

Breaking Cycles

An action plan: co-designing, developing and implementing services with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

2023–2025



Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the State of Queensland; we acknowledge the cultural and spiritual connection that Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and sea.

We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as two unique and diverse peoples with their own rich and distinct cultures.

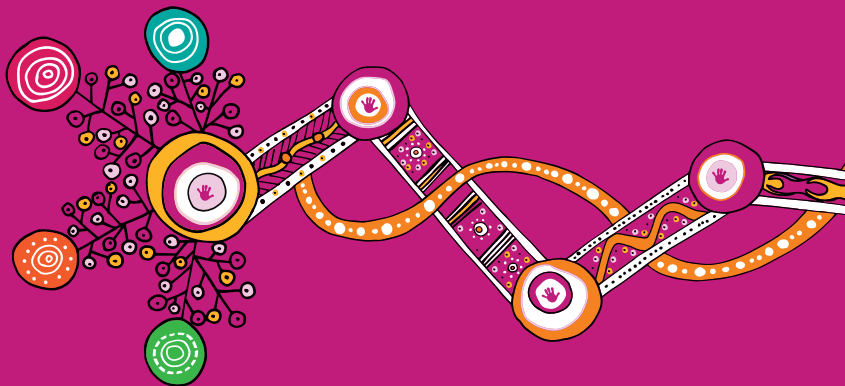
We pay our respects to Elders past and present as well as the existing and emerging leaders who walk together in partnership on this journey.

This action plan represents the shared commitment of the Queensland Government, Family Matters Queensland and Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak and reflects the combined voices of families and communities.

Story of the Motif

We acknowledge the contribution of Aboriginal artist Rachael Sarra for the original design of artworks. Rachael originates from the Bunda People in Goreng Goreng country. We would also like to acknowledge the creative leadership of Gilimbaa in *Our Way*.

The motif design is a reflection of equal partners joining together in conversation and positive action. It represents a clear and focused pathway that began as the dispersed energy of many that has now fused to channel clarity, momentum, and strength. It shows the power of unity and simplicity that evolves from complexity. The artwork shows the journey of the child, depicted as the hands, connected to and supported by structures that nurture and guide. The woven orange line acknowledges culture, kin and the strength of learning from the past to act in the present and grow for the future.





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Foreword

Message from the Queensland Government, Family Matters Queensland, the Queensland First Children and Families Board and Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak

Whilst the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland live safely at home with family and connected to community and culture, they are unfortunately disproportionately represented in the child protection system.

We are united in our determination to address this over-representation and give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families every opportunity to thrive.

Breaking Cycles 2023–2025 (Breaking Cycles) continues the long-term shared commitment for Queensland Government to work in genuine and respectful partnership with the Queensland First Children and Families Board, Family Matters Queensland, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP), and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, children, and families to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system in Queensland by 2037.

We are also committed to Closing the Gap in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, so that their children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community, and culture.

Breaking Cycles aligns with Queensland Government's commitment to a reframed relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through Path to Treaty and Local Thriving Communities as well as the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* and *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031*.

Self-determination, shared responsibility and accountability, cultural knowledge and leadership are critical to the success of the *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037* strategy (*Our Way*) and action plans. We respectfully recognise the collective rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to actively participate in decisions that affect them and their families, and in the design, development and delivery of policies, programs, services and supports to their children and families.

This is critical to the achievement of *Our Way*'s vision and target to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system. It also enables the child protection system to be more culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Early success through *Changing Tracks 2017–2022* action plans, the first implementation phase of *Our Way*, changed how we work together to implement child and family reforms. The national Family Matters Report 2022 showed that Queensland has:

- the second lowest rate of over-representation in out-of-home care nationally and proportion of over-representation has stabilised, a reversal of pre-reform trend
- equal highest proportion of investment in community-controlled organisations for family preservation and reunification services nationally, with a relatively high proportion of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations
- strengthened the role of QATSICPP in strategy, policy and sector development.



Despite these successes, more work is needed to achieve the *Our Way* vision and target.

It will require:

1. significant and sustained reform of the child protection and family support system
2. genuine cross-government commitment and engagement to address the socio-economic drivers of over-representation including health, housing, education, employment and justice.

Breaking Cycles provides an ambitious roadmap for transformational change across the child protection and family support system in Queensland to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and reduce their interactions with the child protection system.

Key initiatives under *Breaking Cycles* include amongst other initiatives:

- growing investment in community-controlled organisations to deliver culturally safe and responsive child and family support services
- commence planning the transition of all child and family support services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations by 2032
- develop and trial in partnership with the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak, a new family and relative care model, *Family Caring for Family*, to maximise the placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people with family, and or kin, connected to family, community and culture
- the statewide implementation of delegated authority through the implementation of, *Reclaiming our storyline: Transforming systems and practice by making decisions in our way*
- maximise whole-of-government collective effort to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and mitigate the risk of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering the child protection system
- continue to support the Queensland First Children and Families Board to oversee and guide the implementation of *Our Way* strategy and *Breaking Cycles* actions.

We collectively commit to working together across government, the non-government sector and services to ensure the universal and secondary health and human services sector is responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

‘Our Way strategy should be determined and driven by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples in partnership with Queensland Government.’

Craig Crawford MP

Minister for Child Safety

Minister for Seniors and Disability Services

Michael Currie

Co-Chair

Family Matters Queensland

Rachel Atkinson

Co-Chair

Queensland First Children and Families Board

Garth Morgan

Chief Executive Officer

Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak



Introduction

Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037 (Our Way) is in its sixth year of implementation to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system, and to close the gap in life outcomes for Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Our Way is being delivered via a whole-of-system and partnership approach with Family Matters Queensland (FMQ), Queensland First Children and Families Board (QFCFB) and Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) to elevate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, leadership and governance to oversee the implementation of *Our Way*.

To realise our vision, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe, loved and cared for in family, community and culture, *Our Way* and its action plans continue to be built on the Family Matters Building Blocks:

- All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children.
- Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive.
- Governments and community services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The *Changing Tracks 2017–2022 (Changing Tracks)* action plans under *Our Way* set the foundations to empower children, young people, families and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led services to actively engage in influencing laws, policies, practice, community-led solutions and decision-making in the child protection system.

Released in 2022, the independent evaluation of *Our Way*, *Changing Tracks* emphasised the importance of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in the design of strategies and initiatives which can deliver the transformational systems change needed to realise family and community-led decision-making and the delivery of culturally responsive services which prevent children and families from further involvement with child protection.

