

Neighbourhood Centres

Our shared vision for a vibrant Neighbourhood Centre system in Queensland



Neighbourhood Centres

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Interpreter



The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If you have difficulty in understanding this document, you can contact us on 13 QGOV (13 74 68) and we will arrange an interpreter to communicate the report to you. www.qld.gov.au/languages

Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners and Elders of the lands and seas on which we meet, live, learn and work.

We acknowledge those of the past, the ancestors whose strength has nurtured this land and its people, and who have passed on their wisdom.

We acknowledge those of the present for their leadership and ongoing efforts to protect and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

We acknowledge those of the future, the Elders not yet born, who will inherit the legacy of our efforts.

We recognise it is our collective efforts, and responsibility as individuals, communities and governments, to ensure equality, recognition and advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders across all aspects of society and everyday life.

This publication may contain images or references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are deceased. The Queensland Government does not wish to cause distress to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community members.





Minister's message

Neighbourhood Centres are the cornerstones of their communities.

The Palaszczuk Government funds 128 Neighbourhood Centres across Queensland. These centres provide critical insight to the unique needs of their communities and offer invaluable community development activities and access to support and advocacy services.

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting the delivery of this critical social infrastructure, including through the single biggest operational funding boost delivered in the 2022-23 State Budget. This record level of investment in our network of government funded Neighbourhood Centres increases their ability to deliver quality services to Queensland.

At their core, Neighbourhood Centres are inclusive and welcoming of everyone, which is why their role is particularly important as we strive to address issues such as social isolation and loneliness, and implement initiatives to support community recovery, as part of the Communities 2032 strategy.

Communities 2032 recognises the crucial role Neighbourhood Centres play in providing place-based and community-led solutions and the importance of positioning them to be able to continue this critical work, regardless of size or structure.

Neighbourhood Centres support Queensland communities to celebrate their diversity and develop responses to modern-day challenges. They have a unique ability to cultivate strong and resilient communities and transform the lives of some of Queensland's most vulnerable people.



This is why I established the Neighbourhood Centre Strategic Repositioning Committee – to consider these opportunities and identify ways to strengthen the capacity of all Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland.

The committee included leaders from the Neighbourhood Centre sector and experts from related sectors who worked together to co-design a framework that would guide the future direction of Queensland's Neighbourhood Centres.

This strategic framework is the foundation for progressing a consistent service approach and operational model that will ensure the sustainability of our Neighbourhood Centres well into the future. In partnership with Neighbourhood Centres Queensland, the department will work with the sector to develop their capability to meet the evolving and emerging needs of Queensland's diverse communities.

Our government is continuing to take action to support and strengthen our Neighbourhood Centres, so they may grow and continue to fulfil their crucial role in our communities.

The Honorable Leanne Enoch MP

Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts

Director-General's foreword



Neighbourhood Centres are a vibrant and vital part of our social infrastructure.

They are a place of connection – a welcoming environment where people of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances can come together as a community.

Though diverse in size and nature, they have one thing in common: they are all community-led; managed by local people to uplift the voice of the community members. As community-led organisations they build a deep understanding of the unique needs of their communities, and the appropriate services and programs to meet those needs.

Empowering communities to make decisions that best meet their needs is fundamental to achieving our Communities 2032 vision to strengthen the fabric of Queensland's communities. That's why we have collaborated with the Neighbourhood Centre sector to map a way forward that will support our Neighbourhood Centres to carry out their crucial work.

This strategic framework is the product of a genuine partnership between the Queensland Government and the Neighbourhood Centre sector. It is a shared vision to identify synergies and encourage greater investment that will strengthen and support all Neighbourhood Centres to reach their full potential, now and into the future.

Through this framework, we are forging a new direction to grow and develop the Neighbourhood Centre system. This is a long-term commitment, and we look forward to building on this foundational work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clare O'Connor', with a horizontal line underneath.

Clare O'Connor
Director-General

Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts



Neighbourhood Centres Queensland foreword

The Neighbourhood Centre sector has been steadily growing and evolving in Queensland for decades.

