

Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Child Protection Peak Limited



Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children



**Thriving bubs, Thriving families,
Thriving Communities**
Understanding the levers of change



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INTRODUCTION

Ensuring children get the best start to life lays the foundation for improving outcomes across the life course. The early years – from conception to around age five – is a critical window to positively influence the trajectory of a person's health, wellbeing and prosperity.

When children are loved, safe and nurtured, have their needs met, and are provided with opportunities to play and learn, they thrive and can reach their full potential. For young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, this includes early opportunities to learn, celebrate and share their cultures.

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap sets ambitious targets for improving early childhood outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This bold vision will only be achieved by harnessing the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, families, communities and organisations. It will also require a coordinated approach across governments, systems and sectors to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up safe, healthy and strong.

In partnership with the Thriving Queensland Kids Initiative, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) is leading the development of Queensland's first early years strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The strategy will focus on the systems reform necessary to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive in their early years. The strategy will be co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities, organisations and leaders to embed cultural authority and community ownership from the outset.

This discussion paper provides an overview of the early years landscape in Australia and Queensland, with a focus on the policy and systems issues acting to either enable or constrain improved early childhood outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The paper privileges the perspectives and lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and leadership. It will be used by QATSICPP to inform and guide community consultations and in the development of the strategy.



THRIVING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN INITIATIVE

Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership

Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP) is a systems-focused intermediary and broker, bringing together a cross-sectoral coalition of leaders, organisations, practitioners and collaborators working together with a shared purpose of improving the conditions for Queensland children and families to thrive. Initiated by ARACY in 2020, TQKP has since garnered support from a wide range of Queensland Government agencies, not-for-profit organisations, philanthropic entities and tertiary institutions. The TQKP approach aims to connect, catalyse and amplify existing and new initiatives that share, translate and apply knowledge of 'what works and what matters' to improve early childhood outcomes, disrupt disadvantage and adversity, and build capabilities and connections.

Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Initiative

The Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Initiative is a partnership between TQKP and QATSICPP to lead and drive systemic reform to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland have the best start and journey in life. A key component of the initiative is the development of a Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy. The Strategy seeks to:

- lead and bring people, organisations and sectors together to drive systems change
- produce discussion papers to collate ideas and identify barriers and solutions
- engage multiple stakeholders and build coalitions of support
- support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and catalysts in engaging and leading change at a local level
- facilitate collaborative action, innovation and development at a systems level.

THE EARLY YEARS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have been nurtured, loved and cared for by their families and communities for millennia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing traditions and practices are significant protective factors for children. They support children at each developmental stage to learn new knowledge and skills and maintain cultural connections. Children are seen as sacred and central to the life of the community. They are cared for lovingly by mothers, fathers, grandparents and extended family within intricate kinship systems of connection and support. Children's positive emotional and social wellbeing is supported and maintained by ongoing connections to Country, kin, culture, spirit and ancestors.

The impact of invasion, colonisation and racism has been felt through a loss of traditional parenting practices and lack of positive parenting models handed down through the generations. This cumulative intergenerational trauma and fractured connections contributes to over-representation in the child protection system and limits the development and life opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in their early years. Healing intergenerational trauma and reclaiming, valuing and applying the ancient wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing enables children to thrive.

The importance of the first 2000 days

The first 2000 days of life, from conception to age five, is a critical window for a child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional health and development. Positive relationships, experiences and environments during these early years supports development and learning, and lays the foundation for lifetime health, wellbeing and prosperity.

The rapid development that occurs in these early years of life provides the best opportunity to establish the conditions for children to thrive. There is strong evidence that intervening as early as possible in a child's development enhances the preventative effect and improves the impact of interventions. As children get older, it can be harder to reverse the impacts of early adverse experiences, especially for those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage. There is also compelling evidence for a strong return on investment in the early years.¹

As such, there is growing recognition amongst policy makers of the importance and benefits of a First 2000 Days approach to early childhood development.²³

A health and wellbeing focus in the early years

Applying a health and wellbeing focus to the early years ensures children's physical, cognitive, social, emotional and cultural needs are considered and supported as part of early childhood policy, programs and services.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, health and wellbeing approaches must recognise and embed the following foundations:⁴

- Holistic health and wellbeing – interconnectedness of physical, mental, emotional, social, cultural, environmental and spiritual health of the individual, community and broader society

¹ Department of Social Services 2023b

² Queensland Clinical Senate 2023

³ New South Wales Health 2019

⁴ Department of Health 2021



- Cultural determinants of health – protective factors that enhance resilience, strengthen identity and support good health and wellbeing including connection to Country, family, kinship and community, cultural beliefs and knowledge, cultural expression and continuity, language, self-determination and leadership
- Social determinants of health – social conditions and factors that impact health and health equity including socioeconomic status, housing and basic amenities, food security, family structure and relationships, health service access, early learning and education, parental employment, social inclusion and non-discrimination, community safety, and natural and neighbourhood environment
- Life course approach – stages of life and key transition points at different stages of life for the child, family and community.

Wellbeing frameworks for the Early Years

Several models have been proposed for conceptualising and measuring children's wellbeing.

Developed by ARACY, The Nest Wellbeing Framework⁵ conceptualises wellbeing as six interconnected domains that support children and young people to thrive and reach their full potential. The Nest's six domains are being valued, loved and safe, having the material basics, good health, opportunities for learning and a positive sense of identity and culture, and participating as a member of society. TQKP uses The Nest to inform its work in systems leadership and change for child wellbeing.

The New Zealand Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy⁶ conceptualises wellbeing as six interconnected domains that supports the vision of Aotearoa New Zealand as the best place in the world for children and young people. The strategy aspires for children to be loved, safe and nurtured, have what they need, be happy and healthy, learn and develop, be accepted, respected and connected, and involved and engaged. These domains are very similar to those proposed in ARACY's Nest.

