CCDE Strategic Plan 2014-2016

Introduction and Context:
Our new strategic plan for 2014 - 2016 supersedes the initial strategic planning document which informed the successful establishment of the Centre for Child Development and Education.

During 2014-2016 the Centre will undertake research to inform policy and build human capacity in the fields of (i) early childhood education and parenting, (ii) social and emotional wellbeing of young people (iii) suicide prevention, and (iv) data linkage capacity.

Our research will be strategically focused and prioritised to achieve the greatest returns on our effort. We will refine our structure and governance to maximise our responsiveness to research needs, and we will streamline our systems to support strategic planning and decision making. We will build leadership capacity within the Centre, and work to attract and retain quality staff by providing them with opportunities to develop their skills and extend their qualifications.

Our Vision: To see the development, education and wellbeing of Australian children and youth highly valued and well resourced, and to close the gap in health and wellbeing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Our Purpose: To undertake research that advances the health, learning and development of children and young people within their families and communities in the Northern Territory and beyond.

Our Ways of Working:

Collaboration: We seek to build and maintain relationships with communities, governments, service providers and other stakeholders to inform our research priorities.

Cultural responsiveness: Our research is driven by the education and health needs, and the priorities of the people and communities with whom we work.

Scientific rigour: Our research is rigorous in integrating findings and methods from across disciplines and applying these to make a practical difference to children’s lives.

Ethical practice: We undertake research in a way that upholds the values of our professions.

Innovation: Our research is informed by perspectives consistent with current trends in developmental science.

Valuing people: We foster and develop our staff, and strive to maintain a culture that is both supportive and collaborative.

Communication: We engage with partners, stakeholders and the broader community through our research, as we create a distinct profile for the Centre.
Our Opportunities and Challenges:

There is a clear need for the research and services the Centre provides. We are uniquely placed to respond to requests for research and consultancy in a number of specialised areas. Previous partnerships with communities have contributed to the development of a body of knowledge which enables the Centre to leverage further opportunities, especially in the field of research on Indigenous children. Close community links and experience provide a basis for continued engagement, and the sharing of skills and knowledge. Our capacity to undertake high quality, culturally appropriate research leaves the Centre well positioned to attract further funding so that we can continue in our efforts to improve the lives of Australian children.

The priorities of the new governments at both the national and Territory levels are subject to change. Further, the wider economic uncertainty around the country continues to effect contributions from philanthropic agencies. Consequently, the Centre needs to position itself to be successful in an environment of fierce competition for limited funding. Maintaining a critical mass of skilled staff is an essential component of this positioning. This challenging context shapes the Centre’s strategic priorities for the next three years.

Our Strategic Priorities:

1. Build strategic alliances which reflect the Centre’s core business

We will seek to establish strategic partnerships and scientific networks. We will engage with key government and non-government agencies and build enduring relationships with NT communities. In addition, the Centre will establish scientific collaborations with research institutions and universities in the NT and beyond. The development of national and international scientific networks to support and extend the Centre’s work will also be given priority.

By 2016 we will aim to:

- Undertake regular planning with partner organisations and NT communities to identify research priorities of mutual benefit.
- Develop a mechanism to measure the long term impact of Centre projects.
- Increase the number and diversity of collaborative ventures.
- Build partnerships with Charles Darwin University across key disciplines.

2. Increase the profile of the Centre

We will promote our activities to the broader public to enhance our identity as a national leader in the development, education, and wellbeing of children and youth, particularly young Indigenous people. Our communication strategy will promote the Centre through a website, publications, and through the hosting of symposiums and conferences. Research forums to publicise recent advances in our fields will form part of this strategy.
By 2016 we will aim to:

- Be recognised as the social research arm of the Menzies School of Health Research.
- Develop an ongoing process for publication planning.
- Have every active researcher publish at least three articles in peer reviewed journals each year.
- Write and disseminate project briefs.
- Conduct four seminars each year through the Child Health and Development Seminar Series.
- Host two research conferences.

3. Increase and diversify funding:

Competitive grant funding does not cover the full costs of conducting research. Consequently, the Centre will engage in proactive business development to capitalise on the skills of our staff.

By 2016 we will aim to:

- Develop a diverse and self-sustaining funding framework which includes a strategic approach to identifying the most appropriate work for the Centre to undertake.
- Establish a funding mix of 50% tenders and consultancy, 30% competitive funding, and 20% philanthropic income.
- Maintain a capacity building fund which supports three senior research staff and two corporate support staff.

4. Enhance the workforce of the future

The relative isolation of the NT means that all Darwin-based organisations find it challenging to attract and retain professional staff. The Centre will ensure all our staff are intellectually supported through opportunities for professional development and career planning. The Centre will also undertake leadership development for current and emerging leaders, and ensure the depth of talent necessary to support succession planning.

In recognition of our partnerships with Indigenous communities and originations, the Centre will seek to be an employer of choice for Indigenous community-based personnel.

The Centre will also continue to build on its existing strength in supporting post graduate education and higher degree research training

By 2016 we will aim to:

- Continue to foster a culture which values skills transfer, mentoring and professional development.
- Further develop career pathways for Indigenous community-based researchers and assistant
5. Build Indigenous community partnerships

The Centre’s location in Darwin allows our staff to nurture critically important relationships with Indigenous communities and organisations in the Northern Territory and beyond. Many of these relationships are long standing and the Centre is proud to enjoy the mutual trust of Indigenous communities, and to ensure that our research is based on local needs.

Culturally appropriate communication is essential when working with Indigenous communities because it is respectful and because it maximises the quality of the research. Effective community-based research requires ongoing two-way communication, consultation and feedback. Our collaborative approach to research methodology improves the quality of our product and facilitates the translation of research results into improvements in people’s lives. All of this requires careful planning and training, and dedicated resources.

By 2016 we will aim to:

- Continue our association and planning activities with Indigenous communities across the NT and beyond.
- Honour our commitment to reporting back to communities that are the subject of research projects.
- Build and maintain our relationships with Indigenous research and service delivery organisations.
- Encourage new staff to undertake cultural awareness training.