

Changing Tracks

**An action plan for
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
children and families**

2020–2022



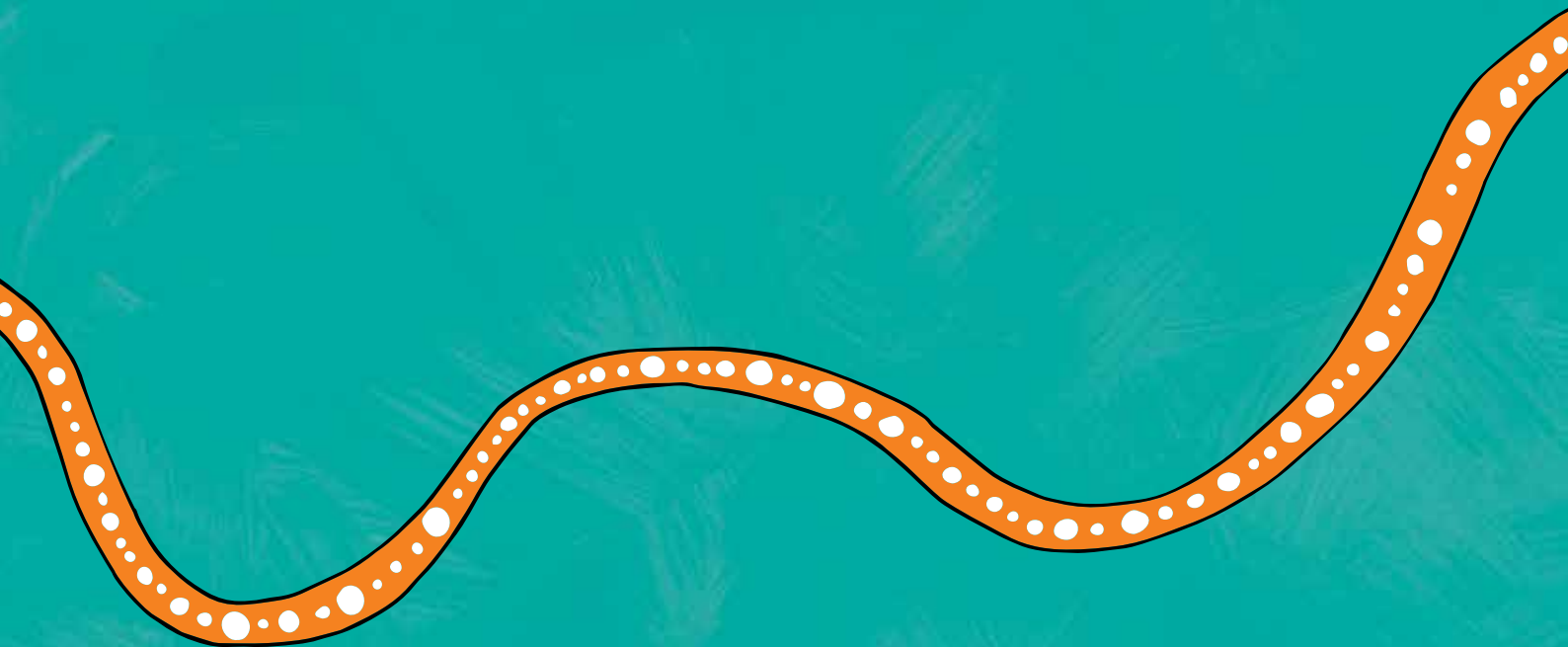
We respectfully acknowledge the First Nations people in the State of Queensland; we acknowledge the cultural and spiritual connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and sea.

We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique and diverse peoples with their own rich and distinct cultures.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present as well as the existing and emerging leaders who walk together in partnership on this journey.

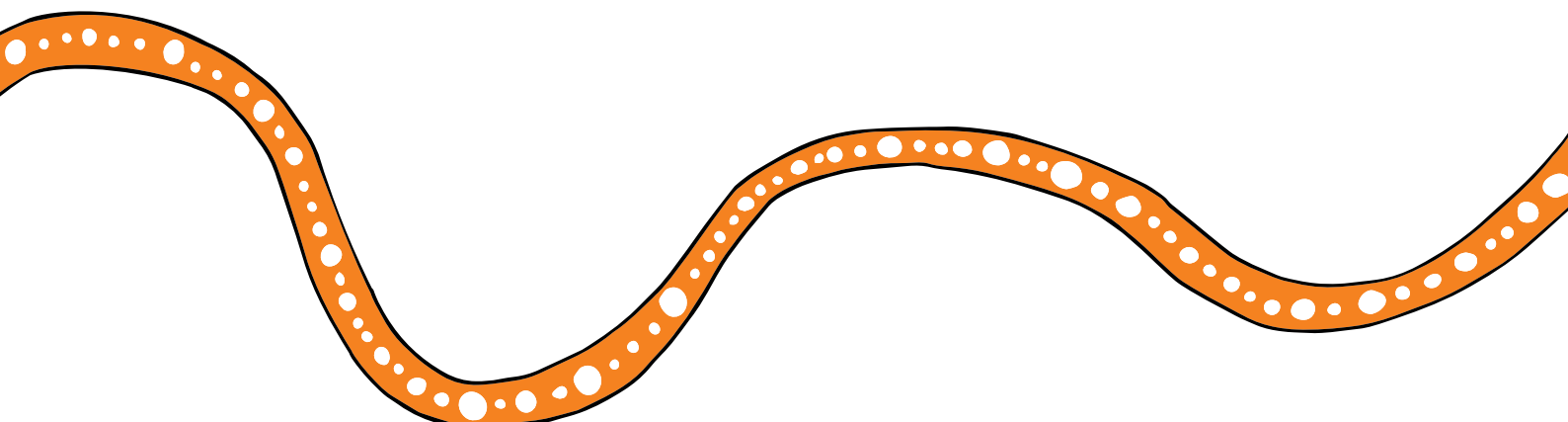
This action plan represents our shared commitment. Use of the word ‘we’ throughout refers to the shared voice of the Queensland Government and Family Matters Queensland, and reflects the combined voices of families and communities.

We acknowledge the contributions of Rachael Sarra for the original design of artworks and the creative leadership of Gilimbaa in this action plan.



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Message from the Queensland Government, Family Matters Queensland and the Queensland First Children and Families Board

The Queensland Government and Family Matters Queensland are committed to working in partnership with communities and key stakeholders to implement *Changing Tracks: An action plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2020–2022* (Changing Tracks 2020–2022). This action plan is the second of seven plans to reach our vision under *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037*.

The Changing Tracks action plans (2017–2019 and 2020–2022) focus on the changes needed to deliver the systems and policy settings required to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system by 2037 and to close the gap in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

A key priority going forward will be the adoption of strategies to address systemic, social and policy barriers that have contributed to the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system.

We are seeing positive changes as a result of Family Matters Queensland’s partnership with the Queensland Government to implement child and family reforms. *The Family Matters Report 2019* (the Report) shows Queensland has the lowest rate of over-representation in out of home care nationally. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care has stabilised, after 14 consecutive years of increases in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation.

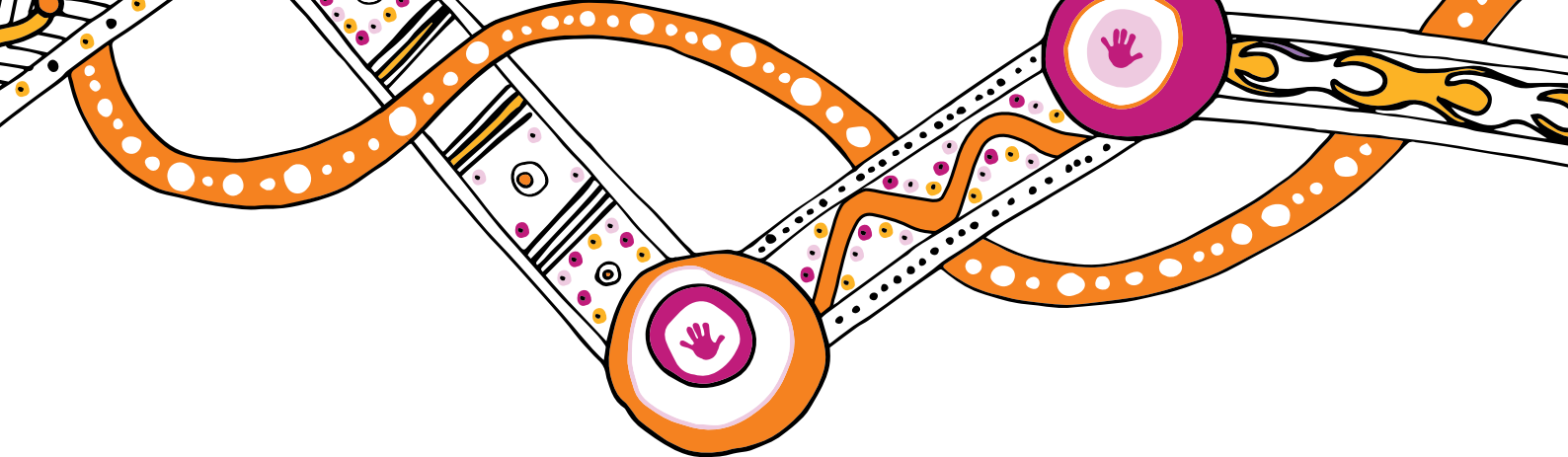
The Report also shows an improvement in our journey towards developing a culturally safe and responsive service system, with Queensland having by far the highest proportional investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services of all the jurisdictions that provided data for the Report.

