did not point to specific problems like smoking during pregnancy. Some did identify smoking as a problem, but only as one of several social ills, for example:

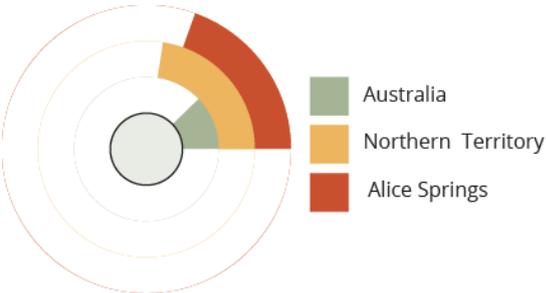
 Glass all over bike tracks and skate park. Big mobs of kids at skate park without grown ups, swearing and smoking.

One adult specifically mentioned smoking during pregnancy and saw a solution as:

 Intensive support for at risk women of child bearing age so they do not drink and smoke when pregnant so baby is born healthy.

Smoking during pregnancy adds health risks to the mother and unborn child and has health implications into adulthood (Hollams et al., 2013). Data collected by the Northern Territory Department of Health shows that rates of smoking during pregnancy among women in Alice Springs are nearly double those for Australia (Figure 42). While the results for Alice Springs (19.5 per cent of mothers smoking during pregnancy) compare favourably to the Northern Territory (22.7 per cent), the rate is almost double that of Australia (10.8 per cent).

Figure 42. Proportion of mothers smoking during pregnancy, Alice Springs compared with Australia and the Northern Territory (2012-2014)



Source: (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

## Consuming alcohol during pregnancy

Alcohol consumption during pregnancy is known to have negative maternal impacts. Research shows a strong link to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in children exposed to alcohol during pregnancy. It has also been linked to low birth weight, neuropsychological disorders, pre-term births and disabilities (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017; Stanesby et al., 2018). Across Australia less women are drinking alcohol while pregnant now than they were 15 years ago and more are aware of the need to abstain and the risks associated with alcohol consumption during pregnancy (Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, 2019). However, research has shown that in some communities FASD affects as many as 19.4 per cent of children and neurodevelopmental disorders affect as many as 31/4 per cent (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). Beyond a handful of studies the prevalence of FASD (as an indicator of alcohol use during pregnancy), the extent to which FASD and alcohol consumption during pregnancy is a problem in Australia, let alone Alice Springs, is unknown (Reid, 2018).



## Infant Death Rate and Low Birth Weight Babies

Survey respondents did not identify infant mortality as an issue of concern. However, high infant mortality rates reflect a number of other social health and wellbeing concerns (Freemantle et al., 2015) which arise from maternal lifestyle factors including alcohol use (Srikartika & O'Leary, 2015), smoking, illicit drug use, hypertension and diabetes (Hakeem et al., 2016). The same factors can contribute to low birth weights. For Alice Springs, the relatively high rates points to significant vulnerabilities for young children. The rates for the town also most likely disguises a higher rate among families experiencing vulnerability if not multiple vulnerabilities.

*Table 18. Infant Death Rate per 1000 live births, and per cent low birth weight babies, Alice Springs compared with Australia and the Northern Territory (2011 to 2015)*

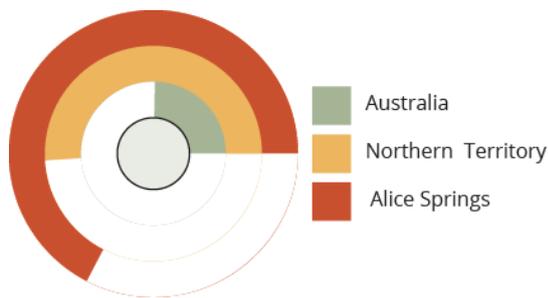
	Alice Springs Town	Northern Territory	Australia
<b>Infant Death Rate per 1000 births</b>	7.0	7.2	3.5
<b>Low birth weight babies (2012 to 2014) percentage</b>	7.1	8.2	6.1

Source: (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

## Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding was only raised in one adult group of survey respondents as an important issue. However, it is well recognised that breastfeeding may have a protective effect against childhood obesity (Hansstein, 2016) and other long term health and cognitive benefits for children and mothers (Binns et al., 2016). Estimates of breastfeeding rates are based on data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the National Health Survey (ABS, 2015b). Breastfeeding rates at six months, shown at Figure 43, for Alice Springs (67.5 per cent) compare very favourably with Northern Territory (51.2 per cent) and Australian rates (24.7 per cent).

Figure 43. Breastfeeding rates (6 months) in Alice Springs compared with Australia and the Northern Territory (2014-2015)

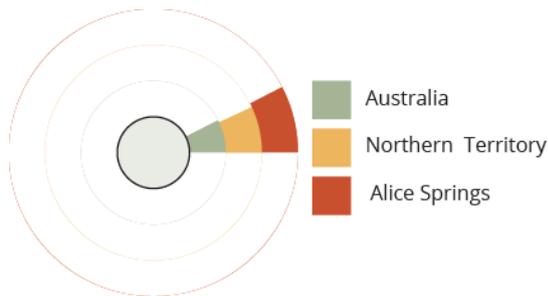


Source (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

## Obesity

Obesity was not raised at all among adult of young people in the surveys. But high levels of obesity are associated with long-term and chronic medical conditions such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease (Sanders et al., 2015). Rates of obesity shown at Figure 44 (7.4 per cent of children aged 2–17) for children in Alice Springs are comparable with rates in the Northern Territory and Australia.

Figure 44. Estimated proportion of population aged 2 to 17 who are obese (2014-2015)



Source (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

Table 19 adds additional information about obese and overweight children and young people, with a breakdown by gender. The estimates show that males are more likely than females to be overweight, though the difference is not great. However, combined, the data suggests that nearly one in three children in Alice Springs are either obese or overweight.

Table 19. Overweight and obese males and females, Age Standardised Rate/100, 2014-2015, Alice Springs

	Males	Females	Total
<b>Overweight but not obese people aged 2-17 %</b>	22.9	19.1	21.2
<b>Obese people aged 2-17 %</b>	7.4	7.5	7.2

Source (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

### Remaining healthy

The aspirational statement in the Healthy Wellbeing Area is ‘for children to lead happy healthy lives’. Children and young people hinted at some aspects of life in Alice Springs that contribute to their wellbeing. One of those is related to the outdoor environment which lends itself to camping. Going out bush was seen to be positive:

 We are so close to the bush. I love the bush.

 Going hunting with your family.

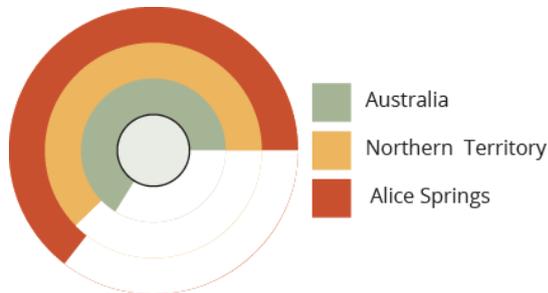
They did not talk about the indicators identified during the consultations. Indeed, their love of fast or take away food, suggests that healthy diet is not at the fore of their thinking. Yet many people in Alice Springs experience many health concerns at much higher rates than for the Australian population. For example, hospitalisations due to acute conditions (e.g. dental, ear nose and throat infections, and convulsions) and emergency department presentations are three times higher in Alice Springs than for Australia, and 50% higher than for the Northern Territory (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019). In the financial year 2017-2018, 50 012 patients presented to the Alice Springs Hospital Emergency Department, up from 41 225 patients in the 2012-13 financial year (AIHW, 2019a). But the data for children or other vulnerable groups in the community is not available.

### Nutrition: Fruit and vegetable intake

Good nutrition is an important part of being healthy and remaining healthy and avoiding future chronic disease (Abbott et al., 2013; Mhrshahi et al., 2019). In particular, having a balanced diet with adequate fruit and vegetables is critical for children’s healthy development. While there is no data for vegetable intake, Figure 45, based on 2015

National Health Survey data, shows that children in Alice Springs are about as likely to have an adequate fruit intake (64.5 per cent) as children across Australia (66.3 per cent).

Figure 45. Adequate fruit intake, 4-17 years, age standardised rate per 100 population, Alice Springs compared with Australia and the Northern Territory (2014-2015)



Source (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)



There is no data available that reports vegetable intake for children in Alice Springs.

## Families have access to health information and are confident to support their children's health

Community members in consultations identified 'families having access to health information and confidence to support their children's health' as a key aspect of the 'Healthy Wellbeing Area'. However, it was difficult to identify data to measure this. Indeed, what should be measured? Is the issue that community members discussed about accessibility of information, or is it the quality of information available, or is it about what they do with the information to support their children's health? This is an issue that requires further study to better understand the dynamics of information access and use.

In the adult survey, many respondents pointed to their concerns about lack of support for children and families (Figure 20, page 35). Some suggested parenting programs:



I think there needs to be more hands on, early parenting programs to help, especially young & disadvantaged parents – give their kids a better start.

Others suggested early intervention programs were needed:



[There is a] lack of funding for early intervention programs and youth, early childhood and child programs. Stereotyping in the community. Over use of police intervention..

The concerns were matched with a perceived need for more family, youth and parent support (Figure 22, page 36). In particular, some adults wanted to see more collaborative, place-based services available for those in need:



*Better collaboration between services,... more place based programs, more services available on Town Camps, more preventative programs that build on children and young people's strengths and skill*



Specific data about families' access to health services or health information is not publicly available for Alice Springs. Data are available for the numbers of people aged 18 years and over who experienced a barrier to accessing healthcare when needed it in the last 12 months, with the main reason being cost of service. These modelled estimates suggest that in 2014, only 1.1 per cent of people in Alice Springs had a barrier, compared to 2.0 per cent in Australia and 0.8 per cent in the Northern Territory (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019). There are other barriers that make it difficult for people to access health information, such as language, stigma and lack of awareness of service availability.

## **Children's health and development concerns are identified early**

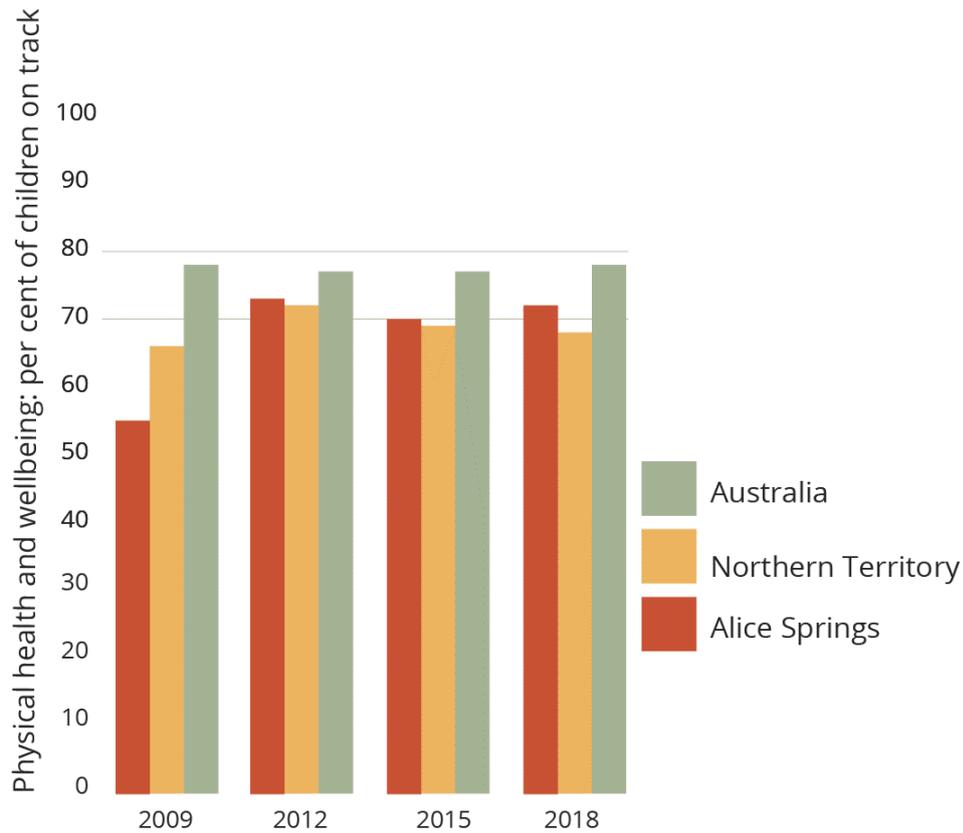
The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) captures information about the vulnerability of children in their first year of schooling (See Appendix 2, Figure 61). The AEDC Instrument collects data relating to five key areas of early childhood development referred to as 'domains': Physical Health and Wellbeing, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, Language and Cognitive Skills, and Communication Skills and General Knowledge. Data are reported at a community level and can be compared with the Territory and Australia as a whole (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019).

While acknowledging the significant value of the AEDC as a data source, there are several limitations with the methodology and application of the data. Data is collected by teachers who are not necessarily trained in rigorous data collection methods and their interpretation of information may well be influenced by their lack of understanding of the local context, particularly where parents speak a language other than English (Guthridge et al., 2016). It may also be influenced by their perceptions of the social context at the time—for example in 2009 the Northern Territory Emergency Response was in full swing. A further limitation in the interpretation of trend data is that the information does not track how children are progressing, rather it tracks how a whole community progresses (or regresses). Demographic changes (see Diversity, page 24) can have a profound impact on outcomes measured in the Census. This is reflected in large intercensal changes for the Alice Springs data, particularly from 2009 to 2012. The data therefore should not necessarily be seen as an indicator of service delivery performance or of access to services.

