

COMMUNIQUE –Queensland First Children and Families Board Meeting 17- 18 August 2021

On 17-18 August 2021, the Queensland First Children and Families Board (the Board), now in its 3rd year, 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*.

The Board was joined on day one by the Honorable Leeanne Linard MP, Minister for Child Safety, Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs who acknowledged the Board's expertise and critical role in advising government. Minister Linard reiterated the commitment of the Queensland Government to eliminating overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care and supporting the Board and its oversight role in the implementation of the *Our Way* strategy.

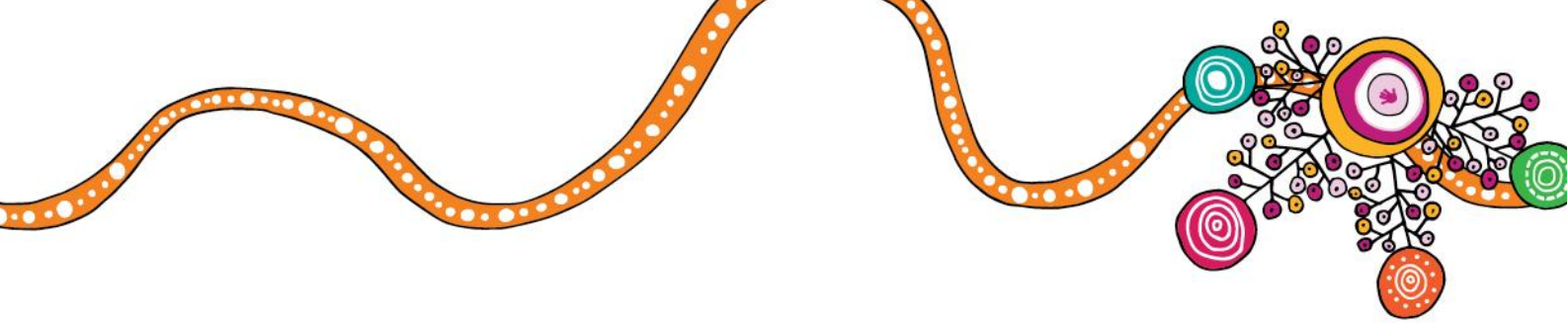
The Board acknowledged the importance of data to undertake their role to monitor the progress of the *Our Way* strategy targets and outcomes, and the complexity of cases, and the collective action and commitment required by partners agencies (Health, Education, Housing) to achieve change. The Board noted progress by the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA) on their key priorities:

- increased proportional funding distribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations and opportunities for enhanced procurement practices
- the successful implementation of delegated authority in the earlier adopter sites of Rockhampton and the Sunshine Coast and the preparation for expansion of this project state-wide. The board noted the importance of placed based initiatives and their prevalence in the department.
- a new kinship care program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, *Family Caring for Family* being developed with Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP), Goolburri Aboriginal Health Advancement Company Limited and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service Brisbane.

The board, the department and the QATSICPP renewed their commitment to actively work together to reduce Unborn Child notifications and better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, particularly young mothers. The Family Matters Queensland update reinforced the role of other agencies to better support young mums by directly linking to relevant services and review how to best co-ordinate our efforts across agencies and sectors.

Day one finished with a presentation by the Commissioner, Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC), Ms Natalie Lewis. Commissioner Lewis presented a position paper by the QFCC, as part of a comprehensive program of work called "Principle Focus" which will examine dynamics and drivers of over-representation across Queensland's child protection system.

Day two of the Board meeting commenced with a presentation on the new Blue Card strategy, *Safe children and strong communities – A strategy and action plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations accessing the blue card system* by the Department of Justice and Attorney General. *Safe children and strong communities* provide a broad five-year roadmap which outlines focus areas, strategies, and actions for achieving effective engagement between a culturally appropriate blue card system and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The team acknowledged challenges raised by board members facing Blue card applicants, contributing to applicants' withdrawals.



The board discussed the development of the next Our Way action plan, *Breaking Cycles* (2023-2025). A Road Map outlining how DCYJMA will co-design in partnership with Family Matters Queensland, QATSICPP and partner agencies was tabled. The board is focused on real collaboration and how to ensure we get genuine buy in from relevant agencies to participate in decision-making during development of the action plan.

The Board's key focus for the remainder of the day was a status update on the proposed reform of the placement system for children in the department's care. The Director-General, DCYJMA has identified key targets for the delivery of placement services into the future:

- Halving the number of children and young people in residential care
- Doubling the number of children and young people cared for by kin
- Transferring care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to the Community Controlled sector.

The Placement Reform agenda has far reaching implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and the board will consider making this a priority on the board's priority, schedule for 2021/2022.

The day ended with the inaugural Commissioner (Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa), Mr C'Zarke Maza meeting the board members. Commissioner Maza was appointed following the passage of the Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa (Torres Strait Islander Traditional Child Rearing Practice) Act 2020 (the Act). The purpose of the Act is to legally recognise the outcome of Torres Strait Islander 'Ailan Kastom' child rearing practice and to establish an application process for the making of and deciding of a 'cultural recognition order'. Commissioner Maza noted the process for traditional adoptions for independent consideration by the Commissioner, commencing from early September 2021.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for 9-10 November 2021.

For more information in relation to the Board including previous communiques, please visit the Board's webpage <https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/campaign/supporting-families/background/queensland-first-children-families-board>.

Any other queries can be emailed to the Board Secretariat through the following email address gfcfbsec@csyw.qld.gov.au.