While these emerging outcomes show promise and are to be celebrated, we cannot take our foot off the pedal. We know there is much more to be done to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system within a generation.

In Queensland, we reaffirm our commitment to the National Family Matters vision and targets, and to working differently with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We will leverage the strength and resilience of the Aboriginal and Torres communities and families in Queensland. With guidance from and oversight by the Queensland First Children and Families Board and Family Matters Queensland, Changing Tracks 2020–2022 accelerates our efforts to create the foundations for change. It will establish a new track to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland grow up safe, loved and cared for in family, community and culture. By 2023 we will have established the necessary systemic and structural transformation required to start to break the cycles of inter-generational disadvantage.

Over the course of this action plan we will grow our investment in community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to better reflect the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing these services and in recognition of the growing evidence of their effectiveness in providing quality services and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families experiencing vulnerability.



Other key actions in Changing Tracks 2020–2022 include:

- implement delegated authority to permit one or more of the chief executive’s statutory functions or powers under the *Child Protection Act 1999* in relation to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child to be delegated to the CEO of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community entity to make decisions for the child in relation to those matters
- embed family-led decision making across the key decision points of the child protection system
- embed active efforts to apply the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle across the child protection system
- apply the *Wellbeing Outcomes Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland* (Wellbeing Outcomes Framework) to ensure appropriately targeted investment across government and strengthen the accountability of Government and service providers for the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- develop and implement the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing strategy to address the impact of intergenerational trauma, grief and loss, violence and abuse
- support Family Matters’ call for a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s strategy, overseen by an independent National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioner
- support Our Way partners in the call for a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s strategy, overseen by an independent National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioner.

This action plan continues our long term commitment to working together across government and the community to set the foundations for change across the child protection system to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe, loved and cared for in family, community and culture.



Family Matters Queensland

Professor Boni Robertson

Co-chair

Queensland First Children and Families Board

Di Farmer MP

Minister For Child Safety, Youth and Women and
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and
Family Violence

Mr Mick Gooda

Co-chair

Queensland First Children and Families Board

Introduction

Through *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037* (Our Way) the Queensland Government and Family Matters Queensland have committed to work in partnership with communities and key stakeholders to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system by 2037 and to close the gap in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

A key priority going forward will be the adoption of strategies to address systemic, social and policy barriers that have contributed to the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system.

Changing Tracks 2020–2022 continues the Our Way journey towards a Queensland where all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe, loved and cared for in family, community and culture.

In Queensland, the Family Matters building blocks and principles underpin everything that we do. Our role is to continue to work together to:

- Apply the Family Matters principles:
 1. Applying a child focused approach
 2. Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children
 3. Protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s right to live in culture
 4. Pursuing evidence-based responses
 5. Supporting, healing and strengthening families
 6. Changing systemic racism and inequities
- Support, enable and equip parents and carers with the tools and resources to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- Eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system by 2037.

Family Matters — Strong communities. Strong culture. Stronger children

National Family Matters and Family Matters Queensland are part of an historic campaign led by more than 150 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations across Australia who are committed to eliminating the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in statutory out-of-home care within a generation.









The Family Matters campaign in Queensland focuses on creating evidence-informed solutions to better enable family strengthening and children’s wellbeing and re-orientate service delivery from crisis intervention to prevention.

For more information visit www.familymatters.org.au

Highlights for 2020–22

Changing Tracks 2020–2022 outlines specific actions to continue to set the foundations for transformational change as well as consolidate and embed the actions achieved in the first action plan, Changing Tracks 2017–2019.

By the end of 2022:

-  The implementation of delegated authority will **permit selected statutory powers or functions in relation to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child to be delegated to the CEO of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity** (Action 2.1)
-  We will have **grown our investment in community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services** and their workforce to better reflect the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing these services (Action 3.1)
-  We will have continued to rebalance investment from statutory child protection to early intervention family support services so that **families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive** (Action 3.1)
-  All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **families will have the opportunity to participate in child protection decisions** that affect their lives, including through an independent person or entity and the Family Participation Program (Action 2.2)
-  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **communities will have the opportunity to participate in the planning, design and delivery of services** necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive (Action 2.4)
-  The **Wellbeing Outcomes Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland (Wellbeing Outcomes Framework)** will underpin our investment decisions, support greater collaboration and coordination across government and the community sector and provide greater consistency and transparency in how we measure progress towards our goals (Action 3.1)
-  We will see **full compliance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle** across the five system elements (legislation, policy, programs, processes and practice) of the family support system (Action 3.3)
-  The **Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing strategy** will address the impact of intergenerational trauma, grief and loss, violence and abuse to help people create a different future (Action 3.5)



Our Way generational strategy at a glance

Vision

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture.

Target

To close the gap in life outcomes for 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 by 2037.

The outcome we want to achieve is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experience parity across the following:



Building blocks



1 All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive



2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children



3 Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive



4 Governments and community services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Who benefits

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in contact with family support and child protection systems

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in or leaving out-of-home care

Principles

1. Applying a child focused approach
2. Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children
3. Protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's right to live in culture
4. Pursuing evidence-based responses
5. Supporting, healing and strengthening families
6. Changing systemic racism and inequities

Implementation framework

Changing Tracks

First and second action plans (2017–2022)

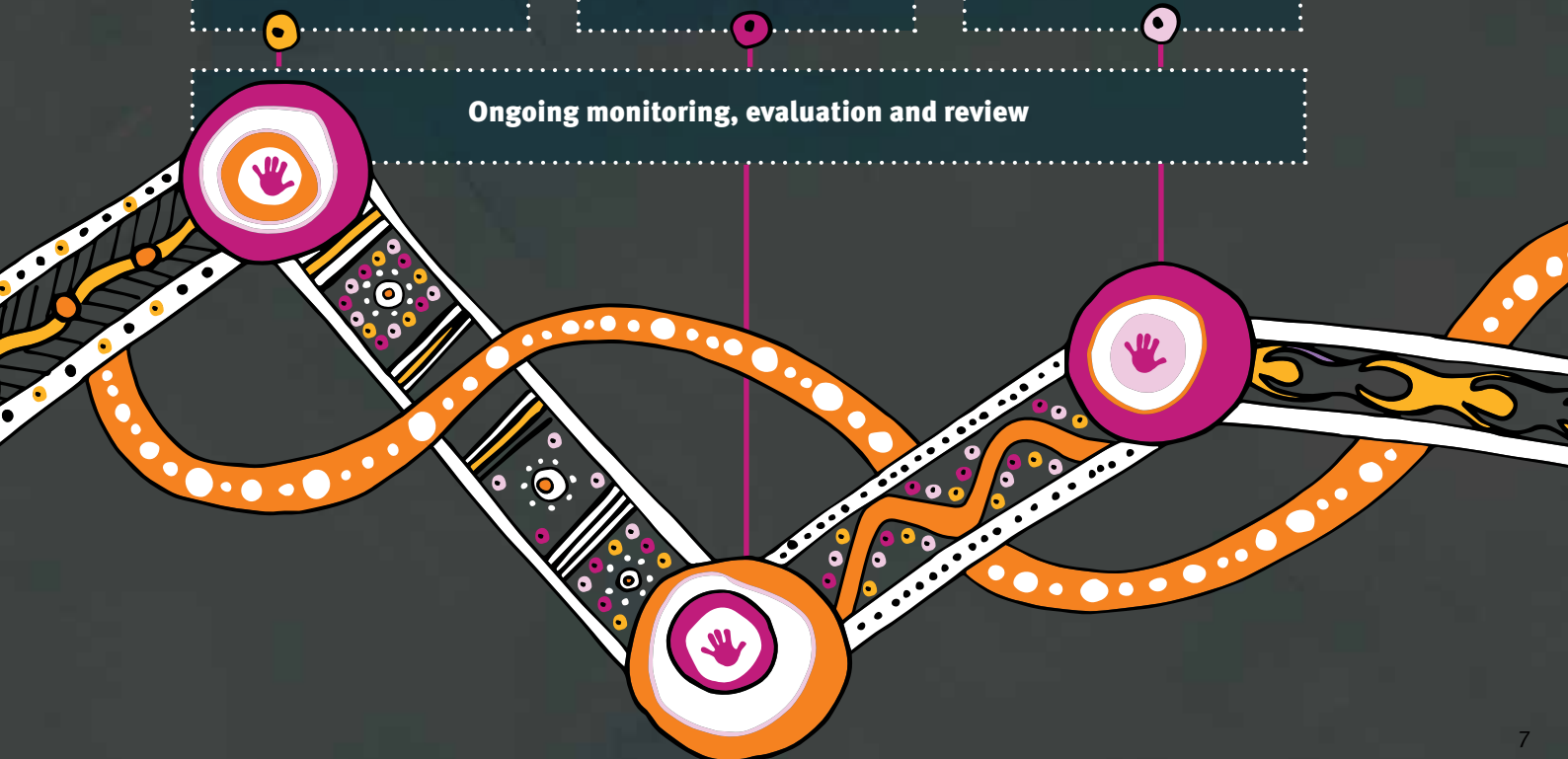
Breaking Cycles

Third, fourth and fifth action plans (2023–2031)

Hitting Targets

Sixth and seventh action plans (2032–2037)

Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review



What else is happening?