## Physical health and wellbeing

The AEDC Physical Health and Wellbeing domain measures children’s physical readiness for the school day, their physical independence and gross and fine motor skills. In 2018, three out of four children in Alice Springs were developmentally on track. Since 2012, the results for Alice Springs have remained reasonably steady (see Figure 46), but the difference between Alice Springs and Australia has increased from 3.9 per cent up to 5.5per cent (see Appendix 2, Figure 61 for more details).

Figure 46. Trends in the Physical Health and Wellbeing domain of the Australian Early Development Census, 2009 to 2018



Source: (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, 2019)

## Emotional maturity

The AEDC describes emotional maturity as 'Children's pro-social and helping behaviours and absence of anxious and fearful behaviour, aggressive behaviour and hyperactivity and inattention' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019, p. 16). Figure 47 shows that the proportion of children 'on track' in Alice Springs has declined slightly since 2012 from 77 per cent on track on 2012 to 74 per cent in 2018. The difference between Alice Springs and Australia has increased slightly over that time, up from 0.9 per cent in 2012 to 3.2 per cent in 2018.

Figure 47. Trends in the Emotional Maturity domain of the Australian Early Development Census, 2009 to 2018



Source: (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, 2019)

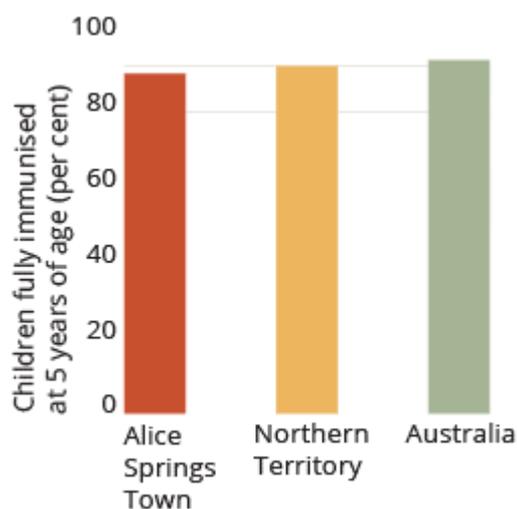
## Immunisation

Immunisation was not mentioned at all by either adults or young people in the surveys. However, immunisation is an important vehicle for reducing future health problems, particularly for children.

*Immunisation programs are a safe and effective way of reducing the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases in the community and protecting against potentially serious health problems. Although the majority of Australian children are immunised, it is important to maintain high immunisation rates to reduce the risk of outbreaks of serious diseases. (AIHW, 2018, p. 2)*

Full immunisation at 5 years 'means that a child has received four doses of diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough vaccine, four doses of polio vaccine and two doses of measles, mumps and rubella vaccine. It is assumed that all previous vaccinations were received' (AIHW, 2018, p. 4). The 2017 results shown in Figure 48 show immunisation rates for Alice Springs compared with the Northern Territory and Australia. While the Alice Springs rate of 90 per cent is only four per cent below the national average (94%), and 3.2 per cent below the Northern Territory average, when compared to other Australian regions, it has one of the lowest immunisation rates among regions across the nation (AIHW, 2018, p. 3). This then represents some concern.

Figure 48. Immunisation rates for children aged 5 years, Alice Springs compared with Northern Territory and Australia (2017)



Source (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

Table 20 provides additional and updated information from the 2017 data shown above. Immunisation rates at five years have increased in Alice Springs by 2.5 per cent since the data shown above was reported. The difference between Alice Springs and Australia is now only 2.2 per cent.

Table 20. Child immunisation rates, Alice Springs, Northern Territory and Australia, 2018

	Alice Springs	Northern Territory	Australia
<b>Fully immunised at 1 year %</b>	93.3	93.4	94.0
<b>Fully immunised at 2 years %</b>	88.5	88.1	90.7
<b>Fully immunised at 5 years %</b>	92.5	93.1	94.7

Source (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

### Mental health and suicide



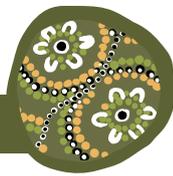
While there is considerable information to draw on about children’s physical health and wellbeing, there is no publicly available data to show the extent to which children and young people experience mental health issues. There is no publicly available information at the local government area level to show what kind of services young people are accessing. Despite this there are high rates of youth suicide (10-17 years), as high as 30 deaths per 100 000 population for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Northern Territory (Northern Territory Department of Health, 2018; Robinson et al., 2011), compared to 12.1 deaths per 100 000 people across Australia (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019).

### Interpreting the data

The data presented for this Wellbeing Area is something of a ‘mixed bag’ with some indications of serious concern (e.g. immunisation rates, infant mortality and smoking during pregnancy) and other indications of strength (e.g. breastfeeding rates and AEDC emotional maturity). What is perhaps more surprising is the lack of concern in the community surveys about health issues. This could be because the first things that come to people’s minds when they are completing a survey are those that are immediately visible to them or that directly affect them, and for survey respondents as a whole, health issues may not be their personal experience. It may also be that the categorisation of themes places some concerns (like alcohol and drug abuse) as a safety issue, not as a health issue. A response to the Healthy Wellbeing Area of course needs to recognise the needs of those who do have a personal experience. The response also needs to recognise the complexity of the systems that support better health and wellbeing. A response must also recognise the impact of colonisation, racial discrimination (Larson et al., 2007) and historical/intergenerational trauma both as a cause of ill-health and as ill health itself (Paradies, 2016).



# ENGAGED IN LEARNING



Learning is a continuous process throughout life. Children and young people learn through a variety of formal and informal experiences, both within the classroom and more broadly in their home and community.

## Community aspiration

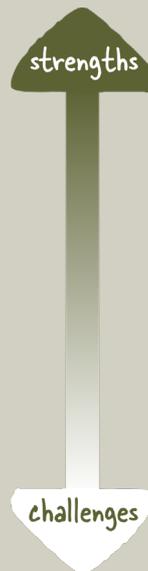
*For young people to receive a good education*

### COMMUNITY VOICE

good schools and teachers •  
strong family support •

concerns about education and training •  
young people want more education options •  
need more family, parent and youth support •  
need cultural leadership and education programs •  
need more education and training options,  
demand for playgroups in Town Camps •

### SUMMARY OF DATA



• NAPLAN results above the NT average

• lower school attendance and retention rates  
• low and declining attendance rates

## How are we doing?

The data shows some really positive educational strengths for young people at school. Many students are doing well at school and many young people say they have great teachers and strong family support. But there are challenges too. Attendance rates are declining, retention rates to Year 12 are relatively low and many people in the surveys expressed concerns about education and training options. People living in Town Camps wanted to see more accessible playgroups and Aboriginal people more generally wanted to see cultural leadership and language education programs for their children.

Analysis of the survey data shows some differences in the way people think. The hope of a good education was expressed more by Aboriginal people than non-Indigenous people. The flip side of this is a perception that the education available to Aboriginal children is not as good as it is for other children.

## Key indicators

- School attendance and enrolment
- Pre-school enrolment and attendance rates
- Year 12 completion
- Early Childhood Developmental Vulnerability
- NAPLAN results
- Communication Skills and General Knowledge
- Language and Cognitive Skills
- Family support for children's learning
- Internet access and digital inclusion

## Children are confident, involved and successful learners and have access to quality education

Among all the hopes and dreams that adults identified for their children, 'a good education' was second only to being 'safe and free' (Figure 18). One respondent said that they wanted to see:

 Great educational opportunities that provide diverse learning models and strategies to cater for individual learning styles and aspirations. Ditto for extra-curricular activity opportunities. The development of educational opportunities that lead to tertiary education.

Children and young people were generally positive about their experiences of school.

 Amazing schools. Amazing teachers. Amazing students.

Adults surveyed identified education as their top priority for change (Figure 22). But 'education' for most respondents was not just about schooling. It included pathways to university and jobs; adult learning opportunities; early learning opportunities. Many respondents had clearly spent some time thinking about the educational issues that were important to them.

 I'm concerned about future access to tertiary education. Will we need to leave when my eldest child is ready for university? That is a few years away and I am not familiar with the depth or breadth of courses available locally, but I think it would be great if CDU entered partnerships with universities around the country to provide curated remote access to a wide range of courses.

Some adults were particularly focused on community education.

 Maybe opportunities for all cultures to learn about one another and listen to each other...

Children and young people too, recognised the benefits of 'great teachers' (Figure 14, page 29) but also wanted to see more educational opportunities (Figure 16, page 31) but they were less specific in their articulation of expectations, for example:

 Kids need to go to school.

In the expression of their hopes and dreams, adults surveyed tended to describe educational aspirations connecting with other Wellbeing Areas. For example, in this quote the respondent is describing the aspiration of 'Playgroups and Kindies on Town Camps' (an early educational hope), but brings that together with 'language classes' (a cultural hope). There is also an element of active participation here too where children are the centre of a range of activities such as gathering bush tucker and dancing.

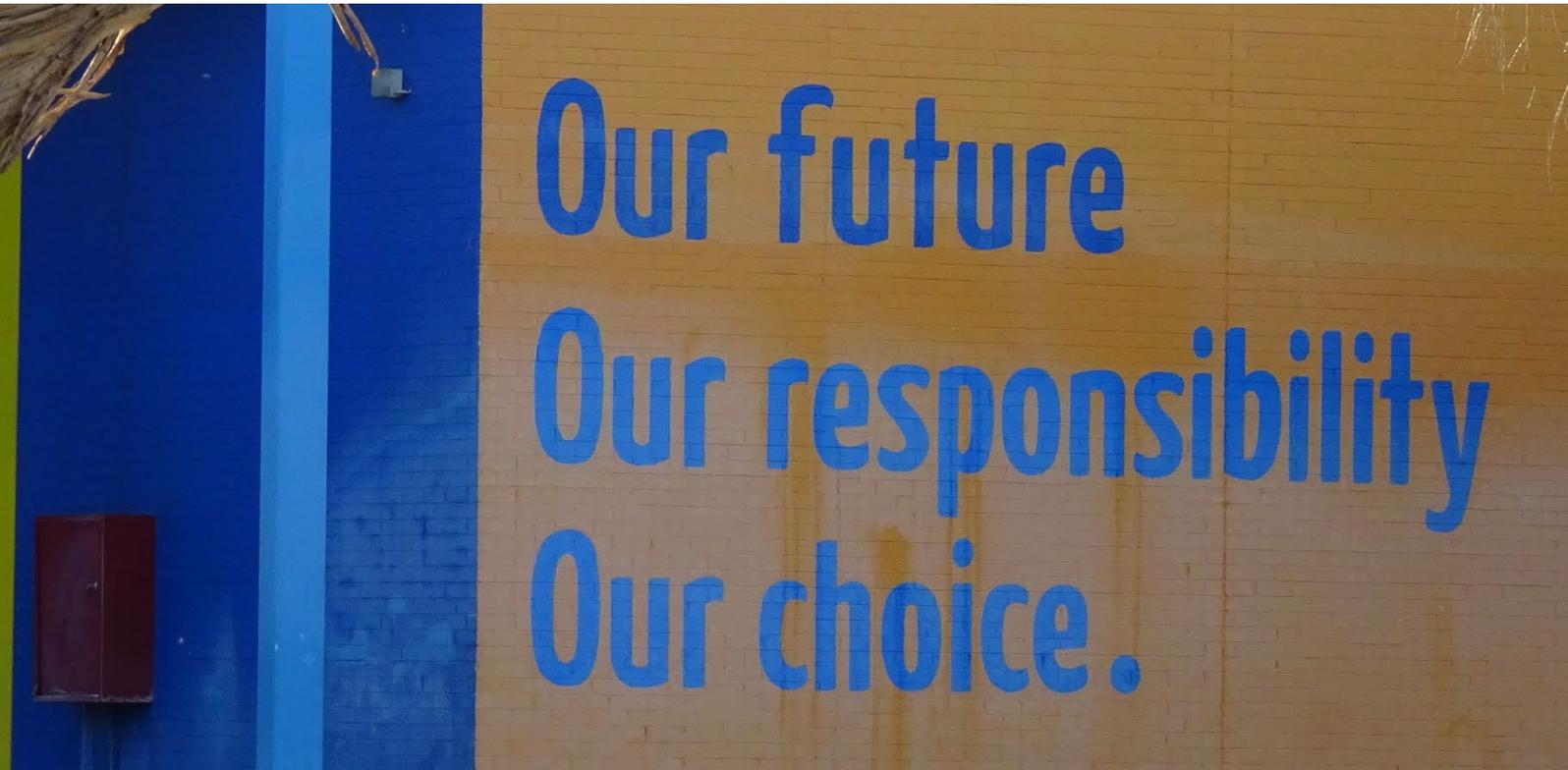
 Playgroups and Kindies on Town Camps. Language classes at school; Arrernte, Warlpiri and Luritja. Children's Ground are good, they put children at the centre learning language, culture, bush tucker and dancing for boys and girls.

This and other examples like it, demonstrate how intrinsically linked education is seen to be to other areas of wellbeing, a bit like glue that holds the hopes and dreams together. However, it may reflect the community's expectations that schools and educators are the solution to a range of problems in the community. The risk then is that schools are expected to do a lot more than educate children and young people, placing an unreasonable burden on teachers and assistants to deal with complex health and wellbeing issues.

### Attendance, enrolment and access

Table 21 summarises characteristics of schools across Alice Springs based on data available on the My School website. The size of these schools varies, from 24 at Amoonguna up to 728 (St Philips). A total of 5223 students were enrolled in Alice Springs schools in 2018. Three schools have only Aboriginal students (Yirara College, Yipirinya School and Amoonguna School). Other schools have varying mixes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students. Alice Springs Steiner School had only 7 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in 2018, while Sadadeen Primary School had 90 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment. There is considerable variation in attendance rates, too. Attendance rates at Yirara College were just 34 per cent in 2018, while at Living Waters Lutheran School, the rate was 93 per cent. A map of school locations and attendance rates is available on [Google Maps](#). ICSEA scores (Index for Socio-Educational Advantage) are designed to show the relative levels of advantage of schools, based on a number of individual components (ACARA, 2013). A score of 1000 indicates that school is at the average for Australia. Four schools have above average scores in Alice Springs, while the remainder are well below the average. To some extent these data reflect the high levels of income inequality existing in Alice Springs (see Figure 41, page 69).