The Queensland Children's Wellbeing Framework,⁷ developed as an action under the Early Years Strategy, articulates a common language, aspirations and commitments for all Queensland children 0-8 years old. This framework seeks for children to be strong in self and culture, active and healthy, happy and resilient, learning and exploring, and capable and connected. It recognises that for this to be achieved, children's fundamental rights and needs must be met, they are loved, nurtured, included and have opportunities to flourish, and are provided with enriching experiences and challenges to reach their highest potential.

The Wellbeing Outcomes Framework for Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People⁸ was developed as an action under the Our Way Strategy. The outcomes framework conceptualises wellbeing as eight interconnected domains of safety, culture and connection, economic empowerment, health, mental health and emotional wellbeing, learning and skills, home and environment, and empowerment. It includes associated outcomes and success indicators intended to be used by Queensland Government agencies to guide policy and investment decisions and by service providers to inform service design, delivery and evaluation. SNAICC's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Wellbeing Framework is closely aligned to the Queensland Wellbeing Outcomes Framework, using the same eight wellbeing domains and identifying 21 long-term outcome statements mapped to the domains.⁹

⁵ Goodhue R et al. 2021

⁶ Te Tari o Te Pirimia Me Te Komiti Matua / Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2023

⁷ Queensland Department of Education n.d.

⁸ Winangali 2019

⁹ SNAICC 2019



Questions to consider in the development of the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy

- What ages, stages and cultural milestones should the strategy focus on?
- How is wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the early years best conceptualised?
 - What language do people use to describe their aspirations for their children?
 - What is seen as important and necessary for their children to thrive?
 - How might this look different for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

THE POLICY AND SYSTEMS LANDSCAPE

Australian early childhood government policy and systems are highly interrelated and complex. Responsibility for early childhood policy spans all levels of government and requires cross-government, cross-portfolio and cross-sector commitment, cooperation and coordination.

Integral to early childhood development are the government-driven systems related to health, mental health, disability, early childhood education and care, child protection, parenting and family supports, family and domestic violence supports, social security, housing, and neighbourhood and community environments and infrastructure. These systems act to either constrain or create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.¹⁰

The Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy will sit within this complex landscape. It will need to consider both national and state policy and systems in its development and implementation.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an in-depth analysis of all relevant government policy relating to the early years. Instead, an overview of the core national and state policies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood is provided, with related policies listed in Appendix 1.

National Policy Framework

National Agreement On Closing The Gap

Closing the Gap acknowledges the ongoing strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is underpinned by the principle of self-determination, recognising that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a genuine voice in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services that affect them, better outcomes are achieved. It also recognises that significant structural change in the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is needed to close the gap.¹¹

Signed in 2020 by representatives of the Coalition of Peaks and all Australian Governments, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap commits governments to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their communities, organisations and businesses to implement the Agreement at the national, state and territory, and local levels.

¹⁰ McKenzie, Millar and Mudford 2023

¹¹ Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet n.d.



The National Agreement is built around the four priority reforms, outlining how governments will transform the way they work with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to improve life outcomes. The Agreement includes 17 socioeconomic outcomes, with associated targets and indicators. Under Priority Reform 1, the National Agreement also provides for the establishment of joined-up approaches to five identified priority policy areas through formal policy partnerships.¹²

Established in 2022, the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP) is co-chaired by SNAICC and the Australian Department of Education. The ECCDPP brings together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and government departments with responsibility for early childhood education and care, maternal and child health, families and child protection. The objectives of the ECCDPP are to identify and action reforms to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive in their early years, identify opportunities to work more effectively across governments and sectors, and enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to negotiate and implement agreements to support Closing the Gap.¹³

National Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy

Developed in 2021 in partnership with SNAICC, the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) launched the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy.¹⁴ The Strategy's vision is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be born healthy and remain strong, nurtured by strong families and thrive in their early years.

The Strategy aims to refocus government policy and investment, build a better service system and improve whole-of-government coordination to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years (0-5 years). The Strategy provides a community-informed and evidence-based pathway to achieve the National Agreement on Closing the Gap priority reforms and socioeconomic outcomes for early childhood. The ECCDPP provides oversight and drives development of policy reforms outlined in the Strategy.

The strategy is structured around five goals related to early childhood development, with associated outcomes and opportunities for reform:

- Goal 1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and remain strong
- Goal 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are supported to thrive in their early years
- Goal 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are supported to establish and maintain strong connections to culture, Country and language
- Goal 4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up in safe nurturing homes, supported by strong families and communities
- Goal 5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities are active partners in building a better service system.

National Early Years Strategy

The Australian Government is developing a National Early Years Strategy to shape its vision for the future of Australia's children aged 0-5 years and their families. Over 2023, the Australian Government has conducted a range of consultations to inform the Strategy including a summit, survey, public submission process, roundtables

¹² Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2020

¹³ Department of Education 2022

¹⁴ National Indigenous Australians Agency 2021



and children's consultations. Findings from these consultations will inform the development of the Strategy and subsequent Action Plans.

The Consultation Report notes that stakeholders have called for the Strategy to align with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy and the principles and commitments contained in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.¹⁵ The ECCDPP has been tasked with supporting the development of the Strategy.

State Policy Framework

Our Way: A Generational Strategy For Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Children And Families 2017-2037

Our Way is the Queensland Government's long-term strategy to improve life outcomes for Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system.¹⁶ Taken from the Family Matters campaign, Our Way's vision is a Queensland where all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture.

Our Way is delivered in partnership with Family Matters Queensland and QATSICPP. While developed prior to the introduction of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the Strategy aligns closely to it. The Queensland First Children and Families Board provides oversight, guidance and advice on the implementation of the Strategy and associated Action Plans.

Now in its seventh year of implementation, the Strategy is a whole-of-government approach to closing the gap for Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. While led by and with a focus on the child protection system, efforts are underway to strengthen engagement with other government agencies with responsibility for health, housing and education, recognising the critical role they play in ensuring children and families thrive.