In identifying the actions for Changing Tracks 2020–2022, we recognise that across our lives, we interact with multiple service systems. To be effective, each service system needs to be working towards a shared goal of a Queensland where all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe, loved and cared for in family, community and culture.

We acknowledge the complementary work to achieve improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in areas where they experience disadvantage and which directly impact outcomes for children and families:

- Our Future State, Advancing Queensland's Priorities: Give all our children a great start; Keep Queenslanders healthy; Keep Queenslanders safe; and Be a responsive government

Healing and rights

- Tracks to Treaty Statement of Commitment, A Reframed Relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and the Queensland Government
- Local Thriving Communities
- Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2021
- Every Life, The Queensland Suicide Prevention Plan 2019-2029
- Human Rights Act 2019

Health and wellbeing

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing Services Plan 2018-2023
- Deadly Kids Deadly Futures, Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Ear and Hearing Health Framework 2016-2026
- Growing Deadly Families: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maternity Services Strategy 2019-2025
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Strategy 2016-2021
- Making Tracks towards closing the gap in health outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders by 2033: Investment Strategy 2018-2021
- Shifting Minds: Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drugs Strategic Plan 2018-2023
- Activate! Queensland 2019-2029 (Queensland Sport and Recreation Strategy)
- Action on Ice, The Queensland Government's plan to address use and harms caused by crystal methamphetamine (February 2018)

Housing

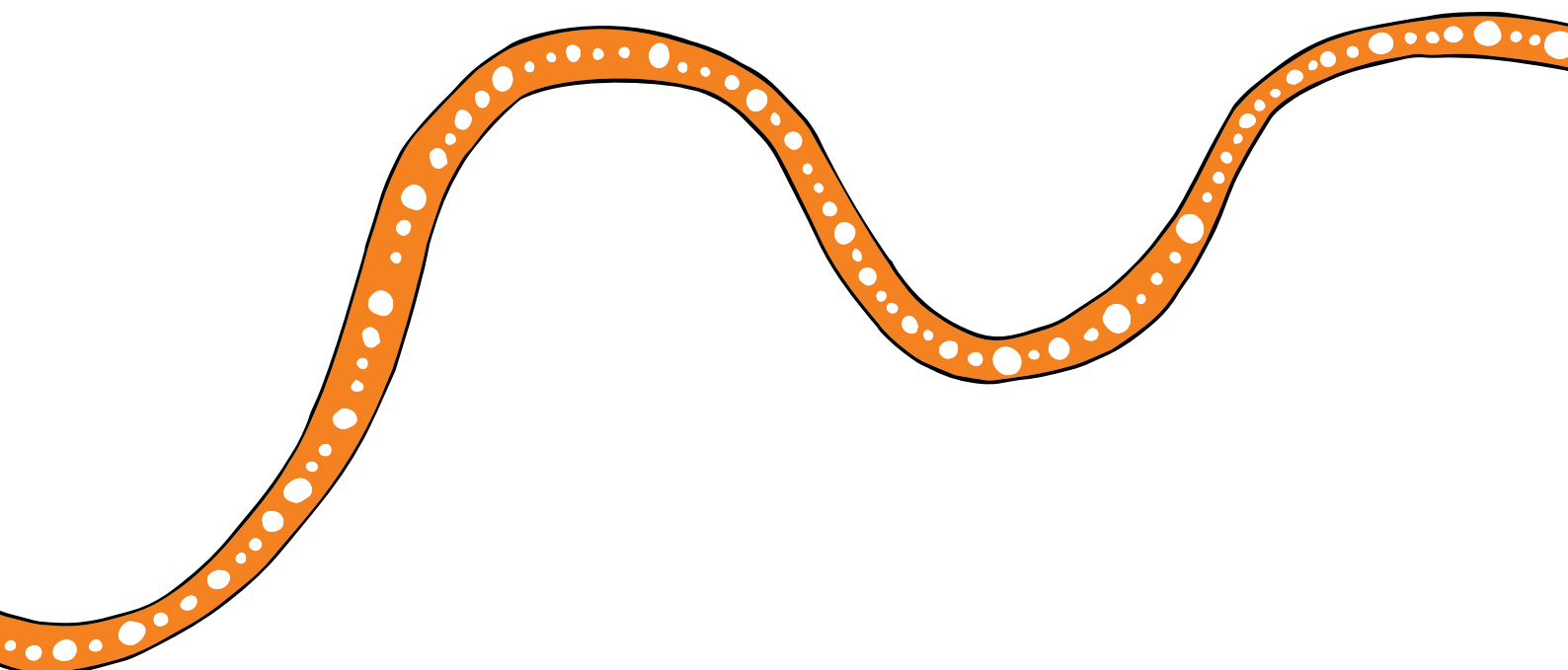
- Working Together for a Better Housing Future, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023

Safety

- The Framework for Action – Reshaping our Approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Domestic and Family Violence
- Working Together, Changing the Story, Youth Justice Strategy 2019-2023 and Action Plan 2019-2021
- Prevent. Support. Believe. Queensland’s Framework to address Sexual Violence

Education

- Advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education: An action plan for Queensland




Changing Tracks 2017–2019 established strong foundations for change

The first Changing Tracks action plan established strong foundations for change including establishing a new legislative framework that more effectively supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families who come into contact with the child protection system. Some of the highlights include:

- establishment of the Queensland First Children and Families Board to provide guidance and oversee the implementation of the Our Way strategy and action plans and to hold government and partners accountable to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The Board brings together prominent leaders from diverse geographical locations across Queensland. Family Matters Queensland and the Directors-General of the Departments of Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships hold perpetual membership. The other eight positions are held by individuals who bring a vast range of expertise and a strong cultural perspective
- the roll out of 33 community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services, making it easier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to access support to strengthen social, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing, and safely care for and protect their children
- the *Child Protection Act 1999* was amended to:
 - support the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to self-determination
 - embed the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle
 - enable the Chief Executive to delegate functions or powers under the *Child Protection Act 1999* in relation to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child to the CEO of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity to authorise the CEO to make decisions for the child in relation to those matters
- the development of a Wellbeing Outcomes Framework that defines wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland. The Framework will inform, shape and frame Queensland government investment in policies, programs and services that aim to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland. It will also inform the impacts to be measured through Our Way's monitoring and evaluation framework
- initiatives to strengthen connections with and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, parents and kin, to support community-controlled sector practice leadership and development, and to develop the cultural capability of DCSYW.

Continuing actions from Changing Tracks 2017–2019 include:

- family and kin mapping for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in care who are not already connected to family and kin
- partnering with three discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to build a coordinated, place-based universal and secondary service system
- develop service delivery models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples based on the findings from trials of domestic and family violence prevention and family support systems
- review of child protection practices, including assessment and decision making tools.



Results from the 2018–2019 financial year indicate the child and family reforms are achieving good results in a number of key areas:

- early evidence suggests a high level of success by community-controlled Family Wellbeing Services in de-escalating risks in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. This reinforces the known evidence of the improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples when they can access culturally appropriate services
- the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being abused or neglected and in need of protection is decreasing
- the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care living with kin increased from 36.5 per cent at 30 June 2013 to 42 per cent at 30 June 2019, while the number living in foster care or residential care decreased from 63.5 per cent at 30 June 2013 to 58.0 per cent at 30 June 2019.

