



Thriving Queensland
Kids **Partnership**

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Making the most of the First 2000 Days

A roadmap for a better Queensland child development system that changes the odds, closes gaps and improves outcomes for Queensland's youngest and their families

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands upon which we live and work, and their continuing connection to land and sea, and to kin, culture and community. We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present, and to First Nations colleagues.

We are privileged to welcome and grow our children and support our families in these places.

We also acknowledge the First Nations leaders, advocates and organisations that have fought for children and their rights.

We acknowledge the consequences of adversity and trauma experienced at the hands of systems over generations.

We acknowledge the resilience, determination, leadership, generosity and innovation they have long demonstrated.



Signatories to the submission

The following system leaders endorse this Queensland Early Childhood Better Systems Roadmap



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Toward a better Queensland Early Childhood System

Every Queensland child, in every family, in every community, deserves to thrive and deserves a fair go.

Everyone wants Queensland children and young people to have a great start and journey in life. While most of our children do have a chance to thrive, too many don't get a fair go.

At present, Queensland does not have a well-integrated early childhood development system – one that works as a whole. That is not how our multiple systems are usually experienced by children and their families, especially those needing to navigate across maternal and child health, child development, disability, mental health, housing, ECEC, DFV, family support and child protection systems.

The development of this Early Childhood Better Systems Roadmap has brought together knowledge and the perspectives of people from multiple systems, sectors and disciplines from across Queensland and beyond.

There are usually plenty of prescriptions for how particular areas could be improved. This roadmap endeavours to take a big picture – a holistic and systemic view. While its focus is on what governments at all levels can do, it sees all of us – as citizens, caregivers and practitioners from every sector – as actors in the eco-systems that shape children's lives.

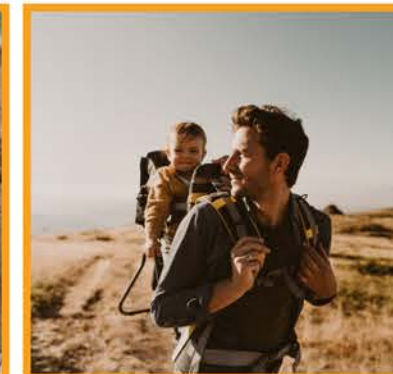
This Roadmap is not a substitute for the new Early Years Strategies that are emerging at national and state levels. We hope that by taking a systems approach, we can positively contribute to these initiatives. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed, and take responsibility for the final report.



Roslyn Dundas
CEO (Acting), ARACY



Michael Hogan
Convenor, TQKP



"You don't get a system if you don't buy a system."

Nancy Mannix, Palix Foundation

*"Programmatic interventions help people beat the odds;
systemic interventions help change their odds."*

Karen Pittman, The Tamarack Institute

The Queensland Early Childhood Better Systems Roadmap

Bringing a child-centred systems perspective to improving wellbeing outcomes across the first 2000 days.

The socioecological perspective, taken from preconception through the first 2000 days, means this is a roadmap for a system that works as a whole. It is designed to pull one or more of six system levers and to shift investment in the domains of The Nest, Australia's wellbeing framework for children and young people. It seeks to take advantage of the current unprecedented national focus on child development to ensure Queensland kids don't get left (further) behind.

Most Queensland children do relatively well; however, Queensland lags behind other Australian jurisdictions in key areas.

A systems perspective addresses the resources and capabilities, policies and processes, the relationships and the power dynamics, and the cultures and mindsets embedded in our systems. Children and families, and the public, get huge benefits when our systems work well. With a huge body of previous and emerging work to draw on from around Australia and beyond, we are in a good position to ensure Queensland children and young people live in an equal society which enables them to flourish, to be treated with kindness, dignity and respect, and to have their rights upheld at all times, in order to thrive.

This roadmap sets out priority actions and priority investments to achieve exactly that.

Priority actions

- 1.1 Clear ministerial responsibility for child, family and community development and wellbeing in Queensland
- 1.2 Whole of community Queensland Early Years Plan / F2000 Days Strategy
- 2.1 Investment reform to achieve better outcomes
- 2.2 Investment reform to close the gap
- 3.1 Better early child development and parenthood support eco-systems
- 4.1 A cross-sectoral workforce capability action plan
- 5.1 Integrated state-wide system of multi-disciplinary child and family services
- 5.2 Extended and integrated Thriving Kids, Thriving Places Initiative
- 6.1 Improved child wellbeing data, evidence and learning

Priority investments

- 7.1 \$120 million over four years for a Great Start, Get Ready initiative for the pre-conception to birth period
- 7.2 \$1.75 billion for a Great Start Postnatal package
- 8.1 \$1.35 billion to increase access to high quality early childhood education & care
- 9.1 Additional support and wellbeing for Queensland parents
- 10.1 Increase support for early childhood services to be culturally appropriate, welcoming and attractive
- 11.1 Increase opportunities for social gatherings & activities with families & friends
- 12.1 Ensure families have access to material basics

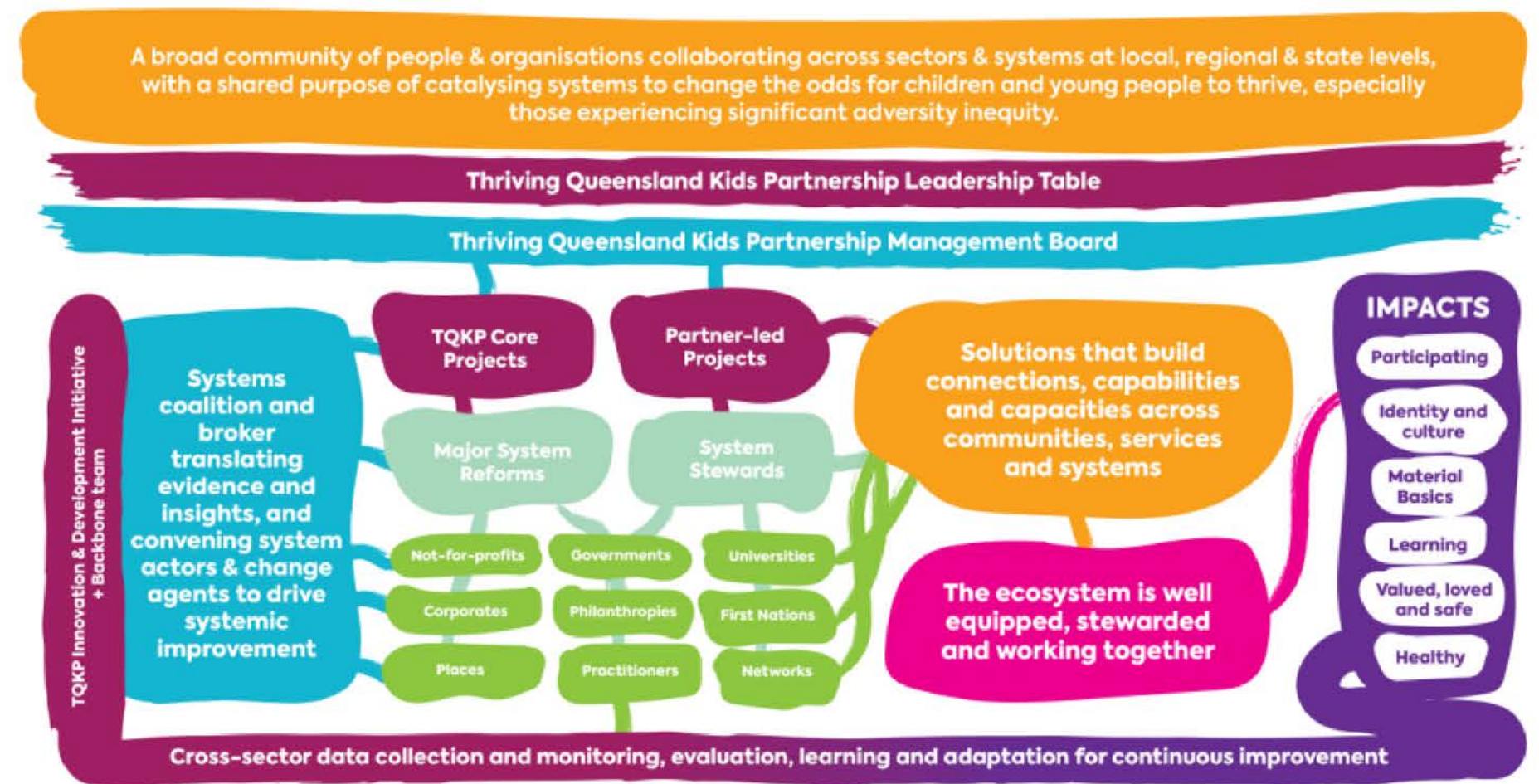
About the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership

Bringing people and knowledge together for multi-sectoral collaboration and action.

The Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP) is a joint initiative of ARACY – the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth – and Queensland leaders and organisations. Established in late 2020 and hosted by ARACY, TQKP is now backed by philanthropic investment from six foundations, which have since formed the Queensland Kids Funders Alliance.

Over the past three years, TQKP has engaged a wide range of Queensland departments and statutory authorities, not-for-profits and community networks, and universities and institutes, as well as leaders and practitioners at all levels, from all sectors and systems. TQKP is progressively building a community of partners, collaborators and networkers.

In mid-2022, TQKP commenced a three-year phase to facilitate ten practical, integrative and developmental initiatives, each with the aim of bringing together key people and organisations, evidence and experience, to join in collaborative work.



QLD child, youth and family ecosystem of individuals, families, communities, organisations, sectors, and systems



Each TQKP initiative is designed to pull one or more of six identified ‘system levers’, and to use one or more of eight identified ‘threads’ to help ‘weave’ our systems together. Each initiative complements others; and each contributes to Queensland Government strategies and community priorities.

This Early Childhood Development Better Systems Roadmap is designed to contribute, to complement and add value to the implementation and evolution of Great Start for Every Child, the Closing the Gap Agreement and other key strategies and plans which touch on the first 2000 days, such as Our Way, Shifting Minds, QHealth32 and Health Equity Strategies.

