

Blueprint for implementation strategy

Reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland's child protection system

The care, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is our shared responsibility.

QCPCI

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Blueprint for implementation strategy

- reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland's child protection system.

The Department of Communities is committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, their families and their communities in keeping them safe, with family, and connected to culture.

The four key priority areas of focus in the Taskforce plan *Together keeping our children safe and well: Our Comprehensive Plan* (the plan) are:

- sharing of a common vision and commitment
- providing the right services at the right time
- ensuring the existence and application of sound legislation, policy, practice and procedures
- building a robust network of Indigenous service providers.

These priority areas are underpinned by the principles of shared responsibility, empowerment, partnership and social inclusion. This Blueprint for Implementation Strategy (Implementation Strategy) will have a community development and family support focus, acknowledging the critical role community and family play in the life and wellbeing of an Indigenous child.

The Implementation Strategy supports the intent of the plan and has been developed to identify how government, community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders can work together to support vulnerable Indigenous families earlier and reduce their over-representation in Queensland's child protection system.

A simple focus on fixing the existing child protection system will not address the risks and disadvantage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families face on a daily basis. This Implementation Strategy commits to work across sectors and communities to achieve better outcomes for Indigenous families and their children.

Evidence suggests the various services and activities that are needed to promote the safety of children are focused on three broad areas:

- prevention, including family support and community development
- alleviation of known risk factors
- intervention, where abuse and neglect has already occurred, to ensure the ongoing safety of children.

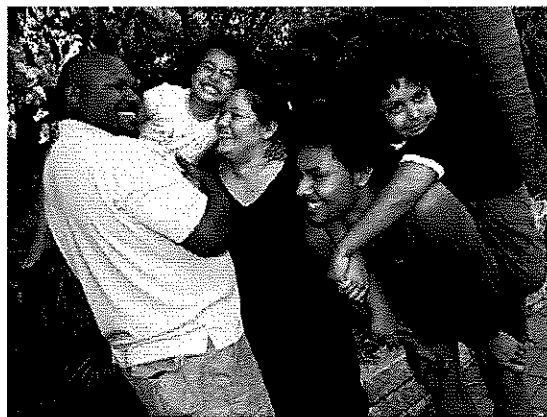
The safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is a shared responsibility; and this Implementation Strategy recognises that government and community need to work together to support families - the primary caregivers of children.

Our shared responsibilities

Best practice in child protection is based on an understanding that the families of children and young people are generally best at promoting their children's safety, wellbeing and access to life opportunities by providing them with a consistent nurturing environment and uninterrupted relationships with, and attachment to, caring adults.

In keeping with this understanding, this Implementation Strategy will:

- re-assert the benefits of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being cared for within their own families and communities
- support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the non-government sector and government in exercising their respective roles and responsibilities and the collaboration needed by all parties to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



A three-way partnership

The Department of Communities will work in partnership both across government and with the sector and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to provide prevention and early intervention services and child protection services that uphold the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The department, the non-government sector and community will work together to support families to protect and care for their children within their community, maintaining cultural connections.

The Department of Communities commits to working with the non-government community sector who deliver effective, culturally responsive services that strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities' capacity to care for and protect their children.

The Department of Communities commits to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who raise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are confident and valued, and live with family in a safe and nurturing environment free from risk and harm.

Decreasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children coming into the child protection system

Research and evidence suggests that to achieve long-term and sustainable change in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children, a balanced approach is required that includes community participation, and prevention and early intervention services.



The following eight steps are the critical components needed to improve community safety, improve the capacity of families to care for and protect their children, and to provide services that are collaborative, timely and respond to immediate and longer-term needs of vulnerable families and communities in culturally responsive ways.

1. Work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to actively participate in policy, planning and service implementation related to their children, community safety, health, housing and wellbeing.
2. Focus on prevention and early intervention services, supporting families earlier.
3. Design service responses that focus on parent and family risk factors for child abuse and neglect.
4. Strengthen the non-government sector services, ensuring they are an effective safety net for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
5. Take a community development approach which includes partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the sector to build community environments and practices which are safe and conducive to family wellbeing.
6. Scope, review and reform components of the child protection legislation and system which impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and ensure implementation is monitored and evaluated.
7. Strengthen service implementation and accountability across government and community sectors to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their children.
8. Take a holistic, collaborative and inclusive approach in policy planning and service implementation, and include social disadvantage factors such as housing, education, health and wellbeing.