The sector has demonstrated incredible resourcefulness, creativity and determination as place-based leaders working with their local communities to effect positive change. Mirroring their approach in local communities, Neighbourhood Centres have worked together to listen, dream, strategise, and advocate to ensure they can more effectively respond to local need through better funding and frameworks.

Neighbourhood Centres Queensland (NCQ), in its current and previous iterations, has led the development of a state-wide voice and network for Neighbourhood Centres. As the sector peak body, NCQ works alongside Neighbourhood Centres to grow the resourcing, recognition, and relationships of the sector at the local, state, and national level. This includes its role as a conduit, bringing the sector's desires for reform to the attention of the Queensland Government.

This strategic framework represents a significant milestone in the evolution of our sector. It is the result of many years of hard work to build a strong relationship between Neighbourhood Centres and the Queensland Government. NCQ and the members it represents have experienced the genuine good will and commitment of the Queensland Government to undertake sector reform in a manner that reflects the values of our sector. This framework amplifies the voices of Neighbourhood Centres and acknowledges their wisdom as place-based experts in their communities, captured through a process of genuine participatory co-design.

Together with our membership of community-owned, independent centres, NCQ looks forward to continuing our partnership of shared understanding with the Queensland Government to see these sector reforms fully implemented. This document creates the foundations for the success of individual centres, communities, and Queenslanders for generations to come.

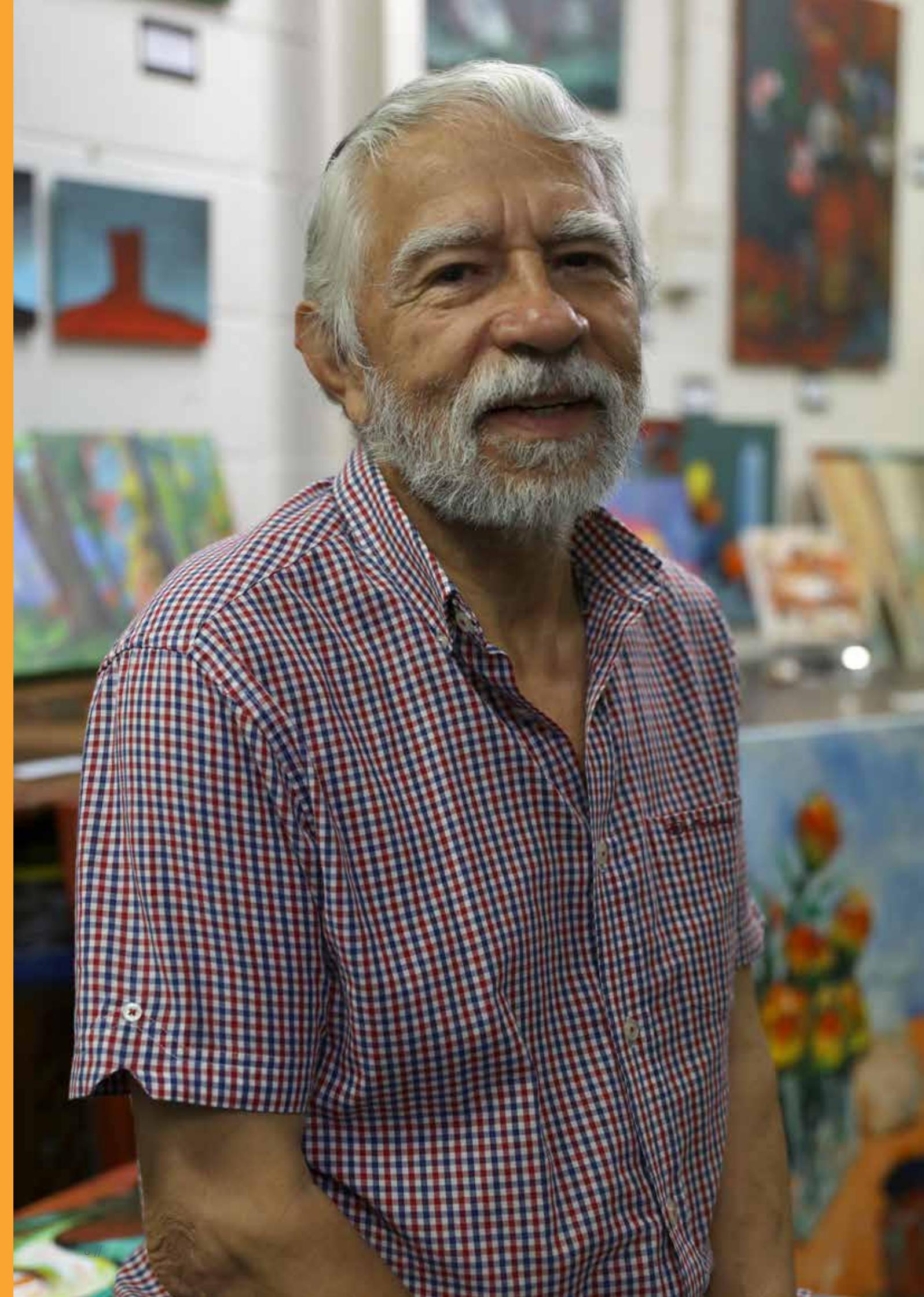
Neighbourhood Centres Queensland
on behalf of our members