To strengthen the *Our Way* vision, *Breaking Cycles 2023–2025 (Breaking Cycles)* aligns to the goals of both national and state initiatives and strategies including: the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* priority reforms and Target 12 and *Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023–2026*.

Breaking Cycles builds on the successes, learnings and foundations set under *Changing Tracks* and focusses on changing the way services are designed, developed, and delivered in partnership with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities by government and non-government organisations.

Continued partnership across state government, community and the sector is required to build on the foundational success of *Changing Tracks*, including greater accountability to ensure that continuing reform activities reflect a shared responsibility and joint commitment to improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



The impact of *Breaking Cycles* will be monitored and reported against the desired outcomes outlined in the *Our Way* Theory of change (Appendix A) and Program logic (Appendix B).

Lead agencies will be responsible for the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities to report against the success indicators identified in the detailed action plan (Attachment 1) and to contribute to a broader system-level outcomes evaluation at the conclusion of *Breaking Cycles* action plan (2023–2025).

A co-designed monitoring, evaluation and learning plan for *Breaking Cycles* will be developed (Action 8.7) based on the *Changing Tracks* evaluation findings, program logic and theory of change to strengthen accountability mechanisms at all levels and measure impact and outcomes being achieved through the *Breaking Cycles* phase of *Our Way*.

Each year, the QFCFB will release an annual progress report to highlight how *Breaking Cycles* key actions are being implemented and contribute to the long-term *Our Way* vision.

The successful implementation of *Breaking Cycles* will provide tangible and substantive benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities — increasing equity, supporting self-determination and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are the central focus and their needs are at the forefront of decision-making.

‘Children are at the centre of everything we do. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are a growing part of Queensland’s child population, and they must be supported as the parents, citizens and leaders of the future. Their interests must remain paramount, and their experiences and voices given priority in the design, delivery, and evaluation of services.’

(Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037, p. 12)



Highlights for 2023–2025

Breaking Cycles outlines key actions that build on the foundations set under *Changing Tracks* for transformational changes in the child protection system. These actions focus on changing the way that services are designed, developed and delivered with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. By the end of 2025:

We will have negotiated a **formal partnership agreement** between the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, Queensland First Children and Families Board, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) and Family Matters Queensland — to support implementation and oversight of *Breaking Cycles* (Action 1.1).

We will have an implementation plan to improve adherence to the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle** across child protection legislation, policy, programs, processes and practice, co-designed with QATSICPP (Action 1.3).

We will have **developed and implemented** culturally safe and responsive intake and investigation and assessment policy, processes and practice to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering the child protection system (Action 1.5).

We will have **developed a strategy** to transition investment in child and family support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector including targets and regional transition plans, co-designed with QATSICPP and in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector and non-Indigenous peaks (Action 2.3).





We will have developed and implemented a strategy to **scale up delegated authority across Queensland** to permit one or more of the chief executive's functions or powers under the *Child Protection Act 1999* (the Act) in relation to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child to be delegated to the chief executive officer of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity to authorise the entity to make decisions for the child in relation to those matters (Action 3.1).

Increased investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services to expand access to prevention and early intervention supports that strengthen families and communities and mitigate the risk of children and families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage entering the child protection system (Action 4.1).

Improved access for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to **have the opportunity to participate in child protection decisions** that affect their lives through an increased investment in the Family Participation Program (Action 5.1).



We will have developed and implemented a strategy to support the ongoing development and **growth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled child and family services** sector (Action 6.1).

The **Wellbeing Outcomes Framework** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland will underpin greater collaboration and coordination across government and the community sector and provide greater consistency and transparency in how we track and measure progress towards our goals (Action 7.1).

Established an ongoing mechanism for **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to have a voice** and shape the implementation of *Our Way* and associated action plans (Action 8.2)





Our strategy at a glance

Our **vision** is that all **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children** and young people in Queensland **grow up safe and cared for** in family, community and culture.

Our **target** is to **close the gap in life outcomes** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and **eliminate the disproportionate representation** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system by 2037.

The **outcome** we want to achieve is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experience parity across the following:



Building blocks



All families enjoy **access to quality, culturally safe universal and targeted services** necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations **participate in and have control over decisions** that affect their children



Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are **culturally safe and responsive**



Governments and community services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Enablers

Focus on the child	Empower parents, families and communities
Enable self-determination	Set high expectations and positive norms
Take a holistic and life-course approach	Recognise culture as a protective factor
Address trauma and enable healing	Share power, responsibility and accountability
Shift and balance investment	Provide accessible and coordinated services
Create partnerships	Innovate, build evidence and adjust

Who benefits

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in contact with family support and child protection systems

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in or leaving out-of-home care

Breaking Cycles — priority areas for first three years

Transformative systems change

Investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector

Delegated authority

Prevention and early intervention

Voice, accountability, and oversight

Family participation and control of decision making

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

Cross-government commitment to address over-representation and improve wellbeing outcomes

Implementation framework

Changing Tracks

First and second action plans

2017–2019
2020–2022

Breaking Cycles

Third, fourth and fifth action plans

2023–2025
2026–2028
2029–2031

Hitting Targets

Sixth and seventh action plans

2032–2034
2035–2037

Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review







* These proposed wellbeing domains derive from a range of sources, including the ARACY Common Approach Wellbeing Wheel, and the OECD's Better Life Index. Development of a Queensland Child and Family Outcomes Framework is underway, and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Wellbeing Outcomes Framework as a part of this will be advanced in the first action plan.

