

COMMUNIQUE – Queensland First Children and Families Board meeting 7 and 8 June 2022

On 7 and 8 June 2022, the Queensland First Children and Families Board (Members), convened to discuss and guide a number of key priorities supporting the implementation of the *Our Way strategy: a generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017-2037*.

Minister Linard MP discussed the importance of collective action across government to achieve the Our Way vision and targets, noting targets exceed the commitments agreed by government under the Closing the Gap. Minister Linard discussed progress under Our Way including the success of Family Wellbeing Services to de-escalate the risk of children and families entering the child protection system, and the continued expansion of delegated authority in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

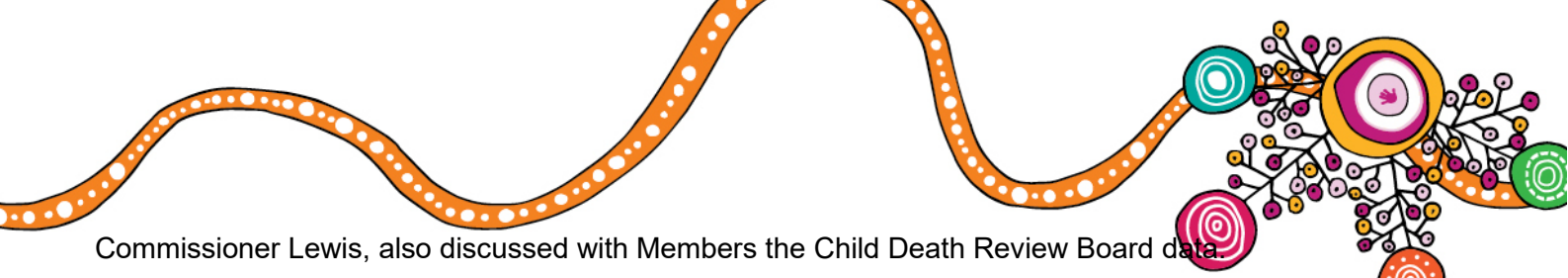
The Director-General, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA) spoke to the department's reform agenda and priorities to: double the number of children in kinship care in five years, halve the number of children in residential care in five years, and transition of all services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families for delivery by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations in ten years. Members were updated on the department's ongoing commitment to ensure kinship care is the primary option for First Nation children in care and progress on the development of the Unify client management system, enabling greater reporting on elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP).

Members noted the ongoing expansion of Delegated Authority and the challenges being worked through by the department with partner agencies to successfully scale it up, including concerns expressed by non-Indigenous services regarding their role and expectations for the transition of investment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

Michael Drane, Executive Director, Youth Detention, DCYJMA, presented departmental data demonstrating the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in youth justice in Queensland, including young people: on child protection orders; in custody, on remand and/ or transitional referrals. Members noted reforms activities that centre largely on proactive and legislative reforms to work better across government, with a focus on a small cohort of complex young people undertaking the majority of offences.

Family Matters Queensland, Co-Chair, Michael Currie, provided an overview of the annual *Family Matters Report 2021* with particular focus on: oversight of ATSICPP implementation, greater proportion of investment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, increased reunification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care and placement with kin and the success of delegated authority, kinship care program being developed in partnership with DCYJMA and QATSICPP.

Principal Commissioner Luke Twyford and Commissioner Natalie Lewis, Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) spoke to a time of renewal through the new strategic plan, with a focus on building a dedicated workforce to contribute to address the disproportionate representation of First Nations children in child protection. Principal Commissioner spoke to his experience in the Northern Territory to address the disproportionate representation of First Nations children in child protection and youth justice. Commissioner Lewis and Principal Commissioner Twyford spoke to the priority of ensuring accountability across government, including the efficacy of strategies and compliance with ATSICPP to keep children safe and well, with a focus on implementation in practice. Members stressed the importance of addressing systemic racism.



Commissioner Lewis, also discussed with Members the Child Death Review Board data.

Michael Hogan, CEO, Thriving Queensland Kids (TQK) presented to Members the TQK initiative; seeking feedback from members regarding opportunities for TQK to support priorities of the Board. Members noted that TQK highlights the disconnect and fragmentation between systems to support children and families, and the historic habit to focus on the “dysfunction of families rather than the dysfunction of systems”.

Members noted the progress update by DCYJMA and the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSCIPP) on the co-design of *Breaking Cycles 2023-25* in partnership with Indigenous Strategy and Partnerships (IS&P) and QATSCIPP on behalf of Family Matters Queensland including the commencement of the independent contractor to assist with the whole of government and sector engagement. QATSCIPP is managing a funding pool and EOI process for 20 communities to undertake regional consultations. QATSCIPP is also working to engage the voices of young people.

Deputy Police Commissioner Gollschewski, Queensland Police Service spoke to policing moving away from a ‘response’ approach to youth offending to one of ‘prevention disruption’, including: improved cultural responsiveness to First Nations young offenders; mandatory cultural training for all officers, specialist teams to identify strategies to support young people and address the drivers of offending behaviour, including the establishment of a First Nations Reference Group to explore what more can be done. This includes a shift in recruitment (looking at new skills rather than hunter-chaser personality) and a focus on referrals to other services and use of formal diversions rather than traditional custodial response.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for 6 and 7 September 2022.

For more information in relation to QFCFB membership and previous communiques, visit [QFCFB webpage](#). Queries can be emailed to the QFCFB Secretariat to qfcfbsec@cyjma.qld.gov.au