The Elders told us ‘get it right at intake’. In response, the Moreton region introduced ‘The HALT Collective’. The Halt Collective brings together representatives from community led organisations and the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women to apply a strong cultural lens to decision-making at intake. Ensuring the participation of community representatives in individual case decisions results in more appropriate responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

There is more work to be done

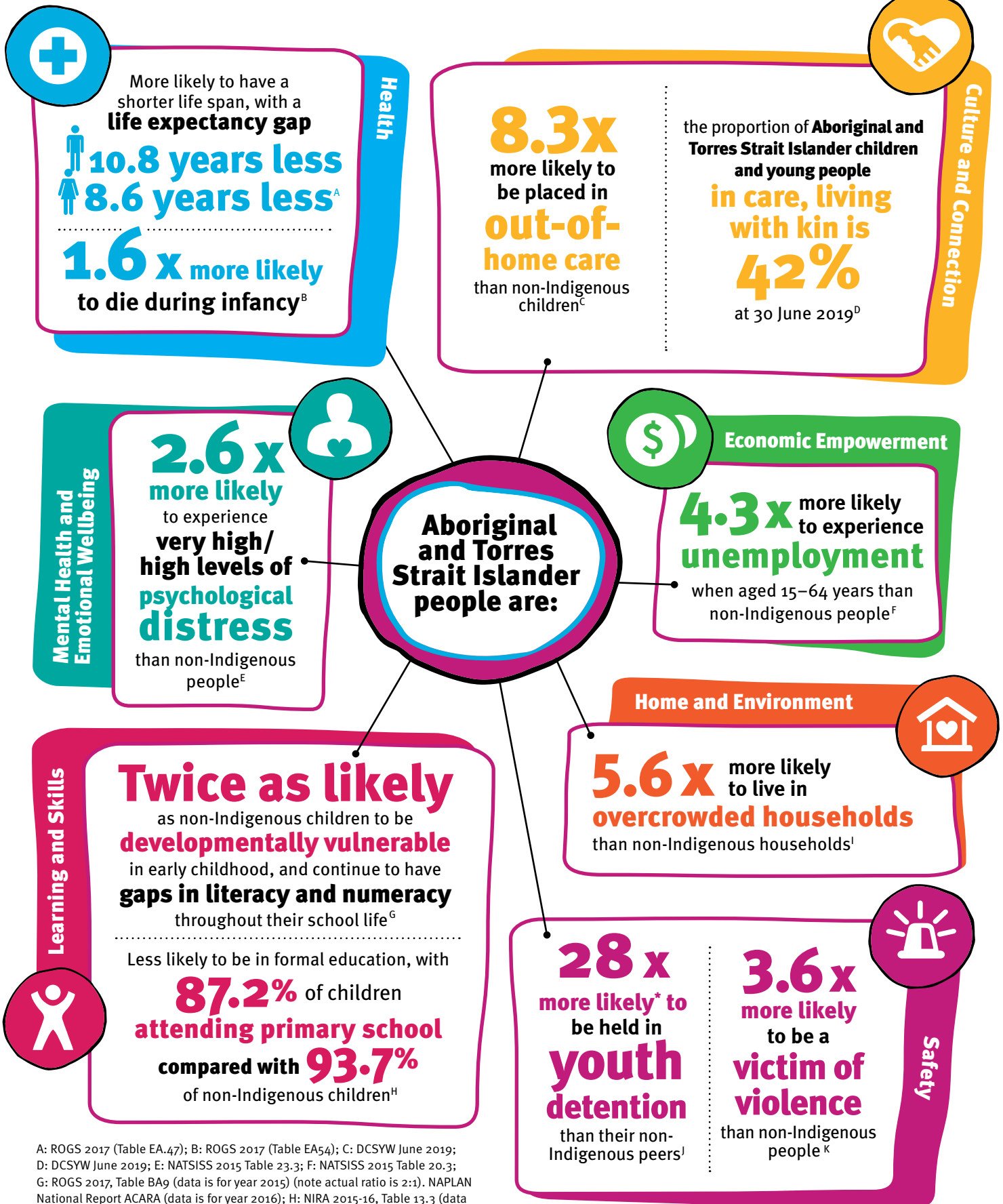
While considerable reform effort and investment is being committed to addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care, more needs to be done.

In Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people comprise

8%
of the population
aged 0–17 years

yet as at 30
June 2019,
represented
42.7%
of all children
in care

What we know



A: ROGS 2017 (Table EA.47); B: ROGS 2017 (Table EA54); C: DCSYW June 2019; D: DCSYW June 2019; E: NATSISS 2015 Table 23.3; F: NATSISS 2015 Table 20.3; G: ROGS 2017, Table BA9 (data is for year 2015) (note actual ratio is 2:1). NAPLAN National Report ACARA (data is for year 2016); H: NIRA 2015-16, Table 13.3 (data is for year 2016); I: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15, Table 24.3; J: DJAG YJ Performance and Reporting (data is for year 2018-2019); K: QGSO Reported victims of offences against the person, Queensland, 2014-15.

* On an average day in the year 2018-2019 Department of Youth Justice, Youth Justice Performance and Reporting

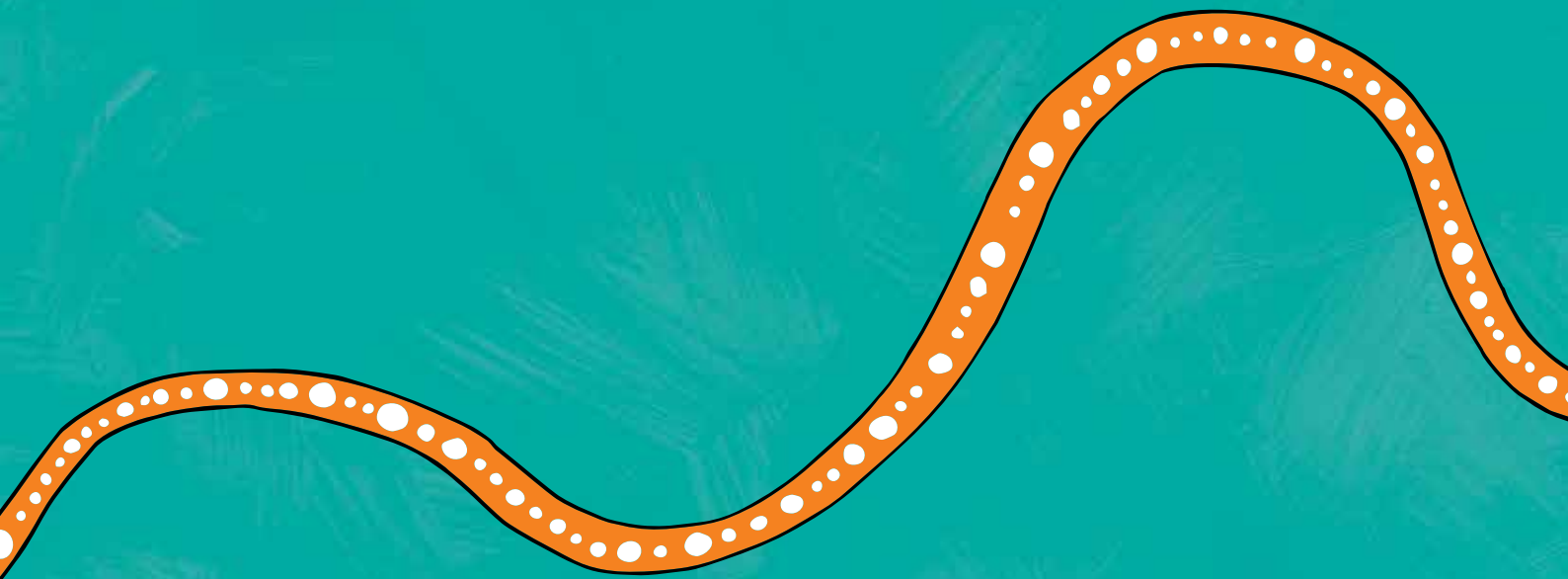


The intent of the second action plan is to continue setting the foundations for change needed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families and to consolidate and embed the actions achieved in the first action plan

It includes 24 targeted actions to continue our 20-year journey towards:

Vision – all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland grow up safe, loved and cared for in family, community and culture

Target – to close the gap in life outcomes for 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 by 2037



Changing tracks for children, young people and families



Building block 1: All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive

We know that access to culturally responsive universal and secondary services is critical to helping families care for their children safely at home.

The Advancing Queensland Priority — Give all our children a great start — recognises that nothing is more important than doing our best to ensure the next generation of Queenslanders are healthy, resilient and ready to be productive members of society.

We have seen how the first few years of a child's life shape and determine their development, wellbeing and successes in adulthood. In these formative years, basic learning and key developmental milestones occur including: developing independence, building cultural connections and conversational skills and interacting more fully with the wider community, such as making friends and entering school.¹ Ensuring children in Queensland thrive as part of a healthy, vibrant society is our ethical, social and economic responsibility.

We know that cultural connectedness is one of the best protective factors for keeping children safe within their families, and the importance of the role of mothers, fathers, kin and community. When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents are empowered and supported by services that are accessible, culturally responsive and safe, and the importance of culture and connection is deeply understood, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families are more likely to thrive.

We saw over the past three years that access to community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services resulted in improved outcomes for children and families.

Over the next three years, we will continue to embed community voices into place-based planning, design and delivery of services. The wellbeing of children and young people will be central to all decisions and based on community strengths, community-identified needs and priorities. These decisions will be data informed and evidence based.

This will be supported by continued investment in community-controlled organisations and their workforce. There will be an increased focus on best practice, culture, healing and greater coordination and cooperation across government.

Government and all community organisations will be accountable for the wellbeing outcomes achieved by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and young people.

