

# Education NT Teacher Wellbeing Strategy 2019–22

*When teachers are at their best,  
students are at their best*





# CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FOREWORD



The wellbeing of educators is a key focus for the Department of Education. Northern Territory teachers do an incredible job. We know that teachers are the most important in-school factor contributing to student achievements and play a significant role in supporting the wellbeing of students within the school environment.

We are committed to supporting the wellbeing of our teaching workforce.

Put simply, when teachers are at their best, students are at their best.

In 2019, we released our Teacher Wellbeing Strategy 2019-22 with the aim of providing targeted support to enhance the health and wellbeing of our teachers.

To inform this strategy, we took the unprecedented step in surveying our entire school-based teaching workforce to better understand the occupational health and wellbeing of teachers in our schools.

To our knowledge, we are the first education department globally to undertake a survey of this kind.

The Education NT Teacher Wellbeing Strategy 2019-22 outlines priority areas and actions to improve teacher wellbeing. These are based on the Northern Territory Teachers' Occupational Health and Wellbeing Survey: 2019 Data report and direct engagement with teachers.

The report confirms what we already know; teachers are highly committed individuals who take significant pride in their work. In response the department will implement key actions to enhance the support of our teachers' occupational health and well-being.

We will do this by:

- supporting teachers for success, with a strong focus on teachers in the first five years of teaching and strengthening collegial connections
- optimising time to teach by reducing administrative workload to increase time for teachers to focus on their primary task of teaching and learning
- promoting a safe and respectful workplace.

I thank the teachers who have given their trust, time and voice to shape the future of teacher wellbeing in the Northern Territory.

Karen Weston  
Chief Executive

1 <https://www.ernweb.com/educational-research-articles/effective-teachers-are-the-most-important-factor-contributing-to-studentachievement/> Accessed 3 September 2019.

2 The NT Department of Education contracted the Australian Catholic University to conduct this research on its behalf.

3 A summary of the report can be accessed at <https://www.teachintheterritory.nt.gov.au/educator-support/educator-wellbeing>

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## OUR DEPARTMENT'S STRATEGIC AMBITION

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*Every child in the Northern Territory has the best start in life and, through early learning and school education, gains a bright future.*

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## OUR GOAL FOR STUDENTS

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*All children and students engage and grow to achieve.*

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## OUR WELLBEING STRATEGY VISION

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*To build an agency-wide culture of wellbeing that supports our school improvement agenda and our teachers.*

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## OUR GOAL FOR TEACHERS

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*All teachers in the Northern Territory engage and grow to flourish in their wellbeing and in the profession.*



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## OUR VALUES

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The Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS) values underpin our organisational culture and behaviour. They guide staff in the Department of Education to deliver quality services to Territorians, and to achieve our best performance at work.

### **Commitment to service**

The NTPS is professional, hardworking, effective, innovative and efficient, working collaboratively to achieve the best results for the NT

### **Ethical practice**

The NTPS upholds the highest standards of practice and acts with integrity in all that it does

### **Respect**

The NTPS respects all people, and in particular their rights as individuals

### **Accountability**

The NTPS is transparent and accountable in all its actions

### **Impartiality**

The NTPS is apolitical and provides the government with advice that is objective, timely and based on the best available evidence

### **Diversity**

The NTPS values the diversity of its workforce as well the NT population it serves.





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## WHAT IS WELLBEING?

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The World Health Organisation defines wellbeing as, “a state in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”.<sup>4</sup>

Wellbeing is a state of being. It is a person’s physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual state.

An individual is said to be in a state of ‘optimal wellbeing’ or ‘flourishing’ when they feel positive, engaged and fulfilled.<sup>5</sup>

It is important to acknowledge that wellbeing is not a constant. It is dynamic and fluctuates depending on circumstance.

Wellbeing may be impacted upon and affected by a range of factors at any given point in time, including:

- personal and professional challenges
- different stressors and demands
- workload
- challenging contexts and relationships
- critical incidents.