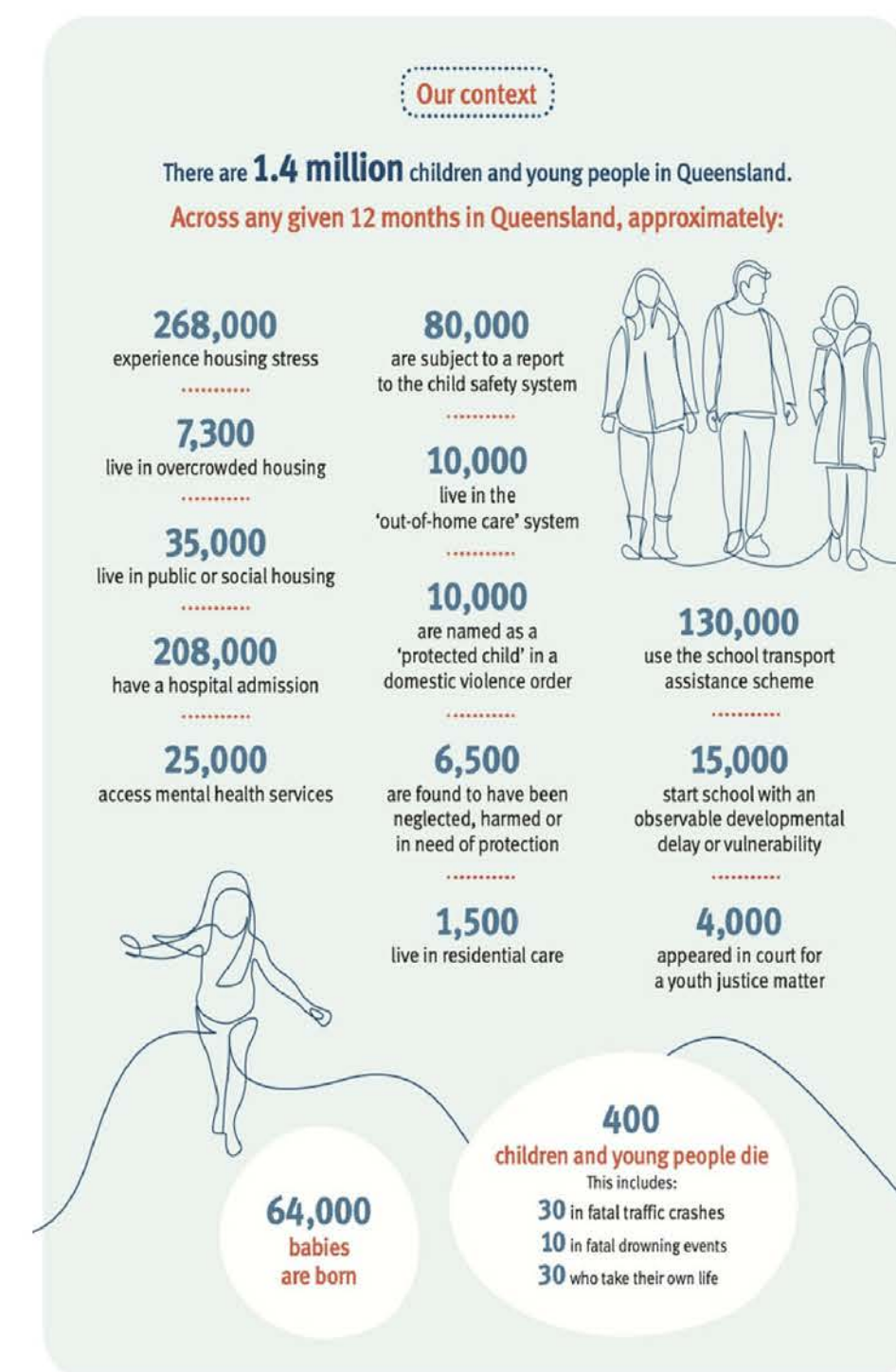


Checking in on how Queensland kids are faring

Catalysing action to change the odds for Queensland kids and their families to thrive.

Most Queensland children do relatively well by national and international standards. However, in key areas, Queensland lags behind other Australian jurisdictions and averages; and Australia lags behind comparable OECD jurisdictions and benchmarks. As always, there is room for improvement, and in some key areas, a pressing need and sound case for urgent action and investment.

- Nearly 1 in 5 (111,043) Queensland children aged zero to eight years live in highly socio-economically disadvantaged areas with limited access to social and material resources and ability to participate in society.
- While improvements since 2009 have been significant, over 1 in 4 of all children, and 42.5 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, are currently assessed as vulnerable in one or more of the five domains on the AEDC (2018). Nationally 1 in 5 children are developmentally vulnerable; in Queensland, it is 1 in 4.
- More than 10,000 babies in 2018 were born outside the healthy weight range (below 2.5kg [7.3%] or above 4.0kg [9.7%]).
- Some communities and groups need support to ensure immunisation rates reach 95 per cent for children at one, two and five years of age, and all need continued support to surpass 95%.
- Children of families experiencing disadvantage are less likely to attend early learning services and maternal and child health services. This means that barriers to achievement start before children have even begun school (Early Years Catalyst, 2022).
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) report that nearly one quarter (23.3 per cent) of long day care services in Queensland have had to apply for staffing exemption waivers, indicating that they cannot find enough qualified staff to fulfill their staffing requirements.
- Perinatal mental health conditions have emerged as significant areas of concern, especially in rural and remote areas of Queensland (QMPQC 2022).
- One in five mothers experience critical psychological distress or mental illness during the perinatal period. Mental illness during the perinatal period is among one of the most preventable and treatable of all mental illnesses, yet Queensland has one of the highest rates of maternal postnatal depression in the country (10.2%).



The time is right for more concerted systems action

As we said at the beginning, everyone wants our kids to have the best possible start and journey in life. Over the past 5 years, we have seen again a growing interest at a local, regional, state and national level on what it takes for children and families and communities to thrive.

This was accelerated by the COVID—19 pandemic and its impacts on families.

The momentum is reflected in the push for national and state inquiries and the push for national and state inquiries and reforms, big investments in ECEC systems (such as Free Kindy for 4-yr olds), and public efforts such as Minderoo Foundation's Thrive By Five campaign.

With this unprecedented national focus on child development, we need to ensure Queensland kids don't get left (further) behind.



TQKP sees a strong appetite to:

- Better support families and communities – so the ‘village can raise a child well’
- Work within and across systems to reduce adversity, support responsive relationships and strengthen core life skills
- Accelerate preventive and early intervention efforts that go upstream to interrupt poor trajectories and cycles that lead into crisis and statutory systems
- Take into service emerging knowledge from science, evidence and experience about what works and what matters
- Build on and bring together existing policy platforms such as the Education-led Great Start and the emergent Health-led work on First 2000 Days
- Get better intergovernmental alignment through National Cabinet and the emerging National Early Years Strategy and early years focus of Closing the Gap
- Leverage the resources and efforts of governments, philanthropies, institutes and communities, such as via the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children
- Ensure our current and future children are better off as we get ready for and leave a legacy from hosting the 2032 Olympics and Paralympic Games.



Using The NEST as the underpinning framework

The Nest is Australia's wellbeing framework for children and young people aged 0 to 24 years. It's a way of seeing the whole child in the context of their daily lives – in their families and communities, underpinned by our systems and environments. It brings together the different elements of what we know it takes for a child or young person to thrive.

Developed by ARACY after extensive engagement and evidence, The Nest conceptualizes wellbeing as six inter-connected domains, each with many elements, that support each other to help children reach their potential. For optimal wellbeing, a child or young person needs to be adequately resourced in all six domains.

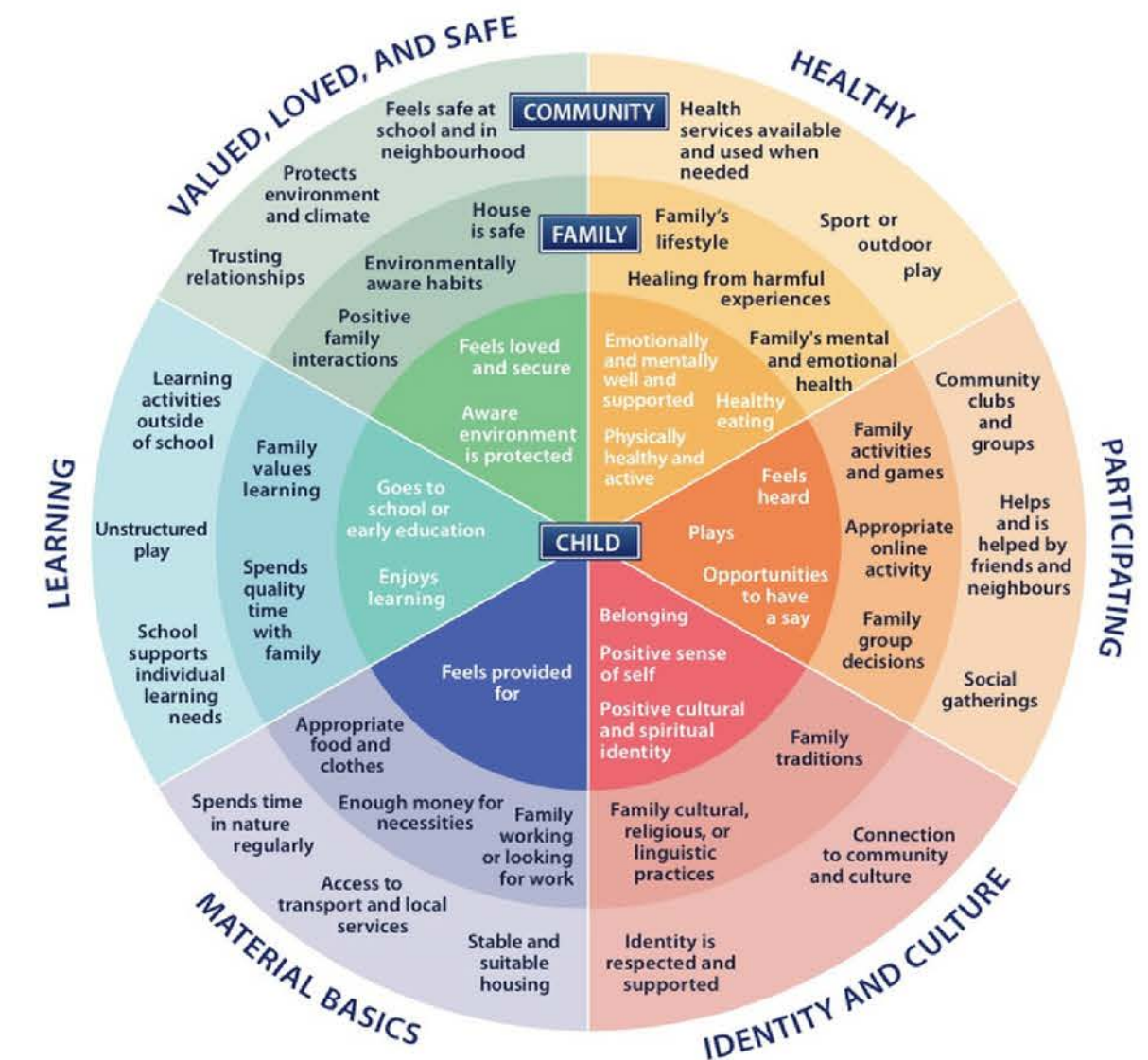
The Nest framework provides a holistic way to understand and take action for child wellbeing at multiple levels, from individual practice through service planning to cohort- and population-level programs and investments, to systems-level leadership.

Across Australia, The Nest is being used as:

- a conceptual framework for the development of strategies at national, state, regional, and local levels
- a tool for community engagement
- a guide to monitoring, evaluating and reporting on children's outcomes
- a means to track student wellbeing in real time, and
- a shared frame for workforce development through The Common Approach.

A growing number of key Queensland entities and initiatives – Children's Health Queensland, Queensland Family and Child Commission, Logan Together, MICAH and Gladstone Region Together – are already using The Nest to increase knowledge and understanding of child wellbeing across sectors and systems.

There will be considerable benefits in more organisations – both government and non-government – aligning strategies and efforts to The Nest as a shared framework, and from using The Nest as the underpinning framework for this Roadmap.



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Taking a systems approach using the TQKP levers

Using the leverage points that enable us to collectively contribute to positive systems change.

What and who surrounds us, and what happens to us, shapes us! Our systems profoundly shape the life opportunities and trajectories of children and their families. They also undergo constant change – through reforms, investments, research, development and innovation. They have been built over generations through policy processes that involve the interplay of public, private and community interests and perspectives. They are now underpinned by massive program, service and infrastructure investment. They involve hundreds of organisations across multiple sectors. They are necessarily complex.