There are several kinds of schools in Alice Springs. Acacia Hill School caters for almost 70 students with special needs. Alice Springs School of the Air caters for about 80 distance education learners. St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre works with more than 100 students who are at risk of disengaging from school. Centralian Middle School is the only school that specifically has students in Years 7 to 9, while Centralian Senior College is the only school for exclusively for Year 10 to 12 students.



Our future  
Our responsibility  
Our choice.

## CHILD FRIENDLY ALICE TECHNICAL REPORT

Table 21. Alice Springs Schools, enrolments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, attendance rates and ICSEA scores, 2018

School name	Enrolment 2018	Per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students 2018	Student attendance rate per cent	ICSEA score where available
Acacia Hill School	68	68	78	
Alice Springs School Of The Air	82	28	92	953
Alice Springs Steiner School	161	7	91	
Amoonguna School	24	100	75	431
Araluen Christian College	199	16	92	998
Bradshaw Primary School	452	35	90	926
Braitling Primary School	232	53	83	795
Centralian Middle School	306	63	74	823
Centralian Senior College	362	51	74	884
Gillen Primary School	208	71	80	796
Larapinta Primary School	308	39	88	912
Living Waters Lutheran School	316	16	93	1023
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic College	690	11	91	1021
Ross Park Primary School	448	16	92	1040
Sadadeen Primary School	134	90	71	723
St Joseph's Catholic Flexible Learning Centre	104	98	31	633
St Philip's College	728	16	91	1037
Yipirinya School	142	100	41	600
Yirara College	259	100	34	620
<b>Total</b>	<b>5223</b>			
<b>Average<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>275</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>76.9</b>	<b>836</b>

Source: (ACARA, 2019a)



Apart from the schools there are 10 play groups and 10 separate pre-schools operating in Alice Springs. Enrolment and attendance data are not publicly reported for these early learning providers.

<sup>2</sup> Averages shown are school averages not student averages

## Attendance rates

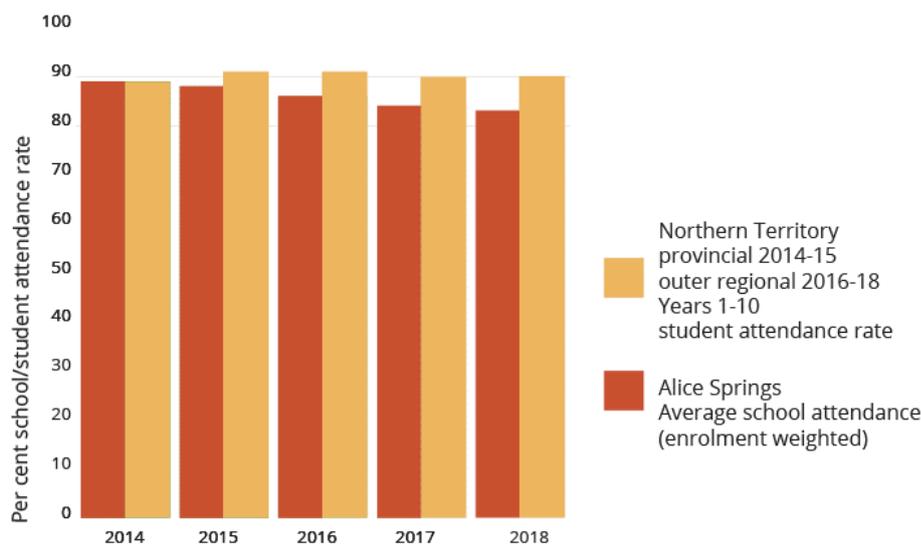
Attendance at school is an indication of engagement with school education. It should not be seen as a proxy for educational performance and is not a reliable predictor of or precursor to academic performance (Baxter & Meyers, 2019; Guenther, 2013; Ladwig & Luke, 2013). However, as an indicator of educational engagement and participation it serves to demonstrate how closely the values and purpose of education are aligned to those of the student/parent community.

Several adults perceived that lack of school attendance was a key issue for Alice Springs.

 Lots of kids are not connected to the community. Not attending school.

This perception is at least partly supported by attendance data. Data shown in Figure 49 compares two different data sets collected and reported by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), so caution should be taken when comparing these results. However, for Northern Territory provincial/outer regional schools<sup>3</sup> (which are more like Alice Springs schools than other remote schools), attendance rates have remained reasonably constant at between 89 and 91 per cent since 2014. For Alice Springs schools the average school attendance rate of the 18 schools (weighted for enrolment<sup>4</sup>) has steadily declined since 2014 from 89 per cent down to 83 per cent. The decline may point to a decreasing level of educational engagement among students in Alice Springs.

Figure 49. School attendance rates for Alice Springs schools compared with Northern Territory provincial/outer regional student attendance rates, 2014 to 2018, Term 1



Source: (ACARA, 2019a, 2019b)

<sup>3</sup> Terminology changed from provincial to outer regional in 2016. Alice Springs is described as 'remote' though as a town it does not necessarily reflect other 'remote' school locations.

Details for all schools, based on information available on the My School website (where available) is provided for the five years, in Table 22. Note that the averages shown are not weighted for enrolment. Small schools have a disproportionate impact on averages in this calculation.

Table 22. Alice Springs school attendance rates, Term 1 2014 to 2018

School	2014 %	2015 %	2016 %	2017 %	2018 %	Average over period
Acacia Hill School	89	81	84	83	78	83
Alice Springs School Of The Air	97			88	92	92
Alice Springs Steiner School	91	91	93	89	91	91
Amoonguna School	59	71		74	75	70
Araluen Christian College	92	93	93	93	92	93
Bradshaw Primary School	87	89	90	90	90	89
Braitling Primary School	83	88	88	87	83	86
Centralian Middle School	86	87	79	77	74	81
Centralian Senior College	78	77	75	71	74	75
Gillen Primary School	86	86	82	82	80	83
Larapinta Primary School	87	91	90	90	88	89
Living Waters Lutheran School	94	93	92	92	93	93
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic College	92	92	93	92	91	92
Ross Park Primary School		92	92	93	92	92
Sadadeen Primary School\	71	64	64	56	71	65
St Joseph's Catholic Flexible Learning Centre	50	83	50	35	31	50
St Philip's College	93	93	92	92	91	92
Yipirinya School		59		52	41	51
Yirara College	68	57	35	35	34	46
All Alice Springs schools	83	83	81	77	77	80

Source (ACARA, 2019a)

### Year 12 completion

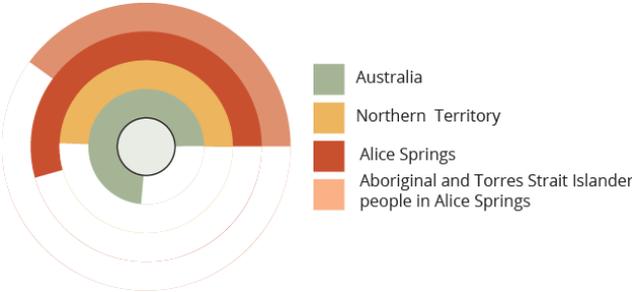
Every five years the Australian Bureau of Statistics asks a question on the Census about the highest level of schooling completed for each person in the household. While Year 12 completion rates for Alice Springs town exceed those for the Northern Territory as a whole, they still fall well short of attainment rates for 20 to 24 year olds across Australia

<sup>4</sup> School attendance rates are calculated using a weighted average so that smaller schools do not skew the results in favour of larger schools.

as shown in Figure 50. Nationally, 73.6 per cent of 20-24 year olds have attained Year 12. For Alice Springs, 54.2 per cent have completed Year 12, while for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the figure is just 39.9 per cent.

The significance of the difference—even though over time this has been reducing (Australian Government, 2019)—should be treated with some caution, firstly because Year 12 is not necessarily a good predictor of economic participation, and secondly standards of ‘Year 12’ completion vary. On completion of Year 12 students may or may not gain a Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) and may or may not achieve an ATAR score for university entry requirements. Some students complete Year 12 using vocational education and training (VET) pathways through a school based apprenticeship or traineeship while others focus more on a university pathway (Northern Territory Department of Education, 2015).

Figure 50. Proportion of 20-24 year old population attaining Year 12, Alice Springs compared with Alice Spring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Northern Territory and Australia, 2016 Census



Source: (ABS, 2018d)

Survey respondents were not as concerned with Year 12 but on pathways to training, university or careers. One adult respondent described limited options as a ‘small town issue’:

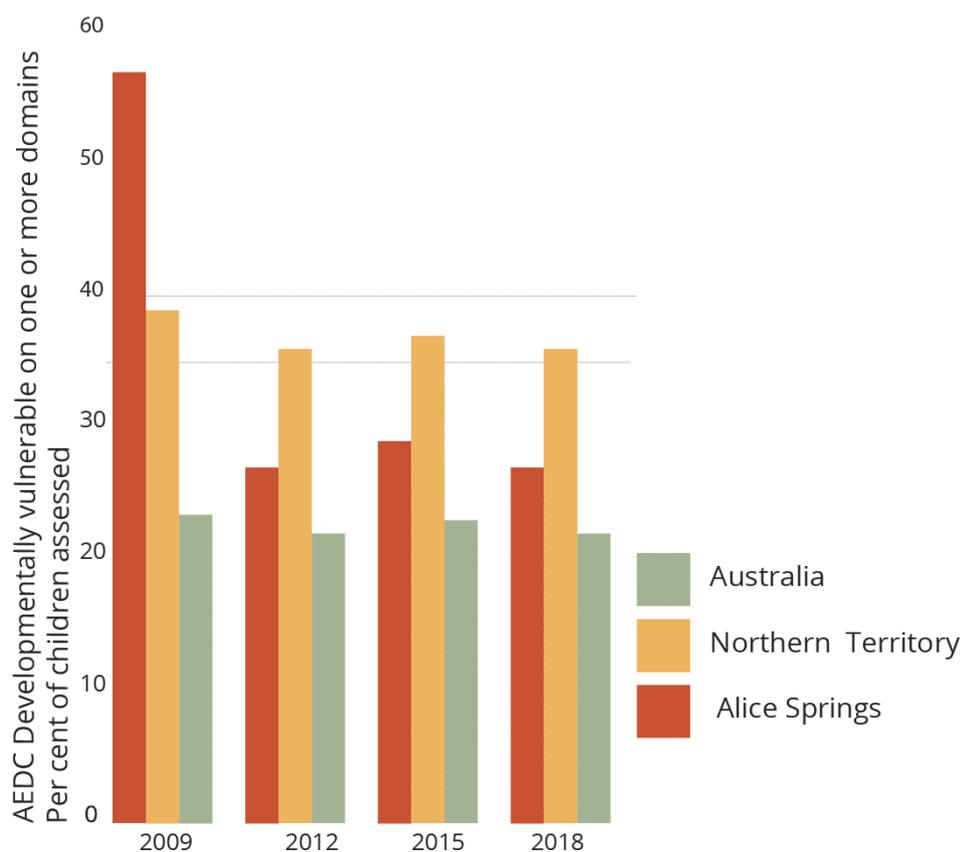
 Small town issues – one problem is limited and outdated public facility such as playgrounds. Another is limited educational options especially at secondary/tertiary levels.

Respondents to the children and young people’s survey did not discuss secondary or university education at all.

### Early childhood developmental vulnerability

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) captures information about the vulnerability of children in their first year of schooling. Figure 51 shows a fairly consistent result for Alice Springs, higher than Australia but lower than the Northern Territory as a whole. In 2018, one in four children (27.4 percent) in Alice Springs were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains compared to one in three (35.8 percent) across the Northern Territory and one in five (21.7 percent) nationally. Additional detail is provided at Appendix 2, Figure 61.

Figure 51. AEDC Trends in developmental vulnerability assessed in one or more domains, 2009 to 2018

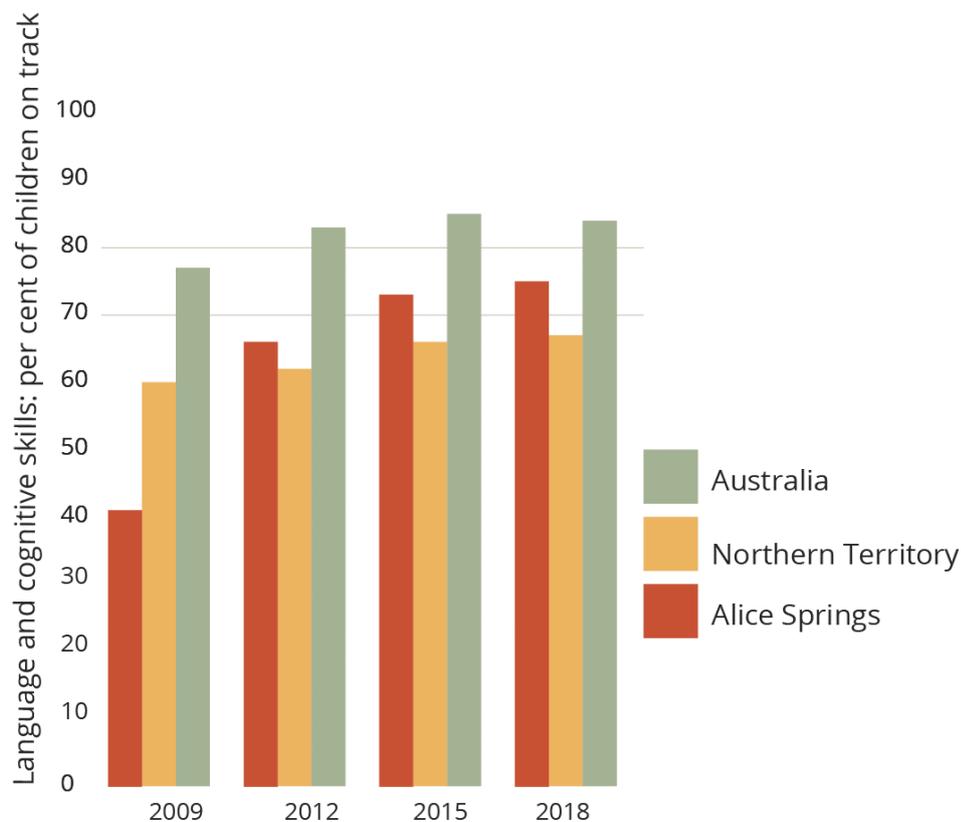


Source : (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, 2019)

## Language and cognitive skills

This domain measures children’s basic literacy, advanced literacy, basic numeracy, and interest in literacy, numeracy and memory. Children who are on track ‘will be interested in books, reading and writing, and basic maths; capable of reading and writing simple sentences and complex words’ [and will] be able to count and recognise numbers and shapes’. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019, p. 17). The trend shown in Figure 52 is favourable for Alice Springs, with the per cent of children on track increasing from 66.2 per cent in 2012 to 75.1 per cent in 2018. Additional detail is provided at Appendix 2, Figure 61.