Breaking Cycles 2023-2031 is the second implementation phase of the Our way Strategy and focuses on changing the way that services are designed and delivered with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Released in 2023, the first Breaking Cycles Action Plan includes a focus on investing in prevention and early intervention, transitioning investment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector, and improving coordination across government portfolios to address the drivers of overrepresentation in the child protection system.¹⁷

A Great Start For All Queensland Children: An Early Years Plan For Queensland

A Great Start for All Queensland Children is a whole-of-government early years plan for Queensland.¹⁸ The vision is for all Queensland children to have a great start in life, supported by their family, service providers and the wider community to improve their life chances and reach their full potential. The plan brings together the health, housing, education, child protection and communities portfolios to all play a role in ensuring children get a great start to life and services work together seamlessly to support children and families.

The plan outlines the actions being taken by the Queensland Government to support children's health, wellbeing and learning in the early years (0-8 years), from their first 1000 days of life, to when they branch out into the

¹⁵ Department of Social Services 2023a

¹⁶ Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2017

¹⁷ Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services 2023

¹⁸ Department of Education 2020



wider world, to when they start their first years of schooling. The plan also includes information to help families and communities support children as they grow and develop.

Although published in 2020 after the release of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, no information is publicly available about how the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities and leadership contributed to the development of the plan or how it aligns to the National Agreement, beyond reference to early childhood targets. The plan appears to be primarily a stocktake of existing initiatives and activities, rather than a forward focused agenda outlining what actions Queensland Government will take to improve early childhood outcomes.

Given the lack of a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years strategy, the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy has the potential to outline and drive significant reform in the early years space for Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.



THE CURRENT STATE

Closing the Gap Socioeconomic Outcomes

The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership focuses on issues and actions that drive progress towards socioeconomic outcomes 2, 3, 4, 12 and 13 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, acknowledging that many other socioeconomic outcomes intersect with and impact early childhood outcomes. For the purposes of this paper, detailed discussion of progress towards improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is limited to these five outcome areas.

Unless noted otherwise, all data is sourced from the Closing the Gap Dashboard.¹⁹

Outcome Area 2: Children Are Born Healthy And Strong

Target: By 2031, 91% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies are born with a healthy birthweight

In 2020, Queensland had the second highest proportion nationally of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who attended five or more antenatal visits during pregnancy (90.7%). However, only 71.1% of women attended at least one antenatal visit during their first trimester.

Latest available data shows that in 2020, 89.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children born in Queensland had a healthy birthweight, a slight improvement and trend upwards from the baseline year (2017). On the current trajectory, **this target is on track to be met**, however, caution should be applied given the limited number of data points. This figure was lower for those babies born in outer regional and remote areas and in areas of the most disadvantage.

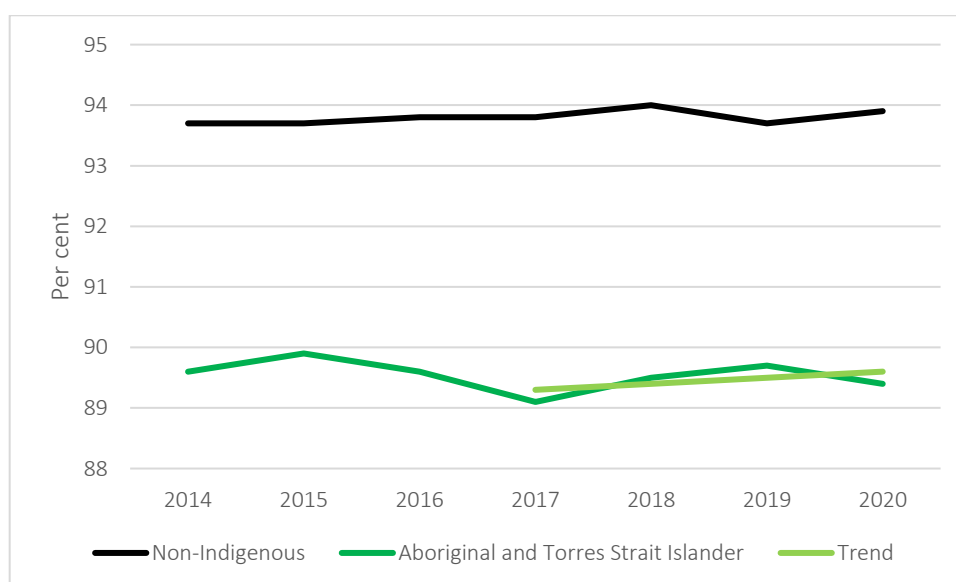


Figure 1: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous live-born singleton babies of healthy birthweight (Queensland)

¹⁹ Productivity Commission 2023a

Outcome Area 3: Children Are Engaged In High Quality, Culturally Appropriate Early Childhood Education In Their Early Years

Target: By 2025, 95% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are enrolled in early childhood education in the year before full-time schooling

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young children access early childhood education through a variety of service models including integrated early years services, playgroups, long day care, family day care and kindergarten.

In 2022, only 26 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled integrated early years services were operating throughout Queensland. This means that most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children growing up in Queensland access early learning through mainstream early childhood education and care services.

Based on latest available data from 2022, 95.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in Queensland were enrolled in a kindergarten or other early learning program in the year before commencing Prep. **This target is on track to be met.** Queensland-specific disaggregated data by level of remoteness and disadvantage is unavailable since the baseline year (2016), however, the most recent national data shows that enrolment rates are significantly lower for those living in remote areas and in areas of high disadvantage.

It is important to note that currently data on children's level of attendance at kindergarten or other early learning program is not being measured or reported, nor is the degree to which these programs and services are culturally appropriate. Therefore, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are enrolled in high numbers, levels of participation in and the cultural safety of these pre-school programs is not clear.