We will continue to improve the support for young people transitioning from care, recognising that parents, kin and community play an important role in supporting young adults through further education and training, finding a job, financial and emotional support and in providing a safety net for life's difficult periods.

In recognition of the important role housing plays in the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experiencing barriers to housing will be a priority cohort for access to social housing assistance.



Actions to ensure all families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive

Action	Evidence	Lead ²	Builds on
<p>1.1 Enhance community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services, with a focus on youth justice and domestic and family violence</p>	<p>Program data shows that community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services are almost twice as effective at keeping children out of the system than other services</p> <p>It is now well established that children growing up in poverty are more likely to experience adverse child experiences that are linked to child welfare involvement³</p> <p>A child’s quality of care, the availability of learning opportunities and their exposure to a wide range of stressors are all associated with experiencing poverty⁴</p>	<p>DCSYW</p>	<p>Action 3.1 Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p> <p>Action 3.5 Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p>
<p>1.2 Enhance the Be Well Learn Well program being delivered in eight remote communities that have a high level of developmental vulnerability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to ensure current and future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland will be able to listen, learn and reach their full potential</p>	<p>The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are considered developmentally vulnerable is 65 per cent⁵</p> <p>The Deadly Ears Program has estimated that between 40–50 per cent of young children in some remote Indigenous communities may be experiencing some degree of hearing loss at any one time⁶</p> <p>In very young children this can affect the development of speech, language and social skills</p> <p>As they grow older it can affect school readiness, communication skills, learning abilities and educational outcomes</p> <p>These issues then combine to impact employment prospects and a range of other outcomes throughout life</p>	<p>DoE</p>	<p>Action 2.4 Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p>

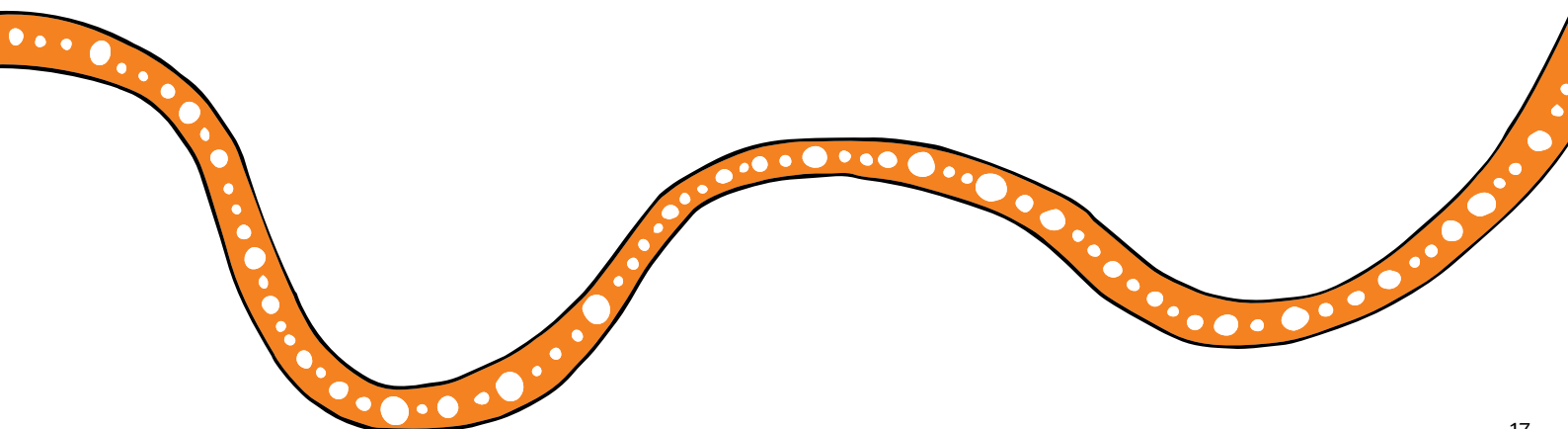
Changing tracks for children, young people and families



<p>1.3 Increase the participation of unemployed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and young people exiting long term care in skills development and vocational education and training under the Skills for Queensland – Great training for quality jobs strategy</p>	<p>Participating in education, training and employment is a protective factor. It enhances families’ economic capacity to care for their children, reduces the risk of poverty and homelessness, enhances the social and emotional wellbeing of children and families and mitigates the risk of families and children entering the child protection system</p>	<p>DESBT</p>	<p>Action 4.3 Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p>
<p>1.4 In planning for mental health, alcohol and other drug treatment services consider culturally safe responses to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities</p>	<p>Mental health and substance abuse disorders such as anxiety, depression and alcohol use causes approximately 19 per cent of the total health burden in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population⁷</p> <p>Research demonstrates that parental substance misuse is one of the most commonly identified risk factors for child abuse and neglect⁸</p>	<p>Qld Health</p>	<p>Connecting Care to Recovery 2016–2021</p>
<p>1.5 Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing program and deliver youth resilience and suicide prevention projects</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are 2.7 times more likely to experience high levels of psychological distress than non-Indigenous people⁹</p> <p>The suicide rate in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is twice that of the non-Indigenous population and suicide occurs at much younger ages</p>	<p>DATSIP</p>	<p>Qld Suicide Prevention Plan 2019–2029</p>



<p>1.6 Implement culturally-responsive pathway planning and case coordination to connect people to the support they need to improve their housing and wellbeing outcomes</p>	<p>Access to safe, affordable housing helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and young people achieve better wellbeing outcomes and can reduce contact with the child protection system</p> <p>In 2016-2017, 3772 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people between the ages of 10 and 24 years accessed specialist homelessness services in Queensland ¹⁰</p> <p>Child safety data for 2018–2019 indicates that domestic and family violence was a risk factor in 45 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in which child safety concerns were substantiated with a completed investigation and assessment</p>	<p>DHPW</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan</p>
<p>1.7 Deliver an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific place-based trial to address youth sexual violence and abuse as part of the Government’s priority actions to address this issue</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are twice as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be victims of youth sexual violence</p>	<p>DCSYW</p>	<p>Priority actions to address youth sexual violence and abuse</p>
<p>1.8 Implement culturally-responsive and developmentally appropriate literacy and numeracy training options for young people through Vocational Training Queensland</p>	<p>Young people released from detention face barriers to successful reintegration to community, including the ability to continue their education or training. This project addresses the educational needs of young people aged 10–17 in the youth justice system and those at-risk of disengaging or needing to re-engage with education</p>	<p>DoE</p>	<p>Advancing education: an action plan for education in Qld</p>



Changing tracks for children, young people and families



Building block 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children



The Our Way strategy and action plans are underpinned by the Queensland Government’s commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ self-determination and enabling individual and family-led decision making and choice.

We must all work together to maximise the participation of families to identify and take control of their healing and support needs through the development and implementation of plans that reflect the hopes and goals they have for their children.

The Wellbeing Outcomes Framework recognises that wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people incorporates broader issues of social justice, equity and rights. One of the eight wellbeing domains is empowerment, which refers to children and young people having and being able to have a voice in the communities and environments in which they live, learn and work.

The Wellbeing Outcomes Framework is centred on what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people **need** to thrive but also reflects what children and young people want for themselves.

The Advancing Queensland Priority — Keep Queenslanders healthy — recognises that both healthy bodies and healthy minds improve wellbeing. We know that empowerment is a key component of healthy minds.

The implementation of the Local Thriving Communities framework and approach will strengthen community voice and local decision making in the planning, design and delivery of place-based services. Studies show that successful community engagement in the design and delivery of public services strengthens community capacity and results in services that are more efficient, effective and sustainable. The evidence suggests savings of up to six times the investment made in new approaches.¹¹

Actions to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children.

Action	Evidence	Lead	Builds on
<p>2.1 Implement delegated authority to permit one or more of the chief executive’s functions or powers under the <i>Child Protection Act 1999</i> in relation to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child to be delegated to the chief executive officer of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity to authorise the CEO to make decisions for the child in relation to those matters</p>	<p>This gives practical effect to the principle in the Act that recognises the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to self-determination</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the highest stakes in the safety and wellbeing of their own children and the effect that their removal has on families and communities</p>	<p>DCSYW/ QATSICPP</p>	<p>Action 4.2 Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p>



<p>2.2 Embed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-led decision making model across the child protection continuum to ensure culturally safe responses to child protection matters</p>	<p>The intent of the Family Participation Program is to provide a culturally safe way to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and children to participate in child protection decisions that affect their lives. A key function of the Family Participation Program is the facilitation of an independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-led decision making process to give authority to parents, families and children to solve problems and lead decision making</p>	<p>DCSYW</p>	<p>Action 6.2 Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p>
<p>2.3 Pilot youth justice Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family-Led Decision Making processes in four locations to increase cultural authority in identifying and responding to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the youth justice system</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are 28 times more likely to be held in youth detention than their non-Indigenous peers. The trials aim to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the youth justice system by empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to make positive decisions to change their child’s behaviour. The trials will provide safe and ongoing cultural and practical support to enable self-determination in finding solutions to a young person’s offending behaviour</p>	<p>DYJ</p>	<p>Working Together, Changing the Story, Youth Justice Strategy 2019–2023 and Action Plan 2019-2021</p>
<p>2.4 Implement the Local Thriving Communities framework to create the enabling and authorising environment that supports communities, including young people, to make decisions about their own future</p>	<p>Government will work in partnership with communities to plan, co-design and deliver services to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families</p>	<p>All agencies</p>	<p>Tracks to Treaty</p>

Changing tracks for children, young people and families



Building block 3: Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive



To eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system within a generation we will continue to build the foundations for change through our law, policy and practice.