Em James
CEO, Neighbourhood
Centres Queensland



Alana Wahl
Chair, Neighbourhood Centres
Queensland Board



Our shared vision

Queensland’s Neighbourhood Centres are a network of diverse community-led, place-based, organisations that build vibrant, inclusive, and cohesive communities.

Neighbourhood Centres are critical social infrastructure. They identify local strengths and priorities, and design, coordinate and implement strategies and solutions that build community capacity to realise their potential.

The term Neighbourhood Centres refers collectively to centres operating throughout the state as part of the Queensland Government Neighbourhood Centre initiative.

Our shared vision is for Neighbourhood Centres to be recognised for their extraordinary social value, and for their potential to be realised through coordinated action, policy and investment.

Queensland is home to more than a quarter of Australia’s First Nations peoples and over 150 Indigenous language groups. Neighbourhood Centres engage with First Nations people, including the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands on which they operate, and will therefore be an integral part of forging shared paths towards healing and reconciliation.



Purpose

Understanding our purpose and key activities



Investment

How we will resource our key activities



Performance

How we will know we are achieving our objectives and making an impact



Neighbourhood Centres

Purpose

Neighbourhood Centres form a network of diverse community-led and place-based organisations that build vibrant, inclusive and cohesive communities.

Neighbourhood Centres integrate knowledge, investment, and action to build community inclusion and cohesion, and advocate for locally-led responses to community issues.

As trusted public spaces, Neighbourhood Centres provide inclusive and respectful places for people to connect, belong, participate and be supported.



Guiding principles

Neighbourhood Centres are founded on the understanding that no two communities are the same, and programs and services are most effective when designed and delivered in place.

The three key principles of Responding locally, Service access and System partnerships underpin our way forward for the ongoing relationship and positive outcomes between Neighbourhood Centres, government, community members and investors.



Responding locally



Service access



System partnerships

Responding locally



Place responsive

Neighbourhood Centres are leaders in place-based approaches. They identify local priorities, and design and implement local level solutions. They coordinate service delivery, integrate funding at a local level, inform government decision making and build formal and informal networks of collaboration across services, organisations and other supports.

Local decision making

Neighbourhood Centres are autonomous community-based organisations with in-depth knowledge of their local communities. They have a critical role to ensure policy, program and service system decision making are enabled and responsive to local needs. Where possible, government decisions that can be made locally will be made locally, while decisions with wider implications will be made at the lowest level of government possible.

Community connectedness

Neighbourhood Centres foster connection, belonging, participation, inclusion and cohesion with individuals and groups. They are connected at all levels of their communities and have strong links with local organisations, business, government, schools and services to address community issues.

Recognising First Nations

Neighbourhood Centres engage with First Nations peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands on which they operate. First Nations people's enduring cultural and spiritual connection to Country is recognised and respected. We seek to learn from, connect and collaborate with First Nations people.