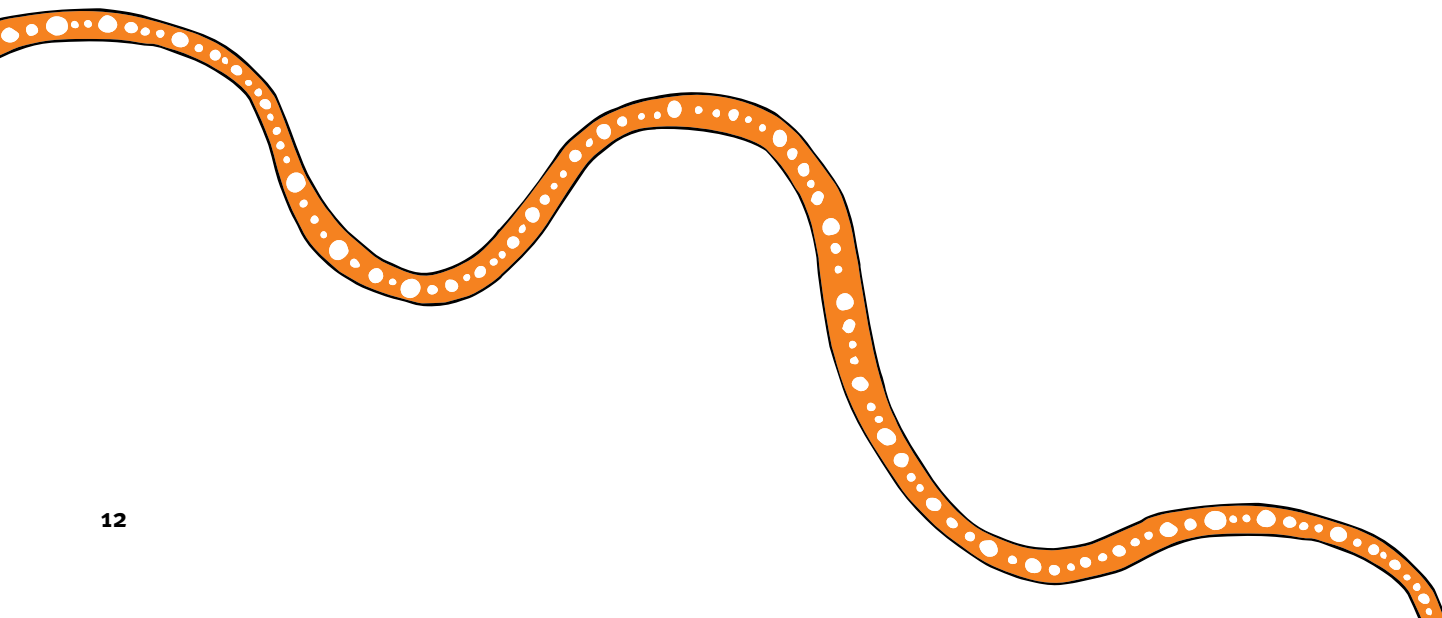


Our journey so far

Strong foundations for change

There have been notable achievements since *Our Way's* establishment in 2017:

-  The *Child Protection Act 1999* (the Act) has been amended to allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (ATSICCOs) to make decisions for the child in relation to child protection matters.
-  Greater trust in and empowerment of the ATSICCOs has improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples access to culturally appropriate services.
-  There has been continued investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services (FWS) (delivered by ATSICCOs) to support families to care for their children, with a recent independent evaluation observing a high level of success in de-escalating risks and addressing family needs.
-  In partnership with QATSI CPP, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services (DCSSDS) has commenced planning for the statewide implementation of delegated authority.
-  More government agencies are embedding community voice in the co-development of strategies and initiatives which relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, although there is an opportunity to align different government strategies to *Our Way* as a whole-of-government strategy.
-  DCSSDS established an *Our Way* Interagency Strategic Partnership group, made up of Deputy-Directors General, to enable improved whole-of-government commitment and collective action in the implementation of *Our Way* and supporting action plans.



Achievements under *Changing Tracks*

Key actions delivered under *Changing Tracks* included amongst other initiatives:

Amendments to the *Child Protection Act 1999* (the Act) affirmed the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to self-determination, enabling family-led decision-making, embedding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) and placing a greater emphasis on culture as a protective factor.

Implemented delegated authority in two early adopter sites, where the functions and powers of the chief executive (Director-General, DCSSDS) for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child, under the Act, can be delegated to the chief executive officer of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entity, where certain requirements are met.

Established the Queensland First Children and Families Board to provide strategic leadership and cultural oversight in the implementation of *Our Way* and associated action plans.

Queensland Government enacted the *Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa (Torres Strait Islander Traditional Child Rearing Practice) Act 2020*. The Act recognises traditional child rearing practices legally and established an Office of the Commissioner Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa and the appointment of Commissioner C'Zarke Maza.

QATSICPP implemented the Professional Scholarships Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, employed across the ATSICCO sector, to undertake the Associate Diploma of Human Services through Griffith University, to build the capacity and capability of the sector.

In partnership with the Queensland Mental Health Commission and the national Healing Foundation, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Strategy, *Leading Healing Our Way 2020–2040*, was developed to address the intergenerational impacts of trauma, violence and abuse experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander FWS in 35 locations to provide culturally responsive child and family support services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Implemented the Family Participation Program (FPP) to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to participate in decisions that affect them across the child protection system.

Increased proportional investment in ATSICCOs.

Co-designed in partnership with QATSICPP, a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family and relative care model, *Family Caring for Family*, to maximize placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with family and kin, connected to community and culture.



Changing Tracks evaluation findings and recommendations

The DCSSDS engaged Deloitte, Murawin and the Social Research Centre to conduct an independent evaluation of *Our Way* and *Changing Tracks* action plans.

The *Evaluation of Our Way, Changing Tracks 2017–2022 — Final Report* was published in August 2022. The report outlined key findings and four areas of focus to strengthen the future implementation of *Our Way*. Learnings from the report have been used to inform the development of *Breaking Cycles*.