As part of the Advancing Queensland Priorities the Queensland Government has committed to being responsive, to make sure that Queenslanders feel like it is easy to do business with their government.

To support the commitments in this action plan:

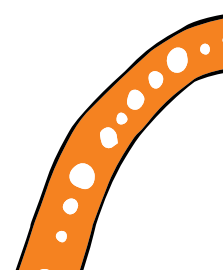
- laws, policies and practice must be culturally responsive to ensure best outcomes for Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander children and families
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families must be actively engaged in decisions that affect their families across the child protection system
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are involved in the co-design and delivery of policies, programs and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children
- the cultural strengths, responsibilities, connections and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will be recognised, respected and resourced.

We will continue to invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services and the people who work there to improve service outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The recent evaluation of intensive family support services found that access to specialist supports in the community for particular needs, such as domestic violence, mental health supports, trauma-focused therapies and other specialist services was often lacking. This is a particular issue in rural and remote areas or smaller regional centres and the resulting lack of service cohesion was the most common barrier to families taking up and sustaining involvement with support services.

Community ownership contributes to authority and autonomy over all aspects of a project; builds the commitment and enthusiasm of all people involved in the program, including collaborators; and contributes to building community capacity so that communities can address their own needs.

The establishment, existence and continued success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations is the result of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community effort to organise, advocate and promote positive community participation in the lives of people experiencing vulnerability.

Going forward, the Wellbeing Outcomes Framework will inform, shape and frame whole-of-government investment in policies, programs and services that aim to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland.





The framework is comprised of eight interconnected wellbeing domains which represent all the areas of a child and young person's life that impact their wellbeing:

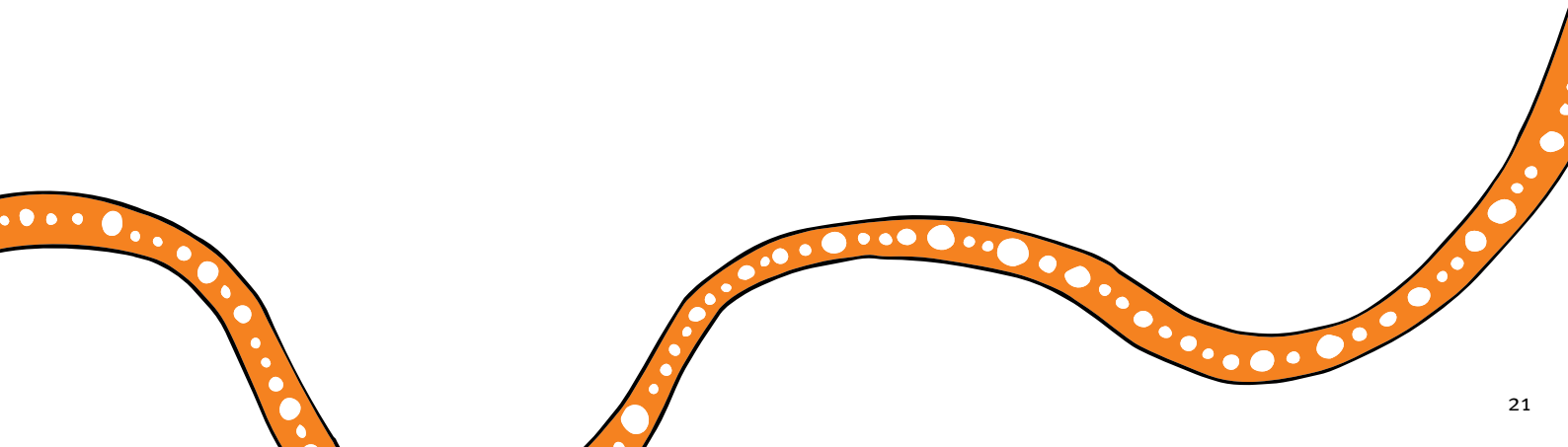
- **Culture and Connections:** Our children are strong in culture
- **Economic Empowerment:** Our children have access to every opportunity
- **Health:** Our children are strong and healthy
- **Mental health and Emotional Wellbeing:** Our children are hopeful
- **Learning and Skills:** Our children learn, develop and thrive
- **Home and Environment:** Our children live in safe and healthy homes
- **Empowerment:** Our children are heard
- **Safety:** Our children are safe

The notion of wellbeing is thought to encompass an individual's freedom to: help themselves and to influence social change, shape their own destiny, and as a group, actively pursue goals or values they regard as important, determine what wellbeing looks like themselves and not be based on predetermined assumptions.¹² There is an increasing recognition that subjective measures of wellbeing (such as those provided by self-reports of life satisfaction or happiness) have an important role to play in policy development and evaluation.¹³

Our law, policy and practice will also be developed through a healing lens with the development of the healing strategy and implementation plan.

Children involved in the child protection system have often experienced neglect and abuse resulting in trauma that impacts their health and wellbeing. Actions that promote mental health and physical wellbeing in children and young people will assist families involved with the child protection system to care safely for their children at home and contribute to achieving the targets for the Advancing Queensland Priority – Keep communities safe.

Families are essential to children's experience of, and connection with, their culture and thus their healing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples learn and experience culture and spirituality through their families: whether through knowledge, stories, and songs from parents, grandparents, Elders, and uncles and aunts, and through everyday lived experience of shared values, meaning, language, custom, behaviour and ceremonies.

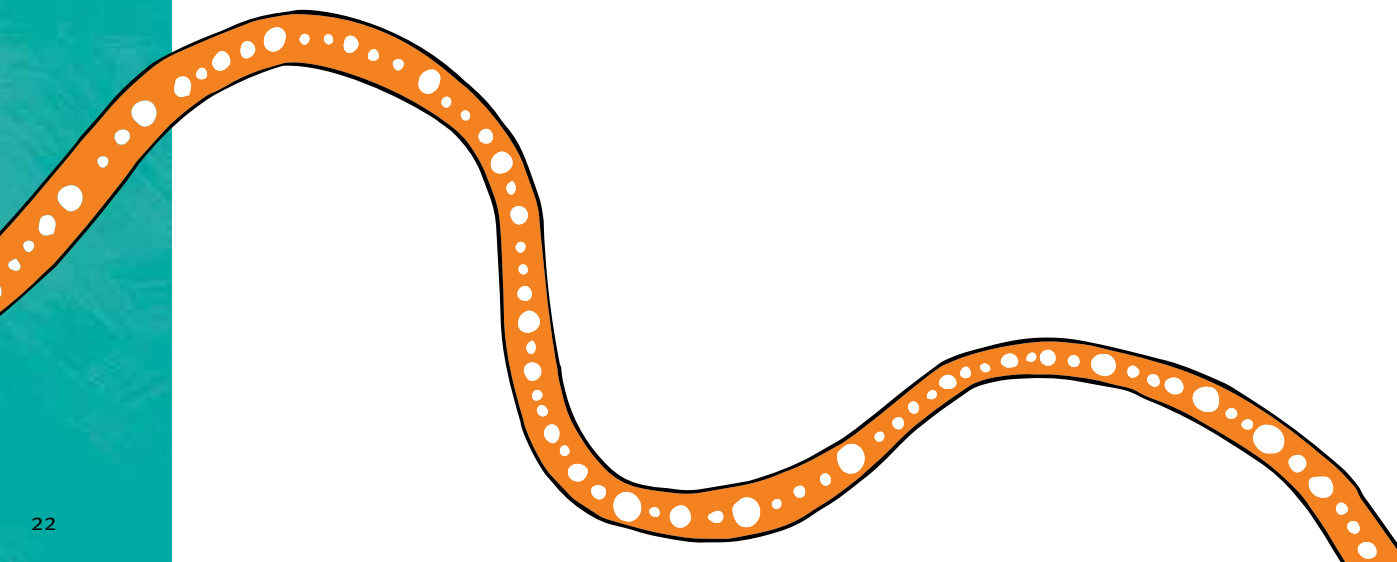


Changing tracks for children, young people and families



Actions to ensure our law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive

Action	Evidence	Lead	Builds on
<p>3.1 Apply the Wellbeing Outcomes Framework to inform government investment, policies, programs and services</p>	<p>Consistent application of the Wellbeing Outcomes Framework and complementary investment principles provides an opportunity to achieve life-changing results for Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people through better, smarter and more effective investments</p>	<p>DCSYW</p>	<p>Action 6.4 Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p>
<p>3.2 Implement the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Professional Scholarships Program to improve the quality of family services provided by community-controlled services</p>	<p>The ongoing success of the sector relies on the capacity and capability of the people who work within it and a workforce that is representative of the clients accessing services</p>	<p>DCSYW/ QATSICPP</p>	<p>Action 6.6 Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p>
<p>3.3 Embed active efforts to implement and give full effect to all five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle across the five system elements of the family support system (legislation, policy, programs, processes and practice)</p>	<p>The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle is made up of five elements to enhance and preserve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's sense of identity, their connection to their culture, heritage, family and community. The <i>Child Protection Act 1999</i> requires the application of the Principle to the administration of the Act in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children</p>	<p>All agencies</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle</p>





<p>3.4 Partner with QATSICPP to develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Kinship program, inclusive of relevant services, that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connects children in care with kin and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture • enables and supports kin to care for children to prevent ongoing statutory intervention • enables children who require ongoing statutory intervention to be cared for by kin wherever possible and safe to do so 	<p>Currently only 42 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care live with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kin, this increases to 42.3 per cent living with kin when non-Indigenous kin are included</p>	<p>DCSYW</p>	<p>Action 4.1 Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p>
<p>3.5 Co-design and implement a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing strategy to address the impact of intergenerational trauma, grief and loss, violence and abuse</p>	<p>The evidence tells us that strategies to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage will continue to fail unless underpinned by trauma informed healing approaches that recognise the devastating impacts of colonisation and subsequent government policies¹⁴</p>	<p>DCSYW</p>	<p>Action 6.11 Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p>
<p>3.6 Enact legislation providing legal recognition to Torres Strait Islander families’ traditional child rearing practice</p>	<p>Generations of Torres Strait Islander children have been raised in supportive and loving extended family environments</p> <p>Legal recognition of this ancient and enduring cultural practice will acknowledge the importance of Torres Strait Islander culture and cultural decision-making processes in Torres Strait Islander community and family life</p>	<p>DATSIP</p>	
<p>3.7 Work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to increase the birth registration rate of children aged 0–10 years</p>	<p>Birth registration allows access to a birth certificate, without which a person is susceptible to a number of significant obstacles over the course of their life, all related to proving their identity, personal particulars and legal relationships. Not having a birth certificate is a barrier to accessing basic rights and privileges</p>	<p>DJAG</p>	<p>Queensland Cross-Agency Strategy and Action Plan</p>

Changing tracks for children, young people and families



Building block 4: Government and community services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Governments and community organisations will work together to share power and responsibility with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. Governance structures and practices will be developed to ensure services have a deep cultural understanding, and are based on the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

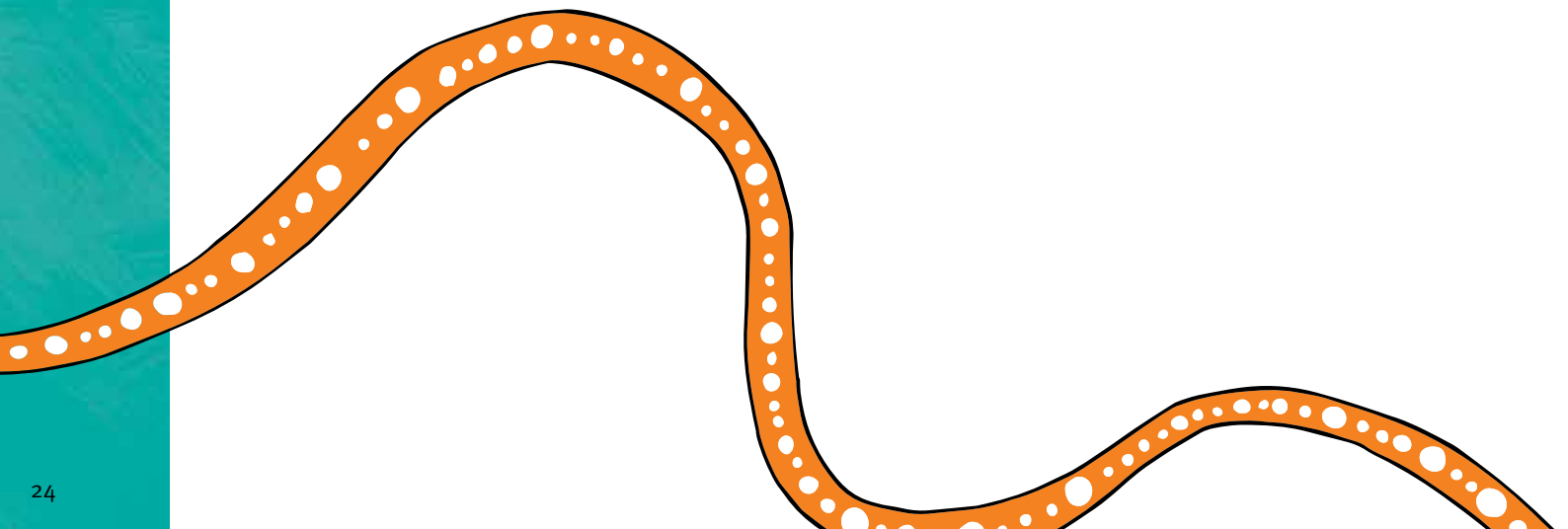
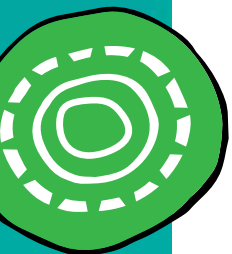
We remain committed and accountable to the long-term vision of the strategy and ensure that every action we take contributes to enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead solutions so children grow up safe, loved and cared for in family, community and culture.

The application of the Wellbeing Outcomes Framework, investment principles and healing strategy, together with the Family Matters building blocks and principles, will underpin the approach to measurement, evaluation, reporting and governance over the course of this action plan.

We will continue to explore options for the establishment of a centre of excellence to:

- provide a legitimate evidence base for service design and delivery
- inform government decision making regarding investment
- enable government to invest in best practice initiatives and programs.

We recognise the important role the Queensland First Children and Families Board plays in ensuring government and community services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A key challenge moving forward is supporting the Board to continue to guide and influence these reforms, creating the space for truth telling and for the hard conversations to happen. Over the next three years we will work to improve support for the Board including succession planning and the development of emerging leaders.



