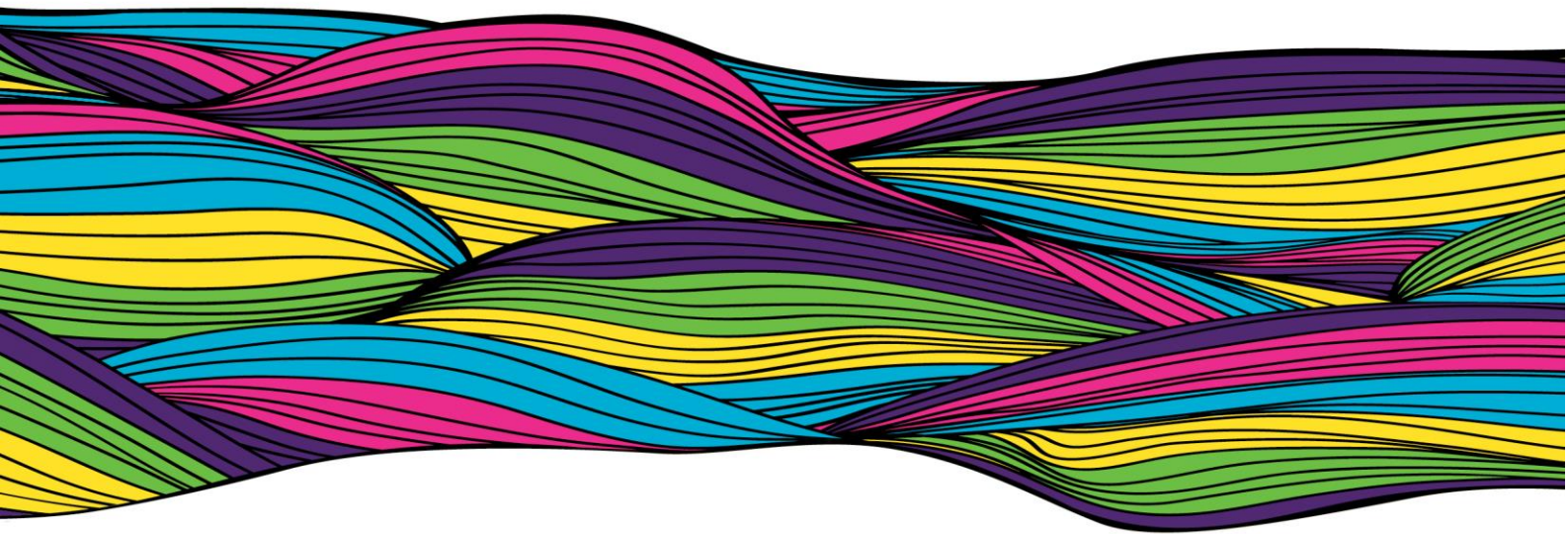


Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce

# 2021 Annual Report

To the Minister for Children and Youth Justice  
and Minister for Multicultural Affairs



14 January 2022

The Honourable Leanne Linard MP  
Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs  
Locked Bag 3405  
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Minister

Members of the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce (the Taskforce) are pleased to present the 2021 Annual Report, that is provided in line with the Terms of Reference that the Taskforce operates under.

This year saw the continuing appointment of some members from the previous two-year membership term, as well as the appointment of four new members to the Taskforce. The Taskforce welcomed the opportunity to have differing levels of experiences across its membership and are pleased to have representation from a variety of service providers and people with lived experience of institutional child abuse.

Like many around the world, the Taskforce have continued to be impacted by the health pandemic of COVID-19, with the workplan of the Taskforce being adapted to ensure the health and safety of all who engage with the Taskforce is maintained, while continuing to provide information and hear from people with lived experience, their supports and service providers.

A significant achievement of the Taskforce has been the privilege to host, with the support of knowmore Legal Service and Lotus Place, several community forums across the state as part of its *Statewide Listening Tour*, with over 300 people attending.

