



COTA 

NORTHERN TERRITORY
for senior Territorians

Grandparents Toolkit

Tips for first-timers, modern grandparenting, staying connected and helpful resources.



About

COTA NT is the peak body representing the interests and rights of people aged 50+ in the Northern Territory.

Our advocacy work includes collaboration with our Members, Club and Associate Members, service providers and sector partners on issues such as health, elder abuse, housing, employment, aged care, rights, and more.

Grandparents Day

In 2021, COTA NT embarked on a three year project funded by the Northern Territory Government: Territory Families, Housing and Communities to create a Grandparents Day observance in the Northern Territory.

COTA NT launched the [Grandparents Day website](#) to raise awareness of the observance, to encourage Territorians to celebrate their grandkin and the role they play in our society. The website includes: community resources including links to support services for grandparents, event kit, event ideas, a community event calendar and promotional kit, competition information, news posts, community photo gallery and a I Love Grandie photo gallery (created in 2021).

COTA NT holds events across the Territory to help grandies celebrate and runs a competition every year - that can be entered by all ages - with focus on arts, crafts, events and storytelling. All of these 'competition' activities being inclusive, easy to share and fun to do.



NT Grandparents Day

In the Northern Territory, Grandparents Day is held every year on the last Sunday in October.

Grandparents Day celebrates the many roles that grandparents and older people play in the Northern Territory – both the things they have done, and the things they keep doing for friends, family and community.

I ♥ Grandie



NT



**Grandparents
Day**

COTA
NORTHERN TERRITORY
for senior Territorians



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WE
LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS
VE

ntgrandparentsday.org.au
[#ntgrandparentsday](https://twitter.com/ntgrandparentsday)

Last Sunday of October

I ♥ Grandie



Your GPD Event Kit is free to download from ntgrandparentsday.org.au

An event kit is available to download from the ntgrandparentsday.org.au website (ntgrandparentsday.org.au/promote-and-support-grandparents-day). It includes:

- 3 choices of poster design + 1 customisable poster you can use for your event invitation and promotion
- 1 customisable certificate
- bunting templates
- I Love Grandie selfie frame template (*shown on opposite page*)
- colouring sheets
- communications toolkit and promotional words
- 1 Facebook event and cover image, 3 choices of Facebook post design
- and a Grandparents Day email signature.



Help and Support in the Northern Territory

Follow the links below for help and support in the NT for:

- [Grandparent, Foster and Kinship Carer Advisers](#)
- [Support for grandparent carers](#)
- [Information about NT Grandparent, Foster and Kinship Carer Advisory Line](#)
- [Help for grandparent, foster and kinship carers from Department of Human Services \(Centrelink\)](#)
- [New grandparent and kinship carer information](#)
- [Help and support for elder abuse](#)
- [Support for foster and kinship carers in the Northern Territory](#)

If you do not have access to the links on this page, please call COTA NT Head Office for support on **08 8941 1004**.

If you are a formal or informal carer providing ongoing care for children, call **Grandparents, Foster and Kinship Carer Adviser Line on 1800 245 965**. This is a **free call number available Mondays to Fridays, 8.30am to 4.30pm**.

I ♥ Grandie



Photos: Christine Tayler, William Carroll, Lorna McLaughlin

Whatever you do to celebrate Grandparents Day, it's about spending time together.

Here are just a few ideas to do at home, out and about, indoors and out.

- Have a tea party
- Have a facepainting or make-up day
- Take turns reading a book
- Video call each other
- Draw family trees
- Pamper hands and feet with a gentle clean and massage
- Interview and record each other
- Make some family selfies
- Share old photos and stories
- Sing karaoke and dance
- Take a walk
- Enjoy a picnic (outdoors or indoors)
- Go fishing
- Have breakfast together
- Watch a movie together!