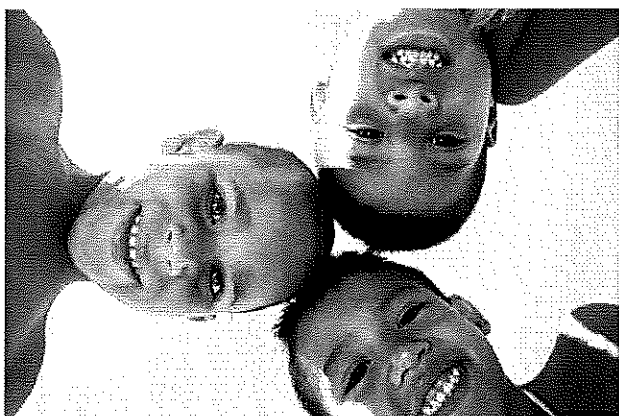
This provides a foundation and focus for ongoing departmental planning in policy and program development and service approaches that impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and families

To address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system, it is critical Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and families are key participants in this process.

This Implementation Strategy will involve engagement at a state, regional and local level through various networks. This will involve working through various networks at all levels including:

- **State level**
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council
 - Mayor's Group representing the 19 remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the Torres Strait region.
- **Regional level**
 - Roundtables with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander regional representatives.
- **Local level**
 - negotiation tables in the communities with community leaders and representatives
 - consultation through non-government sector networks for feedback
 - community-based networks
 - local level child safety networks and community-based service providers.



The next stage is the development of a long-term engagement strategy to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in relation to the protection and care of their children - recognising that to create sustainable change Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are a key partner.

Monitoring our progress

The following governance structures are proposed to manage and coordinate the strategy's implementation, these will include:

- an annual advisory group meeting to review a progress report and provide direction in relation to the Implementation Strategy focus for the 2012 calendar year
- a working group to meet quarterly to continue the partnership with the department in the implementation of the intent of the Comprehensive Plan through the Implementation Strategy
- a designated senior officer within the Department of Communities to manage and coordinate implementation, including monitoring progress of the Implementation Strategy
- establishment of formalised linkages at both state and local levels to promote the proper and full participation of government, non-government sector and community representatives in the development and activation of a detailed 12-month Implementation Strategy addressing each of the priority areas identified within the Comprehensive Plan.

These actions are outlined in the implementation table in section 2.

Blueprint for implementation strategy

Reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland's child protection system

Joint statement of commitment	The safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is our shared responsibility.
Purpose	A framework for the Department of Communities to work with its Queensland Government agency partners, non-government community service sector organisations and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in partnership to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland's child protection system.
Vision	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow with family, connected to culture and in a safe and nurturing home environment.

Principles	Shared responsibility	Empowerment	Partnership	Social inclusion
Roles and responsibilities	The Department of Communities	Non-government community services sector	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community	
	Work in partnership to provide prevention and early intervention services and child protection services that uphold the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and support families to protect and care for their children in their community in cultural ways.	We recognise the role of the sector to deliver and advocate for effective, culturally responsive services that strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families' capacity to care for and protect their children.	We recognise the role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to raise children who are confident and valued, and live with family in a safe and nurturing environment free from risk and harm.	

Implementation				
A shared vision and commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families about the future direction of child protection services.	Joint delivery of effective and timely prevention and early intervention services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who are vulnerable.	Implementation of a revised Recognised Entity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Support Services model.	Sector capacity building, including development of strategies to support organisations in developing and maintaining the governance and management arrangements.	We are committed to service quality and enhancements.