Raising community awareness of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission) and the impact of institutional child abuse remains a priority area of work for the Taskforce. In addition to the community forums, the Taskforce have presented at a number of presentations nationally and across Queensland.

As the Taskforce enters its last year of operation under its Terms of Reference, members remain hopeful of continuing to hear from people with lived experience and work with the Queensland Government on the implementation of Royal Commission recommendations.

On behalf of the Taskforce, I would like to take this opportunity to extend our appreciation of your support and commitment to Royal Commission related reforms.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss this report, or the work of the Taskforce.

Yours sincerely



Mr Robert (Bob) Atkinson AO APM  
**Chair, Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce**

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## Acknowledgements

The Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce (the Taskforce) acknowledges all that has come before and led us to where we are now.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as our First Nations and Traditional Owners of the land.

We acknowledge all people with lived experience of institutional child abuse.

We also acknowledge:

- the Stolen Generations
- the Forgotten Australians and Child Migrants whose experiences were recognised through the *1999 Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions*, known as the Forde Inquiry
- people who as children in the care of the State of Queensland were inappropriately placed in adult mental health facilities
- people harmed in out-of-home care
- people affected by forced adoptions.

We recognise the lifelong impact of childhood abuse in institutional settings experienced by many in the past and are committed to keeping this at the forefront of our work.

## Background

On 3 September 2018, the Taskforce was established by the Queensland Government. The role of the Taskforce is to provide for the views of those who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse, support services and organisations, in advice to the Queensland Government on implementing the reforms arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission).

On 14 December 2019, in accordance with changes to the *Civil Liability and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019* and the removal of the statutory limitation period for serious child physical and psychological abuse, the Premier expanded the Terms of Reference for the Taskforce to include all forms of institutional child abuse.

The Taskforce operate under a Terms of Reference and also provide advice on a grants program for activities that contribute to truth, healing and reconciling histories.

## Membership

The Terms of Reference that the Taskforce operate under state that membership will include:

- four representatives of people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse, ensuring:
  - representation of experiences of physical, sexual and psychological abuse within institutional settings

- at least one member representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and;
- one member representing people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse in an institutional setting other than residential or home-based care.
- two representatives of services that support people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse
- one representative of care providers
- one representative of an organisation that supports children and young people
- one representative of religious institutions and religious schools.

## Taskforce members

Current membership of the Taskforce includes:

- Mr Robert (Bob) Atkinson AO APM – Chair
- Mr Michael Wragge
- Mrs Joan Isaacs
- Ms Diane Carpenter
- Ms Aimee Hele
- Ms Carly Jacobitz, Life Without Barriers
- Ms Yvette Salam, Link-Up QLD
- Ms Karyn Walsh, Micah Projects
- Ms Jacqui Reed, CREATE Foundation
- Reverend David Baker, Queensland Churches Together

To find out more about our members go to page 9.

## Vision and purpose

Our vision is for a Queensland where children are protected, safe and supported to reach their full potential.

Our purpose is to raise awareness of institutional child abuse and its impacts, to drive changes that will protect children, and provide a holistic response to support, justice and healing for people with lived experience across Queensland.

## Priorities of the Taskforce

Key areas of work have been identified by members and inform the workplan of the Taskforce. Priorities include:

1. Increasing community awareness and getting out and talking to people – this includes educating the public about the work of the Royal Commission and its 409 recommendations, and giving those with lived experience of institutional child abuse an opportunity to voice their concerns, provide input and feedback.
2. Implementation of the recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse across Queensland Government.
3. National Redress Scheme – including providing advice to the Queensland Government about their participation in the National Redress Scheme.
4. Contemporary out-of-home care.

5. Engagement across all levels of the Queensland community – the Taskforce will continue to grow its profile in the community through engagement with people with lived experience, services and organisations and government.