Service access

Universal access

Neighbourhood Centres welcome all people equally. There are no eligibility criteria and there is no time limit to engagement; all members of the community are able to connect, participate and contribute to centres across their lifespan.

Inclusiveness

Neighbourhood Centres operate as inclusive spaces for people from all backgrounds, experiences and cultures to connect, belong and participate in local and online communities.

No wrong door

There is no wrong door into the activities and services Neighbourhood Centres offer. Every person who presents to a centre will be guided to an appropriate response.



System partnerships

Sustainability

Neighbourhood Centres require recurrent and capital investment that is robust, fair, and equitable, that supports their administration, operations and delivery responsibilities for the long-term sustainability of the sector.

Accountability

Neighbourhood Centres attract a mix of investment through community resources, local businesses, philanthropy and local, state and federal government and other agencies. Accountability frameworks based on consistent evidence demonstrate Neighbourhood Centres' public value to this diverse investment base and local communities.

Networked governance

Neighbourhood Centres operate as an inclusive and adaptive network of services and community resources. They work with government and other stakeholders, collectively and individually, to gather local intelligence and share resources and ideas to achieve better outcomes for their communities.

Innovation

Neighbourhood Centres work in partnership with community members, local organisations, groups, the private sector and government to foster innovation and action.

Stewardship

Governments are system stewards in collaboration with Neighbourhood Centres and other stakeholders. Together we ensure policies, regulations, services, investment, and performance and reporting arrangements are organised as a system to improve community outcomes through a continual cycle of design, delivery and adaptation.





Key activities of Neighbourhood Centres

Neighbourhood Centres come in different shapes and sizes, and respond to the needs of their communities in many different ways.

As community-driven and responsive endeavours, Neighbourhood Centres are as unique as the communities in which they operate, and there is no single description that can fully describe them in their diversity. However, across all of Queensland's Neighbourhood Centres, there are common activities that define the unique role and function that they play in their communities.

These are the core activities that are at the heart of what the Neighbourhood Centre system delivers across Queensland. These activities are far from exhaustive in describing the work that Neighbourhood Centres do, but provide the framework of what the common activities are across the system.

The activities can be categorised under three broad key activity dimensions:



Link people with formal and informal support



Create social connections and inclusion



Integrate local community action

1

Link people with formal and informal support

Neighbourhood Centres are a point of expertise for universal support through information provision, warm referrals to other services, and informal and formal service connection. Families and individuals come to **Neighbourhood Centres** to access support and assistance for a wide range of activities, which may be immediate or complex.

Neighbourhood Centres offer practical advice to people who need help to navigate local, regional and online services. They are a point of expertise for local community information and can link people with the right services, support and assistance.



Provide a trusted and respected local place for people to seek support and assistance

Support individuals and families through providing information, service navigation, digital inclusion, and direct interventions

Be a point of expertise on pathways to formal and informal support and service navigation

Work with local and regional groups to support a high functioning and locally responsive service system



Create social connections and inclusion

By facilitating and promoting inclusion and cohesion, Neighbourhood Centres create a welcome environment for all community members. They provide spaces where all people, regardless of their background or circumstances, can participate in a wide range of activities, events and services. Neighbourhood Centres create connections and opportunities for participation and involvement in their local communities.

Mutual respect and recognition of First Nations peoples is critical for us all to connect with place and enjoy the lands and seas that have been nurtured for thousands of years.

Neighbourhood Centres play an important role in providing activities and supports to address social isolation and loneliness and build empowerment. They provide spaces for participation where people can volunteer, gain work experience and complete work development orders and student placements.

Neighbourhood Centres play a key role in mentoring, supporting and auspicing local community groups and organisations to build their capacity.

They provide a space for people to connect, contribute and belong locally. They foster inclusion and promote cohesion for all Queenslanders.