However, with rapidly changing and challenging circumstances, our systems are not always fit for purpose. It is hard to ensure that they are well connected, well geared and well stewarded at every level. Despite the best will and efforts, they aren't easy to shift. Positively, we have seen a strong 'systems' focus, including on stewardship, emerging from within and outside governments in Queensland and elsewhere.

A 'systems approach' addresses the resources and capabilities, policies and processes, the relationships and the power dynamics, and the cultures and mindsets embedded in our systems. It sees us all as part of and actors in these systems.

Children and families, and the public, get huge benefits when our systems work well. They also bear significant costs and consequences from inadequate policies, capabilities and resources, and/or from poor interfaces and integration.

TQKP has adopted the six key levers outlined by the ANZSOG & Every Child joint project on Systems Leadership for Child and Youth Wellbeing, and they are used as a frame for this Qld Early Childhood Development Better Systems Roadmap.





Developing the ECD roadmap

In late 2021, the proposition for TQKP to facilitate a rolling series of life-stage based ‘better systems roadmaps’ was canvassed. We decided to start with the early years. An ECD Systems Roadmap Working Group was formed in early 2022.

With a huge body of previous and emerging work to draw on, the project team and Working Group grounded the development of the Better Systems Roadmap on core science, evidence and experience-based frames from around Australia and beyond.

These included:

- ARACY's Better Systems report, and The Nest and Common Approach
- The Early Years Catalyst / Orange Compass Group Systems Reports
- Harvard Center on the Developing Child's Three Core Principles
- State and Territory strategies such as Tasmania's It Takes a Village and NSW's Brighter Beginnings and First 2000 Days Implementation Strategy
- Murdoch Children's Research Institute's Restacking the Odds
- The South Australian Royal Commission report on Early Childhood
- The ANZSOG / Every Child joint report on Systems Leadership for Child and Youth Wellbeing
- Queensland Clinical Senate's First 2000 Days Symposium Report
- The Centre for Policy Development's Starting Better National Guarantee



Assessing Queensland's ECD system

To inform the development of this Roadmap, TQKP commissioned Accenture to undertake a rapid assessment of the current early childhood development system. This included a review of key data and a survey of systems leaders and actors.

This was not a comprehensive analysis, but a diagnostic exercise using two key frames: TQKP's six system levers, and MCRI's Restacking the Odds.

Two frameworks were combined to assess selected elements of the early childhood system in Queensland from a system and programs lens

1 Six Levers of System Change

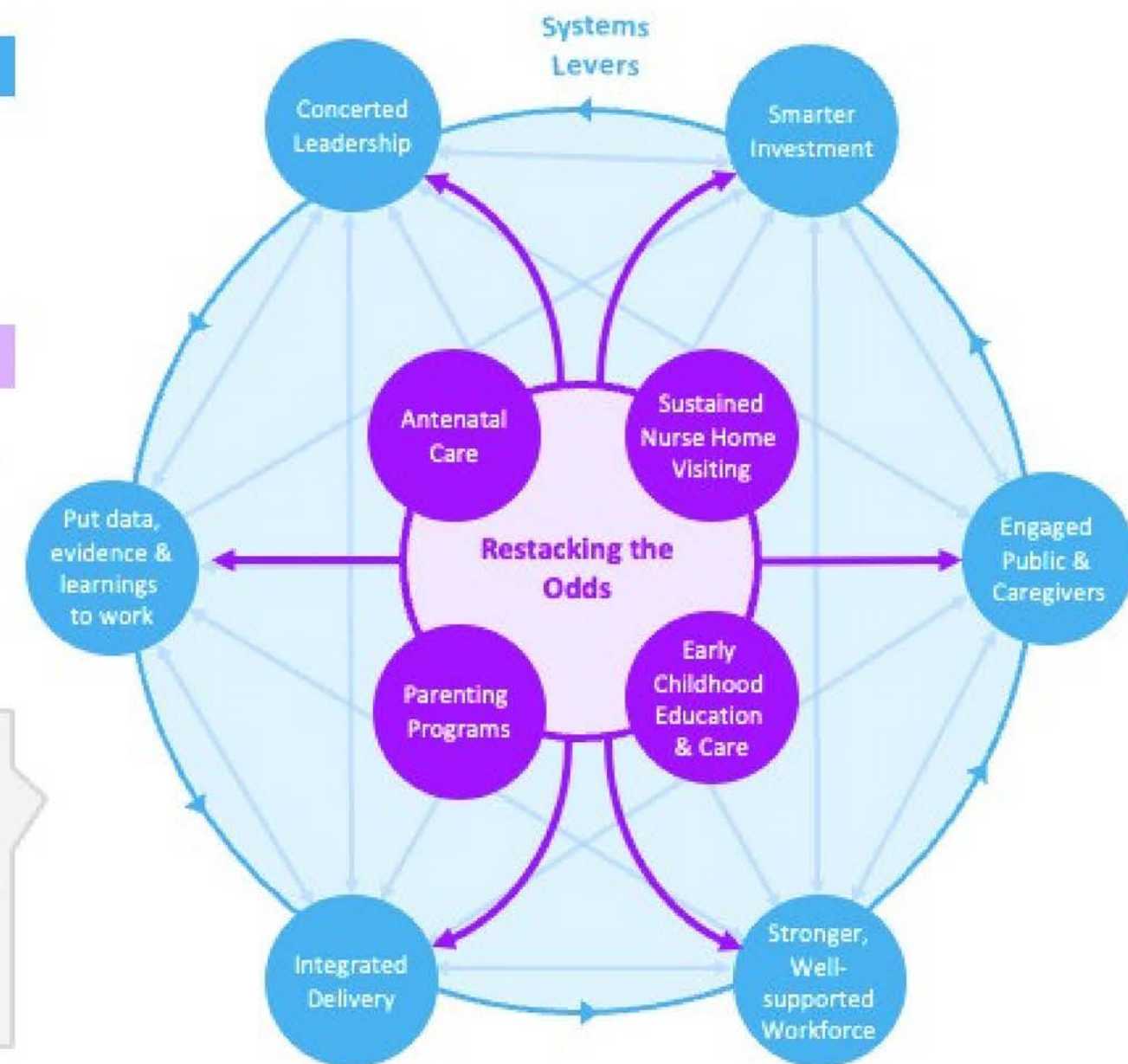
There are many models for systems thinking, leadership, change and reform. The **Six Levers of Systems Change** highlight six critical elements for a **systems approach** to improve childhood wellbeing. By addressing these six elements, sectors and organisations in the Queensland eco-system will be better equipped and stewarded to work together well and support families and communities to raise children.

2 Restacking the Odds

Restacking the Odds (RSTO) focuses on five key evidence-based interventions or platforms in early childhood aiming to address the inequalities which emerge in early childhood and continue into adulthood. The study aims to develop measurable best practice indicators of **quality, quantity and participation** within each of the five initiatives or platforms. This study excludes early years of school as this falls outside the scope of the project which is the first 2000 days.

↑↓ These two best-practice frameworks were selected as the basis of the assessment of the system as together they enable a top-down and bottom-up lens

- **Top down (Six Levers of System Change):** The system level top-down perspective seeks to examine how the elements of the system function to provide the right environment to enable the delivery of better outcomes for children and families.
- **Bottom up (RSTO):** The bottom-up assessment seeks to understand how services and programs are delivered and the degree to which the system elements impact the achievement of outcomes.



Source: [Restacking the Odds](#), [Six Levers of Change](#) Notes: 1. Early years of school has been excluded from the RSTO framework due to the age group of children in the early years of school falls outside the scope of the first 2000 days of a child's life. 2. RSTO has been used as a starting point for a programmatic assessment. RSTO uses a different and broader set of indicators which have not all been included in this assessment due to data availability and time constraints.

Assessing Queensland's ECD system

Current state assessment found that there are opportunities for greater action across a number of system and programmatic domains

Overall Assessment: All 10 domains could benefit from significant focus and investment to achieve future state goals

Whilst there is a strong personal willingness from leaders to be collaborative and innovative, this is not happening across the board. Structural barriers such as funding models, resourcing and the political cycle **limit concerted leadership** in the sector.

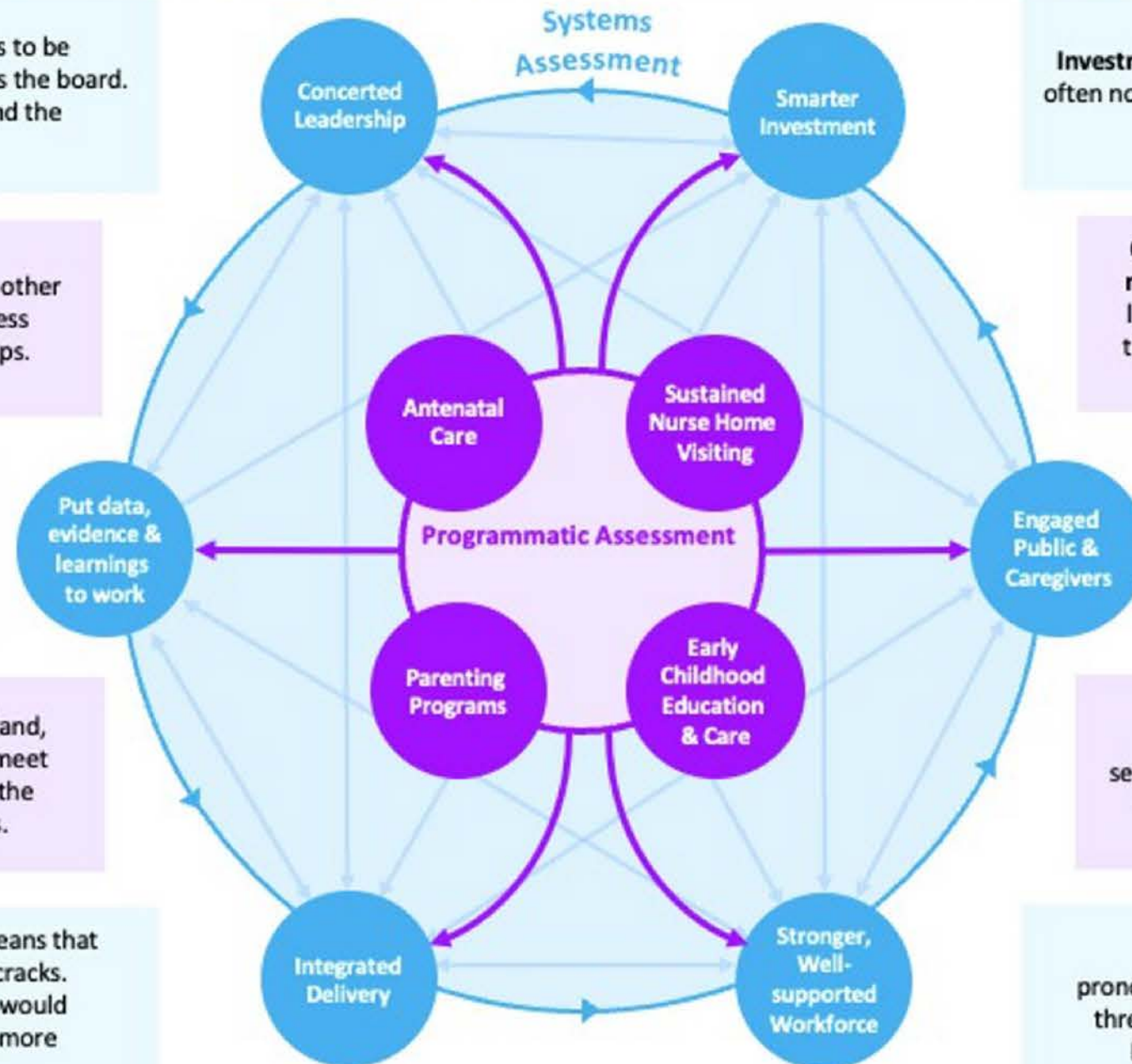
Antenatal health outcomes and access is comparable to other states overall, but significant variation in quality and access exists – particularly for more vulnerable population groups.