## Taskforce meetings

Throughout 2021, the Taskforce adjusted the way it held meetings and combined a mix of face-to-face and virtual discussions. Five formal meetings were held throughout the year in March, April, June, August and October, with a number of out-of-session discussions also occurring.

Two communiqués per year outlining the topics of discussion are prepared by the Taskforce and made publicly available on its webpage. The Taskforce have remained committed to discussions that focus on Royal Commission related reforms in Queensland and its impacts on people with lived experience of institutional child abuse.

Topics that were discussed at meetings throughout the year included, but were not limited to:

- The National Redress Scheme
- The National Centre for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse
- Implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations including child safe standards, criminal justice recommendations and the Queensland Intermediary Scheme
- The final report of the second-year review of the National Redress Scheme (the Review)
- Information and support for children, young people and adults with lived experience of institutional care.

While there is no requirement for Taskforce members to work in between meetings, we aim to be responsive to opportunities to influence the implementation of Royal Commission related reforms.

## Highlights for 2021

### Statewide Listening Tour

A significant piece of work for the Taskforce has been in establishing and delivering a series of community forums across Queensland, known as the Taskforce '*Listening Tour*'. The first community forum by the Taskforce was held in Toowoomba in 2020, with further forums placed on hold, due to the COVID-19 health pandemic.

The purpose of these forums is to hear from people with lived experience of institutional child abuse, their supporters and service providers on their experiences, concerns, and suggestions for change.

The Taskforce were pleased to be able to host its community forums again from May 2021, with forums held on the Gold Coast, Townsville, Cairns, the Sunshine Coast and Rockhampton to over 300 people. The Taskforce acknowledges the contributions of

knowmore Legal Service and Lotus Place (Redress Support Service) in providing information on the National Redress Scheme and the application process, along with the supports available to applicants.

#### *Presentation to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vulnerable Persons Conference, hosted by the University of Southern Queensland*

In May 2021, Mr Atkinson presented on the Royal Commission and the work of the Taskforce at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vulnerable Persons Conference in Toowoomba, to a range of stakeholders including but not limited to, the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA), Department of Education, a variety of community organisations and representatives of locally based law firms.

#### *4<sup>th</sup> National Child Protection Forum*

This forum was held in July 2021, with Mr Atkinson presenting virtually to 200 attendees from around Australia. Mr Atkinson spoke on the key messages that he believed came from the Royal Commission relating to preventing and responding to child sexual abuse and supporting people with lived experience. Mr Atkinson spoke of the importance of maintaining the momentum of the Royal Commission and ensuring that the key messages and stories heard are not forgotten.

#### *Changing Futures Forum – Daniel Morcombe Foundation*

A presentation was provided at the 2021 Changing Futures Forum, hosted by the Daniel Morcombe Foundation, where Mr Atkinson spoke on the importance of maintaining the momentum of the Royal Commission. In his message, Mr Atkinson shared the importance of organisations implementing the child safe standards.

#### *Australian Society of Archivists Conference*

A keynote presentation was given by Mr Atkinson at the Australian Society of Archivists Conference in September. Key recommendations of the Royal Commission were shared by Mr Atkinson, with a focus on the importance of good record keeping and information sharing, providing insight for attendees on key issues that the Royal Commission heard regarding the quality of record keeping.

#### *Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Grants Program*

DCYJMA provides funding for the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Grants Program, to support activities that contribute to truth telling, healing and reconciliation in Queensland and that partner with people with lived experience, with two grant rounds throughout 2021.

As part of the grant's evaluation process, two members of the Taskforce are invited to attend the panel as Special Advisors. Special Advisors have no scoring functions, however act to advise the panel on their thoughts and opinions of the applications in meeting the selection criteria.

In 2021, two grant evaluation panels were convened, with two members appointed as Special Advisors at any given time, totalling four participants. The Special Advisors provided their advice on each application and its alignment to the selection criteria.