Figure 52. Trends in the Language and cognitive skills domain of the Australian Early Development Census, 2009 to 2018

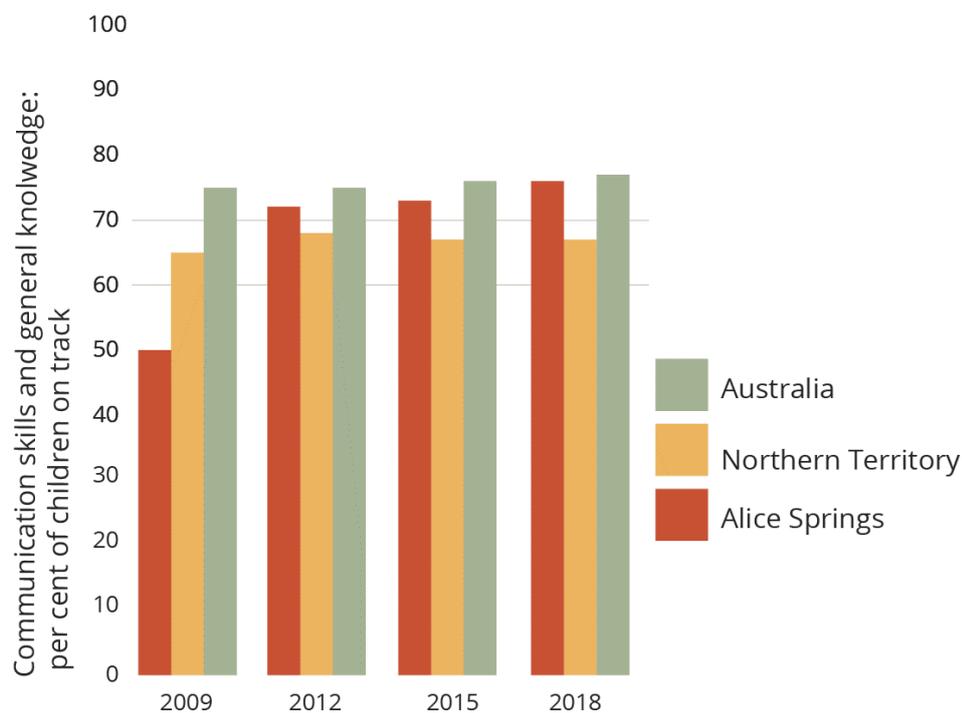


Source: (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, 2019)

### Communication skills and general knowledge

The Communication skills and general knowledge domain ‘measures children’s communication skills and general knowledge based on broad developmental competencies and skills measured in the school context’. Children who are on track in this domain will ‘have excellent communication skills, can tell a story and communicate easily with both children and adults, and have no problems with articulation’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019, p. 18). Figure 53 shows an increasing trend in this domain for Alice Springs children, up from 72.1 per cent in 2012 to 75.9 per cent in 2018. Additional detail is provided at Appendix 2, Figure 61.

Figure 53. Trends in the Communication skills and general knowledge domain of the Australian Early Development Census, 2009 to 2018



Source: (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, 2019)

## National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) Results

Data from the My School website allows us to see how every school in Alice Springs is faring with their NAPLAN results. On average, based on NAPLAN tests, Alice Springs schools have slightly lower results than schools across Australia and slightly higher results than schools across the Northern Territory. To some extent these scores reflect the relative level of engagement in schooling that is offered to students. Scores are influenced by a range of other factors. They should not be seen as a measure of Alice Springs children’s future wellbeing or their ability to contribute to the community. Adults or young people did not raise any concerns about NAPLAN processes or results.

Table 23. Trends in NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy Alice Springs<sup>5</sup> Schools compared with Australia

	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Year 3 Reading Alice Springs</b>	358	344	357	327
<b>Australia</b>	425.5	425.6	431.3	433.8
<b>Year 5 Reading Alice Springs</b>	450	446	437	451
<b>Australia</b>	498.5	501.5	505.7	509.3
<b>Year 7 Reading Alice Springs</b>	493	448	481	455
<b>Australia</b>	546.0	540.8	544.7	542.2
<b>Year 9 Reading Alice Springs</b>	550	506	431	537
<b>Australia</b>	580.2	580.8	580.9	584.1
<b>Year 3 Numeracy Alice Springs</b>	366	330	344	351
<b>Australia</b>	397.8	402.0	409.4	407.7
<b>Year 5 Numeracy Alice Springs</b>	442	441	430	446
<b>Australia</b>	492.5	493.1	493.8	494
<b>Year 7 Numeracy Alice Springs</b>	480	476	480	481
<b>Australia</b>	542.5	549.7	553.9	548.4
<b>Year 9 Numeracy Alice Springs</b>	591.7	588.9	591.9	595.7
<b>Australia</b>	555	516	556	532

Sources (ACARA, 2019a, 2018)

<sup>5</sup> Note that average Alice Springs results are based on school level averages, not individual level so may not be directly comparable with Australian data.

## Internet access and digital inclusion

Internet access was seldom raised as a concern for survey respondents. Some young people wanted to see faster internet:



Two adult respondents felt that the internet was getting in the way of outdoor recreation or was a problematic 'distraction'.



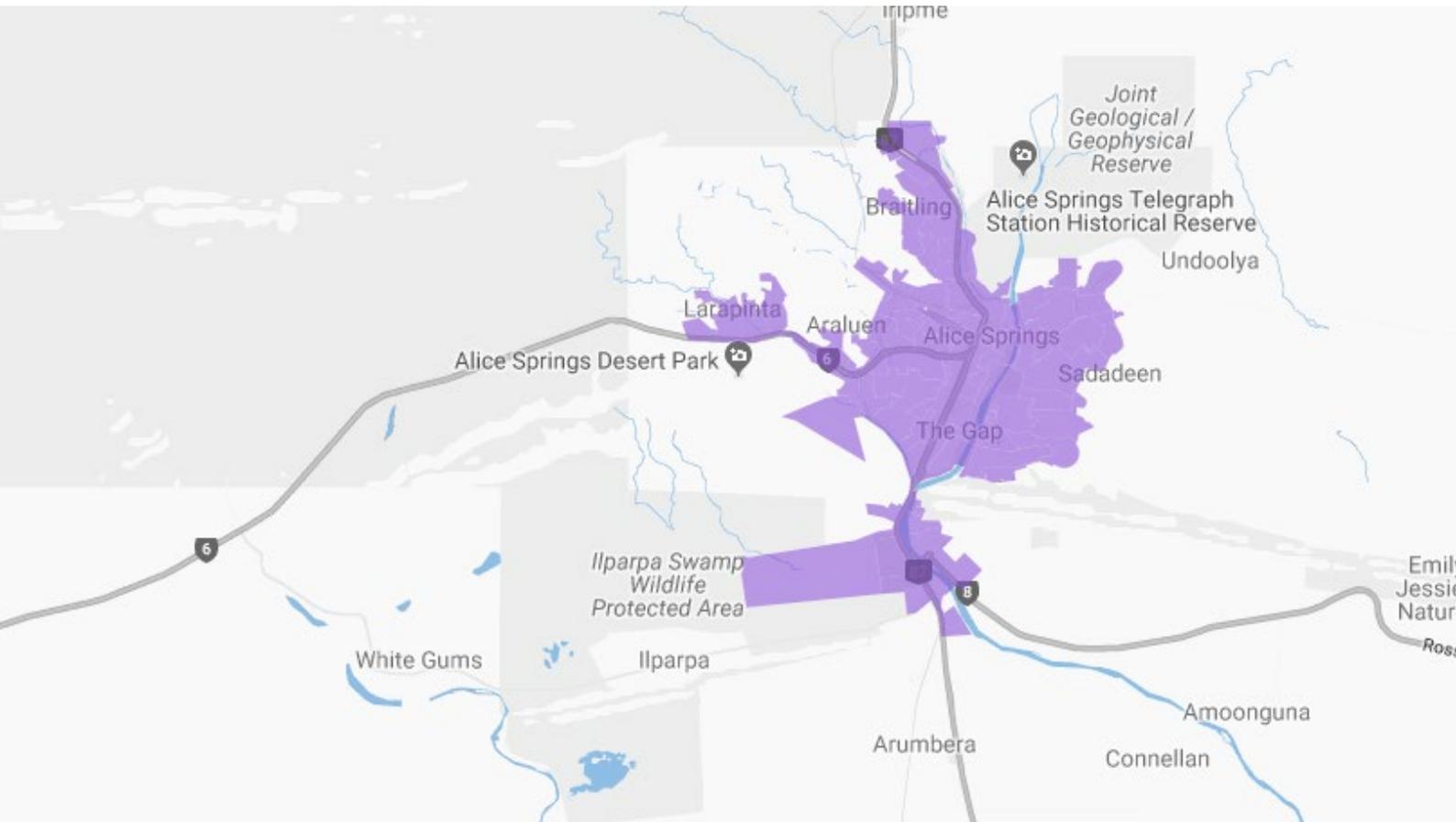
Setting aside those comments, internet access is an important enabler for education. Many refer to 'digital inclusion' now as a goal, rather than access. Thompson et al. (2014, p. 9) define digital inclusion as 'outreach as a means to empower underserved and marginalized populations'. More specifically, Ragnedda and Mustsvairo (2018) point to digital inclusion as a combination of access, availability and training for digital literacy skills. Similarly, Thomas et al. (2016) suggest that digital inclusion has three components: access, affordability and ability. They argue that:

*The goal of digital inclusion is to enable everyone to access and use digital technologies effectively. It goes beyond simply owning a computer or smartphone. At heart, digital inclusion is about social and economic participation: using online and mobile technologies to improve skills, enhance quality of life, educate, and promote wellbeing across the whole of society (Thomas et al., 2016, p. 6)*

Access to fast broadband internet opens up opportunities for lifelong learning, and enables parents to better support their children in learning activities. It also has the potential for supporting cultural and language maintenance, which is a priority for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Alice Springs (Guenther 2019).

Some parts of Alice Springs have good access to fast National Broadband Network (NBN) services. Others, particularly in some Town Camps and rural areas only have access to slower speeds with mobile services. Figure 54 shows coverage available through the National Broadband Network. The regions without NBN coverage include Ross, Arumbera, Connellan, Amoonguna, Kilgariff, Ilparpa, White Gums, Hidden Valley Town Camp, Karnte Town Camp, Ipiye Ipiye Town Camp, and Anthepe Town Camp.

Figure 54. NBN coverage map of Alice Springs (August 2019)



Source:(NBN, 2019)

The data in Table 24 reflects the challenges many people in Town Camps of Alice Springs have accessing the internet from home. While other households have access comparable to Australia as a whole, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Alice Springs have much more limited access.

Table 24. Internet access at home, Alice Springs, Northern Territory and Australia, 2016

Internet accessed from dwelling	Alice Springs	Northern Territory	Australia
Household with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person(s)	58	55	72
Other Household	85	85	84

Source: (ABS, 2018c)

### Children participate in early learning programs and activities

The ‘potential of early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs to facilitate positive social, economic and health trajectories has been demonstrated with strongest effect among families living in circumstances of disadvantage’ (Leske et al., 2015, p. 109). While this may be the case, there is also ample evidence for the more important role of parents as their children’s first teachers —early involvement of children in schooling

may disempower parents in favour of the hegemonic (and perhaps assimilative influence) of institutional schooling and so limit opportunities for first language development other than English (Bae, 2017). Further the assumption that pre-school is better than staying at home may start 'with the assumption that nondominant parents are failing at this role, and therefore require training and intervention to perform the "right" (i.e., middle-class, White, Eurocentric) kinds of behaviors and interactions with their children' (Horvat & Pezzetti, 2018, p. 46). Alternatives such as family-based and home-based learning may well be just as effective as school based programs (Borisova et al., 2017).

These arguments aside, a challenge with early learning data is tracking how many families are attending one or more of the 30 formal early learning services in Alice Springs. There is currently no central data collection point that accurately measures early learning participation, until children enter the school system.

Some adults surveyed were keen to see more early learning opportunities, particularly playgroups in Town Camps. For example, one adult respondent wanted culturally integrated playgroups and another specifically mentioned playgroups in Town Camps:

 Culturally integrated play groups. Childcare with long term good staff who can support special needs kids.

 Playgroups on town camps. Programs run by local staff.