Data collection is improving, but the focus remains on outputs rather than outcomes. A concerted focus on outcome evaluation and data sharing is needed, to improve data-driven decision making.

While some quality **parenting programs** exist in Queensland, there is a lack of a suite of evidence-based programs to meet the diverse needs of the community who may not meet the parameters and structure of current parenting programs.

Services are often delivered in a siloed fashion, which means that children and families are more likely to slip through the cracks. Greater collaboration and integration across the system would improve referrals and continuity of care, which requires more resources.

Systems
Assessment



Investment in early childhood regularly occurs in a siloed fashion, is often not based on data-driven evaluation and is typically short-term in nature, all of which inhibits a systems approach.

Queensland has some examples of **effective sustained home nursing programs**, but these are limited in size and offered in limited areas. There is a need for a suite of programs to meet the varying needs throughout Queensland and accommodate cultural and family needs

The **public's** perceived value of the childhood development system is largely underdevelopment, and programs and services are often designed to meet the needs of the system, rather than the family.

Quality and access to **early childhood education and care** across Queensland could be improved significantly. Many services don't meet quality standards and accessibility is low in rural and regional areas and for more vulnerable population groups.

Workforce shortages exist across the system but are most pronounced in regional, rural and low-socioeconomic areas which threatens the ongoing effectiveness and viability of the services. Digital and cultural sensitivity skills are lacking in some areas.

➤ Overall assessment based on stakeholder assessment (survey) of progress towards each future state goal with additional quantitative data and survey insights to support this assessment. See appendix for method.

A promise worth keeping

Principles and attributes of a world-class ECD system

- TQKP and our partners and collaborators think that Scotland have set out a great systems approach that we can use to guide us in our ambition to improve outcomes for Queensland kids.

Getting it Right for Every Child is the Scottish Government's commitment to provide all children, young people and their families with the right support at the right time - so that every child and young person in Scotland can reach their full potential.

We have adapted from Scotland a statement of key principles and attributes to ensuring children and young people live in an equal society which enables them to flourish, to be treated with kindness, dignity and respect, and to have their rights upheld at all times, in order to thrive.

Principles	Attributes	Principles	Attributes
Child-centred	Services and supports should put children – their developmental needs, relationships, abilities, and resources – viewed holistically, at the centre of design and decision-making. Services and supports should be rooted in an approach of ‘getting it right for every child’. Children’s rights should be a lens through which all decisions are made.	Preventive, proportionate and flexible	Services and supports should be designed to reduce adversities and toxic stress. Early help should be universally and freely available. Flexible, responsive and proportionate support should be available to families as soon as they need it, and for as long as it is required, tailored to aid development and prevent problems worsening. Support should adapt to changing needs.
Whole of family	Wherever necessary, services and supports should be wrapped around the whole of family – considering each person’s individual and their collective needs. This requires relevant join up with adult services & whole system, place based, preventative approaches addressing adversities and inequalities.	Developmental and non-stigmatising	Services and supports should be designed to build the relationships, resources and capabilities of children and their families. Support should be promoted and provided free from stigma and judgement. Help seeking and supports should be as normalised as accessing universal services.
Needs-based	Services and supports should be tailored to fit around each individual family, not be driven by rigid services or structures. It should cover the spectrum of support from universal services, more tailored support for development and wellbeing, and intensive supports.	Whole of community	Services and supports should respect and enable community assets, connections and informal supports, and enable collaborative and inclusive, whole of community, and place-based approaches to child development and wellbeing.
Family’s voice	At a systems, program and individual level, families should be meaningfully involved in the design, delivery, evaluation and continuous improvement of services and supports. These should be based on trusted relationships between families and professionals and peers, working together with mutual respect.	Collaborative and seamless	Services and supports should be multi-agency and joined-up across services, sectors and systems, with well-designed common platforms, tools and information-sharing protocols. Families shouldn’t experience multiple, unproductive referrals or inconsistent support, nor have to repeatedly tell their story.
Assets- and strengths-based	Services and supports should be empowering, building on existing strengths within the family and their wider communities. Families should be able to ‘reach in’ not be ‘referred to’. Support must be explicitly connected to locations that work for local families and their communities.	Skilled and supported workforces	Our early childhood development workforces deserve to be well remunerated, supported and respected. Services and supports should be informed by common and contemporary understandings of attachment, trauma, resilience, inequity and poverty across workforces in all child and family systems. Staff and organisations should be enabled to work in multi-disciplinary, inter-sectoral ways, and be enabled to be collaborative and innovative in responding to families and their children. Staff organisations should be culturally capable.
Whole of systems	Systems should be well aligned, connected, geared and stewarded at all levels, with: strong cultures and capabilities for learning and improvement; shared accountability for outcomes; incentives for joined up approaches; and non-siloed and proportionate investments, equitably allocated and co-commissioned, matching contexts and scale of need.		

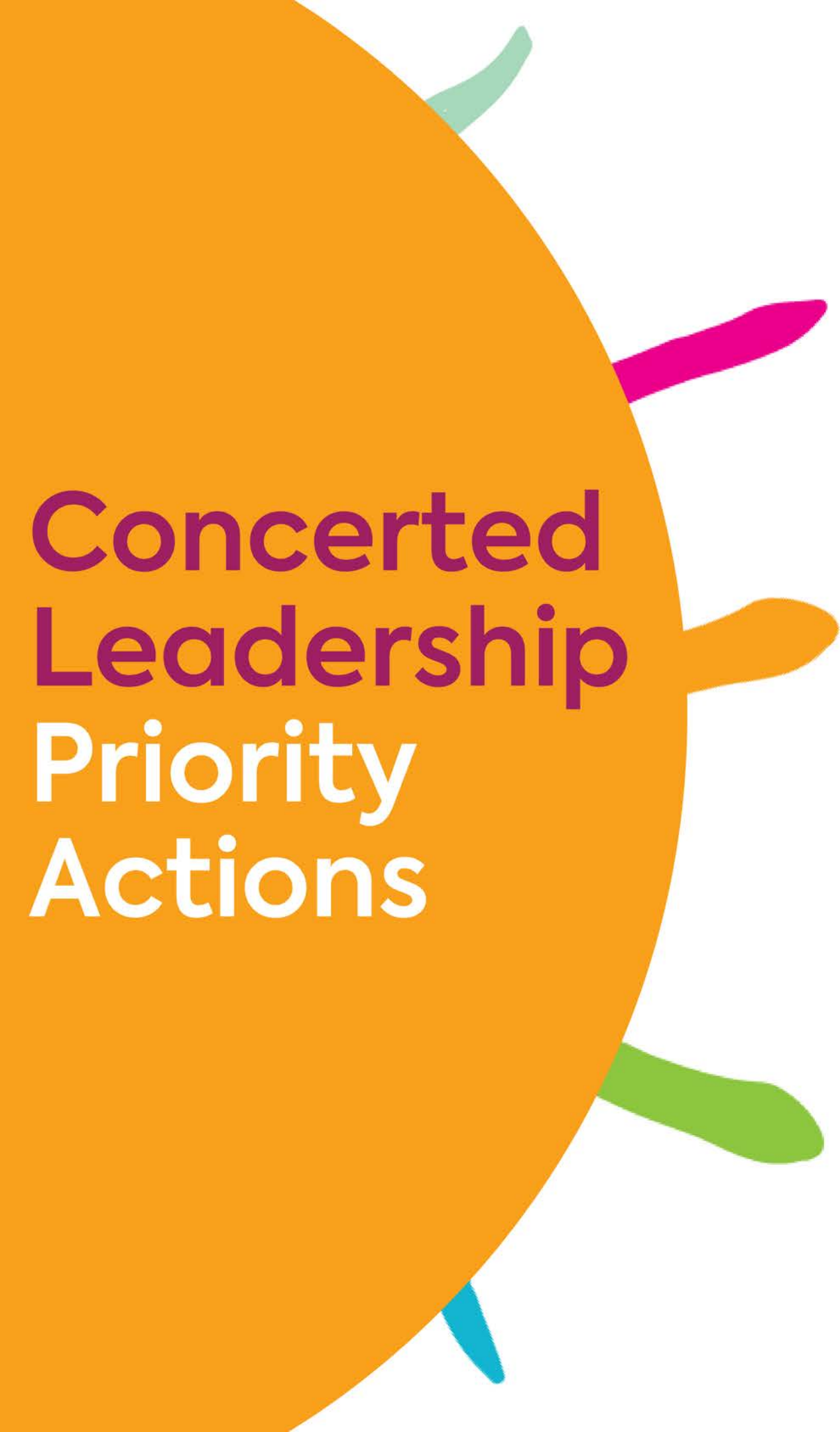
What's driving TQKP?



Thriving Queensland
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Priority actions using the six systems levers





Concerted Leadership Priority Actions

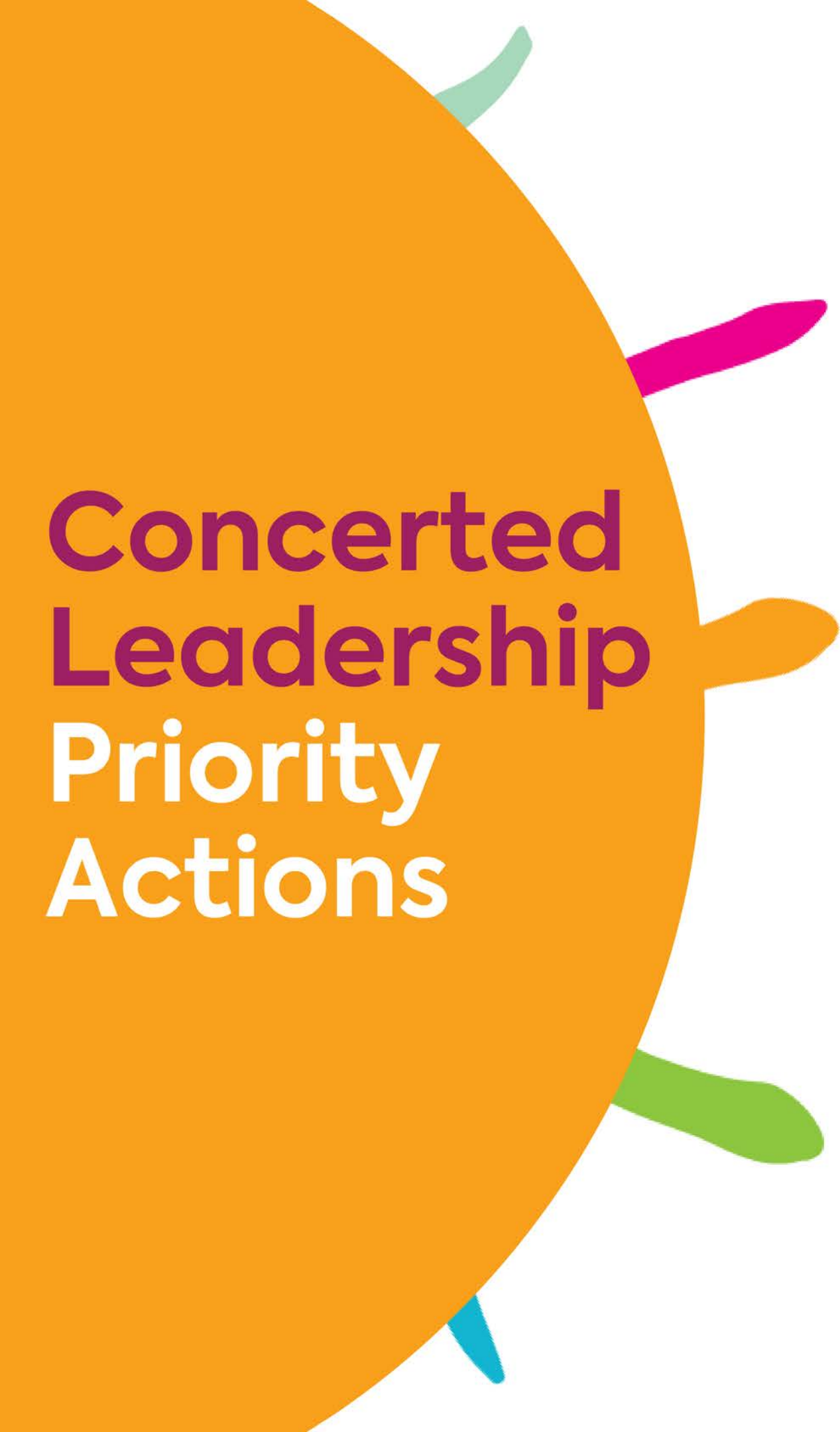
1.1 Create clear Ministerial responsibility for child development and wellbeing in Queensland, including the early years:

