National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

Have your say on child protection in the Pilbara

Submission guidelines for the *Review of the Regional Child Protection System in the Pilbara.*

Closing date: 12pm AWST Thursday 24 December 2026

Submission Options:

1. In writing or through an audio, or video recording through the Make a submission form
2. Emailing your written submission to StrategicPolicy@ncatsicyp.gov.au or
3. Calling 03 6162 8555 and someone will take your submission over the phone.

Children and young people: there is a separate guide for you at the end of this document. Go to the guide for children and young people

About the Review

The National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, is undertaking a Review of coordination between child and family support services and statutory child protection in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

We want to understand how the child protection system and other services are supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, what is working well, and what needs to improve.

The Review will look at how services respond to children and families, how they work together, whether children's rights are being respected and how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities are involved in decisions that affect them.

The Review will use people's experiences, knowledge and perspectives to help develop findings and recommendations for improving the system.

The focus is how services work together, whether support is timely and effective, who is accountable, and what priority changes are needed. This is not a comprehensive assessment of the adequacy of every service.

Individual experiences can help us understand systemic issues. The Commission cannot investigate or resolve individual complaints because its legislation does not permit it to do so, and the Review cannot intervene in court proceedings.

The National Commission acknowledges Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters, and community. We pay our respects to them, their cultures, and Elders past and present.

Who can have their say?

Anyone with experiences, knowledge or information relevant to child protection in the Pilbara is welcome to make a submission.

We particularly encourage submissions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, kin, Elders and communities.

We also welcome submissions from:

- Children and young people who are currently or have previously been involved with the child protection system, including young people who have left care.
- Parents, family members and kin who have experiences with the child protection system or related services.
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Elders and community members with knowledge, experiences or perspectives to share.
- Kinship carers, foster carers and other carers who support children and young people.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and community groups.
- People working in child protection, health, education, housing, police, justice and other relevant services.
- Service providers, advocates, researchers, academics and other organisations.
- Anyone else with relevant experiences, knowledge or information to share.

You do not need to currently live in the Pilbara to contribute. We also welcome submissions from people with connections to the Pilbara region, including children and young people who have been placed or have moved outside the Pilbara.

You can make a submission as an individual, as part of a group, or on behalf of an organisation.

You may provide your name or the name of your group or organisation and a safe way to contact you. You can also submit without giving your name, or use a different name, such as a nickname.

Anonymous information may inform our understanding of systemic issues, but we may be unable to clarify it. We will not publish quotations or identifiable stories from anonymous submissions when we cannot obtain the necessary agreement or manage identification risks.

Taking part is voluntary. You can choose what to share and whether to be quoted. You should not feel pressured by services, carers or anyone else to participate. We will explain how your information may be used and the limits of confidentiality so you can make an informed choice.

What can you tell us about?

We want to hear about your experiences, what you think is working well, what needs to improve and what changes you would like to see.

Your submission can simply tell your own story about child protection or getting help for you or your family in the Pilbara. You do not need to write a formal submission or answer the questions below. We also welcome community knowledge, professional insights, research and other relevant information.

You do not need formal writing skills, documents or knowledge of the system to contribute. Contact us if you need help preparing your submission or an interpreter.

If helpful, tell us approximately when and where something happened, which services were involved, what they did, what difference this made, and what should change. Include examples of effective coordination as well as difficulties. You do not need documents or proof for your experience to be considered.

We are particularly interested in hearing about the following topics.

Getting help and support

- Can Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families get the help and support they need and when they need it?
- How well do services respond when concerns are raised about a child's safety or wellbeing?
- What support is available to children and families involved with the child protection system, including people leaving care?

How services work together

- How well do child protection, health, education, housing, police, justice and other services work together to support children and families?
- What works well, and where do services encounter difficulties in sharing information, making referrals, planning together and following up support?

  What happens when a referral is declined, support is delayed or no service takes responsibility?
- Are children, families and communities involved when services make plans or decisions about the support they provide?

Child protection laws, policies and practice

- Are child protection laws, policies and practices working well for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities?
- Are children's rights, safety, wellbeing and connections to family, community, culture and Country respected in child protection decisions and practices?
- Do children and families feel respected and culturally safe?

- Have services understood your family, culture and circumstances?
- Have racism, assumptions or misunderstandings affected the help you received or decisions made about your child or family?
- Have language or disability-related barriers affected access to support or involvement in decisions?
- Can children and families involve trusted family, kin and Aboriginal organisations?
- How well are all five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle being implemented: prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection?

  What active efforts—purposeful, timely and practical action—are agencies making to implement them, and what difference do these efforts make?

Having a say and holding services accountable

- Are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities listened to and meaningfully involved in decisions that affect them?
- Do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations have genuine decision-making authority in matters affecting their children and families?
- Is it clear which government agency or service is responsible for coordinating support and completing agreed actions?