Provide space for people to connect, participate, belong, contribute and volunteer

Auspice, mentor and support local groups and organisations

Foster inclusion and cohesion through recognition and respect for all Queenslanders





Integrate local community action

Neighbourhood Centres are well established in their local communities with wide-ranging local networks, enabling them to provide leadership in a range of place-based community engagement and development activities. These activities integrate action and resources to build community resilience, community development and local problem solving. Local-level responses are enabled by local leadership, including the capacity to leverage local resources in a coordinated way.

These activities include identifying and responding to local issues, building on the capacity of local communities, and actively fostering volunteering and community involvement internally and externally.

Neighbourhood Centres operate within a community development framework to enable the most sustainable outcomes for the community.

Neighbourhood Centres take a proactive role to build social capital, respond to community issues and empower community members to effect positive social change. Centres advocate on a wide range of issues that affect local people and are a conduit to and from government to the local level for local benefit. Centres play a critical role in contributing to or leading local disaster preparedness, responses and recovery, and in building community resilience.



Lead place-based responses by identifying local strengths and priorities, and designing, coordinating and implementing local level solutions

Foster volunteering and community involvement

Be a conduit to and from government, harnessing opportunities and whole-of-government action for local benefit

Leverage local resources and investment in a coordinated way to build social capital

Empower community members to organise and build local capacity

Provide local leadership for disaster preparedness, resilience, response and recovery

Resourcing and investing

Investment

Neighbourhood Centres deliver enormous value in their local communities.

The Queensland Government is committed to investing in these centres, recognising the significant return on this investment in positive outcomes for communities across the state.

Through the investment of Neighbourhood Centre base operational funding, Queensland Government provides centres with a stable base to attract and use a variety of other investment and resources.



Neighbourhood Centres and communities are resourced and empowered by a range of investment sources, which is critical to build social capital and the essential skill base of this workforce.

The Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, as the lead Queensland Government agency for the Neighbourhood Centre system, provides base operational funding that supports the core activities of Neighbourhood Centres. This funding is provided under the Neighbourhood Centres Initiative. We acknowledge centres may also benefit from funding and support from additional sources.

Neighbourhood Centres attract resourcing and investment from a range of sources such as local, state and federal government, donations, grants from philanthropic organisations, income from business and social enterprise activities. This diversity of funding sources contributes to the unique range of activities undertaken by Neighbourhood Centres.

Neighbourhood Centres may receive funding from other organisations or government agencies for the delivery of specific services or activities. This funding provides a range of benefits such as delivering economies of scale and creating program synergies that can provide a more comprehensive service offering to individuals, flexibility associated with having more staffing and volunteers, and opportunities for networking and community development.



Investment objectives

Investment in Neighbourhood Centres is underpinned by five key objectives.

Coherence and alignment

We recognise substantial investment does and could further flow to Neighbourhood Centres from across many different sectors, including government departments and philanthropic sources, and a consistent investment approach would bring benefits to all parties.

Community benefit

We recognise sustainable investment is required for the future growth and continuous improvement of the Neighbourhood Centre sector, and for the benefit of local communities.

Diversity and sustainability

We recognise the diverse mixed economy and diversity of the Neighbourhood Centre sector and the need for proactive support for a strategic and coordinated approach to funding arrangements within government.

Efficiency

We aim to boost productivity for Neighbourhood Centres, for example by reducing overhead costs, improving efficiency, deploying technology and removing other barriers to productivity.

Effectiveness and equity

We value investments that align with the agreed Neighbourhood Centre purpose based on effectiveness, equity and evidence.



Queensland Government investment

Base operational funding

The Queensland Government, through the Neighbourhood Centres Initiative, provides base operational funding to support the operation of Neighbourhood Centres. This funding is provided to assist with basic costs and core activities, with the understanding that many centres will fund additional activities through other means and/or be operated by volunteers and community support.

The Queensland Government, in providing base operational funding, recognises and respects the independence of Neighbourhood Centres as grassroots, community-led entities. Centres have flexibility in how they operate and how activities are conducted, and will have differences in urban, regional and remote communities.