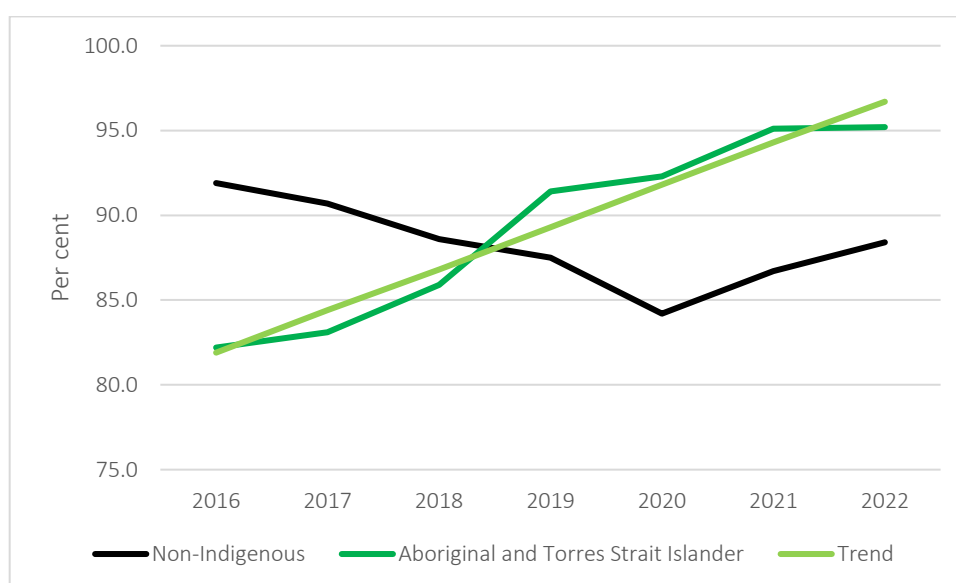


Figure 2: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children enrolled in a pre-school program (Queensland)

Outcome Area 4: Children Thrive In Their Early Years

Target: By 2031, 55% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

Latest available data from 2021 shows that, despite more than 95% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being enrolled in a pre-school program, only 33.8% of children starting school in Queensland were assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the AEDC. This represents a slight improvement and trend upwards from the baseline year (2018). On the current trajectory, **this target is not on track to be met**,



however, caution should be applied given the limited number of data points. Boys, those living in regional and remote areas and those living in areas of high disadvantage were more likely to be assessed as developmentally vulnerable upon starting school.

It should be noted that the cultural appropriateness of the AEDC for assessing the developmental outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has been questioned by some due to dominant western frameworks and understandings of child development and milestones.

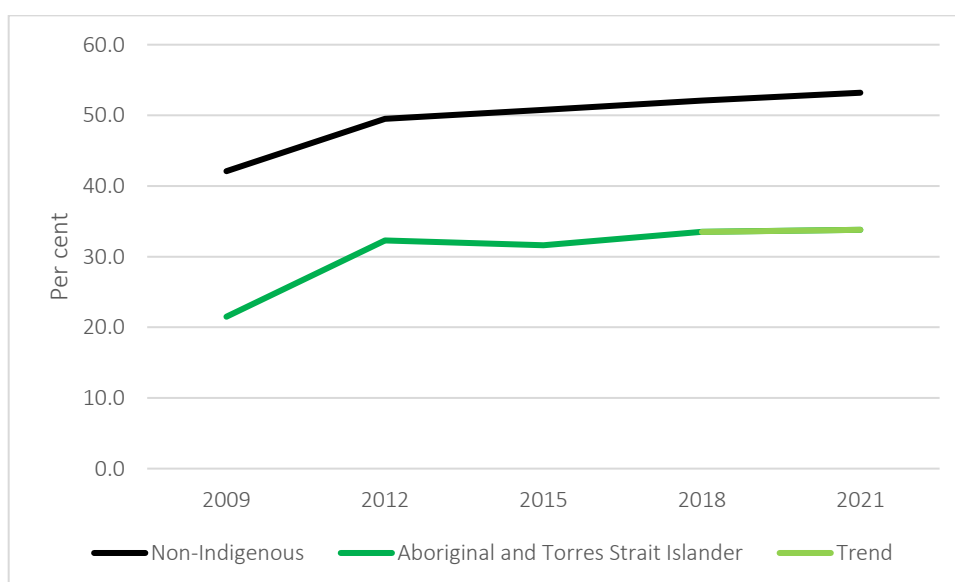


Figure 3: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children assessed as developmentally on track when starting school (Queensland)

Outcome Area 12: Children Are Not Overrepresented In The Child Protection System

Target: By 2031, the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is reduced by 45%

In 2022, Queensland had the second lowest rates nationally of substantiation of notifications of abuse and neglect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Since the baseline year (2019), rates of substantiation of reports of physical abuse and neglect declined, while rates of substantiation of reports of sexual abuse increased. Rates of substantiation of reports of emotional abuse remained the same.

Based on latest available data from 2022, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-17 years in out-of-home care was 45.0 per 1,000 children in the Queensland population. This represents a year-on-year increase since the baseline year (2019), with progress towards the target worsening. On the current trajectory, **this target is not on track to be met**, however, caution should be applied given the limited number of data points. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in Queensland are now 9.1 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children.²⁰

²⁰ Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services 2023

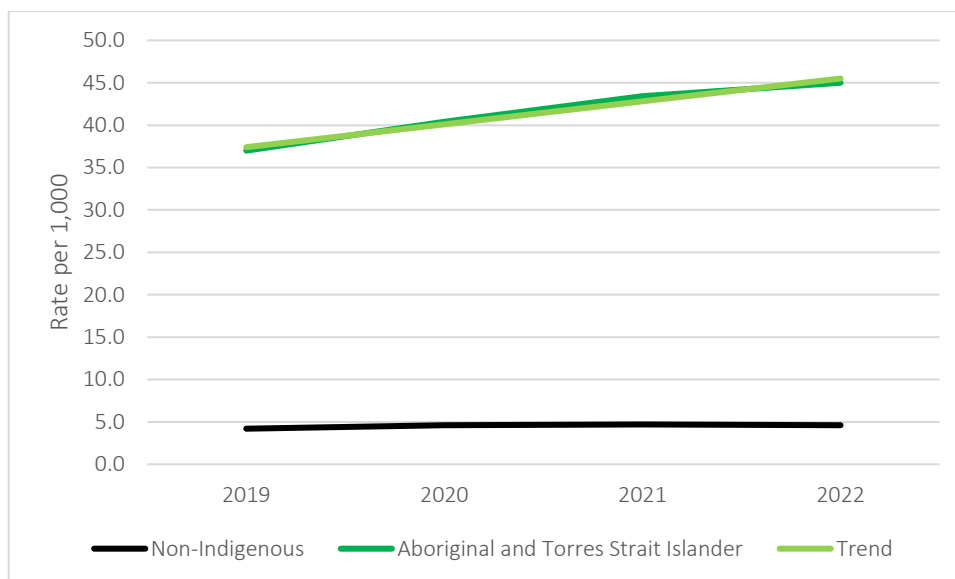


Figure 4: Rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children aged 0-17 years in out-of-home care per 1,000 children in the population (Queensland)