  Are actions followed through, and what happens when services do not act or respond to concerns and complaints?

Making improvements

- Which changes would make the greatest difference to children and families?

  Who should be responsible for acting, and what should happen first?
- How do staffing, funding or resource arrangements help or hinder services working together to provide timely, effective and culturally safe support?
- What Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander-led approaches, existing programs or previous reforms could inform improvements to the system?

You do not need to answer every question or cover every topic.

These questions are only a guide. You are welcome to share anything else you think is relevant to the Review.

Read the full Terms of Reference on the Commission's Pilbara Review announcement. Terms of Reference (PDF, 297,73 KB)

How can you have your say?

There are three ways you can make your submission:

1. In writing or through an audio, or video recording through the Make a submission form
2. Emailing your written submission to StrategicPolicy@ncatsicyp.gov.au or
3. Calling 03 6162 8555 and someone will take your submission over the phone.

Your submission does not need to be long or formal. You should use your own words and focus on the issues that matter most to you.

Please avoid unnecessary names, addresses, case numbers or details that could identify other people, especially children. You do not need to send a full case history or describe distressing events in detail. Contact us before sending sensitive case files or court documents. Do not send material you are not permitted to share.

Before making a submission, please read our privacy collection notice. It explains how we collect, use, disclose and store your personal information, and how you can access or correct it or make a privacy complaint.

If you are submitting your submission via email, please read the privacy collection notice and attach the completed consent form to your email when your send your submission.

If you would like to speak to someone about making a submission, please contact the Strategic Policy Team on telephone 03 6162 8555.

Submissions must be received by **12pm AWST Thursday 24 December 2026**.

For help making a submission or to request more time, email mailto:StrategicPolicy@ncatsicyp.gov.au and tell us a safe way to contact you, including whether we may leave messages. We can explain the process and help you organise your account in your own words. You can also ask for interpreter assistance. We will discuss the arrangements with you.

What happens to your submission?

The information you share may inform the Review's findings and recommendations. If you provide safe contact details, we will acknowledge receipt and may contact you to clarify information. Not every submission will be quoted or lead to a separate recommendation.

We understand that some people may share personal, sensitive or difficult experiences. We will treat the information you provide with care and respect.

How will we use your information?

We may use the information from submissions to identify common issues, understand people's experiences and highlight opportunities for change.

The Review's findings and recommendations will be included in a report, which will be made public.

Confidentiality and privacy

We will not publish your submission or identify you or your specific community in the public report. We will remove names and assess other details that could identify people or communities.

Someone familiar with the circumstances may still recognise a story, so complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed. The legal disclosure limits explained below still apply.

There may be circumstances where we need to share information with relevant authorities or where the law requires us to disclose information. More information about this is provided below.

Using quotes from submissions

We may want to include quotes from submissions in the Review's report to help explain people's experiences and perspectives.

Please tell us in your submission whether you agree to us using quotations from your submission. If you do not tell us, we will not quote you. Quotations will not name you or your specific community. We will also assess whether their details could identify anyone.

If you agree to be quoted, we will contact you before the report is published to confirm you are happy with how your quote will be used.

Before publishing a story or quotation, we will assess risks to physical, emotional and cultural safety, including identification of people or communities. Permission to quote does not remove this responsibility.

We will agree the proposed quotation and any changes with you and preserve your meaning. We may instead summarise an issue without identifying its source or decide not to publish the material.

You do not have to agree to being quoted to make a submission. We can still use the information you share to inform the Review's findings and recommendations.

You can ask to correct or withdraw your submission, or change your permission to be quoted, by emailing StrategicPolicy@ncatsicyp.gov.au. Please contact us as early as possible.

We will explain what can still be changed at that stage; information already incorporated into completed analysis or a published report may not be removable. Records may still need to be retained under applicable requirements.

What if I share concerns about a child's safety?

The Review examines systemic issues. The National Commissioner cannot investigate or resolve individual complaints. You can still share individual experiences to help us identify wider problems, but we cannot resolve your individual situation.

If you tell us something that suggests a child has been harmed or may be at risk of harm, **we may need to share this information with the relevant authorities**, such as the Department of Communities or Western Australia Police Force, where we reasonably

believe this is necessary to lessen or prevent a threat to a person's life, health or safety. We may also share information where the law otherwise authorises us to do so. This may happen even if you have asked us to keep your submission confidential.

How will we store your information?

We will store submissions and any personal information you share securely, with access limited to authorised staff who need the information for the Review.

We will handle and retain your information in accordance with applicable privacy, information management and government recordkeeping requirements.

We will securely destroy your information when it is no longer needed, in accordance with the Archives Act 1983 (Cth) and applicable records authorities.

Children and young people taking part

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 000. The Review's submission inbox is not an emergency service.

