



COMMUNIQUE

Queensland First Children and Families Board meeting

13 and 14 December 2022

On 13 and 14 December 2022, the Queensland First Children and Families Board (Board), convened in their role to discuss and guide the implementation of *Our Way: a generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017-2037*.

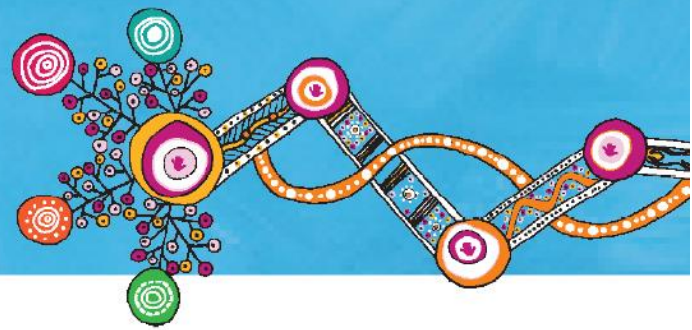
The Board led by interim Chair, Aunty Rachel Atkinson, acknowledged and thanked Mr Mick Gooda and Aunty Boni Robertson for their strong leadership through their time as Board Co-chairs over the last 4 years, noting Mick's resignation from the Board and Aunty Boni's choice to step back as Co-Chair whilst remaining as Board member. The process to fill the vacancy for a new Board member and a Co-Chair is underway. Member also acknowledged the success of the recent QATSICPP Conference, noting increased attendance by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Services and government representatives, and the interest from sector participants generated by the expansion of Delegated Authority.

Minister Linard reinforced her confidence in the partnership with the Board and thanked members for their ongoing trust and leadership, noting the strength of relations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners and government in Queensland, recognised nationally as one of the strongest partnerships of any jurisdiction in Australia.

Minister Linard has invited fellow Ministers to join her in attending an upcoming Board meeting to speak with members, in particular Ministers responsible for education, housing, health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs acknowledging the importance of continuing to foster collective action across government to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to address the risks of entering the child protection system.

Deidre Mulkerin, Director-General (DG) Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA), spoke to the progress of initiatives related to the Board's key priorities including Delegated Authority (DA), transition of DCYJMA investment for services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled sector, embedding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-led decision-making model and the implementation of new Kinship Care program in partnership with QATSICPP. The Board continues to review its priorities in 2023.

The Board acknowledged the annual Family Matters Report 2022, the positive progress by Queensland, particularly favorable by comparison nationally, and the vast amount of work still ahead. Members reiterated the importance of leveraging off the work underway nationally and statewide, including *Closing the Gap*, *Path to Treaty*, *Local Thriving Communities* and *Our Way*, and the department's commitment to achieve: proportionate funding to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community service sector, reduced numbers of children and young people in residential care and increase numbers placed with kin. Board members discussed and noted the importance of sequencing of reforms, the need for person centred commissioning, a better understanding of what is meant by self-determination by government, and the importance of expanding on and further refining successes such as Delegated Authority.



Kate Connors, Deputy Director-General (DDG) DCYJMA spoke to the department's new Strategic Plan that sets the framework to support a new system that better meets the needs of families and children to live safe and supported in culture with family and kin. An implementation plan to be shared with the Board at its next meeting. The DDG also spoke to the progress and strategic approach to Placement Reform to ensure implementation is focused and targets achieved.

Delivery plans have been developed to guide the department's work towards the targets including:

- finding and assessing kin
- supporting placements
- preventing unplanned entry to residential care
- stabilising and supporting residential care, and
- increasing permanency.

Natalie Wilson, Acting Senior Executive Director, Investment and Commissioning (I&C) DCYJMA provided an update on Commissioning Reform activities to grow investment and capacity in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled sector. DCYJMA is committed to a Commissioning Framework that is culturally safe and supportive. Members acknowledged the valuable feedback received from services, the Board and QATSICPP to guide the development of the Framework, and the import that it supports growth in the community-controlled sector and local services necessary to achieve reform.

Dr Bruce Visser, Acting Executive Director, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DSDSATSIP), provided an update on the Path to Treaty, and the critical importance of ensuring government is Treaty Ready. The Queensland Government response to the Treaty Advancement Committee Report includes the commitment to legislate and establish a Truth Telling and Healing Inquiry into historical and ongoing, impacts of colonisation.

Michael Currie, Co-Chair Family Matters Queensland (FMQ) noted Queensland's positive performance in the annual Family Matters Report 2022. FMQ is optimistic of Queensland's direction and progress noting the strong foundation of legislation (implementation of the *Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2022*), a strong peak (QATSICPP) and a robust relationship with government. The consultation process for Breaking Cycles has provided insight and authority to community, with over 1,000 community participants consulted.

The Board welcomed Mr Phillip Brooks, in his new role as DDG Department of Education Queensland (DoE) and expressed their appreciation for Phillip's dedication and commitment during his time with Youth Justice. The inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language in all schools and the need for flexible school models was agreed as critical. DoE's aim for a system including adaptive behaviours that meets the needs of children with no expulsion or suspension. This includes enhancing culturally responsive education support programs and planning to better meet the needs of First nations students.

The Board noted the ongoing success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services (FWS) to deliver positive outcomes with many services at capacity. Notably the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children coming into child protection in Queensland remains stable, the number of children placed with kin has increased, as has the children reunified with families and remaining with family.



Helena Wright, Executive Director, DA DCYJMA and Garth Morgan CEO QATSICPP, spoke to the co-design of the delegated authority statewide expansion blueprint. The blueprint builds on the success and learning of the early adopter sites (Rockhampton, Sunshine Coast), and reflects the findings of comprehensive state-wide engagement and cross jurisdictional analysis. The 10-year blueprint will be finalised in early 2023 with resourcing to be considered as part of the 2023/24 Our Way budget submission.

Bernadette Harvey, DDG Youth Justice (YJ) DCYJMA, spoke to the ongoing reform of YJ programs and the significant proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers. An ongoing focus of the Action Review of YJ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Led Decision Making model acknowledges the import for holistic programs that are culturally responsive and tailored for the child and families.

Letitia Creevy, Acting Executive Director, IS&P, DCYJMA, Garth Morgan, CEO, QATSICPP, and Kristal Kinsela Consulting, spoke to the co-design of Breaking Cycles 2023-2025 including consultation and engagement activities with community, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled sector and peaks, government agencies and non-Indigenous peaks. Potential Breaking Cycles actions are expected centre on child and family placement reform, commissioning reform, early intervention services, the continued expansion of DA, Blue Card reform, changes to housing policy to prioritise families at risk of entering child protection and supporting children to transition from child protection. Breaking Cycles 2023-2025 is anticipated to launch in mid-2023.

The next Board meeting is scheduled to be held 21 and 22 March 2023.

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