Outcome Area 13: Families And Households Are Safe

By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced by at least 50%, progressing towards zero

Latest available data shows that in Queensland, 6.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females aged 15 years or over experienced actual or threatened physical harm in their domestic relationships at some point in their lifetime and 4.5% in the proceeding 12 months. No new data is available since the baseline year (2018) and, as such, an assessment of progress is not available.

Questions to consider in the development of the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy

- What other outcomes and indicators are important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to measure and monitor over time as part of the strategy?

A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO IMPROVING EARLY CHILDHOOD OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN

Closing the Gap priority reforms

The central pillars of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap are the four priority reforms. They aim to change the way governments work with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations and accelerate improvements in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They are the basis for greater self-determination and a recognition that without significant and sustained structural and systemic change, efforts to close the gap will remain ineffective.

In their draft review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the Productivity Commission noted that *“progress in implementing the Agreement’s priority reforms has, for the most part, been weak and reflective of a business-as-usual approach to implementing policies and programs that affect the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples”* (p 2).²¹ The report highlighted concerns that governments have not fully grasped the scale of transformative change required to their systems, operations and ways of working to fully meet their commitments under the National Agreement. The draft review states that without accelerated and improved implementation of the priority reforms, there is a risk that the commitments made by governments under the National Agreement become *“another broken promise to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples”* (p 2).²²

Key findings of the Productivity Commission draft review include:

- There are some signs of governments working in partnership, but shared decision making is rarely achieved in practice. Better engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is urgently needed. Governments need to relinquish some control over policy and funding decisions. Progress on the policy partnerships has been slow, with most functioning as a forum for discussion, with little if any authority for shared decision making on significant policy matters.
- Current approaches do not support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to thrive and flourish. Community-controlled organisations have the knowledge and expertise to lead service design and delivery, yet they are not sufficiently valued in decision making. There is growing frustration about the slow pace of change in transitioning service provision from the non-Indigenous to community-controlled sector. Approaches to commissioning and contracting of services and programs needs to change.
- The transformation of government organisations has barely begun, with governments mainly pursuing piecemeal changes. There is a stark absence of whole-of-government or organisation-level strategies to guide the transformation process. Cultural safety is largely being pursued through training and employment initiatives, but this is insufficient to drive the necessary changes. Services funded by governments but delivered by non-Indigenous non-government organisations also need to transform.
- Governments are not enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led data. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations continue to have difficulties accessing government-held data and often the data that is collected by government agencies does not reflect the realities of, or hold meaning for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. More support is needed to strengthen the data capability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

²¹ Productivity Commission 2023b

²² Productivity Commission 2023b



- Stronger accountability mechanisms are needed to drive change. Governments are not consistently adhering to and, in some instances, are completely disregarding the National Agreement. The existing mechanisms lack ‘bite’ – they lack independent oversight, do not contain appropriate consequences for failure, obscure the responsibilities of each party and are not informed by high-quality evaluation. Accountability could be strengthened through clearer responsibilities for driving action within the public sector, publishing meaningful implementation plans and reports, and independent mechanisms governed and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Questions to consider in the development of the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy

- How can the strategy hold governments and systems to account to make long-term and meaningful change?

TQKP systems enablers and barriers

As a systems leadership and change initiative, TQKP starts from the proposition that ‘we can make the whole greater than the sum of the parts’. *“A multitude of factors, from the macro to the micro levels, contribute to the divergent trajectories that children experience. A child’s ecosystem is influenced by social, economic, cultural and environmental factors that impact healthy development and wellbeing. These influences start before birth and have an impact through an individual’s life and across generations ... When outcomes are driven by forces that cut across multiple systems, even doing everything perfectly within one system is not enough. Multi sector casualty requires a multi sector response.”* (pp xv-xvi, 549)²³

Based on the Every Child and Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) joint project on Systems Leadership for Child and Youth Wellbeing, TQKP has identified six critical systems levers to improve child wellbeing.²⁴ Following consultation with the Project Working Group, QATSICPP has re-worded these to better reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and priorities. The re-worded versions are in **bold**, followed by the six TQKP systems levers in *(italics)*.

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and governance** – *(Concerted leadership)*
- **Self-determination in Investment** – *(Smarter investment)*
- **Joined-up services and systems** – *(Integrated delivery)*
- **Culturally strong and skilled workforce-** *(Stronger workforces)*
- **Child, family and community voice** – *(Public, caregiver and community engagement)*
- **Knowledge and data sovereignty and governance** – *(Putting data and evidence to work).*

²³ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine 2019

²⁴ ARACY 2023



Questions to consider in the development of the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy

- How well do the TQKP system levers accurately reflect the systemic issues from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives?
- What, if any, changes are needed to better describe the systems change needed to improve child wellbeing in the early years?

Through a focus on each of these levers, the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy can create change across the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years systems and sectors by amplifying system enablers and addressing system barriers. The below discussion privileges the perspectives and lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities, professionals and leadership, as identified through a review of the relevant literature.