As individuals, our available resources to support a flourishing state of wellbeing, ebb and flow. At times they may even be depleted. Crucially though, they can also be replenished.

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4 World Health Organisation, Mental health: a state of wellbeing, [http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental\\_health/en/](http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/) Accessed 3 September 2018.

5 Stephen Macdonald, Lianne Sipsma, Lisa Vandertogt, Definition of Wellbeing, Kaya, 2015.

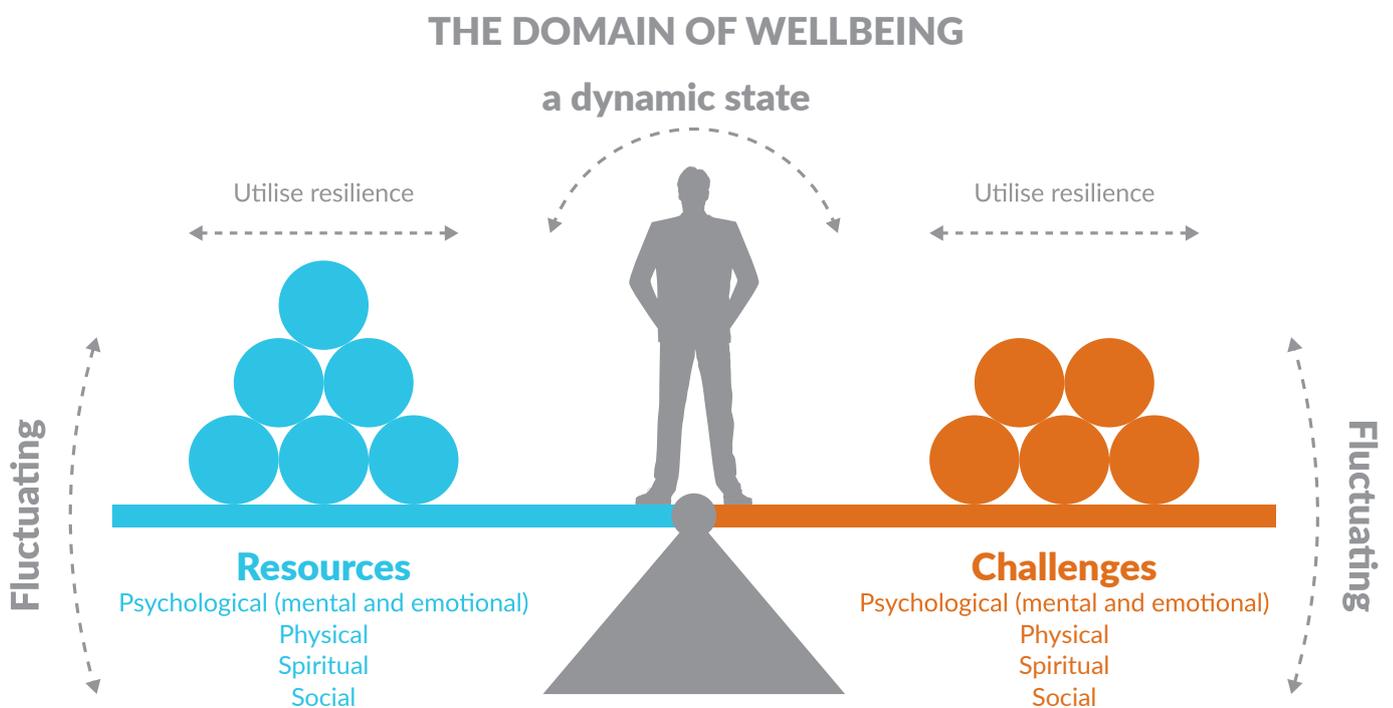


Maintaining and building a flourishing state of wellbeing often comes down to an individual's knowledge of, and access to, resources which can assist in meeting challenges. Equally so, leading health bodies, such as the World Health Organisation, have recognised the workplace as a priority setting for promoting health and wellbeing.<sup>6</sup>

To have a significant impact on teacher wellbeing, this strategy aims to implement actions at the system level and to couple these with strategies employed by individuals, and the collective, at the school level.