## Achievements

While the Taskforce are required to meet formally four times a year, a significant amount of out-of-session work has occurred by members. Key areas of work and achievements by the Taskforce this year included:

- Hearing from Queensland Government departments, including DCYJMA and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, on the implementation of recommendations made by the Royal Commission, including updates on the Queensland Intermediary Scheme, the proclamation of new legislative offences in Queensland, and the ongoing consultation by DCYJMA on the implementation of the child safe standards across organisations.
- With the Machinery-of-Government processes occurring across government, the Taskforce wrote to all Directors-General of Queensland, involved in Royal Commission related reforms, to update on the work of the Taskforce, provide the assistance of the Taskforce for Royal Commission related work, and offer the opportunity to meet with the Taskforce. The Taskforce received responses from:
  - Director General, Department of Communities, Housing and the Digital Economy
  - Director-General, Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, and
  - Director-General, Queensland Health.

The Taskforce were pleased to hear of the work being undertaken by these relevant agencies and our Chair, Mr Atkinson, accepted the invitation extended by Queensland Health to present at the *Queensland Health Expert Advisory Group* regarding Children Exhibiting Harmful Sexual Behaviours, in 2022.

- Informed advice was provided to DCYJMA on the operation of the National Redress Scheme in Queensland, particularly in relation to Direct Personal Responses and Counselling and Psychological Care.
- Members supported the training of Queensland Government senior executives across departments responsible for delivering Direct Personal Responses.
- Advice was provided to the Minister in response to the Federal Government's second year review of the National Redress Scheme (the Review).
- Advice on the implementation of child safe standards and the Queensland project underway to develop options for regulation and oversight of child safe standards in Queensland and a Queensland reportable conduct scheme was given by members.
- Members received briefings and the opportunity to provide feedback on the 2021 Queensland Government second annual progress report – Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- Presentations were provided by the Queensland Police Service, Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Griffith University and the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce.
- Members attended a number of events including Remembrance Day.

- Members also engaged with stakeholders across Queensland, including support services, government agencies and meeting with people with lived experience of institutional child abuse.

### Contact with people with lived experience

While the role of the Taskforce does not extend to advocating for individuals, it is important that we hear from people with lived experience as it contributes to the work undertaken by the Taskforce and shapes the advice we provide to the Minister.

For individuals with lived experience of institutional child abuse, the impact of sharing their stories and providing advice on improving service delivery in Queensland for children in contemporary out-of-home care can be significant.

For Taskforce members, it remains a privilege to hear from people about their experiences and the impact that institutional child abuse has had on their lives. It is through these opportunities that the Taskforce are in a position to ask people with lived experience their thoughts on how Queensland Government can continue to implement the recommendations from the Royal Commission, in a way that will have true meaning and impact on people's lives.

### In our words

Below, three members with lived experience Mike, Joan and Diane share their thoughts on the year the Taskforce has had.

#### **Mike**

“Reflecting on the work that the Taskforce has done throughout 2021, I think has been exceptional. We have continued to address and progress with key recommendations from the Royal Commission. The Taskforce have hosted several community forums with the aim of raising community awareness and providing opportunities for redress support services to provide updates to people with lived experience, which has been very important. We heard some great news stories about activities funded through the truth, healing and reconciliation grants program. I look forward to 2022 and maintaining the momentum of the work that the Taskforce has done, and continued work done by government on improving policies and procedures, as well as ongoing engagement with all stakeholders.”

#### **Diane**

“The third year of the Taskforce has again been challenging to navigate during COVID-19. However, the Taskforce remain committed to taking the ‘Royal Commission books to the people’ and continued to travel to various towns and host its *Listening Tour*. The forums aimed to keep people informed of the Royal Commission, the supports available and the National Redress Scheme, while continuing to hear from people their opinions and thoughts. It's rewarding to hear the feedback from people with lived experience, as well as to hear the challenges that support services and organisations have in assisting people with lived experience to access redress. I'm looking forward to seeing what changes 2022 will bring.”