Key system change

- 1.1.1 The Premier designates a **Minister for Children, Families and Communities** with cross-portfolio leadership explicitly stipulating **leadership and support responsibilities** for child, family and community development and coordination responsibility and resources, and issue revised Ministerial Charter letters to all Ministers and wellbeing relevant to their portfolios.

Implementation detail

- 1.1.2 The Premier and Minister for Children, Families and Communities jointly lead development of a new whole of community, cross-sector Qld Early Years Plan 2.0 / Great Start First 2000 Days Strategy.
- 1.1.3 The Minister for Children, Families and Communities establish and chair an interdisciplinary **Queensland Council on the Developing Child** – comprising leading practitioners, researchers, experts, system and mobilisation suitable for the Queensland context.
- 1.1.4 The Premier and Treasurer, in conjunction with the Prime Minister and Federal Treasurer, and relevant portfolio Ministers, cooperate to **align and link the Queensland and National** Early Years Strategies and all ECD-related national agreements and related investments – such as for ECEC, health, mental health, violence prevention, disability and housing.
- 1.1.5 The Premier adjust the Cabinet Handbook to provide specific guidance about the assessment of and advice regarding impacts of policy and infrastructure proposals on children, families and communities in **Impact Assessment processes**.
- 1.1.6 The Queensland Government collaborates with philanthropies, the corporate sector, and intermediaries such as Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership, to support development of a **Business Building Childhoods initiative**, akin to the Business Roundtable initiative of the Princess of Wales Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood Development.



Concerted Leadership Priority Actions

1.2 A new whole of community Queensland Early Years Plan / F2000 Days Strategy enabled by cross-sectoral engagement, planning and implementation at local, regional and state levels.

Key system change

- 1.2.1 The Queensland Government, through the Departments of Premier and Cabinet, Communities, Health and Education, jointly lead development of a new whole of community, cross-sectoral **Queensland Early Years Plan / First 2000 Days Strategy** – by mid 2024 – in conjunction with the community, philanthropic and corporate sectors.

Implementation approach

- 1.2.2 This new QEYP should adopt **The Nest as a shared outcomes framework**, as well as an explicit capability and resilience development focus. This should provide effective pathways for the voice of children and families to be heard in design, development and implementation decision-making at local, regional and state levels.
- 1.2.3 The Queensland Government, with support from the Australian Government, co-develop by the end of 2024 First 2000 Days **implementation plans for each region** of Queensland. These should be facilitated by DPC and Local Governments, First Nations, caregiver and consumer, and non-government service organisations. These should link with local Birth to Five plans developed through Connect for Children networks and be supported by regional investment planning and commissioning.
- 1.2.4 The Queensland Government, with the Australian Government through the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), support the First Nations-led **Thriving First Nations Kids Strategy** being developed by Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) in conjunction with communities, leaders and other community-controlled organisations.
- 1.2.5 The Public Service Commission assists all Queensland Government agencies to include in all relevant executive and managerial **position descriptions and performance agreements and plans**, explicit responsibilities and accountabilities to contribute to achievement of the shared outcomes framework in the F2000 Days Strategy.
- 1.2.6 The Queensland Government, with support from the Australian and local governments, leverages recent regional governance reforms to reconfigure existing regional managers groups, regional child and youth networks, local Service Level Alliances, and local Communities for Children and Connect for Children networks, to align and **streamline roles and responsibilities** for implementation of the First 2000 Days Strategy, and other key cross-sectoral child, youth and family-related strategies.



Smarter Investment Priority Actions

2.1 Investment reform to achieve better outcomes

Key system change

- 2.1.1 Queensland Government, in conjunction with the Australian Government, and with Australian and Queensland philanthropies, establish a **Queensland Children and Families Endowment Fund**, funded by new investment and possibly, a small **Queensland Child Endowment Levy** on existing programs.

Implementation approach

- 2.1.2 The Queensland Children and Families Endowment Fund should co-invest in innovation, research and development, community engagement, digital and other infrastructure, service integration and place-based backbone teams to facilitate early child development initiatives.
- 2.1.3 The Queensland Government consider enabling the Queensland Children and Families Endowment Fund to act as a **commissioning** agent on behalf of portfolio Ministers and agencies, including the Australian Government, to streamline the planning, requirements, scheduling and management of funding processes.
- 2.1.4 Queensland Treasury, in conjunction with relevant agencies, **review funding program processes** over 2023-24 to assess the transaction costs of doing business with the Government and identify practical measures to streamline processes and to reduce red tape, including consideration of extending the duration of contracts with high quality providers.
- 2.1.5 Relevant Queensland Government agencies, in conjunction with Treasury, undertake a **rolling program review** – over the 2024 to 2026 budget cycles– of early child development and wellbeing funding programs to update the evidence-based design (if necessary), explore opportunities to rationalise (without withdrawing funding), ensure equity and upstream investment in prevention, consider scaling high impact programs and align programs to whole-of-government strategy.
- 2.1.6 Whether or not the Queensland Children and Families Endowment Fund is established and acts as a coordinating agent for communities, Queensland Treasury should facilitate trials of **regionally and locally based cross-agency commissioning** to enable proper community engagement, local level collaboration and decision making, and flexible commissioning approaches.



Smarter Investment Priority Actions

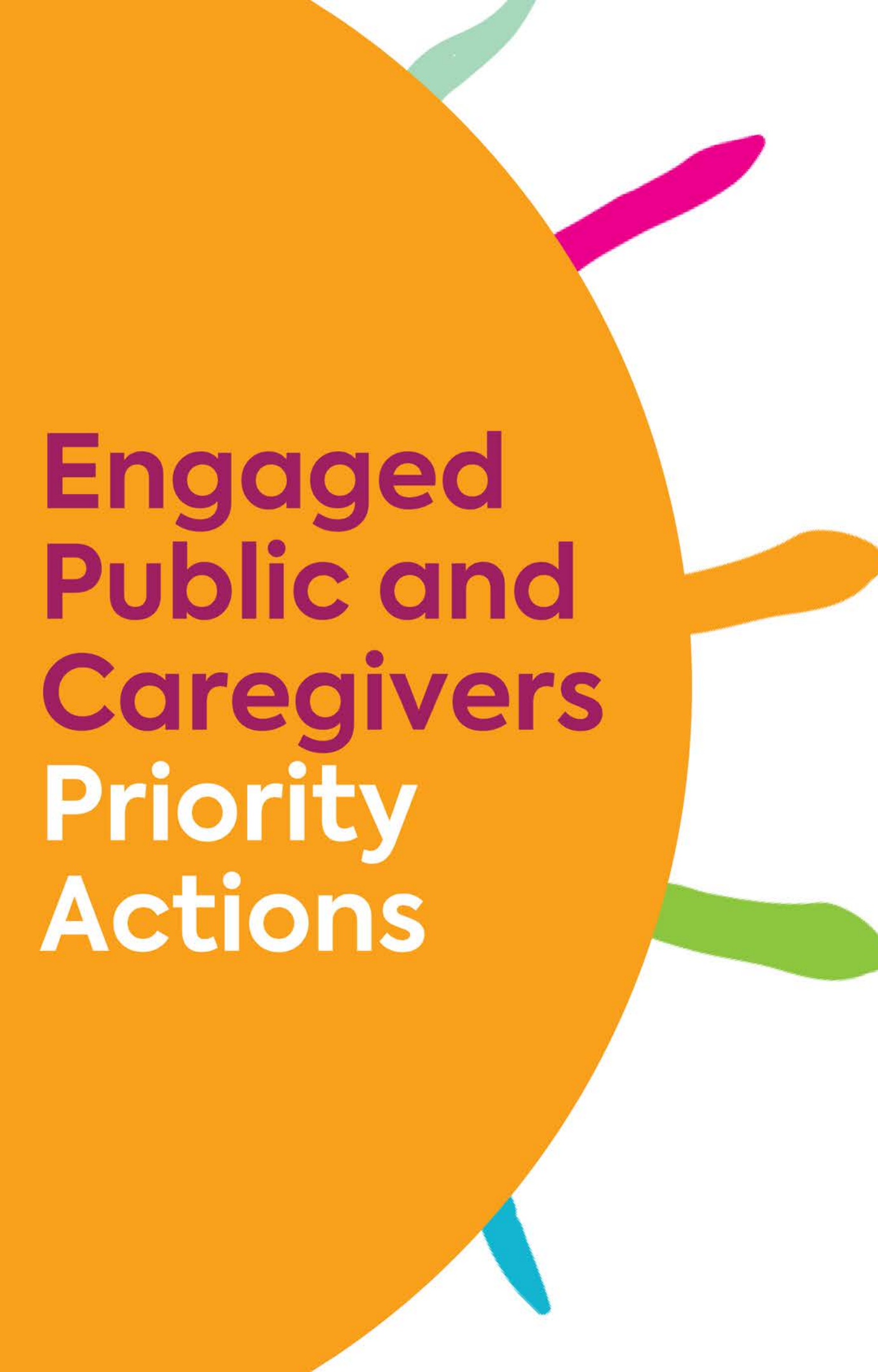
2.2 Investment reform to close the gap

Key system change

- 2.2.1 The Queensland Government establishes a **Queensland Deadly Families Investment Fund and Great Start Early Years Building Fund** to give First Nations and developmentally vulnerable children better access to quality early years services.