While there are 10 playgroups in Alice Springs, it is not clear how many children attend these playgroups. There is no accurate count of the number or proportion of children who are regularly attending pre-schools in Alice Springs. The 2016 Census General Community Profile (ABS, 2017) indicates 381 children attending pre-school, aged between three and five years. Enrolment figures obtained through a special request from the Northern Territory Department of Education show that 409 children were enrolled in formal pre-school programs in 2018. Of these, 113 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children.

## Parents/care-givers have opportunities to learn

Parents also need opportunities to learn. While there is data available to show how many people are enrolled and complete vocational education and training courses, there are lots of other ways that adults can learn, for example at University or through adult and community education classes. It is not clear how many parents are accessing these opportunities. But many want more opportunities:

 Raise more awareness about the effects of alcohol and domestic violence, the impact it has on children, their health and development.



Data relating to parent participation in vocational education and training, or non-formal adult education programs or informal learning activities is not available. The number of adult learning providers in Alice Springs is unknown, and how many providers offer online courses for parents is also unclear.

## Families are supportive of learning

Supportive families make a difference to children’s ability to learn at school (Guenther, 2014; Guenther et al., 2015a). Many adults were supportive of learning, but there is no data, except for a subjective assessment in the AEDC data collections (which only applies to Transition aged children). That data, summarised below in Table 25, suggests that nearly 90 per cent of children’s parents are actively engaged in their children’s learning, and more than 80 per cent are regularly read to. See the caveats on AEDC discussed earlier (page 79) as a comment on the large differences for the data in 2009.

Table 25. Teacher perceptions about parent support for children in their first year of school, Alice Springs 2009 to 2018

	2009	2012	2015	2018
<b>Teachers’ response to the question: Would you say that this child has parent(s)/caregiver(s) who are actively engaged with the school in supporting their child’s learning. % of children</b>	70.4	87.5	90.8	88.7
<b>Teachers’ response to the question: Would you say that this child is regularly read to/encouraged in his/her reading at home. % of children</b>	51.5	83.9	86.7	81.3

Source (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, 2019)

## Interpreting the data

Education is a strong priority for most parents and young people in Alice Springs. They believe in its intrinsic value but expect a lot from it. There is evidence of disengagement in the data. Attendance rates are relatively low and Year 12 completion rates lag behind the Australian and comparable Northern Territory averages, but there are signs of improvement coming from the AEDC early years data. The importance of education for children is also reflected in survey respondents who wanted more options for education for parents, and more accessible childcare and playgroups, particularly in Town Camps.

Perhaps more interesting is how educational aspirations link with other wellbeing areas. The risk in responding to the community aspiration is to see education as a cure for a range of wellbeing issues. Schools (or the broader systems around education) have limited capacity to address safety and health issues. But they can play a role. The challenge is to find the balance between education strategies and other vehicles for improving wellbeing among children and young people.





BRIDGE

## ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING



The social environment in which young people grow is important for their development. For many young people participation in sport and recreational activities is one way to mix with and make friends. For others, volunteering is important. It is also important for children to be provided with opportunities to speak and feel heard. For these things to happen, children and young people need places that meets their needs and strong organisational structures.

### Community aspiration

#### *Safe community spaces and environment*

#### COMMUNITY VOICE

- positive youth perceptions about town pool •
- positive youth perceptions about sport •
- festivals and events •
- nothing to do •
- need for collaborative and community-led solutions •
- need more youth activities and services •
- need more sport and recreation opportunities, parks and playgrounds •



#### SUMMARY OF DATA

- relatively high rates of youth volunteering

### How are we doing?

Many adults surveyed talked about the need for community-led solutions to the challenges young people faced. The issues they want addressed include the need for more youth activities and services and more facilities.

Beyond the challenges, young people themselves see lots of positives from their involvement in sport and particular places like the town pool. The data also shows relatively strong rates of volunteering among young people in Alice Springs.

### Key indicators

- Parks and recreation facilities
- Participation in sport (0-12 years)
- Youth volunteering

## Community spaces are child and family friendly

The social environment in which young people grow is important for their development. For many young people participation in sport and recreational activities is one way to mix with and make friends. For others, volunteering is important. It is also important for children to be provided with opportunities to speak and feel heard. For these things to happen, children and young people need places that meet their needs and have strong organisational structures. Many children and young people surveyed offered an optimistic assessment of their community offering several strong points about life in Alice Springs.



Good playgrounds. Good shopping places. Swimming centre. Good schools.  
Takes 20 mins to drive around town. Beautiful mountains. Good food. Good government. Good weather.

Among adults who wanted changes, parks, playgrounds and recreational facilities were high on their list of priorities (Figure 22, page 36). For example, one adult commented on the need for:



More facilities for youth. A skatepark in Northside/Stuart/Braitling would be helpful. A water park with water slides that is clean and well-equipped.

### Parks and recreation facilities

Parks and recreational facilities provide many benefits for communities. Beyond health and physical activity outcomes, other benefits such as enhanced sense of community and a place for family togetherness are possible (Mullenbach et al., 2018). They are open spaces for anyone, where people can feel safe to meet, engage with each other, and participate together. For individuals there are psychological and physical health benefits that can come from using parks or even living near parks (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005).

Children surveyed placed particular emphasis on places like the town pool, the skate park, bowling and more generally the natural environment.



I love the desert. Bush walks are the best! There's so many mountains to climb! One more thing, it's the best!

One of the top priorities for change for many children and young people was a water park with pools and a beach (Figure 16, page 31). This was raised in various ways, sometimes in conjunction with other facilities, by more than 120 out of the 470 respondents to the child and youth survey.

 I want a cool waterpark! We should have a place like in Darwin where there's the waterpark, park, skate park and basketball courts! My friend and cousins would be there all the time.

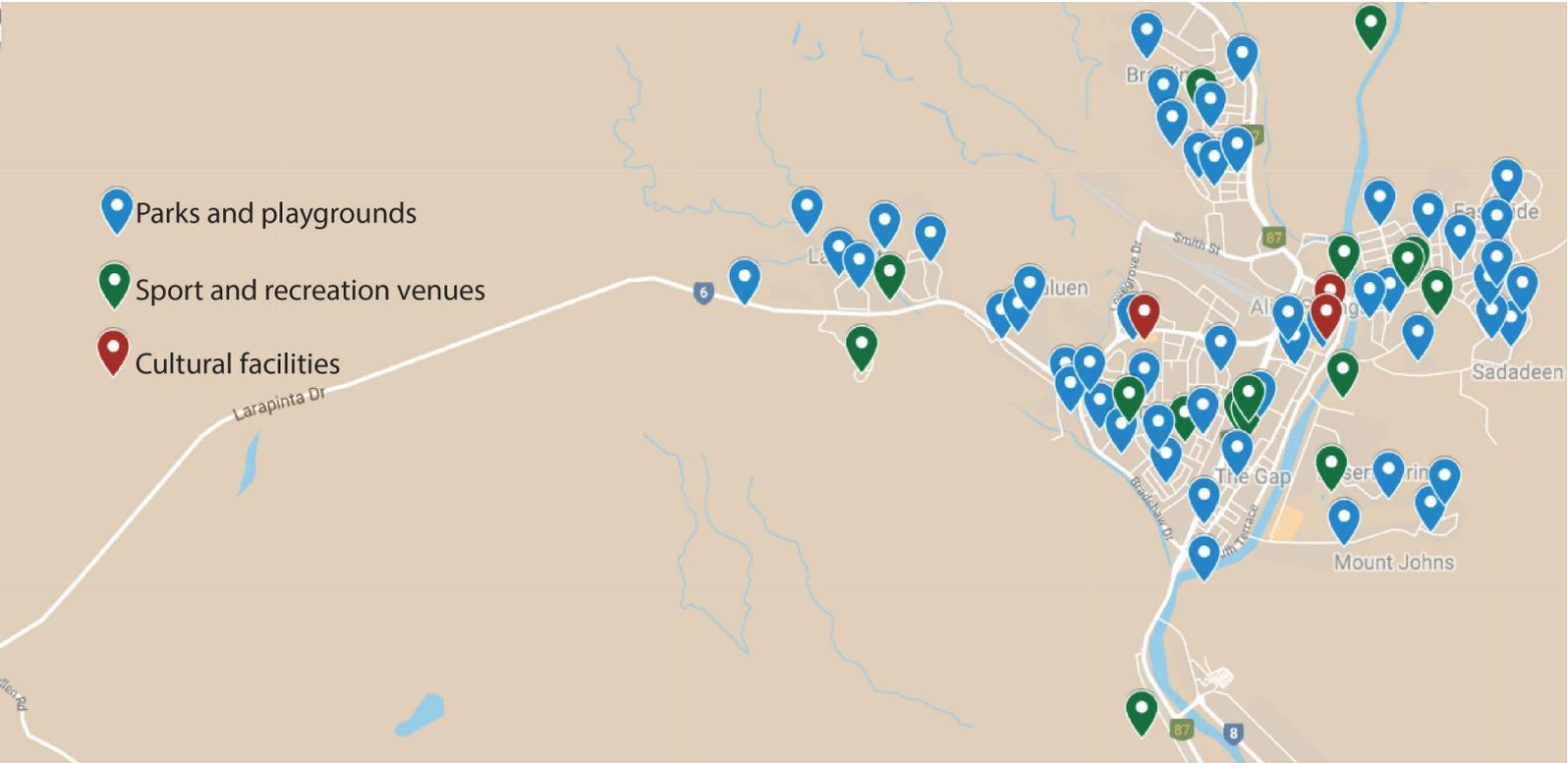
Playgrounds were also on young people's wish lists for change (Figure 16, page 31).

 More play grounds with water and shade



The map at Figure 55 shows the location of more than 70 parks, playgrounds, sporting venues and cultural facilities. There are 47 parks in Alice Springs with play equipment. Only a small number have a fence that separates the playground from the street. Many have shaded areas, but some are just open spaces with no equipment, no shade, and no water. Note though, that the parks serve different purposes. Some are clearly for children to play in, others for exercise or dog-walking, while others form part of a cycle way. The map is based on information available from the Alice Springs Town Council (Alice Springs Town Council, 2019a). The facilities at each site vary. An interactive version of the map can be found on a [Google Map](#)<sup>6</sup>. Most parks are not fenced. Also, there are some parks and playgrounds in Town Camps, Amoonguna and the rural locations south of The Gap (not included in the map).

Figure 55. Parks and playgrounds, sport and recreation venues and cultural facilities in Alice Springs, as at March 2019



Source information for map: (Alice Springs Town Council, 2019a)

<sup>6</sup> <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1XTBGb5NqrsXbv27uqYYDJEknNOiOvTpQ&usp=sharing>  
 Google Map includes photographs of most parks

## Children can safely voice their views and feel heard

It is important that children and young people are listened to, are supported in expressing their views, that their views are taken into account and they are involved in decision-making processes that affect them. 'Only through direct participation can children develop a genuine appreciation of democracy and a sense of their own competence and responsibility to participate' (Hart, 2013).



It is difficult to measure the extent to which children and young people are involved in these processes. Six adults surveyed talked about the need for children to have voice and be heard. For example, an aspirational hope from an adult encapsulates this sentiment:



*For all children to love themselves, have a strong sense of their own worth and be connected to their own spirit and have a voice.*

Another expressed a more all-encompassing aspiration for children and young people:



*To lead healthy lives, be involved in the community, to have career and life aspirations and be able to follow them, to have a voice in the community, to be safe, to be treated with equality, to live in a sustainable way and empowered with knowledge and resources.*

## Community provide opportunities to access and participate in activities

Alice Springs provides a variety of low-cost and free community activities and events. Some of the community did not perceive this to be the case. Some children and young people made particular comment about the costs of entry for the town pool and the bowling and some adults surveyed, commented generally about the cost of activities:



*Activities are becoming more costly to all involved.*



*A lack of suitable free activities, safe spaces for young people to play and the disconnectedness of the community holding young people back from feeling connected*

While these views were expressed by a minority, it is important to recognise that not all parents have the financial resources to be able to allow their children to participate in the full range of recreational activities they would like to.

Many adults spoke of the need to work together to address the needs of young people (Figure 22, page 36).

 Community supported to be heard. All the community involved in determining what they need.

 Collaborative work from agencies and families

These comments point to the need for community-led responses rather than interventions that come from government, which are led from the ‘top down’. The comment here also refers to process-driven responses, rather than those that are just about outputs or outcomes. The way change is created is often more important than the change itself.

**Participation in sport (0-12 years)**

While the child and youth survey clearly showed how popular sport and recreation activities are in Alice Springs, how many children are actively involved in sporting clubs is unclear. There are over 40 sporting and recreational organisations identified on the Alice Springs Town Council Website (Alice Springs Town Council, 2019b). Comments from children in this section are not restricted to those under 13 years. A study by Telford et al. (2016) confirms that ‘Australian youth taking part in club sports are more active, fitter and have less body fat than non-participants’ (p. 406). Other studies show that participation in sporting clubs at age 12 is associated with lower obesity (Basterfield et al., 2015).



There were many comments in the survey about sport participation, but there is no data that identifies how many children participate in what kind of sporting activities, And while many people in surveys talked about participation in sport, quite a few also said there is not enough for young people to do (Figure 15).

 Holidays are boring that’s why we leave. Need more places for other hobbies like art, singing, acting, dancing.

Sometimes this was associated with antisocial behaviours and a worry from parents that if they let their children go out alone, they might get into trouble.



I don't like seeing drunken people in the streets or fighting up town!  
There's not a lot of fun things to do!

However, sport was seen as a major benefit for young people, particularly young males (Figure 14). For some sport and recreation was more individual.



I can quad bike in the bushes & that is why I like Alice Springs.

For others, the benefits of sport and recreation were about being part of a team or club.



Clubs like scouts and basketball.



You can play good sports e.g. netball, football. The YMCA is so good.