To be the most improving system we must invest in our teachers and create the conditions for them to be at their best and flourish.

FIGURE 1: THE DYNAMIC STATE OF WELLBEING.<sup>4</sup> THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHALLENGES AND RESOURCES



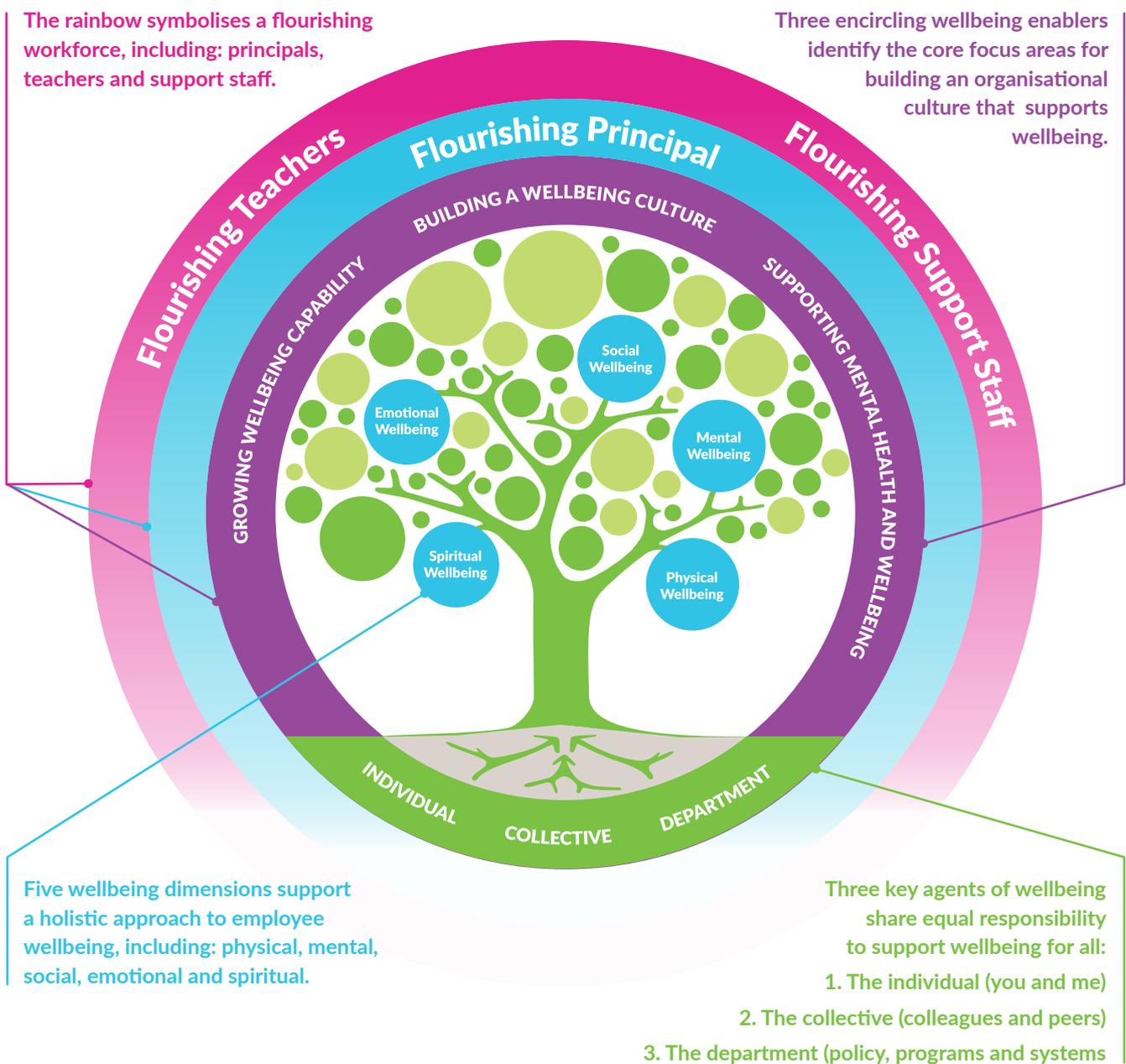
6 Healthier Work, 'Guide to Promoting Health & Wellbeing in the Workplace', Worksafe ACT, Australian Capital Territory Government, Canberra, May 2012, p. 4