Tips for First-Time Grandparents

Becoming a grandparent can be one of the most joyous times in life. If it's your first time as a grandparent, it can sometimes be overwhelming and a little frightening, and you may not know what to do and not to do. Here are some helpful tips for first time grandparents:

Support the new parents

Being involved in your grandchild's life is really exciting, however it's important to remember the new parents during this time. Remember boundaries, such as not turning up unannounced. Always wait to be invited or ask to visit first and while visiting it's extra helpful to offer to cook or clean up or maybe run errands. New parents are often tired and overwhelmed and doing these things will really help. Offering to babysit is also a great idea, as it can allow the new parents some reprieve or rest time, and you get quality time with your new grandchild.

Don't over indulge

It might be tempting to go on a shopping spree when you have a grandchild on the way, but make sure you ask the parents what they need, what they already have and what they don't want.

Also as your grandchild gets older, don't over indulge them with sweet treats or gifts, otherwise visits to the grandparents become associated with sugar and few boundaries and they may happen less often.

Don't give unwanted advice

It's important not to continuously correct, criticise or judge the new parents, no matter how you feel about their choices or decisions. It's important to remember that it is highly likely that the new parents will do things different to you, as times have changed.

It's usually best to give advice if it is asked for, and when you do this try to make sure it is non-judgemental, non-critical, supportive advice. They will no doubt be getting advice from everywhere at this time, and won't need any extra pressure.

Don't compare

New parents are usually feeling a lot of self-induced pressure to get things right. So mentioning and comparing other people's babies and how they sleep, feed well or gain weight isn't helpful. Even mentioning how your own children were when babies won't help. This may make them feel like you're judging them, even if you're just trying to help. Focussing on the positive things about the baby is the best way to communicate with new parents.



Make memories

Remember to bring a camera or your phone with you when you visit, as no doubt you will want to capture all the amazing things they will do. Choose a method to record and store these memories so you can look back and reminisce in the future. Making your own digital or hard copy photo albums is also a great way to put your memories all together and show them off to your other family and friends.

Be prepared to share

Remember that in the most families there are two or more sets of grandparents. Communicate with everyone involved when organising visits, gifts and things such as holidays and events. Allow for other family members wanting to help and spend time with the new bundle of joy.

Enjoy the best bits

Treat your grandchild as your grandchild and not as your own child. Take a step back when or if necessary and appreciate that you can enjoy all the best bits of your grandchild, and then hand them back to their parents to deal with the midnight wake ups and dirty nappies, while you get a well-earned rest!

Don't do too much

It may be important for you to be an involved and active grandparent, but don't run yourself into the ground in the process. Make sure you set boundaries and limits for yourself and don't let your life to be dictated by parental expectations or childcare. Remember you can also say no when necessary.

Sources:
livewellclub.com.au/tips-for-first-time-grandparents/
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www.gransnet.com/grandparenting/tips-for-new-grandparents

I ❤️ Grandie



Photo: Up Here Photography

Grandparenting advice

You may find the advice and tips for Grandparents and Carers on the raisingchildren.net.au website useful. The key points and links to their grandparenting advice are published below.

Becoming a grandparent (read more [here](#))

- Becoming a grandparent can be a big change. You can decide what kind of grandparent you want to be.
- It's good to negotiate your role as a grandparent, including whether you look after your grandchildren.
- Looking after yourself helps you keep up with your grandchildren.

Grandparent carers and kinship carers: tips for getting started (read more [here](#))

- As a new grandparent or kinship carer, you might need to organise clothes, medical checks, schools, paperwork and more.
- If a child coming into your care has been through trauma or traumatic events, they might need special support.
- Asking for help from schools, GPs, carer services and case workers will help you meet the child's needs.

Grandparents and family relationships (read more [here](#))

- Family relationships might change when grandchildren arrive.
- Your grandchild's parents are learning to be parents. It's important to give them time and space.
- Your support is good for your relationship with your grandchild's parents and good for their family relationships too.

Grandparents: roles and boundaries (read more [here](#))

- Your role as a grandparent will depend on what you want to do, what you can do, and how your grandchild's parents feel.
- It's good to talk to your grandchild's parents and be clear about what suits you.
- Grandparents' roles might change as grandchildren grow up and family circumstances change.