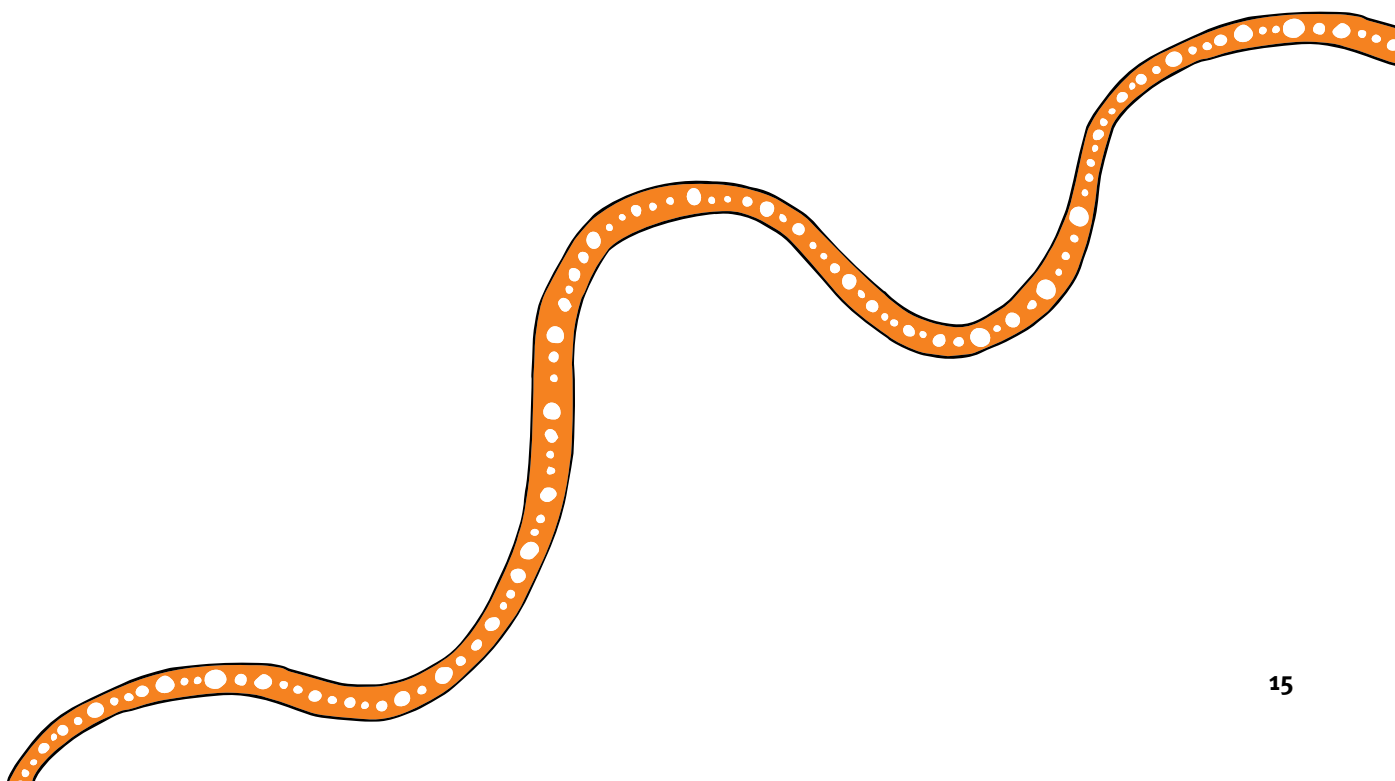
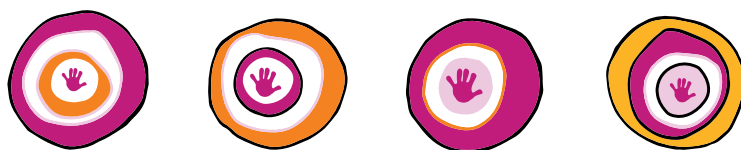
Key evaluation findings:

- The majority of the *Changing Tracks* actions were implemented on time and as intended, and that emerging changes to the systems, policies and collaborative working approaches between government agencies, partners, and service providers to implement *Our Way*, will enable *Our Way* to achieve its targets and longer-term outcomes.
- The *Changing Tracks* action plans have begun to foster collective action to ensure services, policies and programs are culturally safe and responsive.
- Positive changes are emerging in the policy and legislative settings that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in Queensland, including changes in systems, policies and collaborative working approaches between government agencies, partners, and service providers to implement *Our Way*.
- There is evidence of greater trust in and empowerment of the ATSICCO sector, which is resulting in improved access to culturally appropriate services — this is particularly reflected in an improved relationship between DCSSDS and ATSICCOs.
- Changes in collaborative working approaches between government agencies, service providers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives to enable the implementation of *Our Way*.
- Changes in legislation and government processes are commended as echoing the broader community's aspirations for self-determination.
- *Our Way* has influenced the way partner agencies make decisions, undertake strategic planning and implement activities with community voice prioritised and embedded.
- Growing investment in community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and their workforce is better reflecting the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples accessing these services.



Four areas of recommendations to strengthen the future implementation of *Our Way*:

- Recognise and implement the transformative changes that *Our Way* requires: the government must be willing to relinquish control over key decisions in order to promote self-determination and support the safety, wellbeing and connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- Support the sustainable development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector: a clear transition plan is needed to guide investment in strengthening the community-controlled sector.
- Re-orientation of government mechanisms: acknowledge and challenge the systemic racism that continues to influence the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- Engender whole-of-system commitment to achieve *Our Way*'s objectives: All government agencies and the wider non-Indigenous sector need to understand their collective role in supporting positive changes in the system.



Our Way Journey 2017–2037

As we enter
the second phase
of *Our Way Journey*
people have said their
priorities are...



Transformative systems change

Investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander community-controlled sector

Delegated authority

Prevention and early intervention

Voice, accountability, and oversight

Family participation and control of decision making

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

Cross-government commitment to address over-representation and improve
wellbeing outcomes



Building Block 1

All families enjoy access to quality,
culturally safe universal and targeted
services necessary for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander children to thrive.



Building Block 2

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
peoples and organisations participate
in and have control over decisions that
affect their children.



Building Block 3

Law, policy and practice in child and
family welfare are culturally safe and
responsive.



Building Block 4

Governments and community services
are accountable to Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Changing Tracks

First and second action plan (2017–2022)

So far we have:

- ✓ Amended Legislation to enable self-determination
- ✓ Established the Family Wellbeing Services and Family Participation Program and co-design of *Family Caring for Family*
- ✓ Increased proportional investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations
- ✓ Established the Queensland First Children and Families Board to oversee *Our Way*
- ✓ Proportion of children in out-of-home-care has stabilised, a halting of the pre-reform trend of increasing over-representation
- ✓ Provided scholarships to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations workers to complete tertiary studies
- ✓ Implemented delegated authority in two early adopter sites and preparing for statewide expansion
- ✓ Established Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Centre of Excellence
- ✓ Appointed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner at the Queensland Family and Child Commission
- ✓ Implemented Youth Justice Family-Led Decision-Making
- ✓ Established Indigenous Practice Leader and Cultural Practice Advisor positions within the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services
- ✓ Legal recognition of Torres Strait Islander traditional child rearing practices through the *Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa Act 2020*
- ✓ Greater involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peaks in the co-design of strategy, policy and sector development initiatives

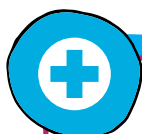
Breaking Cycles

Third, fourth and fifth action plan (2023–2031)

Hitting Targets

Sixth and seventh action plan (2032–2037)

What we know



More likely to have a shorter life span, with a **life expectancy gap** (2015–17)

7.8 years less
6.8 years less^A

1.6 x more likely
to die during infancy^B

9.3% of babies are born with **low birthweight** compared to **4.8%** for **non-Indigenous babies^C**