# ENGAGE, GROW, FLOURISH ... OUR WELLBEING JOURNEY

This strategy is supported by the Northern Territory Department of Education's Employee Wellbeing Framework<sup>7</sup> model, which represents the department's commitment and vision for the wellbeing of all employees.

FIGURE 2: THE EMPLOYEE WELLBEING FRAMEWORK MODEL

The tree in full bloom represents the flourishing individual.



<sup>7</sup> The Northern Territory Department of Education Educator Wellbeing webpages <https://www.teachintheterritory.nt.gov.au/educator-support/educator-wellbeing>

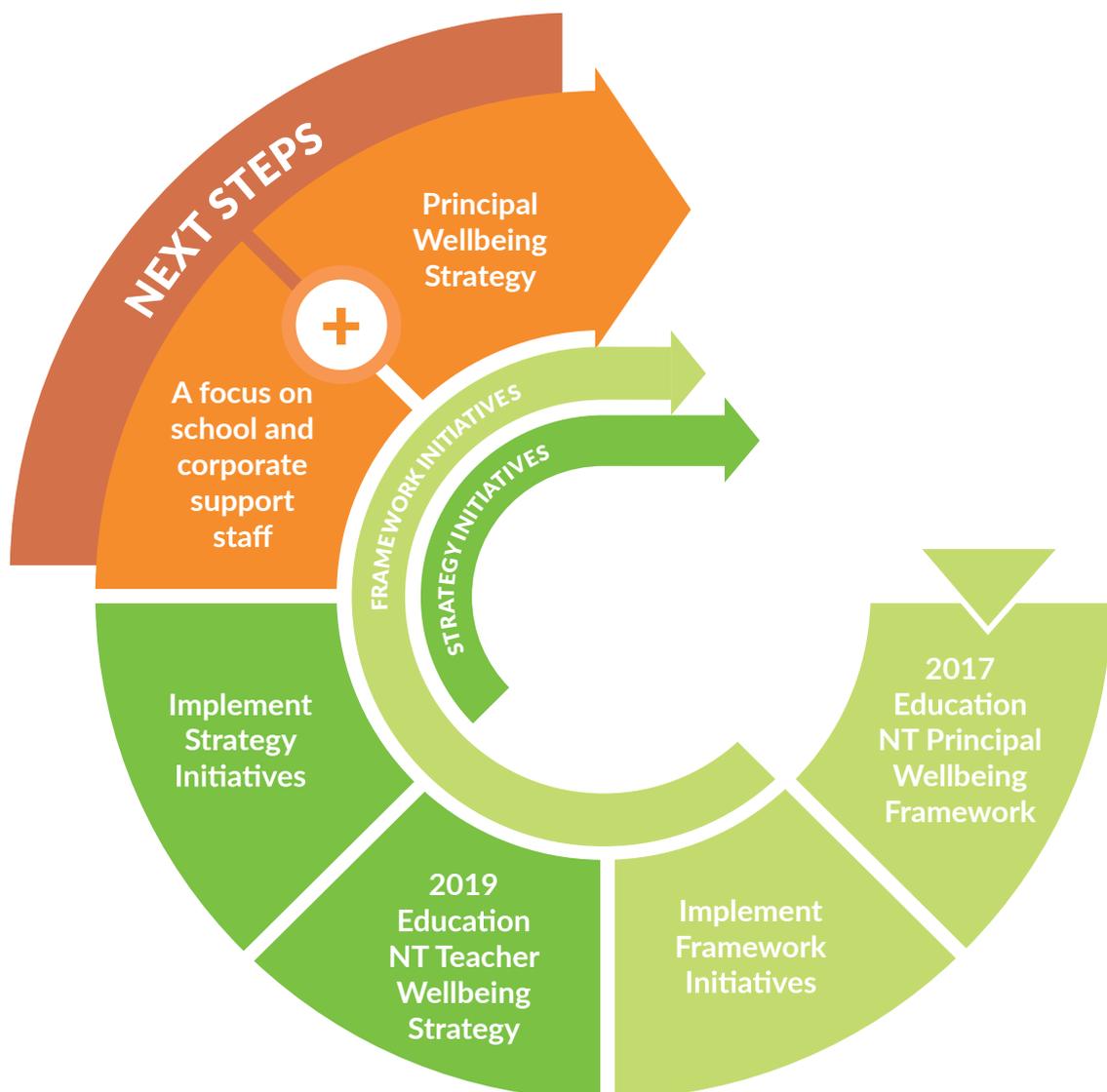
The wellbeing of our employees is key to the success of students and underpins our commitment to a strong, equitable public education system that gives every child the opportunity to engage and grow to achieve.