### Youth volunteering

Volunteering is seen as a positive sign of civic participation, social capital and social inclusion (Bates \* & Davis, 2004; Speevak-Sladowski et al., 2013). Strong social capital and cohesion is a good foundation on which to build a strong community. Table 26 shows that the proportion of young people aged 15 to 19 who volunteer in Alice Springs (22.4 per cent) compares favourably with both the Northern Territory (14.9 per cent) and Australia (20.1 per cent). No one in either of the surveys talked about youth volunteering, though some adults suggested there was a need for more volunteers in general.



There are lots of activities and sports available. Unfortunately lack of volunteers and qualified coaches can limit things.

The table also shows youth engagement in work or education. While the data for volunteering compares favourably to Australia, there are proportionally fewer young people engaged in either work or education.

Table 26. Youth volunteering and young people earning or learning (2016)

	Alice Springs	Northern Territory	Australia
15-19 year olds who volunteer %	22.4	14.9	20.1
15-24 year olds earning or learning	75.5	65.4	84.3

Source: (ABS, 2018d; Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

## **Interpreting the data**

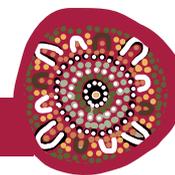
While there is little numerical data provided in this Wellbeing Area, the evidence from surveys provides points to high levels of participation in sport and recreation activities—and there are strong physical health and social benefits associated with participation. Families in Alice Springs value the parks, playgrounds and sporting facilities they have and young people say they enjoy sport and the outdoor environment of Alice Springs. There are however expectations of more. For young people, this included a water park. Adults were keen to see more parks, playgrounds and facilities for young people.

The challenge is to bring the whole community together to decide how these expectations are turned into reality. Bringing children's voices in a participative way is also worth pursuing.





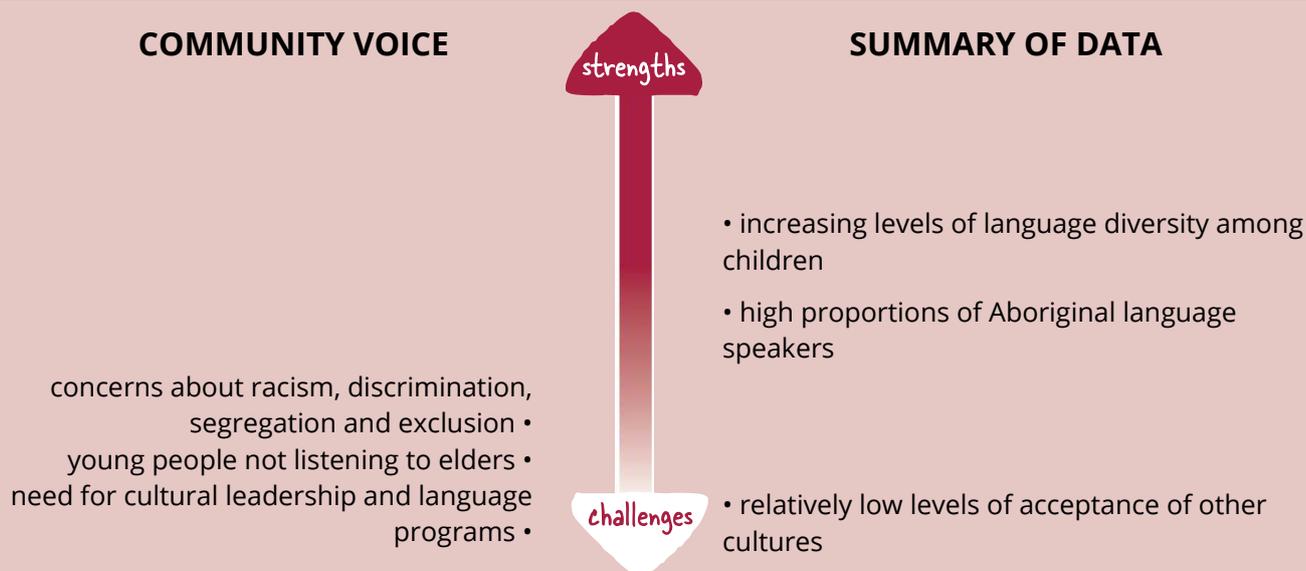
## POSITIVE SENSE OF IDENTITY AND CULTURE



It is an expression of individuality and uniqueness; knowing where you come from, where you are, where you belong, that you are valued and have the capacity to choose where you're going. Culture is about being part of a way of life – ideas, values, customs and behaviour.

### Community aspiration

*For people to be respectful, living in harmony*



### How are we doing?

As young people grow up they gradually develop character and identity. Adolescence is a particularly turbulent time for many young people as they grapple with who they are and where they belong culturally. Their values and beliefs are shaped as they learn to navigate different ideas and different ways of being in the world. Many adults in the survey wanted to see young people growing up respectful of all people, living in harmony with others regardless of culture.

Alice Springs is increasingly becoming a culturally and linguistically diverse place. The strength of Aboriginal languages spoken across the town is something to be celebrated. However, the survey data shows many people were concerned about racism, and external data shows relatively low levels of acceptance of those with different cultural backgrounds.

### Key indicators

- Acceptance of other cultures
- Aboriginal languages spoken
- Languages other than English spoken at home
- Organisations that support language and culture

## Children have a sense of belonging to people, place and culture

Children and young people did not have a lot to say about what they thought was 'good' in relation to language, culture and identity. Some were able to identify issues they felt were not right. For some, this was reflected in statements about racism and discrimination, but these comments were seldom voiced.

### Acceptance of other cultures

One of the key aspirations of adults surveyed was for the community to be respectful, living in harmony (Figure 18, page 34).

 Everyone working together and respecting each other, recognising that everyone has different values. Acknowledging that this is Arrernte country and bringing Traditional Owners in to all of the town planning and decision-making meetings

But this hope, shared by many in Alice Springs, is not always realised. Comments from survey participants about racism and discrimination were fairly common, though mostly from adults (Figure 20, page 35), often with different descriptors:

 Deeply entrenched racism and paternalism.

 Structural oppression. Intergenerational trauma, dispossession. Structured racism.

 Prejudice e.g. Indigenous not considered for jobs.

 The great divide .... Racial discrimination in schools is an issue as [it] promotes segregation.

One young person commented:

 People are too racist in Alice.

It should be noted that there were very few comments from survey respondents that could be described as 'racist' on their own. However, there were many comments, particularly from adults that demonstrated limited understanding about how some response to problems (such as tough on crime, punitive approaches) would negatively impact on some groups in the community. As if in recognition of this, there were calls from other adults for community education programs to provide better services for young people at risk:

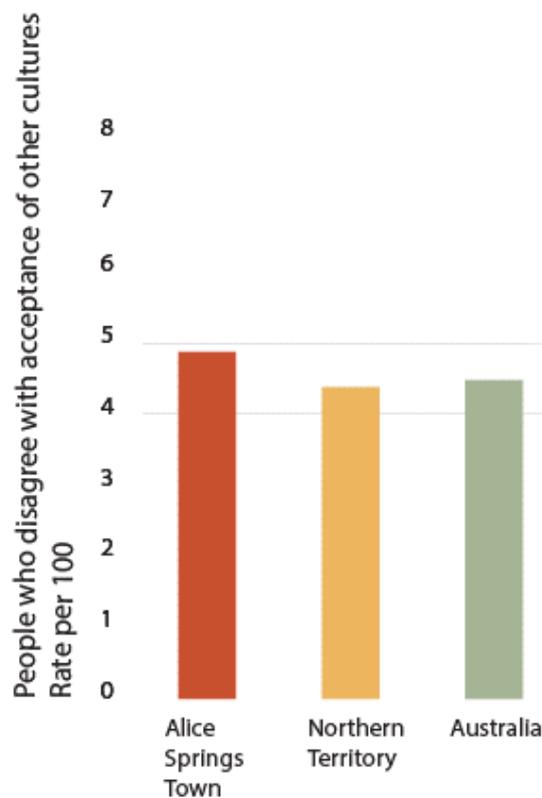
 A community education program to educate members of the community about trauma informed care and practice, so that community members can work together to help the youth rather than just complain about them.

Similarly, as noted in the Actively Participating Wellbeing Area (See page 108), there were calls for more collaborative approaches, community-led responses and greater consultation with the whole community. There were also pleas for greater understanding:

 More awareness of how tough life can be for young people in Alice Springs who haven't had a good start in life. There are a lot of issues for young Indigenous people. A lot of people don't have a safe place to sleep at night, people seem to fall over themselves to remember any hard times that have befallen white Australia and yet Aboriginal people have suffered all manner of terrible things... If someone feels strongly about the mistreatment of an Aboriginal youth they are labelled a bleeding heart. We need to make Alice Springs a great place for its local children first and foremost and then everything else will follow...

While the diversity of Alice Springs is a strength, the results of the adult survey however suggest that some people find that diversity challenging. Communities with greater acceptance of other cultures are more cohesive and harmonious (Cantle, 2005). Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics General Social Survey suggest that proportionally slightly more people in Alice Springs have difficulty accepting other cultures. The differences are however very small when compared to the Northern Territory and Australia. Racism and discriminatory attitudes get in the way of hopes and dreams (Figure 20, page 35).

Figure 56. People who disagree with acceptance of other cultures, Alice Springs compared to Northern Territory and Australia (2014)



Source: (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2019)

## The community supports children to learn and use their language

There are many languages spoken at home in Alice Springs, but it is difficult to capture how the community supports children to learn and use their language. Most schools offer a range of language learning opportunities, though there were concerns about local Indigenous languages not being taught in schools among some adults.

 There is no one teaching them language of their tribe at school.

Another local Aboriginal person stated that it was important:

 to have our culture recognised in the education system. Teach both our Indigenous and non-Indigenous kids about the beauty of our history and language.



While the importance of language support is widely recognised, there is no definitive picture of the organisations in Alice Springs that do support use of first languages or maintenance of heritage languages.

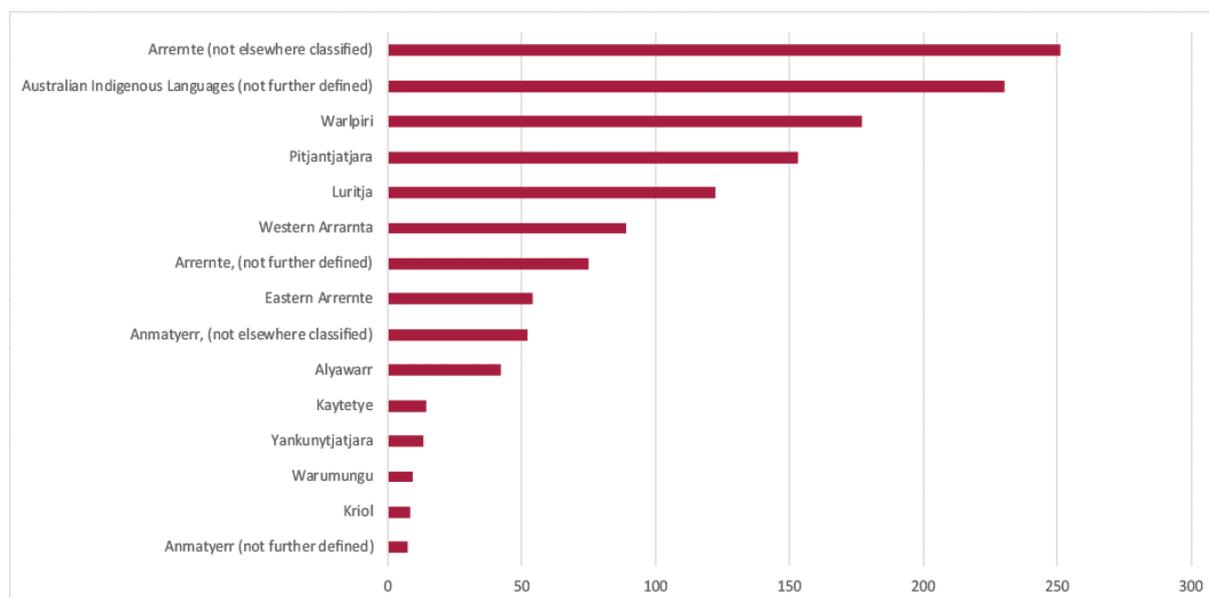
## Aboriginal languages spoken

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in particular, the need to strengthen cultural leadership came through strongly in the survey (Figure 22, page 36 and Figure 23, page 37), and particularly among Town Camp residents. Educational programs that strengthen language and ties to local culture were also sought. Despite the diversity of cultures and languages other than English or Australian Indigenous languages, there were few comments in the surveys about immigrants, their culture or their languages.

 [We need] local school holiday programs, free access to the town pool, bush trips to learn about culture, tucker and hunting. Language to remain strong in communities. Language lessons at school run by parents and caregivers as paid employment. More community involvement in schools.

According to the 2016 Census, 1354 people in Alice Springs spoke an Australian Indigenous language. The 15 most frequently spoken languages are shown below in Figure 57.

Figure 57. Numbers of Indigenous language speakers, Alice Springs (2016)



Source: (ABS, 2018d)

## Languages other than English spoken at home

After Aboriginal languages, the most commonly spoken languages other than English are southern Asian and south-east Asian languages. The 23 languages shown at Figure 58 make up the bulk of non-Australian languages other than English spoken at home in Alice Springs. About one in 10 Alice Springs residents speak one of these languages.

Figure 58. Map of 23 non-Australian languages other than English spoken at home in Alice Springs



Source: Information from ABS Census (ABS, 2018d)

Figure 59 shows the proportion of different groups in Alice Springs that speak either an Australian Indigenous language or a language other than English. Comparisons with the Northern Territory and Australia are also shown. About one-third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Alice Springs speak a traditional Australian Indigenous language or creole at home. For the Australian population, only 0.3 per cent speak an Aboriginal language, and among Aboriginal people, only one-tenth speak an Aboriginal language at home.