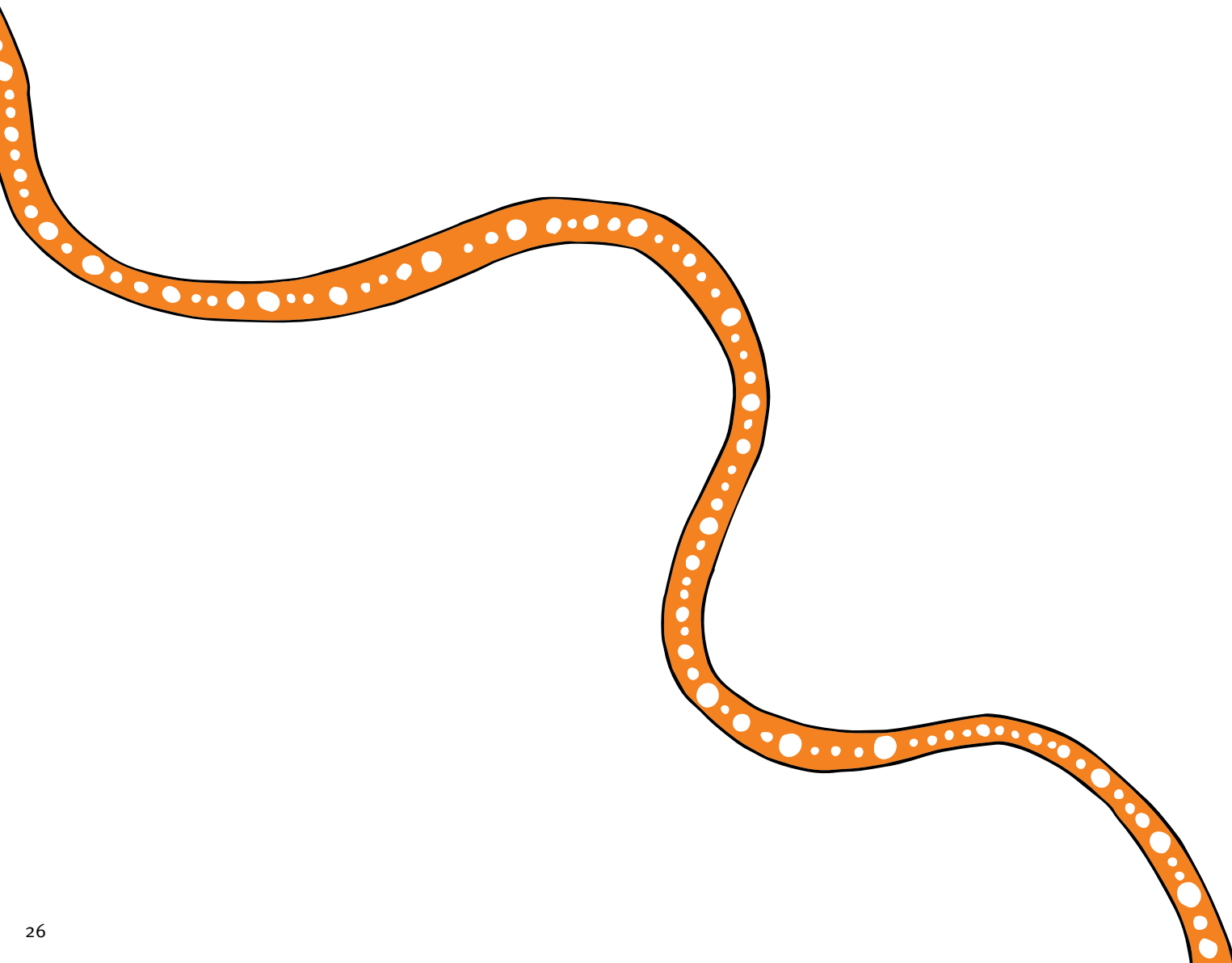


Actions to ensure Government and community services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Action	Evidence	Lead	Builds on
<p>4.1 Continue to support the Queensland First Children and Families Board</p>	<p>The Board provides independent advice and guidance as well as operating as an authorising and oversight body to hold the Queensland Government and partners accountable</p>	DCSYW	<p>Action 6.1 Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p>
<p>4.2 Continue to explore options for the establishment of a centre of excellence to build the evidence base for what works for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family reforms</p>	<p>What is described as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is largely viewed through the lens of people from non-Indigenous cultures</p>	DCSYW QATSICPP	<p>6.8 Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p>
<p>4.3 Evaluate the Changing Tracks action plan 2017–2019 to measure the change (impact) in the lives of children and families as a result of the initiatives in Changing Tracks 2017–2019</p>	<p>Monitoring and evaluation will allow us to identify those initiatives that are successful, effective and meaningful in addressing issues of child safety, and make changes to, or cease, those activities that are inefficient or ineffective</p> <p>The approach to monitoring and evaluation will be informed by the QFCFB and based on the Wellbeing Outcomes Framework</p>	DCSYW QFCFB	
<p>4.4 Develop annual progress reports to ensure the strategy and action plans are responsive to the needs of the Queensland Government and community and reflect the Family Matters Queensland partnership</p>	<p>Annual progress reports will ensure our actions and impacts are delivering the intended outcomes against key indicators and that we remain on track towards achieving our vision</p>	DCSYW QFCFB	<p>QFCFB Changing Tracks Progress Report May 2017–December 2018</p>
<p>4.5 Support Our Way partners in the call for a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s strategy, overseen by an independent national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioner</p>	<p>While the Queensland government continues to implement Our Way, in partnership with Family Matters Queensland and the QFCFB, the scale and complexity of issues driving the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems is so immense, it requires national consistency and commitment</p>	DCSYW	<p>The Family Matters Report 2019</p>

Acronyms

DATSIP	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
DCSYW	Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
DESBT	Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
DHPW	Department of Housing and Public Works
DJAG	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
DoE	Department of Education
DYJ	Department of Youth Justice
QATSICPP	Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak
QFCFB	Queensland First Children and Families Board



References

1. Children’s Health Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing Services Plan 2018–2023
2. Note: “Lead” means the agency or organisation with primary accountability for delivering the action and may include planning, resourcing, managing partnerships, monitoring, reporting and evaluation
3. Family Matters Report 2019, p.g. 50
4. Ibid.
5. The Australian Early Childhood Educational Development Experience Research Project explores the impact of early learning experiences, both at home and in early education and care services, on young children’s development and learning. The project aims to build a picture of children’s activities in the years before they start school and the impact of these activities on their development. The domains are: physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; communication skills and general knowledge.
6. Deadly Kids Deadly Futures 2016–2026 policy framework.
7. Children’s Health Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing Services Plan 2018–2023
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9. The health and welfare of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: June 2015, p.g. 50, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-health-welfare/indigenous-health-welfare-2015/contents/determinants-of-health-key-points>
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13. Manning, Ambrey and Fleming, ‘Indigenous wellbeing in Australia: Evidence from HILDA’, CAEPR Working Paper no. 101, 2015, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences. p.g. 1
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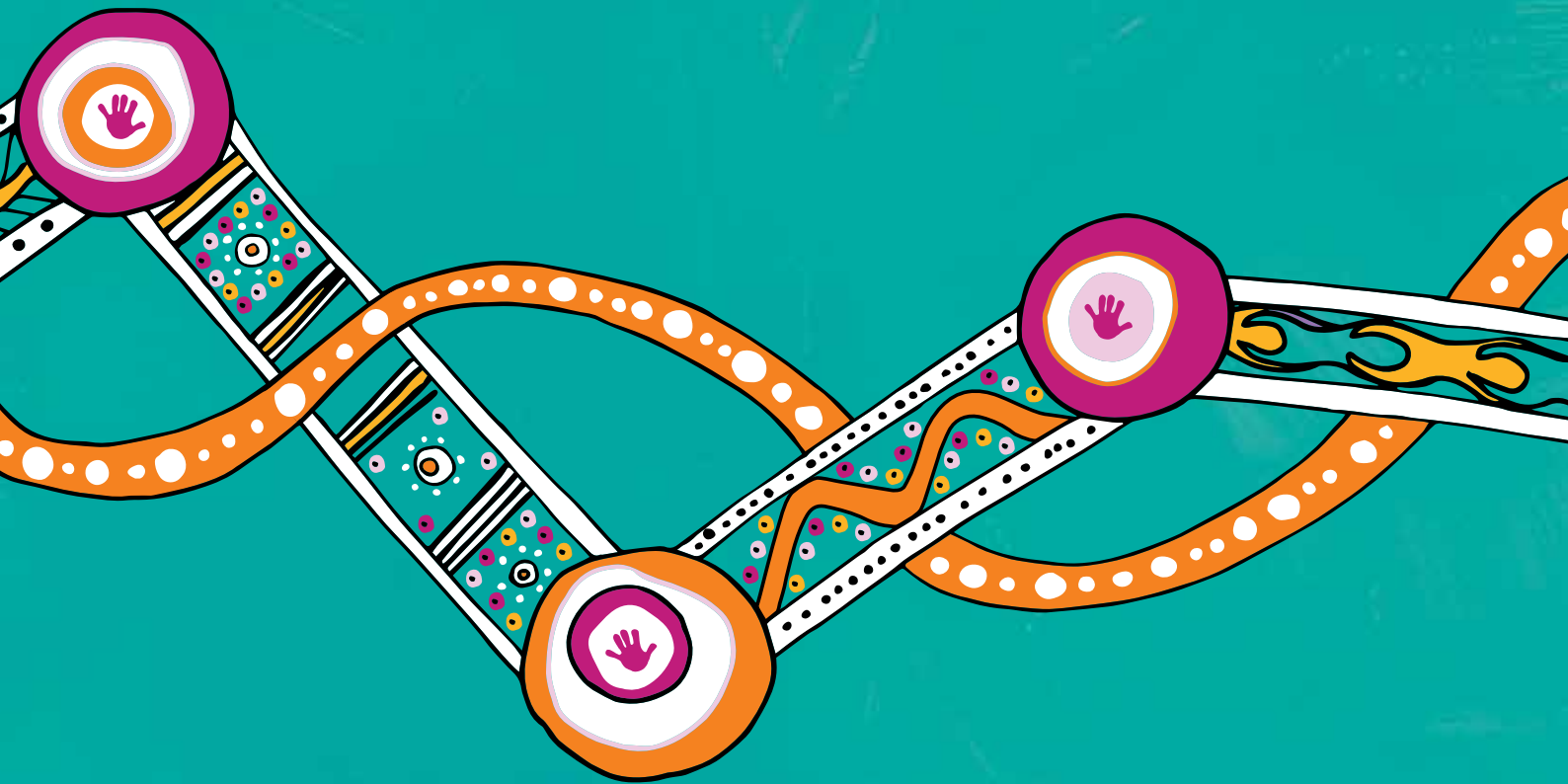




Story of the motif

The motif artwork was created by Rachael Sarra, an Indigenous artist and designer from creative agency Gilimbaa. Rachael originates from the Bunda People in Goreng Goreng country.

The motif design is a reflection of equal partners joining together in conversation and positive action. It represents a clear and focused pathway that began as the dispersed energy of many that has now fused to channel clarity, momentum, and strength. It shows the power of unity and simplicity that evolves from complexity. The artwork shows the journey of the child, depicted as the hands, connected to and supported by structures that nurture and guide. Through the woven orange line it acknowledges culture, kin and the strength of learning from the past to act in the present and grow for the future.



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Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
Locked Bag 3405, Brisbane QLD 4001

www.csyw.qld.gov.au