The Queensland Government recognises the importance of funding certainty for social and community service sector organisations, including Neighbourhood Centres. This is essential to ensure the vitality and continual growth and improvement of the sector. The Queensland Government is committed to providing certainty through longer-term contracts (minimum five years) wherever possible, and timely and efficient processes for contract renewals.

Peak funding

The Queensland Government recognises that enhanced state-wide network coordination and the development of place-based leadership expertise are critical factors for continuous improvement and a robust, vibrant sector. To facilitate and accomplish this important element the Queensland Government provides funding to support a peak body for Neighbourhood Centres.

Coordinated Queensland Government funding

The Queensland Government supports Neighbourhood Centres by providing funding for core activities. Neighbourhood Centres are required to report on these funded core activities and outputs.

Other Queensland Government agencies also provide funding for a range of different programs and purposes delivered by Neighbourhood Centres. These various funding sources often require reporting against unique initiative objectives.

The Queensland Government, via the Neighbourhood Centre Initiative, is committed to working across departments to simplify and streamline reporting requirements as far as possible to minimise the administrative burden on centres in collecting, storing, analysing, and reporting information through multiple modes to multiple audiences.

As part of the Neighbourhood Centres Initiative the value of Neighbourhood Centres will be promoted across government, identifying opportunities for new and emerging programs and initiatives to leverage the value of the Neighbourhood Centre system, and influence the development and implementation of government-funded community-based initiatives.

The Neighbourhood Centre Initiative will support and facilitate positive, productive relationships between the Neighbourhood Centre sector and Queensland Government agencies, as well as other potential funding sources.



Evidence based

Available evidence is used to inform a contemporary approach to investment in Neighbourhood Centre service design and funding, and for determining new locations. Queensland Government will invest in new locations depending on availability of funding.

Evidence used for decision making includes:

- use of statistical data such as service mapping, population and growth projections and socio-economic indicators, to inform our understanding of communities
- community consultation with a range of local stakeholders to increase awareness of community needs and other services in the local community and minimise duplication and maximise investment
- local, national and international research to inform solution design and support continual improvement.



Capital construction and maintenance

The Queensland Government will invest into new builds, and redevelopments where appropriate, depending on availability of funding, evidence of community need, and in consultation with local communities. Ongoing responsible maintenance for the Queensland Government owned portfolio of Neighborhood Centre properties will have continued investment under the Initiative. To deliver improved outcomes for communities and individuals, our future investment will include consideration of opportunities for co-location of services.

Future investment and maintenance of the existing portfolio will support the following priorities wherever possible:

- promoting community trust and enabling community ownership of the space
- providing accessibility
- promoting a positive, welcoming and culturally-safe environment
- ensuring sufficient space for the broad range of activities undertaken by Neighbourhood Centres including community development activities and supporting other local groups, associations and organisations
- enabling an effective locus for place-based responses, including implementing local level solutions and local disaster responses.



Diversity of investment sources

Neighbourhood Centres are diverse, capable and agile local experts. Centres seek contributions from a range of sources to support their important work.

Neighbourhood Centres present a great opportunity to funders, investors, social entrepreneurs and philanthropists seeking to make an impact in local communities.

The advantages to investing in Neighbourhood Centres as community-led agencies is clear. They offer established relationships with community members, mechanisms for facilitating engagement and capacity for mobilising local resources such as workforce and volunteers.

Neighbourhood Centres know their local communities and are a critical service, particularly in regional areas where the availability of social services may be limited. They are versatile, resourceful and can be a one-stop shop for community members.

Potential investors are encouraged to consider the alignment of their own goals with those of Neighbourhood Centres, and to identify synergies and opportunities to enhance efforts to achieve shared outcomes.



Fostering a learning culture

Performance

Neighbourhood Centres deliver positive outcomes across the state every day.

Our shared responsibility for measuring the performance of the Neighbourhood Centre system over time means we are able to demonstrate these positive outcomes in concrete terms.

Measurement and analysis give us a rich and detailed picture to inform continuous improvement, future planning and investment decisions.

Data collection enables us to promote, share and celebrate our successes and demonstrate social value. It also provides us with the information we need to reflect on our service delivery and make changes needed to better meet the needs of our diverse communities.