Partnership and participation

The Department of Communities will work in partnership with both the non-government community services sector and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The outcomes will be achieved when all partners are supported in their critical and important roles to meet our shared responsibilities in relation to the care and protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Priority areas	Department of Communities	Non-government community services sector	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
1. Sharing a common vision and commitment	Work with Queensland Government partners, non-government community services sector and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to develop a shared vision and commitment to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in the child protection system.	The department and the non-government community services sector work together to jointly develop a shared vision and commitment which upholds the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to protect and care for their children.	Actively engage the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the development, support and endorsement of a shared vision and commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
2. Providing the right services at the right time	Deliver effective and timely prevention and early intervention services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who are vulnerable. Develop a program that responds to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with children at risk of entering out-of-home care as an early intervention and family support trigger.	The department and the non-government community services sector work together to support increased flexibility for service providers to respond to the issues of concern affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.	Actively engage the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the planning, development and delivery of the 'right services at the right time'.
3. Ensuring the existence and application of sound legislation, policy, practice and procedures	Review departmental policies, practices and procedures for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. Key areas of focus are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the best interest of an Indigenous child • court practices • child placement principle • provisional approvals • unborn child policy. Analyse the feasibility of developing and implementing a self-government model (similar to those models used internationally) within Queensland.	The department and the non-government community services sector work together to jointly develop and implement practice and procedures manuals which support delivery of the important role and responsibilities of the sector.	Actively engage the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the development and implementation of best practice for working outside of crisis mode with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve compliance with the Indigenous Child Placement Principle.
4. Building a robust system and network of Indigenous service providers	Sector capacity building, including development of strategies to support organisations in developing and maintaining the governance and management arrangements necessary to meet contemporary accountability and potentially complex legal requirements.	The department and the non-government community services sector work together to jointly develop and implement a comprehensive 'package' of resources to assist organisations in maintaining effective governance and management arrangements.	

Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Timeframe
Develop and disseminate a Shared Vision Statement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak CREATE Foundation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders 	March 2011
Deliver training programs, information packages and other awareness-raising resource materials to support the Shared Vision Statement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak 	June 2011
<p>Develop a community engagement strategy that:</p> <p>acknowledges the need for partnership and participation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community across both government and non-government sectors</p> <p>focuses on the key areas affecting families and children including community wellbeing, health, housing and education, acknowledging these are critical to the achievement of better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their children.</p>	Department of Communities (Child Safety Services)		June 2011
Align with the implementation of the <i>Strategic Policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People's Health 2005-2010</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council 	December 2011

Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Timeframe
Ensure the planning and delivery of strategies relevant to the five building blocks that comprise the <i>National Indigenous Reform Agreement – Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage</i> support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to raise and care for their children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak 	September 2011
Enhance multi-agency collaboration, planning and reporting of strategies of potential government responses to address over-representation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Child Safety Directors' Network 	September 2011
Review departmentally-funded child protection programs to ensure that the selection, planning and implementation of these initiatives enhance preventative child protection responses that will benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and reduce over-representation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-government sector 	December 2011
Develop a baseline and measure of improvement to monitor the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 		March 2011
Review existing Queensland Government initiatives to identify measures of improvements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 		December 2011
Promote an increased awareness and appreciation of the respective roles of Recognised Entity, Family Support Services and Department of Communities staff through initiatives such as possible placement exchanges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak 	June 2011
Implement four Early Years Centres (EYCs) providing universal early childhood education and care, child and family health, and family support services for children from birth to eight years and their families, with a particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Education and Training 		Caboolture - Completed North Gold Coast – Completed Browns Plains – Completed Cairns - 2011

Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Timeframe
<p>Implement the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, which includes the proposed program outcomes of increased capacity of tenants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and remedy environmental health risks • identify and remedy risks to the health and well being of children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Communities (Indigenous Housing and Homelessness) 		December 2011
<p>To support the safety and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, family violence responses will be reformed and implemented, following the recent review of the <i>Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989</i> and Indigenous research reports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak • Non-government sector • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders 	Commence implementation 2011
<p>Implement the Safe House initiative in discrete Indigenous communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities • Non-government sector 	2011 ongoing
<p>Implement Queensland Health initiatives that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Australian Governments Indigenous Early Childhood National Partnership Agreement which relates to increasing access for young pregnant women (20 years or younger) • expansion of Maternal and Child Health Services in Cape York Communities of Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Pormpuruuw and Napranum. • enhanced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Health Services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council 	Commencing implementation 2011

Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Timeframe
<p>Implement Disability Services initiatives that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Connect Initiative, a two-year pilot being trialled in Townsville and Ipswich which aims to connect vulnerable and hard-to-reach families (including Indigenous families) of children with a disability to six years with early intervention services and promote their participation in family and early childhood services, kindergarten, child care health services and parenting support programs. • Family Support Program for Children which provides flexible supports to families to strengthen their capacity to care for their child with a disability at home. The Family Support Program for Children at Risk provides more intensive support to families of children with a disability who are at risk of entering out-of-home care, or who are returning from out-of-home care. • Local Area Coordination program, which assists people with a disability—particularly in rural and remote areas—to access mainstream services and community networks to build supportive networks and relationships. • Funding provided to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with a Disability Network of Queensland to employ a Network Development Worker and manage a statewide conference. This will identify and bring together representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the state and help to develop a statewide network and strengthen the links between Indigenous communities and specialist disability services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Communities (Disability Services) 		Ongoing implementation 2011
<p>Implement the Cape York Welfare Reforms, focusing on initiatives to improve parental and social responsibility, including the monitoring of wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the four welfare reform communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Communities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Responsibilities Commission • Aurukun • Hopevale • Coen • Mossman Gorge • Non-government sector 	Ongoing implementation 2011

Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Timeframe
Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the new early intervention and prevention initiative, Helping Out Families, in Logan, Gold Coast and Beenleigh/Eagleby.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-government sector • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities 	Commence implementation 2011
Monitor and evaluate the trial of a new integrated approach to preventing domestic and family violence in Rockhampton, linking service provision in assessments, planning and management of domestic and family violence cases to inform future service delivery models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 		June 2011
Reform the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Pilot Program based on the outcomes of the February 2010 Evaluation Report to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, charged with an alcohol-related offence and parents whose alcohol use adversely impacts on their ability to protect their children, with the opportunity to access alcohol treatment services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Justice and Attorney-General 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) • Queensland Health 	Commence implementation 2011
Implement Diversion Services to assist communities to go as dry as possible under the Queensland Government's Alcohol Reforms initiative and consider the impacts on child and family wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Justice Groups • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities 	Ongoing implementation 2011

Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Timeframe
Engage Indigenous owned and managed organisations to provide the functions of the Recognised Entity and/or deliver the associated family support services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 		Selection Completed – 2010 Implementation ongoing 2011
Develop agreed practice framework and manual for Recognised Entity service providers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Support service providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak 		March 2011
Ensure Department of Communities practice and procedural guidelines are consistent with and complementary to the roles being played by the providers of the Recognised Entity functions and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Support services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 		June 2011
Facilitate and support joint training of the respective roles and responsibilities of Recognised Entity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Support service providers and Department of Communities' staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak 	June 2011

Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Timeframe
Review the current policies, practices and procedures used by officers of the Department of Communities in assessing the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak CREATE Foundation A representative group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people Nominated Indigenous academics Experienced, reputable child protection practitioners 	June 2011
Review the use and application of the Structured Decision Making tools with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak 	March 2011
Continue delivery of the <i>Best Start</i> initiative, an evidence-based parenting program with a particular focus on Indigenous parents, including funding four Indigenous child and family support hubs and Boys Town to deliver the Parent-line service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Education and Training 		December 2011
Continue delivery of Triple P (including Indigenous Triple P) training to non-government organisations that deliver parenting support services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Education and Training 		December 2011
Review and define the court role of the Recognised Entity within the Childrens Court.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Justice and Attorney-General 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak 	March 2011

Priority area 4

Building a robust system and network of Indigenous service providers

Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Timeframe
Develop a comprehensive workforce development plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) 	September 2011

For any enquiries, contact the Department of Communities (Child Safety Services)
on 1800 811 810 (Queensland only) or 3244 8045