Grandparents: when your grandchild's parents divorce (read more [here](#))

- When parents separate or divorce, grandparents often worry about grandchildren as well as the separating couple.
- You can support grandchildren by providing a calm environment, maintaining

routines, and actively listening.

- You can support the separating couple by not taking sides and being flexible about the new family situation.

Grandparents: looking after grandchildren (read more [here](#))

- Commitments, health and personal preferences influence whether grandparents look after grandchildren.
- Be open with your grandchild's parents about how much child care you can do.
- If you provide child care for your grandchild, it can help to talk with their parents about holidays, behaviour, expenses and so on.

Grandparent carers and kinship carers: looking after yourself (read more [here](#))

- As a grandparent or kinship carer, looking after yourself can give you the energy you need to raise the child in your care.
- Your emotions, physical health and relationships are key areas to look after.
- Making time for yourself and seeking support will help you look after yourself.
- Try to be kind to yourself and remind yourself that you're doing the best you can.

Bubbles

🕒 10 minutes

INGREDIENTS

7 parts water
3 parts dishwashing liquid
1 part glycerine

OR

1 cup water
½ cup dishwashing liquid
2 teaspoons sugar



DIRECTIONS

Here are 2 different bubble mixes you can make for your grandkids, one with glycerine.

1. For both recipes, combine all ingredients.
2. The recipe with the glycerine, let it sit for a short time before using it.
3. The other recipe is ready to use straight away.
4. These mixes are best stored in airtight bottles.

Use a straw, dipped into the mix, for blowing smaller bubbles or for larger bubbles use an old coat hanger made into a bubble wand.

Playdough

🕒 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

½ cup salt
1 cup flour
2 tablespoons cream of tartar
1 cup water
1 tablespoon oil
Food colouring of your choice