To ensure our shared vision is realised, we are committed to building a learning culture that will build capacity and demonstrate our achievements and value to enable the Neighbourhood Centre system to adapt and change to meet emerging and evolving needs over time.

Together, we seek to undertake monitoring performance at a whole system level. We will consider our achievements and limitations, celebrate success and adopt a continuous-improvement mindset.

Our shared vision sets out our approach to move forward to this goal.

Monitoring, reviewing and evaluating performance

We are committed to a process of ongoing reflection and learning; engaging along a continuum of shared monitoring, review and evaluation. The development of performance reporting for Neighbourhood Centres will connect with our purpose and key activity dimensions.

The objectives of performance reporting are:

- to demonstrate economic, social and community value
- to provide evidence of quality and outcomes
- to provide evidence to assess the effectiveness of design and to support design thinking and improvements
- to analyse and identify service gaps and enhancements for the larger service system.

Consistent with Queensland Government guidelines on measuring and monitoring program performance, our shared approach to monitoring performance of the Neighbourhood Centre system is to consider measures that are relevant, attributable, comparable, well-defined, timely, reliable and verifiable, achievable, time-framed, credible and cost-effective.¹

Our shared understanding for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating performance is underpinned by six key principles.

Efficacy

Represents the economic, social and community value of individual Neighbourhood Centres and the system as a whole

Effective

Guides investment decisions, funding arrangements and design thinking of government agencies and other funders

Adaptable

Balances adaptability and continuous improvement, learning as we do, with the need for long term certainty and sustainability

Outcomes

The design of the performance measurement will inform monitoring, review and evaluation, and will be outcome-focused

Coherence

Align, where feasible, the Neighbourhood Centre performance measurement with the performance reporting systems of other national jurisdictions

Efficient

Data collection that minimises the burden for Neighbourhood Centres, and supports shared data ownership and access

1. Source: Queensland Treasury (2020), Measuring, Monitoring and Reporting Performance, Reference Guide

Data collection and reporting

Monitoring performance is a shared responsibility. Our shared vision includes developing clear mechanisms for data sharing and ownership, for developing reflective design processes and to ensure that all Neighbourhood Centres, big or small, urban, regional or remote are able to participate.

Our shared approach to data collection and reporting for the Neighbourhood Centre system comprises six key components.

Analysis

Comprehensive data mapping will determine the most efficient data collection methods, sources and items that support multiple use and minimise data burden for Neighbourhood Centres

Transparency

Neighbourhood Centre performance measurement will be implemented progressively and transparently based on practical and consistent two-way communication between the sector, government agencies and other key stakeholders

Multi-methods

Neighbourhood Centre performance measurement will use a mixed-methods approach including accessing and analysing administrative data, case studies, stakeholder feedback and other quality measures such as network analysis

Innovation

Technological solutions will be a key element of Neighbourhood Centre performance measurement design and implementation

Multi-use

Information and insights gathered through Neighbourhood Centre performance measurement processes will be used for discussions about individual Neighbourhood Centre contract performance and the broader evaluation of the sector