Implementation approach

- 2.2.2 The Queensland and Australian Governments establish a **Queensland Deadly Families Investment Fund**, co-designed and delivered with First Nations community-controlled organisations and local decision-making bodies established through Local Thriving Communities, to support the expansion of:
- Birthing on Country / Birthing in Our Community collaboratives with HHSs
 - First Nations Child and Maternal Hubs
 - First Nations playgroups
 - Family wellbeing services
 - Home visiting and peer support
 - Deadly Kindies
 - First Nations Hubs and Early Years Places
- 2.2.3 The Queensland Deadly Families Investment Fund should provide **longer-term investment** into the systems and services which support First Nations child development to allow community controlled organisations to establish, implement and evaluate support services, and make informed decisions on how these initiatives can grow and change according to community needs.
- 2.2.4 The Queensland Government invests \$1 billion over 4 years through a **Great Start Early Years Building Fund** to transform early years infrastructure in Queensland. The Fund should be used in areas with most child development vulnerability to build or renovate:
- local child and family centres
 - integrated community or school-based early learning centres that combine early learning with wrap around supports
 - child and family hubs on school sites
 - upgrades to play spaces
 - early learning service buildings in areas where it's hard to attract investment.



Engaged Public and Caregivers Priority Actions

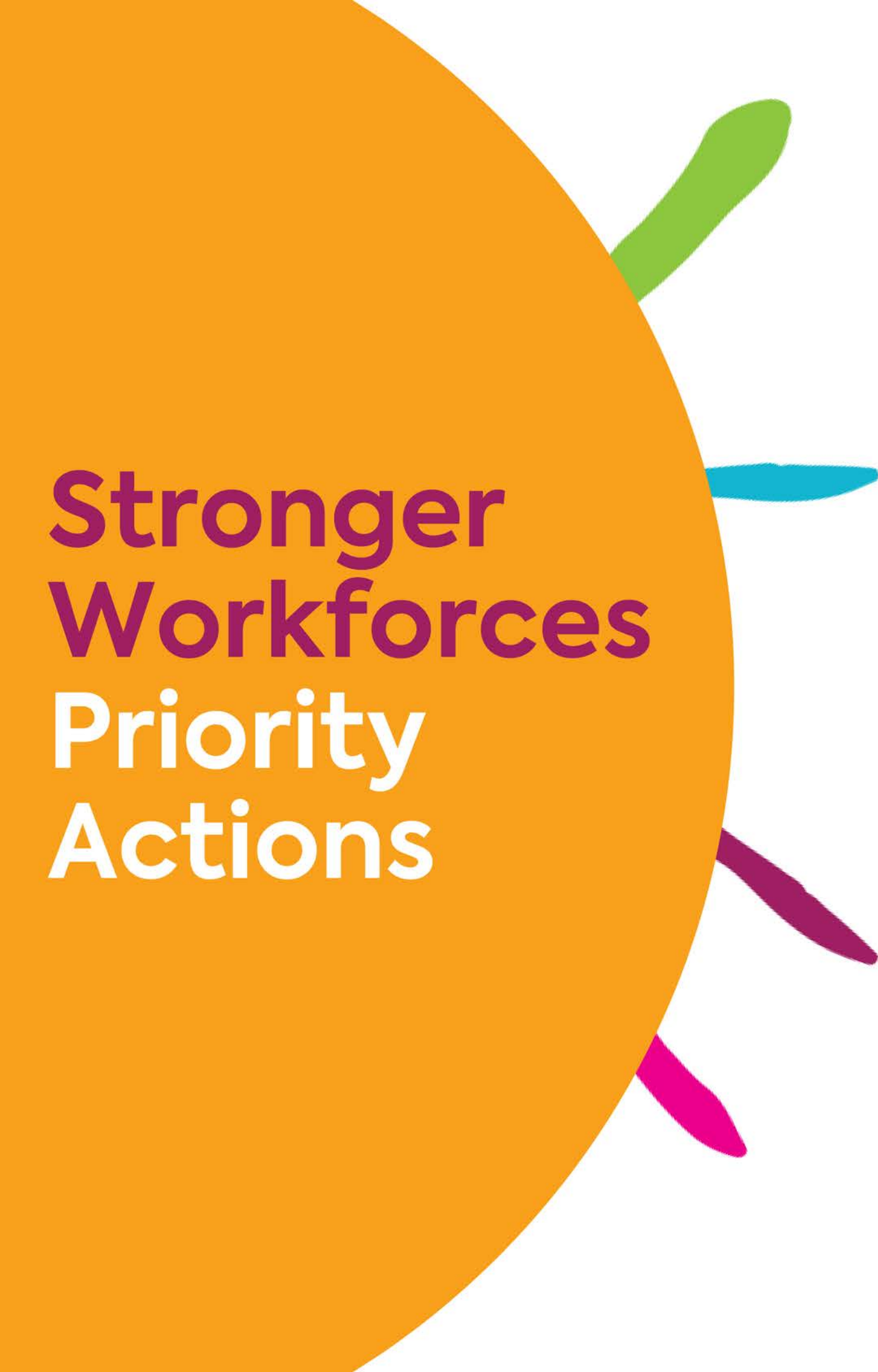
3.1 Co-develop and deliver better state-wide and locally adapted early child development and parenthood support eco-systems

Key system change

- 3.1.1 The Queensland Government co-design and co-deliver an integrated **Great Start for Queensland Kids Plan** which includes a **public and caregiver education and information initiative**, backed by an investment of \$20M over four years, in collaboration with credible providers, to provide a trusted source of information, education, training and support for caregivers and workforces about the First 2000 Days.

Implementation approach

- 3.1.2 The Great Start for Queensland Kids initiative should provide a comprehensive First 2000 days **web-based platform and app** across ages and stages from pre-pregnancy through to school.
- cooperating with existing trusted platforms such as Raising Children Network, Bright Tomorrows
 - using the latest insights from child development sciences and evidence on brains and bodies
 - using the latest evidence on what works in framing, learning and translating to enable understanding, knowledge and use
 - promoting uptake of essential and available local and other supports across the first 2000 days across Queensland
 - extending the successful Connect2U initiative led by Children's Health Queensland.
- 3.1.3 The Great Start for Kids Plan should be enabled through a **whole of government partnership**, jointly led by the Departments of Education and Health, together with the key statutory bodies such as Children's Health Queensland, Health and Wellbeing Queensland, the Queensland Family and Child Commission, the Queensland Mental Health Commission and the State Library of Queensland.
- 3.1.4 The Queensland Government co-invest \$5M in the **Thriving Kids Brain Builders Initiative**, in conjunction with philanthropies and Queensland institutes, to mobilise and translate the rapidly emerging insights from neurosciences and related fields in caregiver and community information and workforce development.
- 3.1.5 The Great Start for Queensland Kids Plan should enable **local collaborations** to adapt and deploy caregiver and community information, and utilise existing infrastructure including local libraries, ECEC services, Neighbourhood Centres, primary care services, Child and Family Hubs, schools, businesses, Connect for Children networks and others.



Stronger Workforces Priority Actions

4.1 Develop and deliver a cross-sectoral Great Start Workforce Capability Action

Key system change

4.1.1 A comprehensive **Great Start Workforce Capability Action Plan (CAP)** should be developed, commissioned by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training and Jobs Queensland, with other agencies and authorities, to support ECD workforce capability and wellbeing.

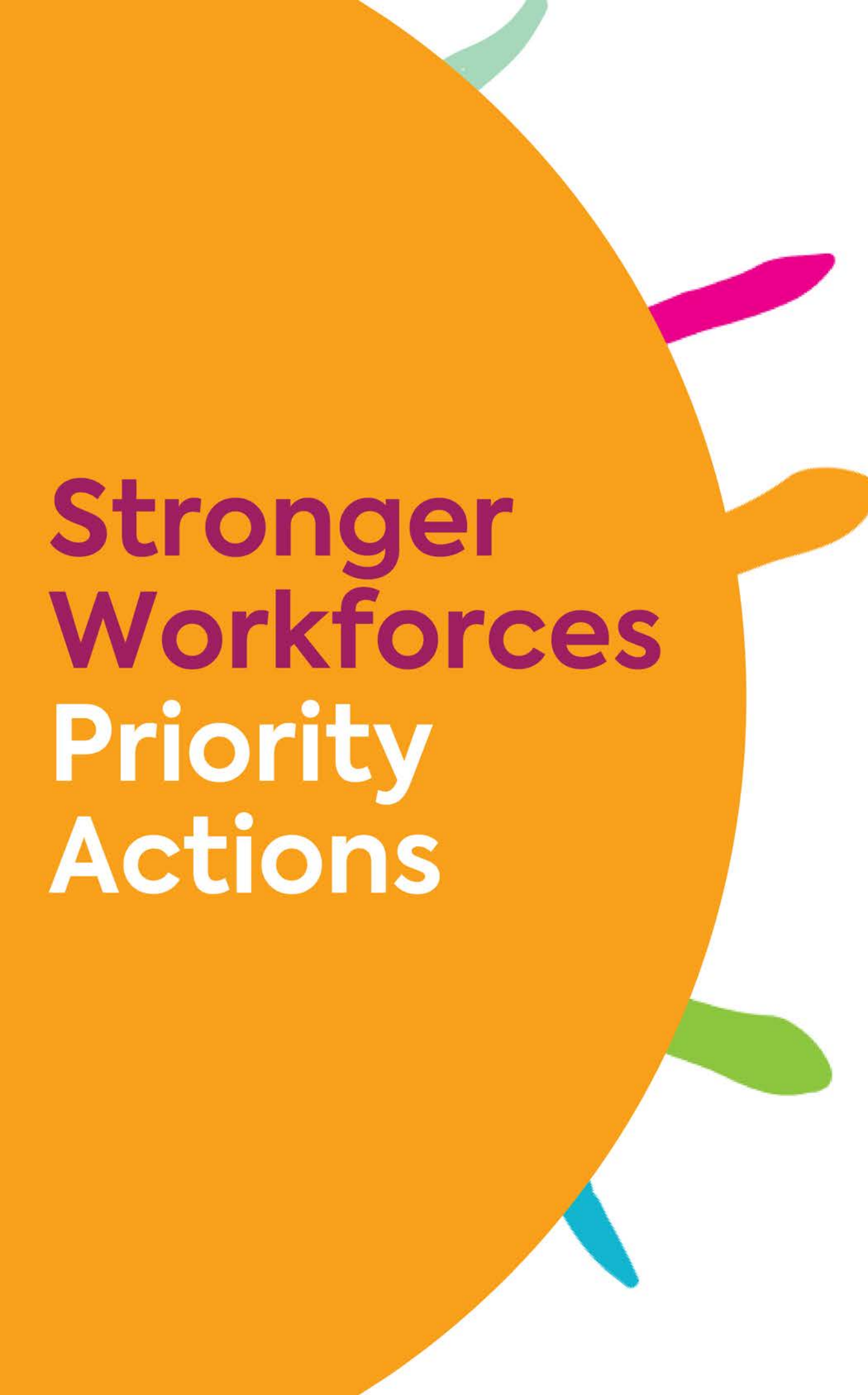
Implementation approach

4.1.2 The CAP should bring together evidence-based approaches to mobilising contemporary and common knowledge, language and skills across all ECD-related workforces.