SYSTEMS LEVER 1: ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Enablers

- **Self-determination**

The collective right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine and control their own destiny. A recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are best placed to make informed decisions about the safety, health, wellbeing and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations determining and leading change for their families and communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' active participation in the design and delivery of policy, services and evaluation leads to improved outcomes.

- **Community-led shared decision making**

Governments partnering with communities and enabling community-led shared decision making about what is most important and what will work best to strengthen and support their children and families. Establishing and strengthening structures that empower local communities to determine local issues and priorities, design and commission local responses, and monitor local progress and outcomes over time.

- **Genuine partnerships**

Genuine partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and government and non-Indigenous service providers, underpinned by the principles of trust, respect, commitment, collaboration, self-determination, cultural safety and responsiveness, and shared responsibility and accountability. Dedicated resources to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of partnerships.

- **Strong voice and political will**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership setting the agenda and holding governments to account through strong coalitions and peak bodies and independent Commissioners. Governments embracing transformative change through bold, innovative actions responsive to the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations, even if it means risking political capital.



- **Policy alignment and a supportive policy framework**

A dedicated and coordinated policy approach within and across governments to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in the early years. Policy and investment focused on prevention and early intervention responses and redressing the social conditions that drive adversity and disadvantage.

- **Central coordination**

Central agencies lead and coordinate changes to government processes to ensure whole-of-government action to meet their commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. A unified, joined-up approach within and across governments, portfolios and sectors to focus efforts on those shown to have the most impact on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

- **Shared accountability**

Clear roles and responsibilities for driving change within and across governments and sectors, with robust accountability and governance mechanisms informed by the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations. Use of culturally-informed child wellbeing outcomes frameworks to guide efforts and measure progress.

Barriers

- Power imbalances between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations
- Systemic and structural racism, discrimination and cultural bias
- Top-down, deficit-focused approaches and old attitudes of 'government knows best'
- Policy misalignment and siloed, disjointed policy approaches within and across governments
- Actions by governments incongruent with their stated policy approach and objectives
- Unwillingness to challenge or disrupt the status quo
- Lack of accountability mechanisms

Questions to consider in the development of the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy

- What existing or new structures or mechanisms could be used to improve early years policy coordination within and across the three levels of government?
- What existing or new structures or mechanisms could be used to improve accountability and oversight of early years policy and investment?
- How can community-led shared decision making be enabled across Queensland?
- What else is needed to enable Concerted Leadership (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership and Governance)?

SYSTEMS LEVER 2: SELF-DETERMINATION IN INVESTMENT

Enablers

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations embed cultural expertise in service design and delivery, have close ties to their communities, employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, are preferred over government and non-Indigenous service providers, and achieve better outcomes for their children and families.

- **Alleviate poverty and disadvantage**

Poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage in early childhood negatively impacts a child's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development and can have lifelong negative effects. Improving the conditions in which children are born, live, grow, learn and play through a focus on addressing the social determinants of health improves outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

- **Place-based approaches**

Place-based approaches empower local communities to develop solutions tailored to their unique needs and circumstances, drive cross-sector and cross-agency collaboration and service integration, and coordinate investment and resources to maximise impact and outcomes. Place-based approaches are consistent with community-led shared decision making.

- **Prevention and early intervention**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families have access to high quality health and wellbeing, family support and early learning services, grounded in culture and fostering strong cultural identity and connections. A proportionate universal system that provides care and support based on child, family and community need, with those most vulnerable or disadvantaged receiving more intensive supports. The earlier the investment, to those who need it most, the greater the return in long-term cost savings.

- **Invest in what matters and what works**

Invest in responses shown to have the greatest positive impact on early childhood outcomes including holistic, family-centred, wrap-around supports and programs that impact the quality of the caregiving relationship and home learning environment in the first 2000 days of a child's life and culturally safe, high quality early development and learning supports and programs, particularly in the two-to-three years prior to starting full-time school.^{25,26,27}

- **Long-term, secure and fair funding models and processes**

Dedicated, adequate and flexible funding models ensure effective and efficient service delivery. Long-term, secure funding contracts, with dedicated resources for capital infrastructure and core operational needs, enables the growth, development and sustainability of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector. Prioritise proportionate and equitable investment in community-controlled organisations.

Barriers

- Underestimating the value of the community-controlled sector

²⁵ Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Social Ventures Australia and Bain & Company 2023

²⁶ New South Wales Health 2021

²⁷ SNAICC and Early Childhood Australia 2019



- Treating the community-controlled sector as passive recipients of funding, rather than essential business partners in delivering outcomes for their community
- Inequity in access and opportunities for those most disadvantaged or in regional and remote areas
- Misalignment of funding programs with community needs and aspirations
- Short-term, insecure funding cycles
- Competitive tender processes
- Complex funding models that are costly to administer and difficult for families and providers to navigate, particularly in the early childhood education and care and disability sectors

Questions to consider in the development of the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy

- What is needed to enable the successful transition of funding from government and non-Indigenous non-government service providers to the community-controlled sector?
- What is needed to effectively scale up place-based, culturally-grounded, integrated early years responses across Queensland, particularly in regional and remote communities and areas of high disadvantage?
- How can existing resources and infrastructure be better used to improve service quality, quantity and participation?
- What is needed to ensure government investment decisions are informed by research, evidence and community voice?
- What else is needed to enable Smarter Investment (Investment in Self-Determination)?

SYSTEMS LEVER 3: JOINED UP SYSTEMS AND SERVICES

Enablers

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations are the lead partners in integrated service models and partnerships. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are active contributors to the design, delivery and evaluation of services and supports for their children and families.

- **Community-led responses within a consistent national approach**

Development of a nationally consistent approach to integrated early years services including a broad definition and core components, quality framework, dedicated funding model and workforce development strategy.²⁸ An authorising environment that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to design and deliver innovative, culturally-grounded integrated responses, tailored to each community's unique needs, priorities and context.

