Rethinking young people's homelessness needs through place-based, First Nations-informed methodology in the NT.

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TAKING CARE OF COUNTRY AND COMMUNITY
Community Safety - Youth Empowerment - Local Training



Acknowledgement of Country

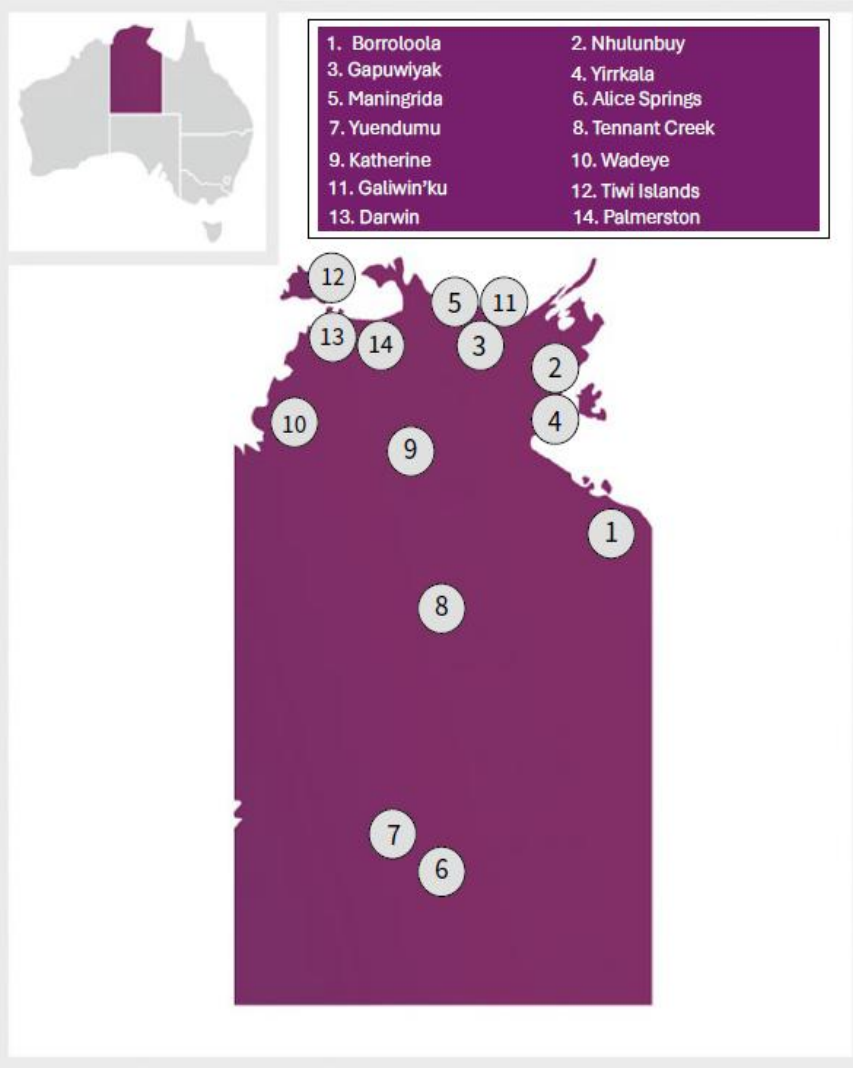
Today, we meet at Garramilla, on the lands of the Larrakia People; the saltwater people.

We acknowledge the Larrakia people as the traditional custodians of the land, sea and waterways and pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the culture and dreams of the First Nations.

We recognise and respect the cultural heritage and belief of all First Nations people and we recognise the importance of the young people who are our future leaders.

The Scoping Study – Understanding the Needs of Young People Experiencing Homelessness Across the NT

- Funded by the Northern Territory Government, Department for Children and Families
- A one-year, multi-site qualitative scoping study
- Consultation across all six NT regions
- Explored the conditions required for young people to have safe, appropriate and connected places to live
- Engaged young people, community members, practitioners and service providers - First Nations young people were overwhelmingly represented throughout
- Place-based, First Nations-informed methodology
- Community/in-place knowledge at the centre



We needed to listen differently…

Standardised consultation does not fit the diversity of the NT.

- Place-based — methods adapted to each community
- First Nations-led — consultations led by Mulga
- Relational — trust, relationships and deep listening
- Flexible — yarning, storying, drawing and narrative inquiry
- Iterative — learning in one place informed what we did next

The methodology changed not only how we collected knowledge — but what we were able to hear and see

Confidential

WHAT IS 'HOME'?



Home emerged not simply as a dwelling, but at the intersection of Place & Shelter, Connection & Kinship, and Culture & Country.

The central finding: a structural misalignment…

Young people’s lives are often:

Relational • mobile • family-connected • culturally grounded • place-based

But systems are commonly organised around:

Fixed housing • individualised• eligibility criteria • age thresholds • program boundaries • funding streams

This mismatch creates vulnerability — particularly when young people move between family, communities, Country, schools, services and towns.

The problem is not simply individual or community failure.

Communities already hold solutions…

- Strong family, kinship and community care
- First Nations organisations and local leadership
- Safe places to sleep, eat, shower and reset
- Trusted adults, mentoring and culturally grounded youth work
- Community-led housing responses, including from young people
- 93 existing responses across the six regions

The message from communities was clear:

- Stop repeatedly rediscovering the problem. Resource what works and move from consultation to implementation.

What needs to change?

Not one Territory-wide model, but shared principles implemented differently in each place:

- Place-based, First Nations and community-led governance
- Policy built around a broader understanding of Home
- Culturally appropriate housing
- Long-term, flexible and relational funding
- Whole-person and whole-family support
- Stronger place-based prevention and better transitions between systems
- Investment in local workforce, capability and existing community solutions

If we rethink what “home” means, we also have to rethink what a homelessness response looks like.