



## MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

### Statement on the 2026-2027 Federal Budget

#### **Attributable to a Children's Ground spokesperson**

Children's Ground welcomes the Australian Government's commitment in the 2026-2027 Federal Budget to continue funding critical health and wellbeing services with First Nations communities in the Northern Territory for 12 months, and an additional six months of security in funding for early years learning in Central Australia until June 2027.

With key government funding ceasing on 30 June, this announcement has brought relief. It will enable continuity of delivery of critical services, supporting more than 1,500 First Nations children, young people and adults across communities, homelands and outstations in Central Australia, Darwin and West Arnhem.

We are grateful to the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Malarndirri McCarthy, for working across government to achieve continued support to maintain services that strengthen the health, education, economic development, wellbeing and safety of First Nations people.

At the same time, we remain disappointed that despite a recent independent federal government evaluation recommending full funding of the Children's Ground Approach based on demonstrated evidence and impact, funding beyond 30 June remains restricted. As a result, some key activities are ending due to expiring contracts and there is significant uncertainty beyond 2027. We welcome the Minister's commitment to review these challenges and work toward a long term sustainable funding solution for the organisation.

Long term change for children and communities cannot be achieved through short term and fragmented funding cycles. The Children's Ground Approach is delivering measurable outcomes, aligned with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and the independent evaluation recommended sustained cross government investment to achieve lasting outcomes for children, families and communities. The evidence base and investment pathway are now clearly established. Community leaders have created a strong future pathway for their children and are now seeking a long term government commitment to support that vision.

This budget announcement comes at a time when Closing the Gap outcomes for First Nations children remain deeply concerning, with alarming rates of incarceration, child removal, economic poverty and ill-health. We cannot speak strongly enough to the growing calls nationally and

internationally for greater investment in prevention, early intervention and First Nations led and owned solutions. Governments must invest in First Nations organisations and approaches that are delivering demonstrated outcomes.

Children's Ground looks forward to continuing to work with the Australian Government toward a sustainable long term funding solution that reflects the evidence and is resourced at the level required to realise the changes for children and families that are desperately needed. We need government to comprehensively support community led change and provide certainty for children, families and First Nations workers and leaders over the long term and across generations.

**END**