The Northern Territory Government has laid out its plan to ensure Territory children receive the best possible start to life through its Great Start Great Future Early Years Strategic Plan 2016-2020.

Education Minister Peter Chandler launched the plan today which supports young Territorians and their families, providing access to high-quality early childhood education, care programs and services.

$19 million has been allocated in Education’s 2016-17 budget as part of the Great Start Great Future plan to ensure that young Territorians and their families continue to have access to high quality early childhood education and care programs and services.

This includes $9.5 million already committed through Commonwealth Government programs and $9.4 million of Northern Territory Government funding.

“The Northern Territory Government understands the foundations of health, learning and development are largely set in the first eight years of a child’s life, including in pregnancy,” Mr Chandler said.

“We know children who have a caring, healthy and stimulating early childhood are more likely to be successful at school and be socially connected as they grow older.

“The Great Start Great Future strategic plan will achieve precisely what its title suggests, by providing much stronger coordination of existing high quality early childhood programs, as well as investing further funding towards new initiatives.”

The plan provides a coordinated approach to early childhood education and care with a focus on health, learning and wellbeing of young children in the Northern Territory.

Initiatives include:

- Investing $1 million per annum to roll out urban Families as First Teachers (FaFT) programs delivered from multiple sites in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs;
- $200,000 to support the Young Mothers are Strong Mothers program providing young mothers the opportunity to obtain further education qualifications including completing Year 12; and
$300,000 per annum to operate the new Larapinta Child and Family Centre.

By December 2017, as part of the A Share in the Future Indigenous Education Strategy, FaFT will expand to 32 remote and very remote communities across the Northern Territory. There are currently 22 programs operating across the Territory.

The Education Minister said by investing in the early years, the Country Liberals Government is assisting young Territorians to have the best chance at life.

“Children have a greater chance of starting school strong, staying in school longer, living a healthier and later in life having a job to care for their families.

“The Northern Territory Government has invested and continues to invest in early childhood education and care,” Mr Chandler said.

“This plan builds on the existing work of the Northern Territory Government to provide a bright future for our children and our community,” Mr Chandler said.

The Great Start Great Future plan is available on the Department of Education website.

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