Health



9.1X
more likely to be placed in **out-of-home care**
than non-Indigenous children^G

the proportion of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care, living with kin is**
46% (45.6%)
at 30 June 2022^H

Culture and Connection



Economic Empowerment

The **unemployment rate** was **11.0%** compared to **4.1%** for non-Indigenous persons aged 25–64^I

2.7 x more likely to experience **unemployment** when aged 25–64 years than non-Indigenous people^I

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

Continue to experience significantly **higher levels of suicide** at **28 per 100,000 people** compared to **14.6** for non-Indigenous people^D



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are:

Home and Environment



18.8% were still living in **overcrowded housing** compared to 5.2% of non-Indigenous^J

In Queensland, **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people** comprise **8%** of the population aged 0–17 years, yet as at 30 June 2022 **represented 45.2%** of all children in care.^K

Learning and Skills

33.8% of children commencing school were **developmentally on track** in all five Australian Early Development Census domains, compared with **53.2%** of non-Indigenous children.^E

63.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students **progressed to Year 12 from Year 7** compared to **84.0%** of non-Indigenous students (apparent retention).^F



21 x as likely* to be held in **youth detention** than their non-Indigenous peers^L

Safety

A: CtG annual data report 2021 (Table CtG1A.1) – estimate period 2015–17; B: ROGS 2023 Table EA.34; C: *Closing the Gap Information Repository* (Dashboard Table CtG2A.1); D: CtG annual data report 2021 (Table CtG14A.2) – rate period 2016–20; E: Productivity Commission, *Closing the Gap Information Repository* (Dashboard Table CtG4A.1) Canberra <https://pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data> (accessed 25 May 2023); F: ROGS 2022 data; G: DCYJMA Performance and Reporting 2022; H: DCYJMA Performance and Reporting 2022; I: QGSO, Indigenous profile, Employment CtG Measure 2021 Census; J: Productivity Commission, *Closing the Gap Information Repository* (Dashboard Table CtG9A.1), Canberra <https://pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data> (accessed 25 May 2023); K: DCYJMA Performance and Reporting 2022; L: DCYJMA Performance and Reporting 2022



Nationally

Breaking Cycles aligns to the goals of national initiatives and strategies including: the National Agreement on Closing the Gap priority reforms, and *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* and its *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023–2026*.

Closing the Gap priority reforms

1. Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making
2. Building the Community-Controlled Sector
3. Transforming Government Organisations
4. Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level

Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan

1. Delegated Authority
2. Investing in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Sector
3. Data Sovereignty
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce
5. Active Efforts
6. Legal Supports
7. Advocating for Accountability and Oversight
8. Social Determinants of Child Safety and Wellbeing

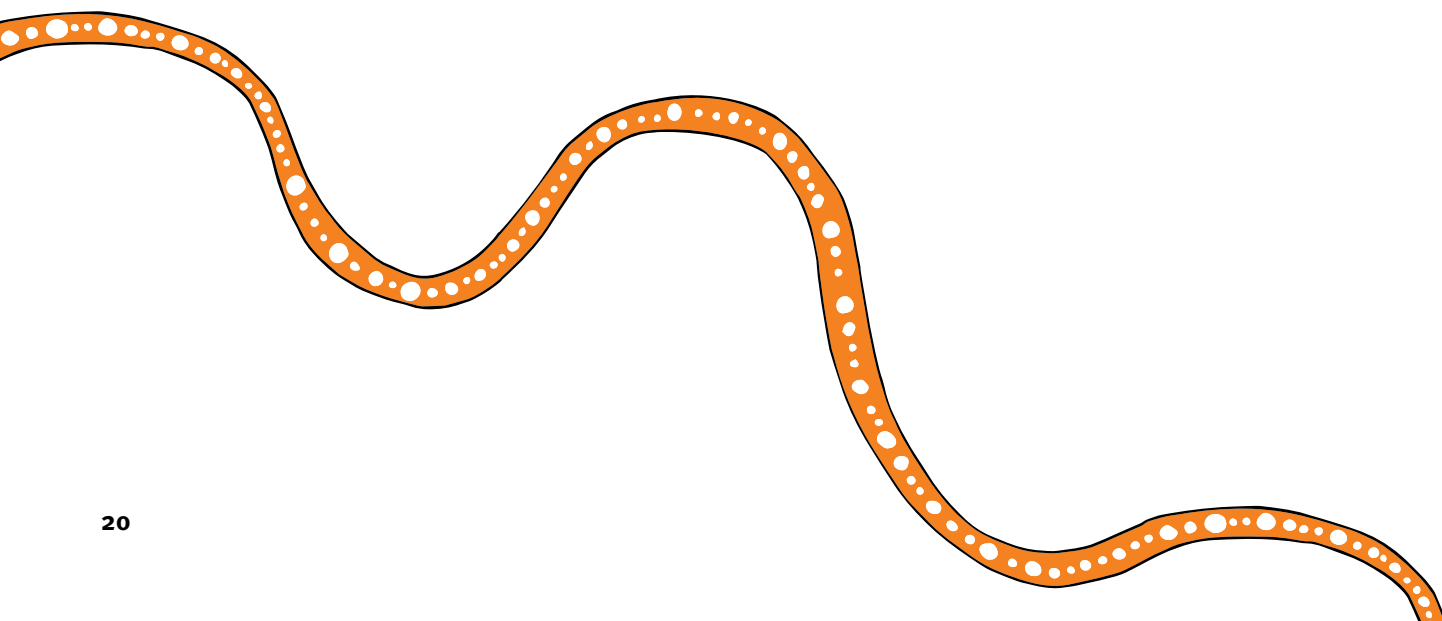
State

Breaking Cycles aligns with the Queensland Government's commitment to a reframed relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Queensland through Path to Treaty and Local Thriving Communities as well as through other government initiatives which contribute to eliminating the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system, as follows:

- Health
 - First Nations Health Equity Strategies 2022–2025 in each hospital and health service
 - Growing Deadly Families: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maternity Services Strategy 2019–2025
 - Better Care Together: A Plan for Queensland's State-Funded Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services to 2027.