²⁸ Social Ventures Australia 2023

- **Integration at all levels**

A joint national and state commitment and strategy to expand the network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned and -led integrated early years services.²⁹ Prioritisation of sites for investment based on geographic modelling and community readiness. Integration at all levels including coordinated government policy, funding and reporting, and cross-sector service delivery across maternal and child health, allied health, early years education and care, disability, family support and child protection.

- **Effective, efficient and flexible funding models**

Long-term, secure funding that ensures integrated early years services are child- and family-centred, responsive to community need, sustainable and supported to deliver on their role as an integrated service and social hub. Adequate funding to enable delivery of core services, flexible responses based on individual child and family needs, and overarching service integration and leadership ('the glue').

- **Comprehensive, holistic supports to nurture the 'whole child'**

The 'whole child' is considered in service design and delivery including services and programs to enrich and support their health, development, primary attachment and caregiving relationships, social and emotional wellbeing, family and community connections, cultural identity, home and neighbourhood environments, and early learning experiences.

- **Family-centred approaches**

'Hook and hub' models use soft entry into universal health and early learning services as a seamless link to joined-up, cross-sector programs and services, determined by individual family needs and preferences. Focus on reducing family stress and adversity, increasing parenting skills, confidence and agency through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing approaches, and providing opportunities for families to connect, socialise and support each other in safe and welcoming spaces.³⁰

- **Early engagement, detection and intervention**

Children and families are engaged early in the perinatal period for the greatest impact over the life course. Early detection of child development concerns or family vulnerability provides the greatest opportunity to intervene early before difficulties escalate and more intensive or intrusive responses are required. Families are supported to navigate the complexity of the health, disability, education, child protection and legal systems to ensure culturally safe and responsive, timely and proactive supports are provided.

- **Outcomes focused**

Efforts directed towards improving sustained positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. High quality, culturally safe and responsive services are essential to improved outcomes.

Barriers

- Lack of cultural safety and responsiveness in mainstream service models
- Inadequate service responses, fragmentation and late intervention

²⁹ Deloitte Access Economics 2023

³⁰ McKenzie and Millar 2022a

- Difficulties attracting, growing and retaining a local, suitably qualified and experienced early years workforce in rural, regional and remote communities and areas of high disadvantage
- Siloed, disjointed funding and reporting requirements
- Short-term, insecure funding cycles
- Inadequate funding for service integration and leadership
- Strict funding guidelines stifling innovation and responsiveness
- Information and data sharing barriers
- Limited data collection and absence of formal evaluations
- Outputs-focused program reporting

Questions to consider in the development of the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy

- What are some good practice examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander integrated early years services that could be adapted or scaled up across Queensland?
- What else is needed to enable Integrated Delivery (Joined Up Systems and Services)?

SYSTEMS LEVER 4: CULTURALLY STRONG AND SKILLED WORKFORCE

Enablers

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce**

A strong, supported, empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce is fundamental to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Recognise the importance and value of cultural knowledge, expertise and connections and the enduring commitment Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to their communities. Acknowledge and appreciate the unique strengths, ethos and practice approaches of community-controlled organisations. Build future leaders by providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people opportunities and capability building to take on leadership roles and enabling access to coaching and mentoring from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

- **Culturally safe and responsive non-Indigenous workforce**

Non-Indigenous educators, practitioners and clinicians develop the requisite cultural understanding, humility and competencies to effectively support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Government and mainstream service providers examine their organisational culture, systems, structures and operations to identify and eliminate racism, discrimination and cultural bias and improve the cultural capability of their staff.

- **Culturally safe and responsive wellbeing strategies**

Recognise the additional family and cultural obligations held by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, as well as the cultural burden for those working in mainstream services amongst predominantly non-Indigenous staff. Provide understanding and time to meet these obligations and access to culturally safe wellbeing supports.



- **Place-based workforce strategies**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations are supported to build and strengthen their local health and wellbeing, family support and early learning workforces through place-based and locally led workforce strategies. Local and regional planning initiatives enable communities to 'grow their own' workforces to meet the growing need for qualified and experienced staff in the health, disability, social services and education sectors.

- **Qualified and experienced workforces deliver high quality services**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are supported to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to support high-quality service delivery by achieving higher-level vocational training and degree-level qualifications. Training providers and institutions are culturally safe and responsive to students and course curricular values and promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews and experiences. Strategic partnerships between governments, philanthropies, community-controlled organisations and training providers to increase student enrolment and course completion rates.

- **Attract, develop, support and retain the workforce**

Place-based workforce strategies that focus on attracting, developing, supporting and retaining local people to grow a capable and sustainable early years workforce. Tailored induction and professional learning programs, early career mentoring, improved career pathways and progression, professional supervision, holistic wellbeing and cultural healing programs, business and operational support, and attractive and competitive pay and conditions encourage people to both enter and remain working in the sector.

- **Core universal competencies**

All educators, practitioners and clinicians providing care and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families have core knowledge and skills in culturally safe and appropriate practice, early childhood development and wellbeing, strengths-based practice, relational and child- and family-centred approaches, inclusive practices, collaborative care, and trauma-aware and healing-informed approaches.

Barriers

- Lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and low levels of cultural competence amongst staff in vocational and tertiary education and training institutions
- Lack of financial support and incentives for people in areas of high disadvantage and/or regional and remote areas to engage in professional learning
- Inadequate funding levels and insecure funding models leading to comparatively low remuneration, poor working conditions and limited career progression
- Lack of professional recognition of the unique skills and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, practitioners and clinicians
- Lack of cultural safety in mainstream early years services and organisations
- Lack of understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural commitments and obligations to family and community
- High levels of individual, family and community trauma amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples working in the early years sectors
- Lack of culturally safe and responsive wellbeing supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.



Questions to consider in the development of the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy

- What are some good practice examples of government and non-Indigenous non-government organisations transforming their systems and improving the cultural capability of their staff?
- What existing or new initiatives and strategic partnerships could be leveraged to support the development and sustainability of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years workforce?
- What else is needed to enable Culturally Strong and Skilled Workforce?