Figure 59. Languages other than English spoken at home, Alice Springs compared with the Northern Territory and Australia (2016)



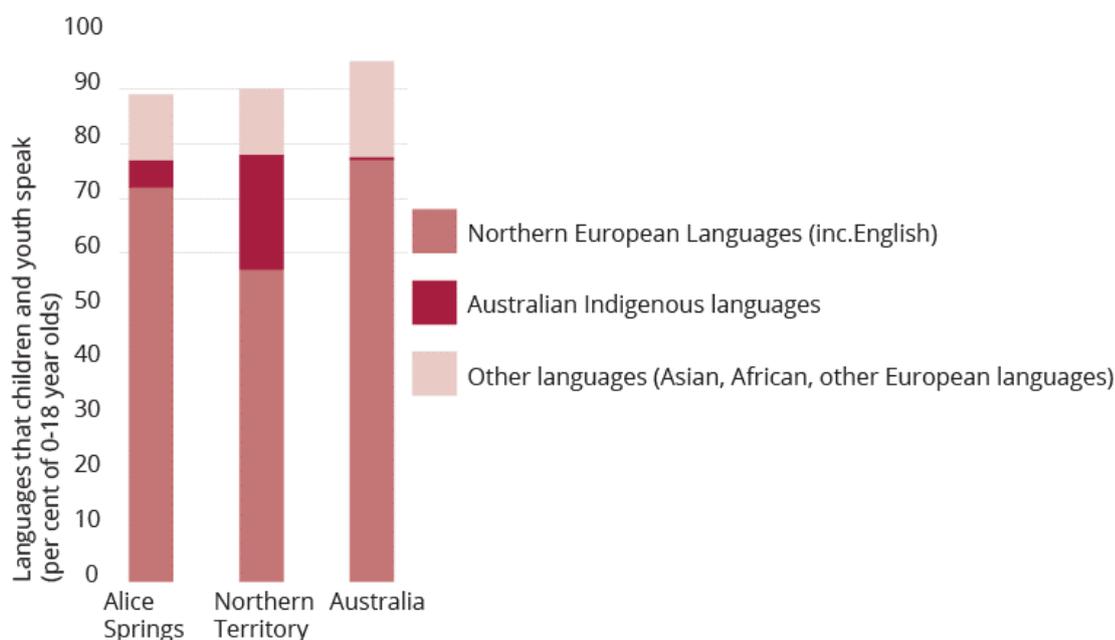
Source: (ABS, 2018d)



## Languages spoken by children and young people

It was noted earlier that about 20 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children in Alice Springs speak an Indigenous language at home. This translates to about five per cent of the total population, much less than for the Northern Territory, but many times more than for Australia (see Figure 60). The proportion of those children who speak another language other than English at home is comparable with the Northern Territory and slightly less than for Australia. Many adults speak more than one language, but it is difficult to know if that multilingualism is being passed on to their children.

Figure 60. Languages<sup>7</sup> spoken by children and young people, Alice Springs compared with Australia and the Northern Territory (2016)



Source: (ABS, 2018d)

## Organisations that support language and culture

There are organisations that support language and culture in Alice Springs, but there is no data about how many or what support they offer. Young people we surveyed did not discuss language and culture. Adults, on the other hand, spoke a lot about language and culture as can be seen from their comments in earlier sections of this Wellbeing Area, but they seldom referred to specific organisations that supported language and cultural maintenance. Some exceptions were Akeyulerre and Children's Ground. There were no



references in the survey data to organisations that support migrants who speak languages other than English either. Overall there is currently a data gap in this area.

<sup>7</sup> Bars do not add to 100 per cent because of those whose language spoken was not stated

## **Interpreting the data**

The data available on the Positive Sense of Identity and Culture Wellbeing Area is limited. Alice Springs is a diverse community made up of people from around the world and also local Aboriginal people. This diversity creates a richness that makes Alice Springs a unique place. It also creates tension so that the aspiration 'for people to be respectful, living in harmony' is not always achieved.

The concerns that many people have about the need for respectful relationships, and their worries about racism and discrimination are at times disturbing. They demand a response from the community. There are organisations and people doing great work in the community to support language and culture, but it is difficult to get an accurate picture of who is doing what with whom. There is more work to do collectively as service providers and a community to ensure that these aspirations are met.



## SUMMARY, APPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This Technical Report has provided a comprehensive summary of what people think about the aspirations and expectations for change as they impact children and young people in Alice Springs. The survey of 605 adults and 470 children yielded strong findings about what the strengths and challenges are for children and young people in Alice Springs, and what they think the ways forward should be. The analysis of quantitative data from external data sources with more than 60 indicators considered, creates another picture of how Alice Springs young people and children are faring. While there are data gaps, there is more than enough information in this Technical Report to map out a pathway to address the challenges and to develop strategies and policies that could better meet the needs of children and young people in Alice Springs. The key findings summarised under each of the six Wellbeing Areas are discussed below.

### **Loved and safe**

The strongest aspiration that emerged from the Adult survey was for children to be safe and free. For children the greatest benefit of living in Alice Springs was 'friends and family'. These perceptions point to the need for young people to grow up in loving, caring and safe families. However, the greatest challenges people saw were in the area of safety. Concerns about violence and crime are mirrored in external data from police about domestic violence, alcohol related assaults and property crime. Further, data obtained from Territory Families show high levels of child protection notifications, substantiations and out of home care cases.

### **Essential needs are met**

If young peoples' needs are to be met, parents and carers must have the resources to be able to respond. The data considered in the Essential Needs area point to employment and income as the primary vehicles for meeting basic needs such as food, housing and transport. Alice Springs is recognised by many adults and young people as a place of opportunity. But this opportunity is not equally spread across the whole community. People living in Town Camps are most likely to miss out. Relatively high paying jobs are often aligned to professionals who come to Alice Springs to work in health, education and community support. High levels of welfare dependence in other parts of the community mean that for some parts of the community, putting food on the table for children can be a challenge.

### **Healthy**

People in the surveys hardly mentioned health as an issue or concern. This is perhaps surprising but perhaps reflects the more visible concerns about safety and essential needs. Nevertheless, there are serious health issues that are evident from an examination of the external data sources. Some of the standout concerns relate to infant mortality (twice the national average) and rates of smoking during pregnancy (nearly twice the national average). Other indicators are hidden from public view. For example, while there are media reports about youth suicide there is no data publicly available on this. Another data gap is in the reporting of alcohol related diseases such as FASD.

## **Engaged in learning**

Most people in the surveys recognised the importance and benefits of a good education. Many young people and children saw schooling as a positive part of life in Alice Springs. Yet there are several indicators that point to educational concerns for children and adults in Alice Springs. School attendance rates tend to be lower than for comparable areas of the Northern Territory; NAPLAN scores are also lower and Year 12 completion rates lag well behind Australia, and this is more marked among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. But there are signs of improvement in some of the early years AEDC data, particularly for communication skills and language and cognitive skills. Digital inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households, particularly in Town Camps, remains an issue. Many adults surveyed saw education as a vehicle for overcoming the problems they saw for young people and children in Alice Springs.

## **Actively participating**

Many adults and young people commented favourably on their involvement in sport and recreational activities. Several saw the physical environment as an asset for the town. There was strong demand for more parks, recreational facilities and youth activities, and among young people many wanted to see a free water park built. While these positive comments suggest sport and recreation as a strength to build on, no data is available to show how many children are actively involved in a sporting club or recreational organisation. It is also difficult to assess how young people are engaged in civic processes and whether their voices are heard.

## **Positive sense of identity and culture**

Alice Springs is an ethnically and culturally diverse community with high proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and many immigrants. One in 10 people in Alice Springs speak a non-Australian language other than English. About one-third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people speak an Indigenous language or creole at home. The diversity creates a rich cultural fabric, but it also generates tension, with proportionally more Alice Springs residents being intolerant of other cultures than other Australians.

## **Responding to the data**

The purpose of this final section is not to be prescriptive about the kinds of approaches that should be used in response to the data, but rather to lay out some principles that should be considered before actions are decided upon.

### **Ethical decision making**

Ethics is about what is morally and justifiably 'good and right' (Godwin, 2009) or 'Put simply, ethics is about what we ought to do or ought not to do' (Boston et al., 2010, p. 1). Decisions based on ethical practice will minimise the risk of harm, and in the case of interventions designed to address concerns raised by the data, it is of prime concern that risks for the subjects of an intervention or strategy be minimised. Ethical decisions will also focus on justice and remedying injustice. They will promote human dignity (Newton, 2014). Therefore, interventions designed for vulnerable people should benefit

vulnerable minorities; they will respect their rights, do no harm and be morally justifiable to those vulnerable people. The rights of the majority, while important, may not be of as much concern as the rights of the vulnerable minority.

### **Recognising complexity**

It can be tempting to see some of the challenges that are laid out in this Technical Report as fairly simple. For example, on issues of crime and violence, a simple solution might be to remove offenders (for example through the justice system). But acts of crime and violence are affected by a range of other factors such as historical trauma and racism. While stopping racism may not solve the problem of violence, it takes away one of the determinants. Interventions that address both violence and racism become a lot more complicated and require involvement of more stakeholders with responsibility for action resting on the whole community, not just police and the justice system. Many people in the survey recognised the complexity of the Alice Springs context and suggested collaborative approaches that would bring the whole community together to solve problems. Others saw the problems as more simple (not complex). Those who believe in the former approach may need to persuade the latter group that their approach is justified.

### **Power and control**

There is no doubt that many of the issues uncovered in the survey are highly political. Garnering political support for ethical responses may be challenging in the face of elections. Pushback against ethical responses will probably come from those who want to retain power and control (or at least be seen to be). For non-government organisations the temptation may be to 'go with the money' (offer services that align with policy directions and program funding) but this approach may not be in the best interests of vulnerable people who are subject to an intervention. In designing a response to the issues raised here, the community should be asking 'whose interests will be best served?'. Are human rights at risk? Where the local community—particularly elders or leaders within the community—owns the intervention it will be more likely to be accepted by the target group. This of course is why Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations are better placed to work with Aboriginal communities than other non-government organisations.

### **Cultural reflexivity**

In many cases, professionals offering services to vulnerable people will not share the same cultural values of ethnic background as those they are serving. The challenge for those designing strategies is listen deeply and attempt to understand the values, ways of being and ways of knowing that the potential client group comes from.

## **Strength-based approaches**

In principle, the actions that arise from the data presented here should acknowledge the inherent strengths and capabilities that empowered individuals can use to address issues of concern to them. However, while acknowledging this, it is important to also recognise that systemic and structural issues may well act as barriers to prevent individuals from doing what they otherwise could do to address their concerns. Actions therefore should have a dual focus on empowering individuals and working for structural change where needed.

## **Collaborative effort**

True collaborative effort requires that partners have a shared goal, that they trust each other, communicate with each other and are committed to a course of action. The outcomes of collaborative effort ought to be better than the sum of the individual effort. This will come about because of the knowledge shared among partners, the coordination of services (as opposed to siloing), and the more efficient use of resources. Collaborative work can be led by a coordinating partner. The Child Friendly Alice team is in a strong position to coordinate a response to the data by building on the collective effort used to create the Community Profile and this Report.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

An important element of any response involving data is to ensure that there is a monitoring and evaluation framework in place that guides the assessment and review of interventions and strategies. The framework will set out how evaluation will be conducted, who is responsible for what, what the measures of success look like, and propose theories of change. It is best developed in partnership with a professional and independent evaluator, though a non-government organisation with evaluation expertise could coordinate this.

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## APPENDIX 1—ADDITIONAL TABLES

### Adult survey responses

Table 27. Hopes and dreams categorised by gender, number of responses (multiple responses allowed)

Hopes and dreams categorised	Male	Female	Not stated/ nonbinary	Total
Safe and free	25	145	6	176
Good education	41	124	6	171
Safe spaces and environment	17	69	4	90
Happy and healthy lives	16	68	4	88
Employment and career opportunity	10	53	5	68
Loved and cared for	9	48	1	58
Respectful, living in harmony	8	46	3	57
Strong families and social networks	12	38	2	52
Reach potential, achieve goals, fulfil	8	35	6	49
More activities for youth	5	39	0	44

Table 28. Top 10 responses for Town Camp residents' hopes and dreams

	Amoonguna	Not stated	Suburb	Town Camps
Good education	2	21	108	40
Employment and career opportunity	2	9	30	27
Cultural knowledge and pride	4	2	10	17
Playgroups in town camps	0	0	2	17
Strong families and social networks	0	6	30	15
Safe and free	0	14	149	13
Happy and healthy lives	0	11	66	11
More activities for youth	0	5	32	7
Safe spaces and environment	3	10	71	7
Build a better world, community	0	2	8	6

Table 29. Top 10 responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents' hopes and dreams

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Non-Indigenous	Not stated or not clear
Good education	71	88	13
Employment and career opportunity	39	21	8
Safe and free	39	125	13
Strong families and social networks	27	23	2
Cultural knowledge and pride	23	8	2
Happy and healthy lives	20	59	9
More activities for youth	19	21	4
Safe spaces and environment	18	64	9
Playgroups in town camps	17	2	0
Build a better world, community	13	4	0

Table 30. Top 10 hopes and dreams by age

Theme								
	18 - 25 years	26 - 30 years	31 - 40 years	41 - 50 years	51 - 60 years	61 - 70 years	Not stated	Over 70 years
Safe and free	8	21	54	43	31	12	4	4
Good education	10	18	46	40	28	13	8	9
Safe spaces and environment	5	8	34	25	11	1	6	1
Happy and healthy lives	6	8	24	22	12	7	4	5
Employment and career opportunity	7	11	8	22	10	5	3	2
Loved and cared for	3	10	11	17	9	5	2	1
Respectful, living in harmony	2	4	20	11	12	1	4	4
Strong families and social networks	3	9	15	11	9	1	3	1
Reach potential, achieve goals, fulfil dreams	8	3	14	10	6	3	5	0
More activities for youth	0	11	15	12	4	0	2	0