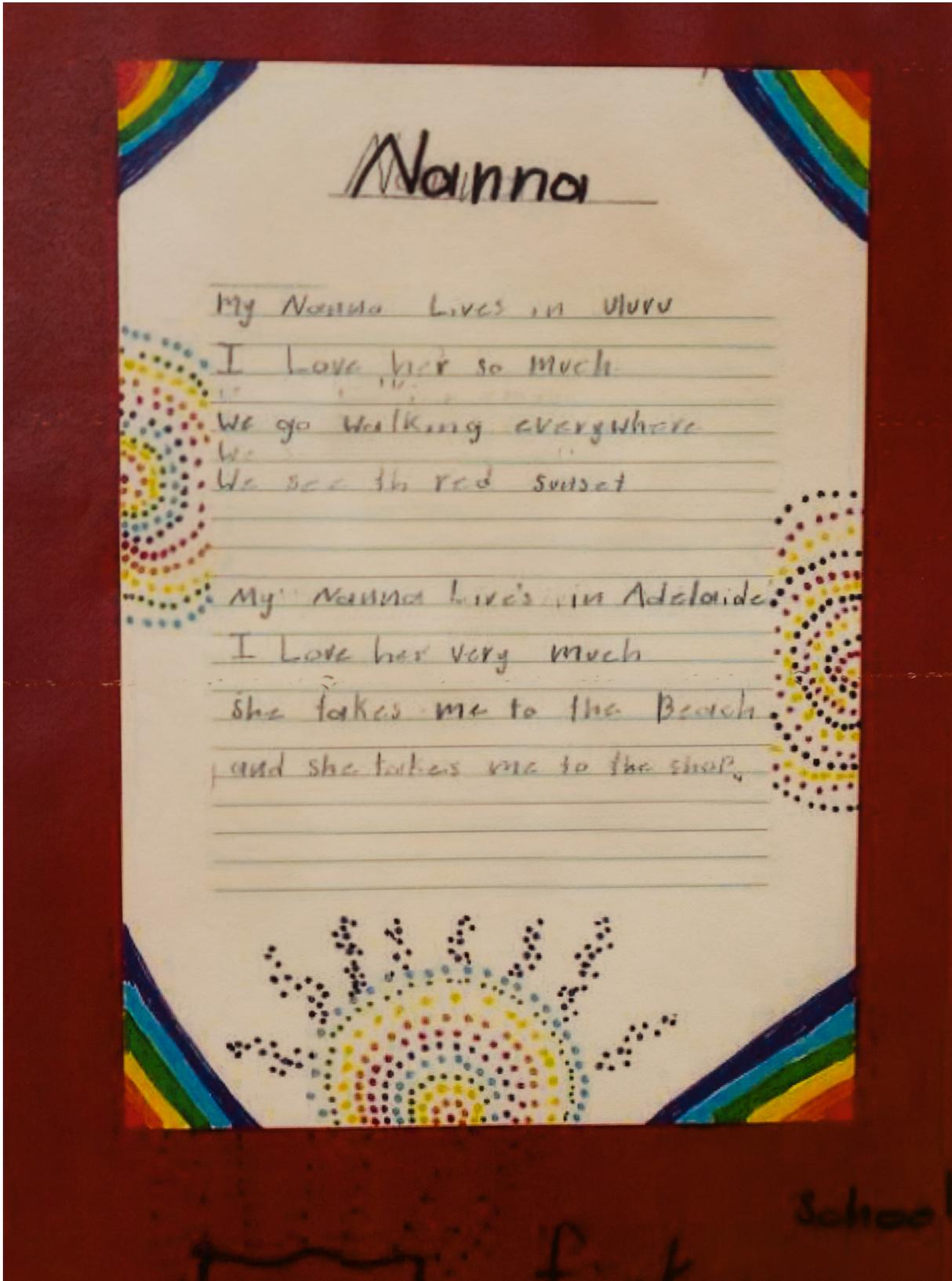


DIRECTIONS

There are A LOT of different playdough recipes, this one is a cooked version.

1. In a sauce pan, mix all ingredients on a medium heat, stirring until the dough comes together.
2. Once cooled, knead into a smooth dough.
3. Store in a sealed container or zip lock plastic bag.
4. Playdough should last up to a few weeks.

I ♥ Grandie



Stay Connected - with Grandchildren

Online connection is great to stay connected to family and friends so why not with your grandchildren too. There is scientific evidence to suggest that spending time with grandchildren is good for your health, makes you happy, helps keep you sharp and may extend your lifespan. Not only do grandchildren offer you these opportunities, they also do a lot more than you may realise:

Grandchildren help you stay mentally sharp

Interacting with your grandchildren is stimulating for your brain. It boosts your memory, your cognitive function. Even answering all of their questions can be beneficial, as it tests your memory.

Grandchildren help you maintain your well-being

Grandchildren can add to your mental health and well-being, they can give you more purpose to life, and are an incentive to be at your best. This includes maintaining a well-balanced lifestyle.

Another way they assist with well-being is that they reduce the risk of loneliness. Loneliness can result in depression, which in turn brings a many additional health risks.

Grandchildren can teach you new things

The learning with your grandchildren doesn't need to be a one-way street. While you are teaching them, be sure that they will teach you a few things in return. This may be something new about technology or give you a different view on life. All being good for your mental health.

Grandchildren keep you laughing

Grandchildren can provide endless amusement! They are clever, often quick witted and have a special view on the world that often lacks a filter. Their sassiness or quirky behaviour can provide many laughs and hours of entertainment. Remember the saying "laughter is the best medicine", it not only feels good but can help lower stress and boost the immune system.

Grandchildren keep you active

Normally that one on one time you have with grandchildren would also benefit you with increased activity, by chasing around after little ones, taking them to the park or on a bike ride; it is all beneficial. Being active with grandchildren is also a great way to create memories with them at the same time.



How to connect with your grandchildren.

There is always the good old landline or mobile phone to call your grandchildren. However, there are a lot more options to talk to your grandchildren now, including face to face video calls on an app on your phone, tablet or computer. The most popular video chat apps to check out are:

- FaceTime
- Facebook Messenger
- Skype
- Zoom
- WhatsApp
- Google Duo

Using one of these apps might seem daunting, but there is plenty of help. Contact a family member or friend to help you set it up and use or visit one of the government websites that can assist:

- Be connected beconnected.esafety.gov.au/
- eSafety Commissioner – www.esafety.gov.au/seniors

There are also a lot of online articles and reviews that can help you choose which app to use.