SYSTEMS LEVER 5: CHILD, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY VOICE

Enablers

- **Tell the story about why early childhood matters**

Build on the work of CoLab and the Frameworks Institute to engage families, communities, the sector and governments around the Core Story of Early Childhood Development.³¹ Build widespread support for the policies and investments necessary to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland thrive and reach their full potential. Continue to educate about the science of early childhood development and learning, while telling the broader story of why the early years must be a national and state priority. Enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to tell their early childhood development stories through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander frameworks and languages.

- **Tell a compelling, shared and hopeful narrative**

Using the framing approach, shift the narrative about early childhood development to one about children's health and wellbeing, the disparities and inequity leading to differences in opportunity and outcomes, and a call to fairness so that all children can thrive and reach their full potential no matter where they live. Frame the story in such a way that everyone who plays a role in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families understands both the importance of and what they can do to support children's wellbeing in the early years.

- **Make it both local, statewide and national**

Tap into the long history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the community-controlled sector designing and delivering effective community-led health promotion initiatives and campaigns. Adapt the Core Story to suit the target audience, be it families, local communities, the early years sector, governments or the wider society, to engage broad support and mobilise efforts around a shared vision. Ensure the voices of children, families and communities are central to the design, delivery and evaluation of policy, programs and services.

Barriers

- Misconceptions and misinformation about early child development

³¹ CoLab 2023

- Deeply held societal beliefs, mental models and assumptions about children, parents and families, early childhood education and care, and adversity and disadvantage³²
- Racism and cultural bias against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and families
- Gaps between what the science tells us (evidence), what governments invest in (policy) and what services and supports are available to children and families (services).

Questions to consider in the development of the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy

- How could the Core Story of Early Childhood Development be adapted and used for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families?
- What else is needed to enable Public, Caregiver and Community Engagement (Child, Family and Community Voice)?

SYSTEMS LEVER 6: KNOWLEDGE AND DATA SOVEREIGNTY AND GOVERNANCE

Enablers

- **Indigenous data sovereignty**

The collective right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to exercise ownership and governance over the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of data relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Protects against the misuse of data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the primary beneficiaries of their data.

- **Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP)**

The collective right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to protect and maintain their cultural heritage by authorising or refusing use to their ICIP, and to be recognised as the owners of their ICIP so that people and organisations continue to return to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander people for consent.

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base**

High quality research and evaluation led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and institutions, grounded in cultural perspectives and worldviews, and conducted in genuine partnership with communities. A strong evidence base about what works to improve the safety, health, wellbeing and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led knowledge creation, translation and sharing activities.

- **National data sets and assets**

Nationally consistent, longitudinal data sets measuring early childhood outcomes and cultural and social determinants of health and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, designed and developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Development of an interactive, digital national data reporting platform to support the collation, presentation and sharing of child wellbeing data, mapped across multiple domains and at different levels of geography.

³² McKenzie and Millar 2022b

- **Information and data sharing**

Governments willingly share data with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community-controlled organisations and change how they collect and use data to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Governments enable community-led shared decision making through the provision of customised, holistic, dynamic and comparative child wellbeing community data profiles, empowering local communities to understand the issues facing their children and families and determine their own solutions.

- **Monitoring and evaluation capability**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are supported to build their capabilities in data collection, monitoring, analysis and interpretation, and service evaluation to inform decision making, investment priorities, service planning and delivery, and workforce development.

Barriers

- Lack of a national clearinghouse to disseminate research and evidence relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood development or child wellbeing
- Reluctance on the part of governments to share disaggregated data
- Significant data gaps including measures of Closing the Gap targets and indicators
- Data governance held by governments and non-Indigenous organisations rather than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities
- Current measures of early childhood development and wellbeing may not be reflective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives or knowledge systems
- Inadequate resourcing for data collection and monitoring and formal service evaluations to monitor the quality of services and impact of interventions
- Outputs-focused program reporting

Questions to consider in the development of the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy

What existing or new initiatives and strategic partnerships could be leveraged to build and share the evidence base for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood development and child wellbeing?

- What data do communities and organisations want access to support community-led shared decision making?
 - Is this data collected currently? If so, by who and how can it be accessed?
 - Which agency is best placed to compile and disseminate the data?
 - What existing or new data repositories and platforms could be used to create child wellbeing community profiles?
- What is needed to build data and evaluation capability?
- What else is needed to enable Putting Data and Evidence to Work (Knowledge and Data Sovereignty and Governance)?



NEXT STEPS

The findings of this discussion paper will be used by QATSICPP in the development of the Thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Strategy.

QATSICPP is also undertaking community consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities, organisations and leaders as part of the Strategy's co-design process. The focus of these consultations will be on implementation – how to leverage the system enablers and overcome the system barriers identified in this discussion paper and other activities.

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APPENDIX 1 – RELATED POLICIES

Key policies related to health, mental health and social and emotional wellbeing

- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031
- National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020-2030
- National Framework for Health Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families 2017
- National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023
- National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021
- Making Tracks Together: Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equity Framework 2021
- Growing Deadly Families: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maternity Services Strategy 2019-2025
- Better Care Together: A Plan for Queensland's State-Funded Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services 2022-2027
- Shifting Minds: The Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs and Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan 2023-2028

Key policies related to disability

- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031
- Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2024
- Queensland's Disability Plan 2022-2027

Key policies related to housing

- Building on Strong Foundations: Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025
- Working Together for a Better Housing Future: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023

Key policies relating to child protection and family and domestic violence

- Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031
- Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026
- National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2010-2022
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2023-2025
- National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030



- Not Now, Not Ever: Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016-2026
- Not Now, Not Ever, Together: Fourth Action Plan of the Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan 2022-2026

Key policies related to workforce capacity and capability

- Sector Strengthening Plan: Early Childhood Care and Development 2021
- Shaping Our Future: National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy 2022-2031
- Queensland Early Childhood Workforce Strategy 2023-2027
- National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021-2031
- National Mental Health Workforce Strategy 2022-2032
- Draft National Care and Support Economy Strategy 2023



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