Taking part is voluntary. Where we have safe contact details, we will explain the process in an age-appropriate way, check the child's understanding and agreement, and consider any additional consent needed. Children can skip questions or stop.

We can help them prepare their submission or arrange interpreter assistance, while ensuring the views are their own.

Anonymous contributions may inform systemic analysis; we will not publish a child's quotation or identifiable story without the required agreement and safety checks.

We will take children's views seriously and give them due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, with support to express their views. We will explain how their contributions informed the Review.

Participation should support their physical, emotional and cultural safety and connections to family, kin, community, culture and Country.

Respecting culture and cultural knowledge

The Review will be respectful of culture and cultural knowledge. Please let us know about any cultural protocols and restrictions that apply to information you are sharing with us so we can ensure we handle cultural information appropriately. Please do not include secret, sacred, restricted or other cultural knowledge that you are not authorised to share

What happens next?

After submissions close, we will consider the information people have shared alongside consultations, research, data and other evidence gathered during the Review.

What we learn will help us identify what is working well and what needs to improve and will help us develop findings and recommendations for strengthening the child protection system and related services in the Pilbara.

The Review's final report will be made public and available on the National Commission's website. We will also share information about the Review's findings and recommendations with communities in the Pilbara.

You can ask us to notify you when the report is available. We will provide an accessible summary and explain to participating children and communities what we heard and how their contributions informed the findings and recommendations, without identifying contributors.

Thank you for taking the time to have your say. Your experiences, knowledge and perspectives are valuable and will help us better understand what needs to change.

Children and young people: have your say

Children and young people's submission guidelines for the Review of coordination between child and family support services and statutory child protection in the Pilbara

We want to know how well services help keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the Pilbara safe and supported. Your story can help us recommend changes.

If you or someone else is in danger right now, **call 000**. Our email inbox is not an emergency service.

Who can have their say?

Children and young people with experiences of child protection in the Pilbara can have their say, including those who now live elsewhere. Young people who have left care are welcome too.

We especially encourage you to make a submission if you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

What can you tell us?

Tell us your story about getting help, being in care or life for you and your family. You do not need to write anything formal or answer every question.

If you want, tell us about a time something worked well or could have been better. What happened, and what difference did it make for you? Please leave out names and private details.

You can tell us what needs to change without describing anything harmful or upsetting that happened. Share only what you want to. You do not need to give details or prove what happened. You may also like to respond to some or all of the below questions.

Getting help and support

- When you or your family asked for help, what happened?
  Did help come when you needed it?
- What help could have made things easier for you or your family earlier?
- If you are preparing to leave care or have left care, what help did you need?
  Did you get it?

Services working together

- Have you had to tell your story to different workers?
  Was there someone who helped bring the right people together?
  When adults said they would help, did they do what they promised?

Decisions about your life

- When adults decided about your care, what helped you feel safe and stay connected to family, culture, community and Country?
  What could have been better?

Having a say and being listened to

- When you told adults what you wanted, what happened next?
  If something felt unfair, could you speak up, and did anyone act?

Making things better

- What is the most important thing you would change?
  What should adults and services do differently?
  What should child protection staff do differently?
- When you got help, did people respect your culture and language?
  Could someone you trust be involved?

How can you have your say?

There are three ways you can make your submission:

1. In writing or through an audio or video recording through the Make a submission form
2. Email your story in writing to StrategicPolicy@ncatsicyp.gov.au
3. If you wish, you can call 03 6162 8555 and someone will take your submission over the phone.

You will need to make your submission by **12pm AWST Thursday 24 December 2026.**

Please read our privacy notice before you send your story. It explains how we look after what you tell us.

If you would like to speak to someone about making a submission, please contact the Strategic Policy Team by calling 03 6162 8555.

If you are sending us your submission via email, please read the privacy notice and attach the completed consent form to your email when your send your submission.

Taking part is your choice. You can skip questions or stop. No one should pressure you. Leave out other people's names and private details. Someone can help, but the views should be yours.

Need help with your submission or an interpreter? Email us and tell us how to contact you safely. We will explain what can be arranged.

If we can contact you safely, we will explain how we may use your story and check you understand and agree.

You can ask questions, correct it or ask to take it back. Tell us early; we will explain what can still change.

You can send it without your name or you can use a nickname, but we may be unable to contact you or quote it.

What happens to what you tell us?

We will take your views seriously when recommending changes and explain how children's views helped the Review.

We cannot investigate or fix individual complaints. Your experiences can still help us understand wider problems. Sometimes we may pass a matter on to another organisation that can help.

We will not publish your submission or identify you or your specific community in the report. Someone who knows your story might still recognise it. We will check identifying details and safety risks. We will ask before quoting you and agree any edits without changing your meaning.

If we think you or another child may be unsafe, we may need to tell someone who can help keep you safe.

Your culture matters. Do not send private cultural knowledge you are not allowed to share. If unsure, ask someone you trust.