Alternatively just ask your children or grandchildren what they use!

Remember there are still other ways to connect to your grandchildren. You can send them a card or a letter, text message or even an email.

More good news

One [study](#) found that grandmothers who spent one day a week looking after their grandchildren were more likely to offset dementia and had a lower risk of developing Alzheimer's.

[Initial data from the Institute on Aging at Boston College](#) shows good news for grandchildren too; a strong bond between grandchild-grandparent can offset depressive tendencies for both parties.

So there are a lot of incentives to spend time with your lovely grandchildren!

References:

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www.cbsnews.com/news/good-grandparent-grandchild-bond-may-lower-depression-risk-for-both/

Modern Grandparents

In the past we have written about why it's important to stay connected to your grandchildren and the benefits that grandchildren bring into your life. Here we delve deeper into modern technologies and how to utilise them to maintain a relationship with your grandchildren.

Whether your grandchildren live far away, or you can't see them regularly, it's still important to stay in touch with them. Grandparents can play such a special and unique role in a child's life. They can:-

- provide endless love, time, stability and connection in a constantly changing world
- offer an alternative perspective and a great amount of experience to help guide young children through life
- show new ways to learn, by sharing their own skills and experiences, and by being a part of new adventures.

Using the latest technology can be a great way to connect with them at their level. Today's grandchildren have grown up in a digital age, with a great deal of technology around them. The way they communicate, the way they play and learn is often technology related. They are unlikely to change this easily, so being a relevant part of their lives will often require us to adapt to using these new technologies.

Video calls

You may normally rely on personal visits and phone calls for your family and friends. However, in these modern times the younger generations are using video calls from computers and hand held devices as a regular form of communication.

Initially, you may need some help with video calling, so don't be afraid to ask someone for support – even your grandchildren!

You may be surprised to know that once set-up, many video calling platforms are actually relatively simple to use. Video calls are a quick and easy solution for staying connected, and due to the visual display, even the youngest of grandchildren are keen to get involved.

Some popular video calling platforms include Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp.

Images on social media

Taking photos from your everyday lives and sharing them is a great way to keep your grandchildren and family and friends up to date with you and your life. Photo memories also act as a time capsule that you and your grandkids can go back to again and again.



You can use privacy settings to limit photo viewing access to only the family and friends you choose. Private groups can also be created, where everyone in the group can share with one another. Facebook and Instagram are the most popular platforms for image sharing. If your grandchildren are younger, you can text the images to their parents to share with them instead.

Text and messaging

Have you tried calling your grandchildren on the phone to find that they don't answer? Keep phone and video-calling if your grandchildren are responding, but if not, it might be time to try regular texting and messaging to connect with your grandkids. To maintain the contact, try to engage them with regular and relevant texts and messages. Phone texting is the best and easiest way to start with this contact with your grandchildren. If you are also on social media, you can message through Facebook Messenger, Instagram or other messaging platforms.

Keep the old ways alive

Even while trying these modern forms of communication, it's still fun to go back to traditional methods from time to time. Send letters or packages to your grandchildren. They will love it and probably hold onto them as keepsakes. You can include photos, handmade cards or even gifts in a letter or package. This tradition will create memories that they will always remember.

To start, don't hesitate to ask for help, from family or friends who are a bit more tech savvy. Once you have got the hang of it, it is much less daunting than you may think. Staying in touch using modern technology is becoming easier and easier.

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www.goodhousekeeping.com/electronics/g32187503/best-video-chat-apps/

Grandparent, Foster and Kinship Carer Advisers

Supporting formal and
informal carers who provide
ongoing care for children



For more information, go to servicesaustralia.gov.au/grandparentfosterkinship
or call **1800 245 965**.