## **Joan**

“Once again, it has been a big year for the Taskforce, and I have had many highlights. I have been fortunate enough to attend all of the forums that were held in 2021.

It is always an honour to be a part of these forums as I feel very strongly about educating people about the Royal Commission and its recommendations. Many service providers have attended the forums and an important part of the day is providing information about institutional child sexual abuse and its long-term impacts.

At the forums, I have met and talked with many other people with lived experience. It has given me a broader understanding of the traumas that others may have experienced. I am looking forward to continuing to hear from others.

The Taskforce meetings have always been informative, with regular updates from other Taskforce members and government departments. Of particular interest to me has been the regular updates from the redress team which has occurred at every meeting and also the updates on the implementation of the child safe standards

An ongoing highlight for me has been the everyday work we do as a Taskforce team. The Taskforce members past and present, have had a common passion for seeing the recommendations of the Royal Commission implemented.

I look forward to our fourth and final year with more forums, meeting more people with lived experience and continuing to work on our goals.”

## **Meet our members**



### **Chair - Mr Robert (Bob) Atkinson AO, APM**

In 1968, Bob commenced public service with the Queensland Police Service, serving as Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service for 12 years from 2000 until his retirement in October 2012.

In a 44-year career with the Queensland Police Service, Bob served throughout Queensland from Goondiwindi to Cairns. Bob oversaw reforms after the Fitzgerald inquiry from 1990 as well as the recommendations of the Public Sector Management Commission review of the Queensland Police Service in 1993.

Following his retirement from the Queensland Police Service, Bob was appointed as one of six Commissioners of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Bob served as one of the six Royal Commissioners during the five-year inquiry from 2013 to 2017.

In 2018, Bob was appointed as the Chair, Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce.

In 2019, Bob was appointed as Co-Chair of the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Council.

Bob's lifelong dedication to public service was recognised through a Queensland Great Award in 2019.



### **Joan Isaacs**

Joan is a wife, mother and doting grandmother. At the age of 14 she was groomed and sexually abused by the chaplain at her school. Despite her abuse, Joan went on to be a teacher.

Silenced by her abuser and later by the Catholic Church through their Towards Healing program, Joan was finally able to speak in 2013 when she gave evidence at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

In 2016, Joan released her book—*To Prey and To Silence*—to expose the truth and to encourage others who have experienced similar challenges. In 2017, her book was a finalist in the Queensland Literary Awards—People's Choice.



### **Diane Carpenter**

Diane is a proud Aboriginal woman, mother and grandmother from the Mitakoodi people, who lives in Brisbane with her husband and 2 blue cattle dogs. Diane grew up in St Joseph's

Orphanage, Neerkol. Diane courageously provided evidence to the *1999 Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Queensland Institutions* (the Forde Inquiry) and in 2004 to the Senate Inquiry into children in institutional care, later known as the Forgotten Australians Report. Many years later in 2015, Diane again provided evidence to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse about her experiences in Neerkol.

On leaving Neerkol, Diane spent many years working as a nurse. Diane has coordinated a shelter for women experiencing domestic and family violence in Mornington Island and was a community health facilitator at the Townsville Migrant Resource Centre. Here she supported people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to access mainstream health services. With the other community facilitators, one of her achievements at the Migrant Resource was the introduction of the interpreter's card.



### **Mike Wragge**

Mike is a proud Wakka Wakka South West Queensland man, born in Cherbourg Aboriginal community. Mike was institutionalised at the age of five and placed with his four brothers and one sister in the Cherbourg Boys home. In 1973, Mike left the Cherbourg Boys Dormitory and stayed with his mother and various other family members around South East and Western Queensland.

Mike began his working career in Cherbourg before moving to Brisbane in 1983 to take up a position as a community worker with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services. It was around this time that Mike started his affiliation with many of the Indigenous organisations and the Murri community in the Brisbane region.