- Housing
 - Queensland Housing Strategy 2017–2027 and the Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021–2025
 - Towards Ending Homelessness for Young Queenslanders 2022–2027: A Policy and Integrated Framework of Housing with Support
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019–2023
 - First Nations Housing and Homelessness Roadmap to 2032.
- Employment, Education and Training
 - Good People. Good Jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022–2032 (the Queensland Government’s whole-of-government Workforce Strategy)
 - Paving the Way: First Nations Training Strategy
 - Equity and Excellence: Realising the potential of every student (Queensland’s Education Strategy).
- Safety and Justice
 - Working Together Changing the Story: Youth Justice Strategy 2019–2023
 - Safe Children and Strong Communities: A Strategy and Action Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Organisations Accessing the Blue Card System 2021–2025
 - Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026 and the Fourth Action Plan 2022–2026.



Breaking Cycles



The first of three action plans under the *Breaking Cycles* phase will bolster efforts designed to strengthen and support families, reduce the number of children removed from their families, and support healing from trauma.

It commences the 10 year transition of investment from the non-Indigenous sector to ATSICCOs, shifting the focus to family preservation and reunification services. Growing the proportion of services delivered by ATSICCOs will ensure the level of investment is proportionate to the service needs and level of system representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

This action plan lays out an ambitious systems reform agenda across eight priority areas and 32 actions.

The independent *Changing Tracks* evaluation noted the need for bold, impactful and transformative actions to achieve the desired systemic change needed to achieve the *Our Way* strategy vision and target.

Family Matters Building Blocks



All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children



Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive



Governments and services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples





BREAKING CYCLES 2023–2025 ACTIONS

PRIORITY AREA

1

Transformative systems change



Commit to bold and transformative reform actions — changing the systems to support the transition




Research and evidence highlight the continued impacts colonisation and oppression has had at a systems level on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities. Transformational systems change; whereby supporting policies, programs, practice and systems are co-developed and delivered in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, local leadership groups and organisations is critical to the achievement of the *Our Way* vision and targets.

Consistent with the Queensland Government's commitment to Local Thriving Communities and enhanced local decision making, working in genuine partnership will ensure that policies, programs, practice and systems are culturally responsive, fit for purpose and meet the needs and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and communities.





We will know we have been successful when:

- government agencies and service providers elevate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice, leadership and governance in their strategic planning, policy development and investment decisions
- government agencies and service providers commit to genuine co-design processes and work in true partnership with communities and ATSICCOs
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities, and organisations make decisions about how best to use resources to support their children and families
- ATSICCOs have strengthened capacity and capability to deliver high quality services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- system stakeholders work in partnership across service streams to enable the delivery of seamless and culturally appropriate supports
- government agencies and service providers are culturally competent and redress instances of structural racism.






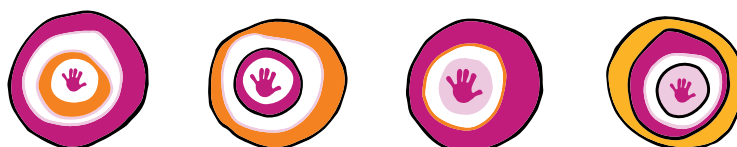
Actions [See Acronyms, page 45]	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
			Family Matters Building Blocks	Closing the Gap priority reforms	Safe and Supported
1.1 Negotiate a formal partnership agreement between DCSSDS, DTATSIPCA, QFCFB, QATSICPP and FMQ to support implementation and oversight of <i>Breaking Cycles</i> , the second implementation phase of <i>Our Way</i> .	Formal partnership agreement between the DCSSDS, DTATSIPCA, QFCFB, QATSICPP and FMQ, including each parties' obligations and accountabilities at the state, regional and local levels, consistent with the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> strong partnership elements contained in the <i>National Agreement on Closing the Gap</i> (clauses 32–33) principles and framework outlined in the SNAICC Guide to Genuine Partnerships. 	DCSSDS DTATSIPCA QFCFB QATSICPP FMQ	 	1	8
1.2 Develop and implement an overarching change management strategy to drive the systems and cultural change within government necessary to achieve reform of the child protection system.	Long-term strategic reform plan which identifies how DCSSDS will support systems and cultural change within government and ensure commitments under <i>Breaking Cycles</i> are achieved, co-designed with QATSICPP and taking into consideration plans to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve the cultural safety and responsiveness of decision-making across the child protection continuum transition investment to the ATSIcco sector within 10 years expand access to prevention and early intervention scale up delegated authority and the FPP increase use of family-based care through <i>Family Caring for Family</i>. 	DCSSDS QFCFB QATSICPP		3	3, 8



Actions <small>[See Acronyms, page 45]</small>	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
1.3 Develop and implement a plan to embed all five elements of the ATSICPP to the standard of active efforts across the child protection system.	Implementation plan to improve adherence to the ATSICPP across child protection legislation, policy, programs, processes and practice, co-designed with QATSICPP.	DCSSDS QATSICPP QFCC	 	3	5
1.4 Review investment and commissioning policy, processes and practice to identify strategies to achieve equitable and sustainable investment in the ATSICCO sector, support innovation and scale up successful approaches, and shift towards community-led, place-based decision-making.	An implementation plan, co-designed with QATSICPP to transform approaches to investment and commissioning that enables self-determination and prioritises investment in ATSICCOs to design programs and services which are tailored to meet the needs of their community and adopt a culturally safe, holistic prevention and early intervention approach.	DCSSDS QATSICPP			
1.5 Develop, resource and implement culturally safe and responsive intake and investigation and assessment policy, processes and practice to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering the child protection system.	Implementation plan to improve cultural safety and responsiveness and eliminate cultural bias from the earliest points of contact with the child protection system, co-designed with QATSICPP and inclusive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of new intake and investigation and assessment decision-making processes and tools • support for collective decision-making mechanisms • review of mandatory reporting and child protection notification decision-making policy and processes across government agencies. Trial of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Intake Officers embedded in Regional Intake Services.	DCSSDS QATSICPP	 	3	5



Actions [See Acronyms, page 45]	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
1.6 Review the intersect of the blue card system with the kinship care approval system, including processes and practice, to improve the experience of and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations, and enable more children to be cared for by family.	Implementation plan to reduce barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples being issued a blue card and approved as kinship carers.	DJAG DCSSDS QFCC QATSICPP		3	5
1.7 Develop and implement culturally safe and responsive complaints management policy, processes and practice to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations experience with government agencies that play a role in the lives of their children and families.	Implementation plan to improve the cultural safety and responsiveness of the complaints management systems within the child protection system. Develop an agreed definition of cultural safety and principles for culturally responsive complaints management to be shared with government partners to inform improvements to their own systems.	DCSSDS	 	3	3, 5





PRIORITY AREA

2

Investment in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector



Grow and support the sector to improve outcomes for children and families

There is widespread recognition across all levels of government of the need to invest in and grow the ATSICCO sector to close the gap in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. We know that programs and services designed and delivered by ATSICCOs employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, are often preferred to non-Indigenous service providers and achieve superior outcomes for their children and families.