## CHILD FRIENDLY ALICE TECHNICAL REPORT

Table 31. What stops hopes and dreams happening, by gender, top 10 responses

Theme	Male	Female	Not stated	Nonbinary	Total
Parenting and family issues	22	54	4	0	80
Drug and alcohol abuse	16	51	1	0	68
Crime, vandalism, property damage issues	8	52	1	1	62
Education issues	11	46	3	0	60
Violence, jealousy, intimidation, bullying, teasing and fighting	3	49	2	0	54
Racism and discrimination, segregation and exclusion	6	41	2	0	49
Resourcing and funding issues	10	36	0	0	46
Lack of youth, child and family activities and events	8	36	1	0	45
Lack of support for children and families	9	33	1	0	43
Antisocial behaviour and gangs	8	26	4	0	38

Table 32. What stops hopes and dreams happening, top 10 responses for Town Camp residents

Theme	Amoonguna	Not stated	Suburb	Town Camp
Transport issues	0	0	4	20
Education issues	2	9	34	16
Drug and alcohol abuse	0	9	45	13
Parenting and family issues	0	12	56	12
Lack of youth, child and family activities and events	0	5	29	11
Employment and work issues	2	1	10	10
Government, systemic policy and program issues	1	5	16	10
Lack of support for children and families	0	4	33	8
Violence, jealousy, intimidation, bullying, teasing and fighting	0	9	36	8
Not listening to elders	0	0	2	6

Table 33. What stops hopes and dreams happening, top 10 responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents

Theme	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Non-Indigenous	Not stated or not clear
Education issues	26	29	6
Drug and alcohol abuse	23	39	6
Parenting and family issues	23	49	8
Lack of youth, child and family activities and events	22	21	2
Transport issues	22	2	0
Lack of support for children and families	18	26	1
Government, systemic policy and program issues	16	13	3
Employment and work issues	14	5	4
Violence, jealousy, intimidation, bullying, teasing and fighting	14	34	6
Racism and discrimination, segregation and exclusion	11	35	4

Table 34. What stops hopes and dreams happening, by age group, top 10 responses

Theme	18 - 25 years	26 - 30 years	31 - 40 years	41 - 50 years	51 - 60 years	61 - 70 years	Not stated	Over 70 years
Parenting and family issues	4	5	22	19	18	7	2	3
Drug and alcohol abuse	4	5	17	22	13	5	1	1
Crime, vandalism, property damage issues	1	8	23	17	10	0	1	1
Education issues	3	13	13	15	7	3	3	4
Violence, jealousy, intimidation, bullying, teasing and fighting	4	4	12	18	11	2	3	0
Racism and discrimination, segregation and exclusion	1	8	14	11	6	7	3	0
Resourcing and funding issues	3	5	16	12	6	3	0	2
Lack of support for children and families	3	12	14	6	6	2	1	1
Lack of youth, child and family activities and events	6	9	16	8	4	0	2	0
Antisocial behaviour and gangs	0	5	13	9	7	3	2	0

## CHILD FRIENDLY ALICE TECHNICAL REPORT

Table 35. What needs to change, top 10 responses by gender

Theme	Male	Female	Not stated	Nonbinary	Total
Better education and training	9	60	3	0	72
Collaborative and coordinated community led approaches	12	53	1	1	67
More family, parent and youth support	9	44	0	0	53
Parent responsibility and accountability for looking after children	8	34	3	0	45
More youth and children family activities and programs	9	25	2	1	37
Fewer alcohol outlets, less alcohol, more restrictions	4	25	0	0	29
More parks and playgrounds and facilities	4	22	3	0	29
More punitive approaches, tough on crime	6	21	2	0	29
Law and justice responses	4	20	2	0	26
Cultural leadership, education and language programs	3	20	1	0	24

Table 36. What needs to change, top 10 responses for Town Camp residents

Theme	Amoonguna	Not stated	Suburb	Town Camp
Cultural leadership, education and language programs	2	1	6	15
Better education and training	0	8	54	11
Jobs	1	0	4	11
Better transport	2	0	7	9
Send bush visitors home	0	0	2	9
More family, parent and youth support	2	4	39	8
Improve school attendance and retention	1	5	8	7
Infrastructure investment	0	0	6	7
More youth and children family activities and programs	3	9	19	6
Free pool days/times	0	0	3	5

Table 37. What needs to change, top 10 responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents

Theme	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Non-Indigenous	Not stated or not clear
Better education and training	22	48	3
More family, parent and youth support	21	31	1
Cultural leadership, education and language programs	18	5	1
Collaborative and coordinated community led approaches	17	42	9
More youth and children family activities and programs	16	18	3
Jobs	15	1	1
Better transport	11	6	1
Send bush visitors home	11	0	0
Improve school attendance and retention	9	10	2
Fewer alcohol outlets, less alcohol, more restrictions	8	18	3

Table 38. What needs to change, top 10 responses by age

Theme	18 - 25 years	26 - 30 years	31 - 40 years	41 - 50 years	51 - 60 years	61 - 70 years	Not stated	Over 70 years
Better education and training	5	7	16	22	13	6	2	2
Collaborative and coordinated community led approaches	4	9	16	18	12	4	2	3
More family, parent and youth support	2	7	14	15	8	3	3	1
Parent responsibility and accountability for looking after children	0	7	9	16	8	3	2	0
More youth and children family activities and programs	4	6	11	6	3	2	5	0
More punitive approaches, tough on crime	1	1	11	9	3	2	2	1
Fewer alcohol outlets, less alcohol, more restrictions	2	2	5	12	5	2	1	0
More parks and playgrounds and facilities	0	4	14	7	0	2	1	1
Law and justice responses	0	1	13	5	4	2	1	0
Cultural leadership, education and language programs	0	5	4	4	8	0	3	0

## Children and young people responses

Table 39. What's good about Alice Springs, top 10 responses by gender

Theme	Male	Female	Not stated	Total
Friends and family	20	50	12	82
Small town	25	34	11	70
Pool	13	25	23	61
Environment and landscape	12	26	13	51
School and teachers	17	21	12	50
Sport	24	17	5	46
Shops	10	22	6	38
Maccas KFC Hungry Jacks, Ice cream, fast food	14	9	13	36
Climate and weather	9	15	10	34
Places to go, things to see	12	10	6	28

Table 40. What's good about Alice Springs, top 10 responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents

Theme	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Non-Indigenous	Not stated or not clear
Friends and family	43	13	26
Sport	18	17	11
Pool	17	7	37
Small town	17	28	25
School and teachers	16	11	23
Shops	13	15	10
Environment and landscape	12	16	23
Maccas KFC Hungry Jacks Ice cream, food	12	6	18
Camping, going out bush	7	8	5
Festivals and events	7	6	10

Table 41. What's good about Alice Springs, top 10 responses by age

Theme	6 - 8 years	9 - 12 years	3 - 5 years	13 - 15 years	Not stated	16 - 17 years	Total
Friends and family	7	30	2	26	7	10	82
Small town	0	28	1	21	3	17	70
Pool	26	23	4	3	3	2	61
Environment and landscape	10	27	0	10	1	3	51
School and teachers	13	24	1	4	3	5	50
Sport	4	23	2	11	0	6	46
Shops	9	17	2	4	2	4	38
Maccas KFC Hungry Jacks Ice cream, fast food	13	13	1	3	2	4	36
Climate and weather	6	16	0	8	1	3	34
Places to go, things to see	7	15	2	2	0	2	28

Table 42, What's not good about Alice Springs, top 10 responses by gender

Theme	Male	Female	Not stated	Total
Weather and climate	28	43	27	98
Drinking drugs and fighting, violence and antisocial behaviour	40	38	12	90
Crime	23	37	7	67
Nothing to do	17	35	5	57
Dirty, rubbish	10	14	4	28
Not enough shops	3	13	6	22
Kids walking round at night	8	9	0	17
No theme or water parks	2	11	3	16
Bushfires	4	8	0	12
Cost of living issues	6	3	3	12

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Table 43. What's not good about Alice Springs, top 10 responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents

Theme	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Non-Indigenous	Not stated or not clear
<b>Drinking drugs and fighting, violence and antisocial behaviour</b>	37	31	22
<b>Crime</b>	25	25	17
<b>Nothing to do</b>	20	22	15
<b>Weather and climate</b>	19	31	48
<b>Kids walking round at night</b>	14	1	2
<b>Dirty, rubbish</b>	11	5	12
<b>Bushfires</b>	6	4	2
<b>No theme or water parks</b>	5	3	8
<b>Nothing</b>	5	1	4
<b>Not enough security</b>	4	5	1

Table 44. What's not good about Alice Springs, top 10 responses by age

Theme	6 - 8 years	9 - 12 years	3 - 5 years	13 - 15 years	Not stated	16 - 17 years	Total
<b>Weather and climate</b>	28	36	3	17	10	3	97
<b>Drinking drugs and fighting, violence and antisocial behaviour</b>	10	43	4	20	2	8	87
<b>Crime</b>	4	25	0	19	3	16	67
<b>Nothing to do</b>	3	24	0	17	0	13	57
<b>Dirty, rubbish</b>	1	17	1	4	1	4	28
<b>Not enough shops</b>	7	3	0	7	0	5	22
<b>Kids walking round at night</b>	0	5	0	6	0	6	17
<b>No theme or water parks</b>	8	6	0	1	1	0	16
<b>Bushfires</b>	1	11	0	0	0	0	12
<b>Cost of living issues</b>	2	3	0	2	0	5	12

Table 45, What needs to change, top 10 responses by gender

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Not stated</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Water park, pools + beach</b>	27	76	21	124
<b>Sport and recreation</b>	31	38	18	87
<b>Shops and shopping centres</b>	7	31	9	47
<b>More activities and services</b>	12	22	6	40
<b>Schools and education options</b>	5	10	9	24
<b>Less crime</b>	11	8	2	21
<b>Parks and playgrounds</b>	7	7	5	19
<b>Safe spaces and security</b>	10	6	3	19
<b>Greening and beautification</b>	3	12	3	18
<b>Housing</b>	6	8	3	17

Table 46. What needs to change, top 10 responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</b>	<b>Non-Indigenous</b>	<b>Not stated or not clear</b>
<b>Water park, pools + beach</b>	39	36	49
<b>Sport and recreation</b>	30	29	28
<b>Shops and shopping centres</b>	16	17	14
<b>More activities and services</b>	14	14	12
<b>Less crime</b>	11	5	5
<b>Parks and playgrounds</b>	9	3	7
<b>Schools and education options</b>	9	2	13
<b>Housing</b>	8	4	5
<b>Less violence and bullying</b>	8	4	4
<b>Curfews, and stop the walking around</b>	7	5	1

Table 47. What needs to change, top 10 responses by age

<b>Theme</b>	<b>6 - 8 years</b>	<b>9 - 12 years</b>	<b>3 - 5 years</b>	<b>13 - 15 years</b>	<b>Not stated</b>	<b>16 - 17 years</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Water park, pools + beach</b>	30	57	1	29	3	4	124
<b>Sport and recreation</b>	12	35	4	28	2	6	87
<b>Shops and shopping centres</b>	12	9	1	19	1	5	47
<b>More activities and services</b>	5	12	0	13	0	10	40
<b>Schools and education options</b>	8	7	0	3	3	3	24
<b>Less crime</b>	0	14	0	4	1	2	21
<b>Parks and playgrounds</b>	7	7	2	1	2	0	19
<b>Safe spaces and security</b>	2	8	2	3	1	3	19
<b>Greening and beautification</b>	4	7	0	5	1	1	18
<b>Clean up</b>	3	7	1	2	1	3	17

## APPENDIX 2—ADDITIONAL DATA

### AEDC Data

Figure 61. AEDC domains: changes over time for Alice Springs

Table 5.1 – AEDC domain results over time for this community.

		2009		2012		2015		2018		Significant change	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	2009 vs 2018	2015 vs 2018
 Physical health and wellbeing	On track	239	55.2	267	73.4	294	70.3	254	72.6	Significant increase	No significant change
	At risk	66	15.2	54	14.8	66	15.8	53	15.1	No significant change	No significant change
	Vulnerable	128	29.6	43	11.8	58	13.9	43	12.3	Significant decrease	No significant change
 Social competence	On track	217	50.1	278	76.4	291	69.6	244	69.7	Significant increase	No significant change
	At risk	110	25.4	55	15.1	94	22.5	78	22.3	No significant change	No significant change
	Vulnerable	106	24.5	31	8.5	33	7.9	28	8.0	Significant decrease	No significant change
 Emotional maturity	On track	218	51.3	281	77.2	314	75.1	258	73.9	Significant increase	No significant change
	At risk	114	26.8	51	14.0	65	15.6	57	16.3	Significant decrease	No significant change
	Vulnerable	93	21.9	32	8.8	39	9.3	34	9.7	Significant decrease	No significant change
 Language and cognitive skills (school-based)	On track	178	41.3	237	66.2	299	73.8	263	75.1	Significant increase	No significant change
	At risk	90	20.9	59	16.5	46	11.4	46	13.1	Significant decrease	No significant change
	Vulnerable	163	37.8	62	17.3	60	14.8	41	11.7	Significant decrease	Significant decrease
 Communication skills and general knowledge	On track	214	49.3	263	72.1	304	72.9	265	75.9	Significant increase	No significant change
	At risk	108	24.9	76	20.8	77	18.5	50	14.3	Significant decrease	Significant decrease
	Vulnerable	112	25.8	26	7.1	36	8.6	34	9.7	Significant decrease	No significant change

Source (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019, p. 11)