4.1.3 The CAP should:

- **link to existing and emerging workforce strategies** and initiatives related to Mental Health & Wellbeing, ECEC Workforce, First Nations' health and family wellbeing, Child and Maternal Health, Disability and Child Safety and Safeguarding
- **leverage existing infrastructure and networks** such as TAFE Queensland; the Centre for Child Health and Wellbeing; Project Echo and other teams and platforms provided by Children's Health Queensland; the Emerging Minds e-learning hub; as well as social enterprise providers such as Yiliyapinya Indigenous Corporation and Pathways to Resilience, Queensland Child and Youth Clinical Network, et al
- influence both **workforce standards** and **competency and accreditation bodies** and the content of **pre-service and in-service courses and qualifications** provided through TAFE Qld, each of the relevant faculties in Queensland's public universities, and private and NFP registered training providers,
- provide organisational level workforce development **implementation planning and support** tools,
- support a **Great Start Institute and Collaborative** of tertiary, not-for-profit and other providers and ECD-related organisation's workforce development teams, and
- support cross-agency and sectoral **organisational and workforce development** at a local level.

4.1.4 **Existing professional development and training courses should be reviewed** by relevant bodies to identify opportunities to update and strengthen the currency, quality and commonality of existing programs.



Stronger Workforces Priority Actions

4.2 Develop and deliver ECD workforce development initiatives

- 4.2.1 The Queensland and Australian Governments should invest in **pre-and in-service professional development** on neuroscience and trauma-informed, learning, and family- and child-centred care, which should be available to all staff in education, care and health and other ECD-related systems and sectors.
- 4.2.2 The Queensland and Australian Governments should invest in a **First Nations workforce development strategy** in both the tertiary and vocational sectors to train First Nations people as Early Childhood Educators.
- 4.2.3 Tertiary and vocational education and training providers should **review the content of courses** that train early childhood development workforces and identify gaps in content that covers First Nations and CALD cultural competencies, understanding of trauma informed and neuro-informed practice, and digital skills.
- 4.2.4 The tertiary education sector should consider offering cross-disciplinary **Early Childhood Development undergraduate and postgraduate courses** qualifications (not currently available).
- 4.2.5 The Queensland Government should jointly facilitate a review with tertiary education providers of **prerequisites for early childhood development qualifications** to identify areas which are blocking upskilling and career progression through the early childhood system.
- 4.2.6 The Queensland Government should **increase the compensation** received by education and care professionals to supervise and train tertiary students who are on ECD-related placements in childcare, schools or health and hospital facilities and other ECD-related settings.
- 4.2.7 The Queensland Government should **ensure remuneration parity** for early childhood teachers equivalent across school, kindergarten and long day care settings and health professionals between public and private sectors.
- 4.2.8 The Queensland Government should review the effectiveness and fairness of **relocation incentives, scholarships** and supports to identify ways to increase uptake of ECD positions in rural and remote areas.
- 4.2.9 The Queensland Government and relevant education providers should review **Child Health Nursing (CHN) training and pathways** to allow for increased uptake and cross-over of nurses and midwives into CHN to alleviate CHN shortage, ageing workforce and training requirements.
- 4.2.10 The Queensland Government should develop a **mentoring program** to engage older, potentially retired early childhood educators and health care workers in the workforce and pass on skills and knowledge to younger teachers and carers, while also alleviating workforce pressures.



Integrated Delivery Priority Actions

5.1 Establish an integrated state-wide system of multi-disciplinary and readily navigable Great Start Child and Families Services

Key system change

- 5.1.1 The Queensland and Australian Governments should invest, through the proposed Queensland Child Endowment Fund or otherwise, in a state-wide network of **Great Start Child and Family Hubs and Spokes Initiatives**, encompassing all the various current models and varieties of community, school and health-based child and family hubs.

Implementation approach

- 5.1.2 The initiative should build on and leverage existing programs and services, as well as work already done, to build well-connected and geared eco-systems of supports and services in communities such as Logan. This should use Restacking the Odds and needs-based funding frameworks to ensure reasonable and necessary investment.
- 5.1.3 The Queensland and Australian Governments should invest in a **Great Start Hubs and Spokes Capability Initiative** to facilitate better integration and build capability for evidence-informed community engagement, service models, practice frameworks, workforce development, digital and other infrastructure for integrated service system initiatives.
- 5.1.4 The Queensland and Australian Governments should invest in **co-located and flexible inter-disciplinary models** that bring together or better link midwifery, parenting support, community paediatric and other child, maternal & family health and wellbeing services, allied health, ECEC, and social and financial and other support services.
- 5.1.5 The Queensland and Australian Governments should invest in a network of community-based **Great Start early childhood navigator positions** to help families navigate the many supports and services in the system. Initial focus should be to support families at-risk and/or with complex needs engaging multiple systems such as child and maternal health, disability, mental health, ECEC, family wellbeing and child protection.
- 5.1.6 Deliver a Queensland **Great Start Child Health and Development Referral Pathway and Digital Red Book** to enable effective transitions from antenatal care to child health and related services for all families through shared digital platforms and tools to address the complexity, fragmentation and discontinuity of care,, inclusive of primary health care, NDIS, specialist/intensive health and developmental services (e.g. ENTs, OTs, SP, psychologists), and adult services that involve families or children e.g. services.



Integrated Delivery Priority Actions

5.2 Establish an extended and integrated Thriving Kids, Thriving Places Initiative

Key system change

5.2.1 The Queensland Government and the Australian Government co-invest in an expanded **Thriving Kids, Thriving Places Initiative** that builds on, integrates and extends existing and emerging Queensland's child-focused, place-based F2000 days initiatives.

Implementation approach

5.2.2 Queensland should invest an additional \$50M over 4 years in **backbone teams in 20 local communities** and supporting infrastructure. This would build on and encompass existing placed-based initiatives, including:

- Connect for Children
- Communities for Children
- Stronger Places, Stronger People, and
- other place-based F2000 days initiatives, including those supported by Primary Health Networks.

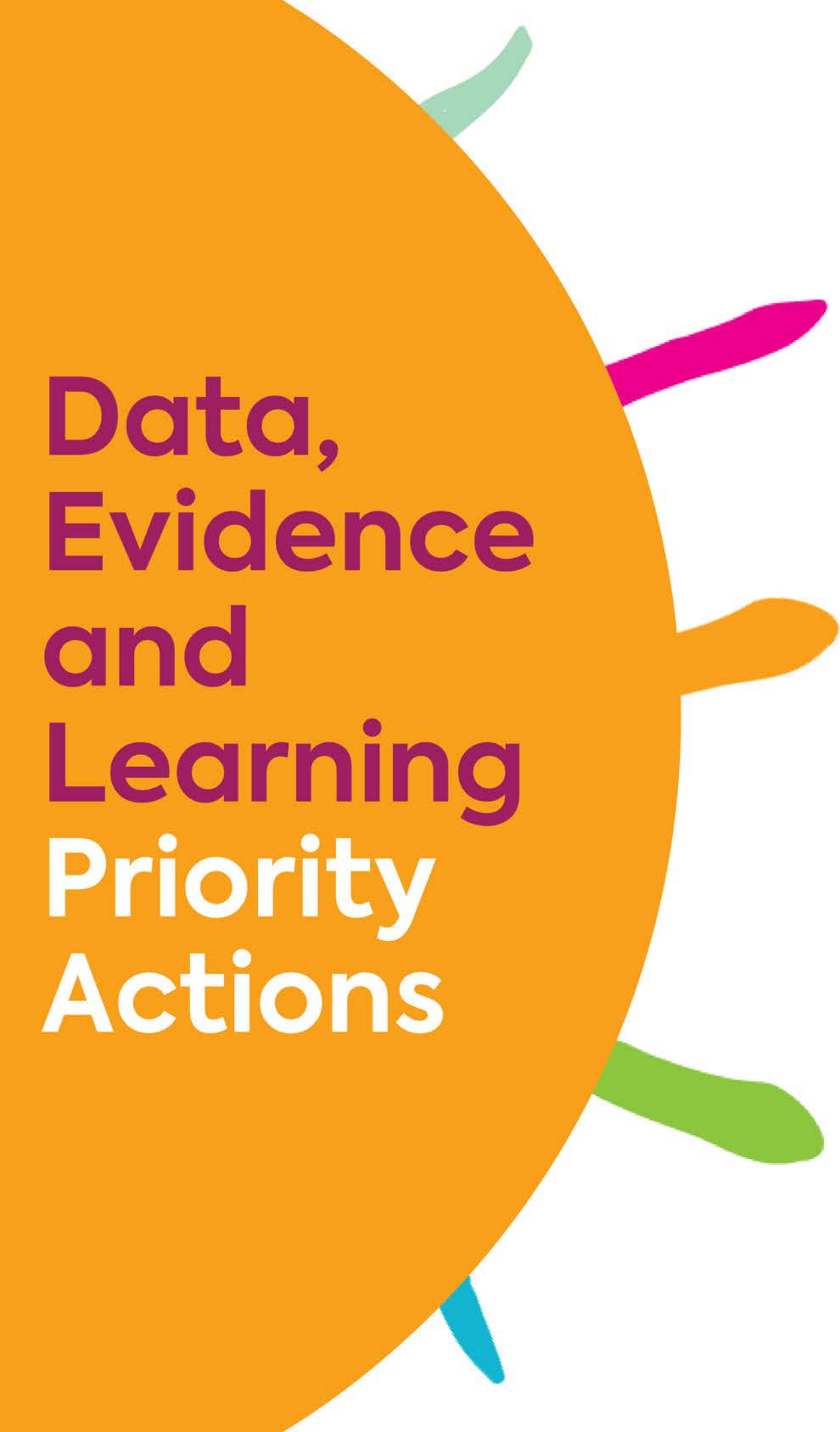
5.2.3 The Queensland Government and the Australian Government should co-invest \$6M in a **Thriving First Nations Kids initiative**. This would encompass and extend, and reduce overlap and duplication of, existing First Nations placed-based initiatives such as Connected Beginnings, Local Thriving Communities and Empowered Communities.

5.2.4 The Queensland Government advocate, including via the National Cabinet, to the Australian Government for a **National Partnership Agreement on Thriving Kids, Thriving Places**, under the aegis of the Council on Federal Financial Relations.

5.2.5 The Queensland Government and the Australian Government seek co-investment through the **Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children** from Australian and Queensland-based philanthropies for child development innovation and R&D initiatives.

5.2.6 The Queensland Government advocate, including via the National Cabinet, to the Australian Government for the proposed **Nexus Centre** to be a network of entities based in each jurisdiction – funded fairly on a national basis – to support local placed-based child-focused initiatives.

5.2.7 The Queensland Government should investigate and determine the **community and system conditions that are optimal** to ensure best return on investment and coordination of systems approach and how communities could be supported to achieve these conditions.



Data, Evidence and Learning Priority Actions

6.1 Improved child wellbeing data, evidence and learning

Key system change

6.1.1 The Queensland Government creates a **Great Start Data initiative**, including a child health dashboard, to improve ECD data systems to inform service planning, funding and delivery, as well as provide systems and service level quality assurance in Queensland.

Implementation approach

6.1.2 The Queensland Government adopt **The Nest child wellbeing outcomes framework** in key strategies and at organisational and program levels, building on existing use by Children's Health Queensland, the Queensland Family and Child Commission and other agencies.

6.1.3 The Queensland Government, preferably with the involvement of the Australian Government, commit to developing an integrated **Queensland Child Wellbeing Data Asset**. This should encompass administrative data from relevant Queensland Government agencies and authorities, and funded services, along with demographic and other related data from the Australian Government.

6.1.4 The Queensland Government invests in a **Queensland node of the Australian Child and Youth Wellbeing Atlas** to provide a community-accessible portal and platform, to be available from the end of 2024. This should link to data assets developed by the Department of Education, Children's Health Queensland, Queensland Family and Child Commission, Health and Wellbeing Queensland, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, and Queensland Treasury.