Mike has had the opportunity and privilege to work closely with many good community workers, such as the Brisbane Council of Elders, which has given him great insight into their experiences and knowledge. Mike has been an active member of the Indigenous community in Brisbane since 1983.

In 1988, Mike commenced work with the federal Department of Social Security which is now the Department of Human Services, where he is still employed.



### **Karyn Walsh**

Karyn Walsh is the Chief Executive Officer of Micah Projects, a not-for-profit organisation in Brisbane committed to social justice. Since the mid-1990s, Karyn has been supporting people with lived experience of institutional abuse.

Karyn has supported people through the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions (the Forde Inquiry), Senate Community Affairs Committee inquiries including *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record – Report on child migration and Forgotten Australians* and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

For over 20 years Karyn has advocated alongside the Historical Abuse Network to recognise the needs of people with lived experience of institutional child abuse. Achievements include: the establishment of Lotus Place—the first peer support and resource centre with Forgotten Australians and former Child Migrants; the 2007-2010 redress scheme; and the establishment of the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce.

In 2016, Karyn was awarded a Doctor of Social Work and Nursing *honoris causa* by the University of Queensland. In 2017, Karyn was awarded a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia. Karyn was recognised for her work through a Queensland Great Award in 2021.



### **Rev David Baker**

Since October 2014, David has held the position of Moderator of the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia. David has served in regional oversight roles in the Uniting Church, and as a congregational minister. Before being ordained in ministry in 1991, David was a property valuer for the Queensland Government.

David is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and holds a Bachelor of Theology from Brisbane College of Theology and a Diploma in Business Management from Queensland Agricultural College.

Under David's leadership, the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia set up an Interim Redress Scheme for survivors of institutional sexual misconduct, consistent with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

David has also overseen improved training of Uniting Church in Australia congregations to ensure that ministry within the life of the church is safe for children.



### **Carly Jacobitz**

Carly Jacobitz is the Director (Child Youth and Family), Queensland at Life Without Barriers. In this role Carly has responsibility for a wide range of programs including out of home care (foster care and residential care), post care support, family and domestic violence and youth justice. With 15 years' experience in child protection across both government and not for profit organisations, she is committed to maximising outcomes for children and young people in care.

Having completed a Master of Applied Psychology, Carly is a registered psychologist and has a keen interest in supporting and advocating for individuals with a care experience and ensuring the availability and accessibility of adequate support systems”.



### **Jacqui Reed**

Since December 2007, Jacqui has been Chief Executive Officer of CREATE Foundation. Jacqui has over 20 years' experience in child protection, out-of-home care, family services and community work and has undertaken social research and held several management roles.

She has written not only policy, training manuals and research papers, but also a children's book. Jacqui is an accomplished public speaker presenting at many national and international conferences.

Jacqui firmly believes that children and young people, given the right opportunities, have the capacity to transcend their adversity and reach their full potential.

Jacqui is a member of the Board of Directors and Leadership Committee at CREATE.



### **Yvette Salam**

Yvette is a representative of Link-Up (Queensland) Aboriginal Corporation, in her role as a Redress Counsellor providing counselling and support to people applying to the National Redress Scheme.

She was born in Gladstone Queensland, to parents of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage.

Yvette's working years began in Education, as an Early Childhood teacher. She then left teaching to work within other government departments servicing Indigenous communities in Far North Queensland, Cape York, Gulf of Carpentaria and the Torres Strait Islands.

Coming from families that had always been strongly connected to and involved with Indigenous communities, Yvette is passionate about serving Indigenous communities and had always worked in community development type roles. Her working life has been predominantly within Indigenous Education, Indigenous Employment and Training, Indigenous Coaching and Mentoring.

In the last four years, Yvette chose to relocate to Brisbane with her children; taking up employment within the fields of mental health, child protection, Redress Counselling and working with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations.

Yvette's personal interests have always been in mentoring, coaching and healing type roles, which had led her to current employment within Link-Up (Queensland).

### **Taskforce contact details**

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