The department is on a dedicated journey to build a wellbeing culture that spans our school and corporate communities to inform our ways of working.

While our journey is deliberate and planned, it is also agile. For each iteration along the way, we will

take our learnings forward to inform our future wellbeing work. As such, it is anticipated that actions and learnings from this strategy will also benefit school leaders, students, colleagues, the teaching profession, school communities, and the broader community.

As we focus on specific workforce groups and co-design with them, we are better able to understand the inhibitors and enablers of wellbeing for each, so as to be targeted and impactful in our actions.





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# HOW WAS THIS STRATEGY DEVELOPED?

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*The department undertook extensive consultation to ensure that this strategy was evidence-based and targeted. By taking this approach, actions of this strategy are designed to be impactful and reflect a whole of agency commitment.*

THREE KEY PHASES OF CONSULTATION INFORMED THE STRATEGY.



## PHASE 1

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All government school-based teachers were invited to participate in the 2019 NT Teachers' Occupational Health and Wellbeing Survey conducted on behalf of the department by the Australian Catholic University.

From this survey, the department received a comprehensive report with recommendations.

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## PHASE 2

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Externally facilitated Online Teacher Wellbeing Engagement Sessions were offered to all government school-based teachers. In these sessions teachers joined their peers to positively contribute in a future focussed discussion about teacher wellbeing in the NT.

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## PHASE 3

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Department executives and educators were consulted to develop, refine and commit to the priority areas and actions of this strategy based on evidence and themes from phase one and two of the consultation process.

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# OUR PRIORITY AREAS AND SUCCESS INDICATORS

## 1

### SUPPORT FOR SUCCESS

*Success indicator: our teachers are supported across the profession and connected with their colleagues.*

## 2

### OPTIMISE TIME TO TEACH

*Success indicator: our teachers are enabled to focus on their primary task of teaching and learning.*

## 3

### PROMOTE A SAFE AND RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE

*Success indicator: our school communities are places where respectful relationships thrive*

# 1

## PRIORITY ACTIONS

### 1.1 DEVELOP AN EARLY CAREER TEACHER PROGRAM

- ▶ We will develop and implement a comprehensive and formalised early career teacher program (1-5 years) that includes induction, mentoring and coaching practises.

**Additional key beneficiaries:**



### 1.2 PROVIDE WELLBEING CONVERSATIONS FOR TEACHERS

- ▶ We will trial and measure the impact of providing wellbeing conversations for classroom teachers. These reflective and restorative conversations will focus on wellbeing, emotional needs and goal setting, and will be conducted by skilled professionals.

**Additional key beneficiaries:**



### 1.3 CONNECT FOR GROWTH

- ▶ We will research and trial a range of ways for connecting teachers across the NT including face-to-face and technology-based options to create communities of like-minded educators.