6.1.5 The Queensland Government aligns and streamlines processes for child wellbeing **data governance and data access** to assure quality control and to reduce delay, duplication and gaps for agencies, communities, not-for-profits, philanthropies and researchers doing data profiles.

6.1.6 The Queensland Government invests in creating a consumer-held **Great Start Health and Wellbeing Digital Record and Great Start app**.

6.1.7 The Department of Health and Children's Health Queensland standardise and consolidate data on the collection, **reporting and benchmarking of maternal and child health checks** with associated key performance indicators.

6.1.8 The Queensland and Australian Governments should **align maternity and child health check digital processes and data collection** with national processes where possible.

What's driving TQKP?



Thriving Queensland
Kids **Partnership**
connect • catalyse • learn

Priority investments using the six domains for thriving





Healthy Priority Investments

7.1 \$120 million for a Great Start, Get Ready initiative for the pre-conception to birth period

- 7.1.1 Invest in a **Great Start, Get Ready Pre-conception and Pregnancy Care package** to extend and build on existing information and support, including:
- incorporating contemporary information into **secondary school health curriculum and antenatal classes** on child development and parenthood, including brain building and other essential contributors to healthy child development over the first 2000 days
 - more accessible **consumer information on pre-conception and pregnancy care** to be available through primary health care, local libraries, early years and local community services, and a Great Start app
 - new Queensland **Clinical Guidelines** on pre-conception care and perinatal mental health
 - during the perinatal period, increase understanding of adverse childhood experiences and improve women's access to trauma-informed perinatal care
 - state-wide roll-out of **relationship-based midwifery**, continuity of care across the antenatal and postnatal period, with extra capacity across HHSs, ACCHOs and integrated primary care teams to provide access to a minimum number of consultations with midwives and child health nurses for all expectant mothers in Queensland (starting in the first trimester), with additional consults available for parents at risk of poor health and well-being, and
 - extended **13Health antenatal telehealth service** to provide consistent care from a midwife (without the need for a GP referral) at points between scheduled appointments and in the place of missed appointments.



Healthy Priority Investments

7.2 \$1 billion for a Great Start Postnatal package

7.2.1 Invest \$700M in a **Great Start Lets Go** package to provide by 2028:

- Guaranteed access for all new parents to **at least 10 consultations in the 12 months after birth** with midwives and child health nurses, starting in areas of highest developmental vulnerability, with additional consults available for parents and infants at higher risk of poorer health and well-being outcomes
- Guaranteed access for **every Queensland child to recommended child health checks** (including oral health checks) within the First 2000 Days, with opt out, in a culturally safe way
- Universal access to a **digital Queensland Red Book**
- Sustained **Health Home Visiting services** in the 40 LGAs with the most numbers and highest proportions of developmentally vulnerable children
- Additional **early intervention Child Development services** to ensure children screened receive support without long delays and to address access barriers and follow up missed appointments.

7.2.2 Invest \$250M in a **Great Start Care Plus** package, providing:

- Healthcare card holders who are pregnant mothers, or mothers or fathers of a child aged up to 5 years who have registered with the GP practice via MyMedicare, with an **annual check by GP practice** of (1) child development, (2) maternal and paternal mental health, and (3) social and economic determinants of health.
- **Timely follow up** of those referred to services for issues identified in the annual check and a review of clinical guidelines with the aim of shortening follow-up periods related to developmental concerns.
- Regular online regional Communities of Practice, led by consultant paediatrician, to support children at high risk.

7.2.3 Invest \$50M in a **Great Start Sleep Support** package including additional funding for:

- Improve access to evidence based professional and peer-based sleep **support information and services**, including expanded *Lets Yarn About Sleep* initiative with Aboriginal and Islander Community Controlled Health Organisations (AICCHOs) and First Nations family wellbeing services.
- Upscale the **Pēpi-Pod® Program** to reach all priority Queensland populations, including First Nations communities experiencing higher levels of infant mortality and developmental vulnerability.
- Regular online regional Communities of Practice, led by consultant paediatrician, to support children at high-risk.
- Promotion of new Queensland **Clinical Guideline: Safer Infant Sleep**.
- Mandatory **safety standards** and information standards for inclined infant sleep and non-sleep products.
- Antenatal health promotion relating to **maternal sleep** position to reduce the risk of stillbirth.



Learning Priority Investments

8.1 Increase accessibility to high quality early childhood education and care, building on the Kindy for All strategy through a \$1.0 billion package, including:

8.1.1 Invest \$800 Million for a **More Kindy For All** strategy with:

- \$650M for access to free **15 hours of three-year-old Kindy** to bring Queensland in line with the best practice in Australia and overseas.
- \$150M to invest in more First Nations community-controlled **Deadly Kindies**

8.1.2 Invest \$200M for a **Great Start Workforce Fund** to:

- Support **better pay and conditions** in public and community-based ECEC services.
- Subsidise **professional development** including time off the floor for our Early Years workforce.
- Establish an **Early Years Institute** to attract workers, coordinate career pathways and coordinate high quality training, and
- Implement other elements of the Great Start Workforce Capability Plan (see above).

8.1.3 Invest \$250M to support holistic **ECEC Plus** services in partnership with non-Government early learning providers to services in areas experiencing higher levels of vulnerability and lower access to ECD services (including rural and remote) with extra funding for:

- Highly nutritious food throughout the day
- Essential supplies
- More highly qualified ECEC staff, and higher staff-to-children ratios
- Targeted intensive support
- Mentoring, peer support and other parent care supports
- Child health and development workers on site
- Early childhood navigator roles
- 'Safety net' strategies to catch children early and provide additional support early to families.



Learning Priority Investments

8.2 Increase accessibility to high quality early childhood education and care, including:

8.2.1 Advocate to the Australian Government to:

- Adopt ARACY's *The Nest Wellbeing Framework* in the Australian ECEC sector
- Increase **child care subsidy** to 100% for low income families
- Remove the **activity test** for childcare subsidy to early childhood education and care
- Increase the **Community Child Care Fund** and extend beyond 2024
- Introduce needs based funding for early childhood education and care centres as an incentive to enrol children from vulnerable groups as outlined in the [Front Project's funding models and levers](#)
- Ensure ACECQA introduces:

assessment and rating of all centres at least once every three years and annually for centres that do not meet the NQS

process changes to significantly reduce the administrative burden associated with assessment

improved reliability and accuracy of the assessment and rating process

a review of standards with a view to strengthen staff relationships with children by increasing support and strengthening responsiveness, sensitivity and attunement.

- Increase and index the funding allocation to the **Inclusion Support Program** to match the hours a child attends early childhood education and care.

8.2.2 Invest \$100M in a **Great Start Great Centres** for all package to:

- increase support intensity and mentoring for those ECEC centres 'working towards' and 'meeting' criteria
- Co-develop, introduce and support implementation of a model code to facilitate childcare centre design and layout that supports optimal child development to support the Great Start Early Years Building Fund (see above).



Valued, Loved and Safe Priority Investments

9.1 An additional \$300M for Queensland parents and communities wellbeing and support

9.1.1 Invest \$270M in a **Backing Queensland Parents** package with:

- \$40M to support the choice and expand the range of evidence-based face to face and digital **parenting information and support programs** available to every Queensland parent.
- \$30M to expand access to the **24hr Parentline telephone support line** and integrate with web based platforms.
- \$15M to expand access to, and sustain up-to-date Queensland-based information on, the national **Raising Children Network** web platform.
- \$25M to support community-based **mums or dads peer support groups** and activities.
- \$30M to support access to free **post-natal mental health support** for Queensland families needing additional support.
- \$50M for extra supports for **Queensland parents with children with disabilities** to assist with earlier access to paediatric and specialist developmental assessments and diagnoses and community-based supports in order to facilitate access to the NDIS, including \$18M to roll out the CliniKids initiative in 40 ECD service locations in Queensland.
- \$30M to enable **adult crisis and support services** in the housing, domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol, mental health, justice and disaster relief sectors to better address the needs of parents and their children, especially those living in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- \$50M to address demand pressures on existing **Family and Child Connect** and **secondary and intensive family support and wellbeing services**.



Culture and Identity Priority Investments

10.1 Increase support for early childhood services to be culturally appropriate, welcoming and attractive.

10.1.1 \$50M for a **Great Deadly Start** initiative to:

- improve access to culturally safe antenatal care, to increase early engagement (first trimester) and frequency of attendance by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- increase First Nations staff in all early childhood settings
- strengthen partnerships with First Nations leaders and communities to co-design better early childhood services, including working with Local Thriving Communities
- expand programs that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to access Kindy and transition to school
- review the cultural appropriateness of the Australian Early Development Census and commit to developing and trialing a First Nations tailored version if needed, and
- license and fund playgroups in the home for First Nation and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse families

10.1.2 \$15M for a Queensland **Inclusion Development Fund** to fill gaps in the Australian Government program for:

- State government funded occasional care, preschools, kindergartens and early intervention services.
- In-Home Care services, and
- Specialist Early Childhood Education and Care services.



Participating Priority Investments

11.1 Increase opportunities for play and social gatherings and activities with families and friends through a \$100 million Playful Queensland package

11.1.1 \$150M for a **Playful Queensland** package to help our kids and their parents get more social and active, including by:

- extra funding for **playgroups** to ensure all families with children under the age of two have access to playgroup and online resources to accompany playgroup attendance
- funding for playgroups for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in priority communities in urban, regional and remote communities, led by fully trained First Nations educators and community members
- expanded access to supported playgroups for parents needing extra support
- co-investing with local governments to enhance local **play facilities** and space
- additional funding for public schools to upgrade play facilities and spaces
- more support for locally-initiated **nature-based play** activities
- extension of Queensland's home-grown **First Five Forever program**, coordinated through the State Library of Queensland, which supports early literacy, play based learning, cultural connection and language transmission, and Parents as First Teachers initiatives – both in and outreaching from local libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres, and
- innovative design initiatives that create **playful urban spaces** and facilities, in conjunction with local government and the property and infrastructure industries.



Material Basics Priority Investments

12.1 Ensuring families have access to material basics

12.1.1 Continuing to grow co-investment with the Australian Government and superannuation funds into additional **affordable and accessible housing**, including for:

- people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- families experiencing domestic and family violence
- tailored housing responses for First Nations people
- supported housing investment and service delivery models for younger pregnant and parenting women in partnership with philanthropy and not-for-profit sectors.

12.1.2 Advocating to the Australian Government to:

- increase Commonwealth investment in and rates for **income support and minimum wage levels** that ensure families have enough money for necessities.
- consider **fairer superannuation** structures which allow women to accumulate equity when they are not earning in the workforce during maternity/early years leave
- provide a 100% **Child Care Subsidy** for families or individuals with children who are experiencing significant vulnerability
- increase flexibility of the childcare subsidy to encompass more than just centre based ECEC allowing parents the choice to home parent full-time for the first 2000 days or utilise childcare options
- make continued child related **Centrelink payments contingent** on up-to-date child health checks as is the case for up-to-date immunisation, and
- further **increase paid parental leave** arrangements to cover two years to support parents with the option to be with their babies for the first years of life.



Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership Charter



“Generational patterns are woven into the fabric of our lives. But they are not set in stone. Fabric can be unravelled, tears mended, knots untangled. And a new pattern can be tenderly and intentionally begun. We are the story-weavers of this generation. May we wield our looms with the bravest love and fiercest hope imaginable.”

L. R. Knost

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