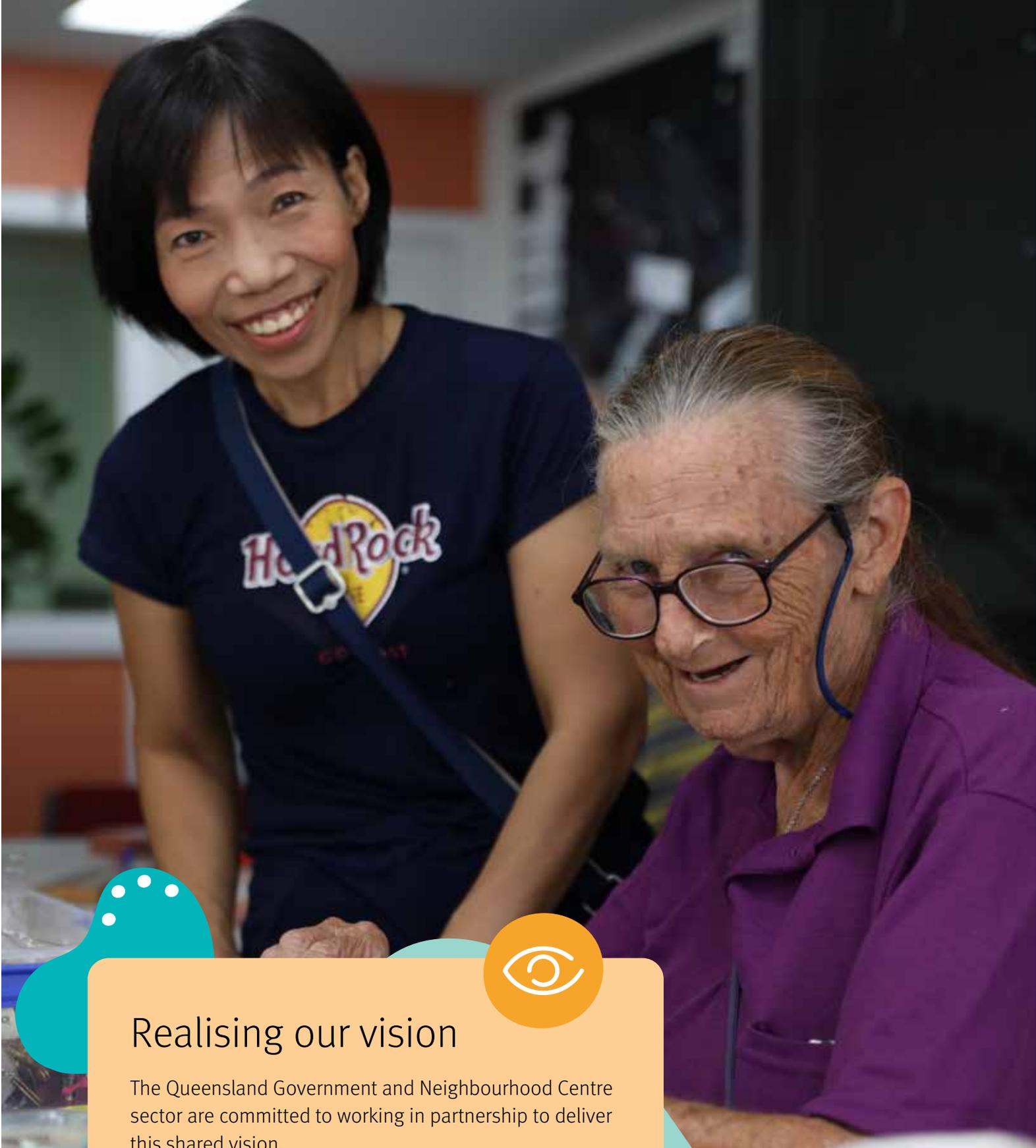
Consistency

Data will be collected and analysed consistently and reliably through agreed counting rules and the development of a data dictionary to ensure a shared interpretation across the Neighbourhood Centre system

Through our shared vision we are committed to jointly explore a developmental approach to data collection methods and systems and the development of tools and technology to ensure the administrative burden on Neighbourhood Centres is minimised.

We will consider a range of collection tools, methods, measures and data collection already in use such as quantitative measures, surveys, interviews, case studies and client journey mapping to identify the most effective and efficient method for all Neighbourhood Centres.

We are committed to a shared understanding of performance that will be achieved through ongoing engagement and open communication.



Realising our vision

The Queensland Government and Neighbourhood Centre sector are committed to working in partnership to deliver this shared vision.

This is a long-term commitment, and we will review this vision over time, making adjustments as required to maintain the focus and energy required to support the continual growth and development of the Neighbourhood Centre system.





Thank you to the Strategic Repositioning Committee

This document has been co-designed with the Neighbourhood and Community Centre Strategic Repositioning Committee and in consultation with the Neighbourhood Centre sector. Queensland Government thanks all participants, including members of the committee, for their time, energy and passion in making this work possible.

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