Investment priorities must be determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, in partnership with government. Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to make decisions about how best to use available resources to support their children and families enables self-determination. This includes moving towards community-led, place-based investment and commissioning processes.

In 2022, DCSSDS committed to transition an equitable share of investment in services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families from the non-Indigenous to ATSICCO sector within 10 years. Achieving reform of this scope and size is a first within the Queensland Government and will require considerable planning, preparation and cooperation among all stakeholders and at all levels.






As part of its commitments under the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, the Queensland Government will review and report on current expenditure within the child protection portfolio. This will assist government and the ATSICCO sector to understand the impact, effectiveness and efficiency of current investment and consider opportunities to better direct funding to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Concurrent to this, the community-controlled sector will be engaged in readiness planning to ensure organisations are prepared for the growth in investment and supported to develop the necessary governance, workforce and infrastructure requirements.

We commit to growing the ATSICCO sector through increased investment so that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families can access the right services and supports at the right time.

We will know we have been successful when:

- there is equitable and sustainable investment in the ATSICCO sector
- there is a significant and sustained increase in the proportion of services delivered by ATSICCOs.



Actions [See Acronyms, page 45]	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
			Family Matters Building Blocks	Closing the Gap priority reforms	Safe and Supported
2.1 Review and identify current spending on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system to identify reprioritisation opportunities.	Comprehensive expenditure report detailing the spend on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system, developed in collaboration with the ATSICCO sector.	DCSSDS	 	3	2
2.2 Undertake investment reform planning activities with the ATSICCO sector to support readiness for growth in investment.	ATSICCO sector readiness plan outlining governance, workforce and infrastructure needs to support transition of investment.	QATSICPP DCSSDS		2	2
2.3 Develop, resource and implement a strategy to transition investment in services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to the ATSICCO sector within 10 years.	<p>Long-term blueprint and implementation plan to transition investment in child and family services to the ATSICCO sector by 2032, including development of targets and regional transition plans, co-designed with QATSICPP and in consultation with ATSICCOs and non-Indigenous peaks.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Blueprint to incorporate the co-design of responses geared to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and the collaborative redesign of existing programs and services.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>DCSSDS to share learnings from the transition process to encourage the adoption of similar investment policy across Queensland Government.</p>	DCSSDS QATSICPP	 	2	2



PRIORITY AREA

3

Delegated authority



Reclaim family and community authority to care for and protect children

Self-determination is the collective right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine and control their own destiny. It is the recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities are best placed to make informed decisions about the safety, wellbeing and care of their children. We know that the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is improved where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are making decisions about their futures.



Queensland has been a leader nationally in establishing the legislative and policy settings to enable delegation of statutory child protection decision making and transfer of service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations. Early success through delegating decision-making has demonstrated what can be achieved when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations reclaim their authority to make decisions and lead for change. There is a strong call within the sector to scale up the initiative as a priority action.

The expansion of delegated authority across Queensland has the potential to fundamentally transform the child protection system and improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

We commit to progressively grow delegated authority across the state including establishing new locations and expanding the range of statutory powers and functions delegated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities, in line with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community priorities and aspirations.

We will know we have been successful when:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are the ones making decisions about outcomes for their children and families
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are empowered, supported and resourced to implement delegated authority in their local communities.

Actions [See Acronyms, page 45]	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
			Family Matters Building Blocks	Closing the Gap priority reforms	Safe and Supported
3.1 Implement <i>Reclaiming our storyline: Transforming systems and practice by making decisions our way</i> to scale up delegated authority arrangements across Queensland.	Expand the availability of delegated authority arrangements in partnership with QATSICPP.	DCSSDS QATSICPP	 	1, 2	1

PRIORITY AREA

4

Prevention and early intervention



Invest in early intervention to strengthen families and communities

A focus on prevention and early intervention is essential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to thrive. We know that when we address the social and cultural determinants of health and wellbeing, children and families flourish and prosper.

Investing in prevention and early intervention responses are critical to ensuring all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up safe, loved and cared for in family, community and culture. Prevention and early intervention is key to breaking the cycles of intergenerational trauma and disadvantage and stemming the tide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering out-of-home care.

We know that the child protection system is weighted too heavily towards statutory child protection interventions and out-of-home care. To achieve the target of reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 percent by 2031, we must urgently shift and balance investment towards responses that strengthen and support families, prevent contact with or progression into the system, and reunify children with their parents or kin as a matter of priority.

Delivered by ATSICCOs across the state, FWS provide culturally safe supports for children and families that improve children's safety, belonging, wellbeing and participation in family and community life. However, limited resources and high demand has meant that FWS have often had to prioritise families in crisis or already in contact with the child protection system due to the urgency of their situations, rather than the broad range of early supports originally intended when the program was designed. Additional investment would enable FWS to broaden their service offerings.




The transition of investment from the non-Indigenous sector to the ATSICCO sector also provides an opportunity to re-imagine and re-design services to ensure they meet local family and community needs and aspirations.

We commit to increasing access to prevention and early intervention responses to reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families coming into contact with the child protection system.


We will know we have been successful when:

- there is a significant and sustained increase in the proportion of funding invested in culturally safe, holistic prevention and early intervention responses
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are engaged as genuine partners in the co-design of services and supports for their children and families.



Actions [See Acronyms, page 45]	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
			Family Matters Building Blocks	Closing the Gap priority reforms	Safe and Supported
4.1 Increase investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander FWS to expand access to prevention and early intervention supports that strengthen families and communities and mitigate the risk of children and families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage entering the child protection system.	<p>Agreed definition of prevention and early intervention approach and activities within FWS.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Agreed target for proportion of FWS funding allocated towards prevention and early intervention.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Implementation plan to expand access to prevention and early intervention supports through the existing network of FWS.</p>	DCSSDS QATSICPP		2	2, 5
4.2 As part of the investment and commissioning reform and transition of investment processes (Actions 1.4 and 2.3), ATSICCOs are empowered to re-design programs and services to ensure responses are tailored to meet the needs of their community and adopt a culturally safe, holistic prevention and early intervention approach.	<p>Commissioning and procurement strategy to support the design/re-design and delivery of programs and services, taking into consideration the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop an agreed definition of holistic prevention and early intervention approach and activities • shift investment towards strengthening and supporting families and communities to care for their children • develop a funding model for regional and remote service delivery that recognises the increased costs of delivering programs and services in these areas. 	DCSSDS QATSICPP ATSICCOs	 	2	2, 5