**Additional key beneficiaries:**



**LEGEND:** ▶ SHORT-TERM (LESS THAN 12 MONTHS) ▶▶ MID-TERM



SCHOOL LEADERS



STUDENTS



COLLEAGUES

## 2

### PRIORITY ACTIONS

#### 2.1 REDUCE NON-TEACHING AND LEARNING WORKLOAD

- ▶ We will consult directly with teachers to identify key tasks impacting on their ability to focus on teaching and learning and act to streamline, change or remove red tape. This work will be done in consultation with school practitioners to ensure workload implications are included in any changes to process.

*Additional key beneficiaries:*



#### 2.2 IMPROVE REPORTING TO PARENTS

- ▶ We will upgrade the current reporting to parents system to improve the experience for teachers by reducing administration time.

*Additional key beneficiaries:*



#### 2.3 REPLACE THE REPORTING TO PARENTS SYSTEM

- ▶ We will explore future enterprise solutions to replace the current system for reporting to parents, encompassing other student administration functions.

*Additional key beneficiaries:*



## 3

### PRIORITY ACTIONS

#### 3.1 SUPPORT A POSITIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

- ▶ We will develop and introduce a system-wide code of conduct for parents, carers and school visitors, backed by department policy to build a culture underpinned by respectful behaviours.

*Additional key beneficiaries:*



#### 3.2 STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS

- ▶ We will explore options to build and strengthen relationships between teachers and students with a focus on providing supports for student behaviours in schools.

*Additional key beneficiaries:*



#### 3.3 ENGAGE THE NATION

- ▶ We will take the NT teacher voice forward to engage with other education jurisdictions to seek partnership in a nation-wide respectful relations community education campaign that supports positive and respectful behaviours towards teachers.

*Additional key beneficiaries:*



(BETWEEN 12 AND 24 MONTHS) ▶▶▶ LONG-TERM (MORE THAN 24 MONTHS)



SCHOOL COMMUNITY



BROADER COMMUNITY



TEACHING PROFESSION

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# HOW WILL WE IMPLEMENT AND MEASURE IMPACT?

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This strategy requires the commitment of the individual, collective and department for implementation. Divisions and teams across the agency will lead, drive actions and monitor impact depending on expertise.

These teams will be supported by an established governance structure and will be accountable to the department's Chief Executive.

A detailed overarching implementation and evaluation plan will be developed to capture impact and provide evidence for continuous improvement against each strategy action.

Department teams will work together towards our goal of ensuring that all teachers in the Northern Territory engage and grow to flourish in their wellbeing and in the profession, in relation to:

- increased support and retention for early career teachers
- increased time to focus on teaching and learning due to red tape reduction
- improved occupational health and wellbeing indicators
- teacher engagement in supportive relationships
- a safe and respectful work environment

We will look for opportunities to understand and measure the impacts of this strategy across a range of data sets within the agency, including workforce data around the retention and separation of our teaching workforce.

In addition, the department will continue to measure the wellbeing of teachers through ongoing implementation of the NT Teachers' Occupational Health and Wellbeing Survey. This data will provide the department with longitudinal trend data and the ability to measure impact over time.



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## REFERENCES

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1. Healthier Work, 'Guide to Promoting Health & Wellbeing in the Workplace', Worksafe ACT, Australian Capital Territory Government, Canberra.
2. Riley, P. et al. (2019) The Northern Territory Teachers' Occupational Health and Wellbeing Survey: 2019 Data report, Institute for Positive Psychology & Education, Australian Catholic University, North Sydney, New South Wales on behalf The Northern Territory Government.
3. Stephen Macdonald, Lianne Sipsma, Lisa Vandertogt, Definition of Wellbeing, Kaya, 2015.
4. Teach in the Territory, Educator wellbeing webpages, The Northern Territory Department of Education <https://www.teachintheterritory.nt.gov.au/educatorsupport/educator-wellbeing> Accessed 3 September 2019
5. World Health Organisation, Mental health: a state of wellbeing, [http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental\\_health/en/](http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/) Accessed 3 September 2018.