This is free if you call from your home phone. Calls from public phones and mobiles may be timed and charged at a higher rate.

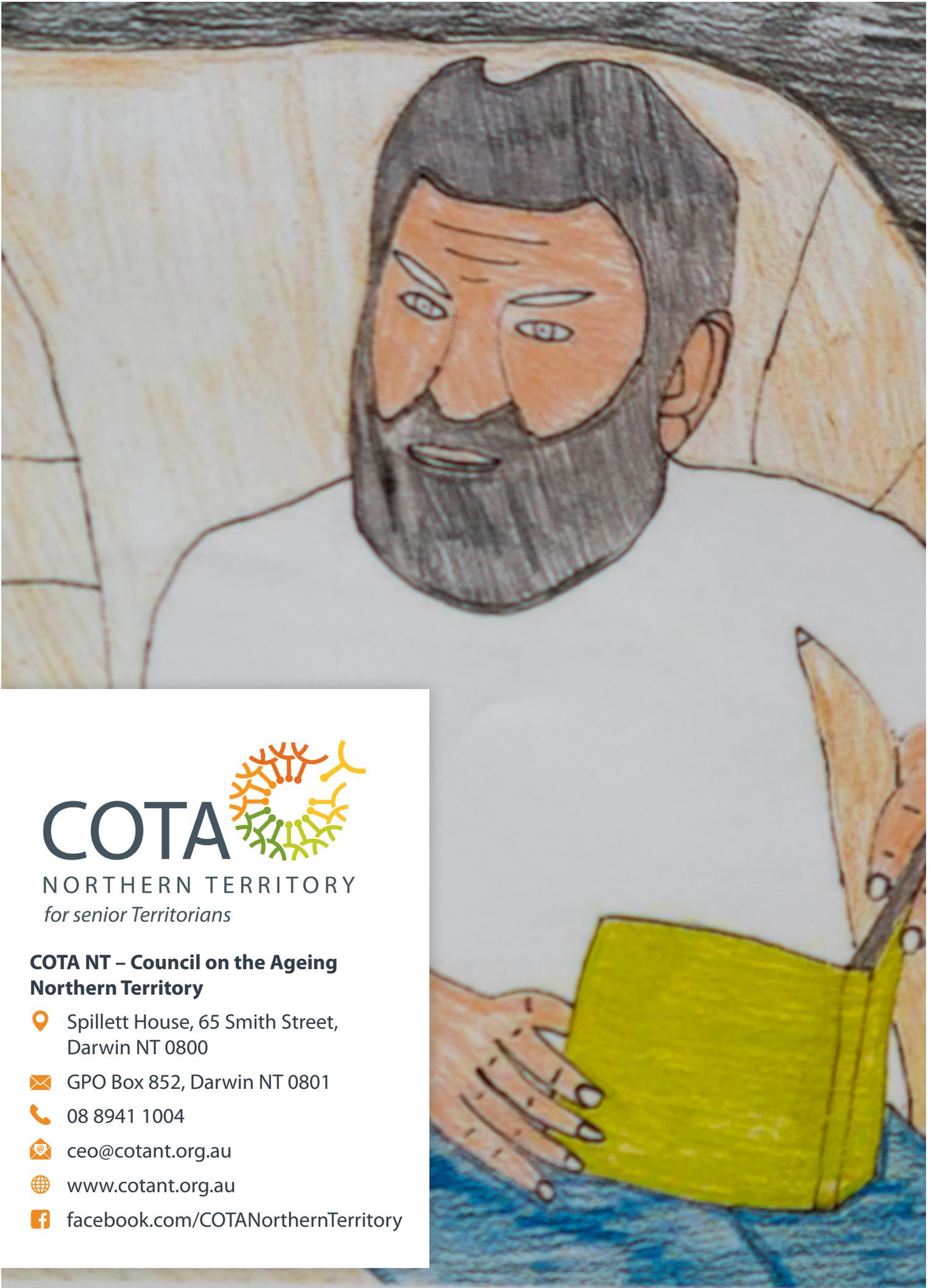


Australian Government



Services
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