Actions [See Acronyms, page 45]	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
<p>4.3 Implementation of the Growing Deadly Families Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maternity Services Strategy 2019-2025 (GDF Strategy) in partnership with First Nations Health Office. The GDF Strategy is Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maternal and child health strategy aimed at providing culturally safe and secure maternity services across Queensland to realise the Strategy’s vision that ‘All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies in Queensland are born healthy, into strong resilient families’.</p>	<p>Maternity services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are co-designed and delivered with the community in partnership with providers including hospital and health services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Organisations.</p> <p>All women in Queensland pregnant with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander babies have access to woman-centred, comprehensive and culturally capable maternity care.</p> <p>Develop a statewide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maternity workforce plan to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working within maternity models.</p> <p>Develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maternal and child health guidelines to support cultural capability of staff.</p> <p>Ensure Queensland Health child protection liaison services are culturally capable, adhere to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principles (prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection) and can work in collaboration with Cultural Practice Advisors and services providers in ensuring safety for the mother and child.</p>	QH		3	4



PRIORITY AREA

5

Family participation and control of decision-making



Empower family decision-making to enable self-determination

A fundamental commitment at the heart of *Our Way* is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children. At a practical level this involves ensuring that the statutory child protection system recognises and respects family decision-making, as well as provides targeted support to families to realise their right to self-determination.

The establishment of the FPP was a key achievement of the *Changing Tracks* implementation phase. Delivered by ATSICCOs across the state, FPP has been an important mechanism to increase family voice and genuine participation in child protection decision-making. Scaling up the program to ensure this critical support is available to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families at all points along the child protection system is necessary to enable self-determination.




We know that not enough Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family or kin and that we need to do more to identify family care options and supporting family and kinship structures to care for their children in community and culture. The establishment of a new, culturally grounded approach to supporting family to care for family, designed and delivered by ATSICCOs, will support extended family networks to care for their children and ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are raised by family in their community and with connections to kin, culture and country.

We commit to scaling up initiatives that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead decision-making about the care and protection of their children and supporting culturally based, family caregiving arrangements.

We will know we have been successful when:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-led decision-making is enabled at all points along the child protection continuum for all families in contact with the system
- there is a significant and sustained increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children cared for by family
- there is a significant and sustained reduction in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.



Actions [See Acronyms, page 45]	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
			Family Matters Building Blocks	Closing the Gap priority reforms	Safe and Supported
5.1 Increase investment in the FPP to embed family-led decision-making across the child protection systems.	Evaluation report on the FPP. Implementation plan to expand access to family-led decision-making through the FPP.	DCSSDS QATSICPP		1, 2	2, 5
5.2 Develop, resource, implement and evaluate the <i>Family Caring for Family</i> model of care to identify and support family to care for their children in community and maintain connections to family, culture and country.	Action research report on <i>Family Caring for Family</i> to document learnings and inform the future scale up of the model across Queensland. Implementation and evaluation plans to support the rollout of the <i>Family Caring for Family</i> model. Two trials of the <i>Family Caring for Family</i> model of care, designed and delivered in partnership with QATSICPP and ATSICCOs.	DCSSDS QATSICPP ATSICCOs	 	1, 2	2, 5





PRIORITY AREA

6

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce



Build workforce capacity and capability to lead for change

A strong, supported, empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce is essential to growing the community-controlled child and family sector and improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations know their children, families and communities best and are deeply committed to walking alongside them to create positive change.

Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples innately embed and embody holistic, culturally safe approaches in their work with children, families and communities. We must recognise, respect and value the important cultural knowledge, perspectives, connections and expertise they bring to their roles.




The planned transition of decision-making authority, resources and responsibility to the community-controlled sector will require a significant and sustained investment in the size and capabilities of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce. We must take action to attract and retain the right people, build and promote a professional identity, and grow and develop staff. We will deliver innovative and practical solutions to ensure the workforce is well-equipped to support the anticipated growth and demand for their skills and services over the coming decade.

We commit to support the ongoing development and growth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families receive culturally safe, high quality supports and services.

We will know we have been successful when:

- place-based, 'grow your own' workforce initiatives support community-controlled organisations to attract, develop, support and retain local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, particularly in regional and remote communities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are supported to develop their professional capabilities and careers through student placements, traineeships, scholarships, short courses, upskilling and mentoring opportunities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples lead the design, delivery and evaluation of high-quality child and family support and child protection services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.



Actions [See Acronyms, page 45]	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
			Family Matters Building Blocks	Closing the Gap priority reforms	Safe and Supported
6.1 Undertake scoping activities with the ATSIKCO sector to inform the development of strategies for a strong and sustainable workforce.	ATSIKCO sector scoping report mapping the existing sector footprint and identifying current and projected workforce and infrastructure needs.	QATSIKPP DCSSDS		2	4
6.2 Develop, resource and implement a strategy to support the ongoing development and growth of the ATSIKCOs child and family services sector.	<p>Sector strengthening plan for ATSIKCOs child and family services, including development of local implementation plans, co-designed with QATSIKPP and consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> strong community-controlled sector elements contained in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (clauses 45) four streams of workforce, capital infrastructure, service provision and governance contained in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (clause 51). 	DCSSDS QATSIKPP DTATSIKCA DYJESBT		2	4
6.3 Increase participation, completion and employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and young people exiting long-term care.	<p>Skilling Queenslanders for Work will continue supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into employment.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Indigenous Workforce and Skills Development Grant program aims to create training and employment pathways for up to 800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Back to Work — continue to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into employment through this initiative.</p>	DYJESBT		2	4



PRIORITY AREA

7

Cross-government commitment to address over-representation and improve wellbeing outcomes



Continue the implementation and monitoring of the child and family reform agenda

The socio-economic challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote, discrete, and urban communities are not new. What is new is the way in which government and the sector is responding to these challenges and implementation of the current reform agenda.




This is an opportunity to reduce or remove barriers to advance the reform agenda from local unified approach between cultural authority communities, stakeholders and government to build and implement community identified solutions tailored to improve social and emotional wellbeing initiatives.

We commit to working differently, in a more coordinated and cohesive way to reduce and remove barriers that may impact the child and family reform agenda. We also commit to improving the cultural capability across government to address disproportionate representation and improve wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.



We will know we have been successful when:

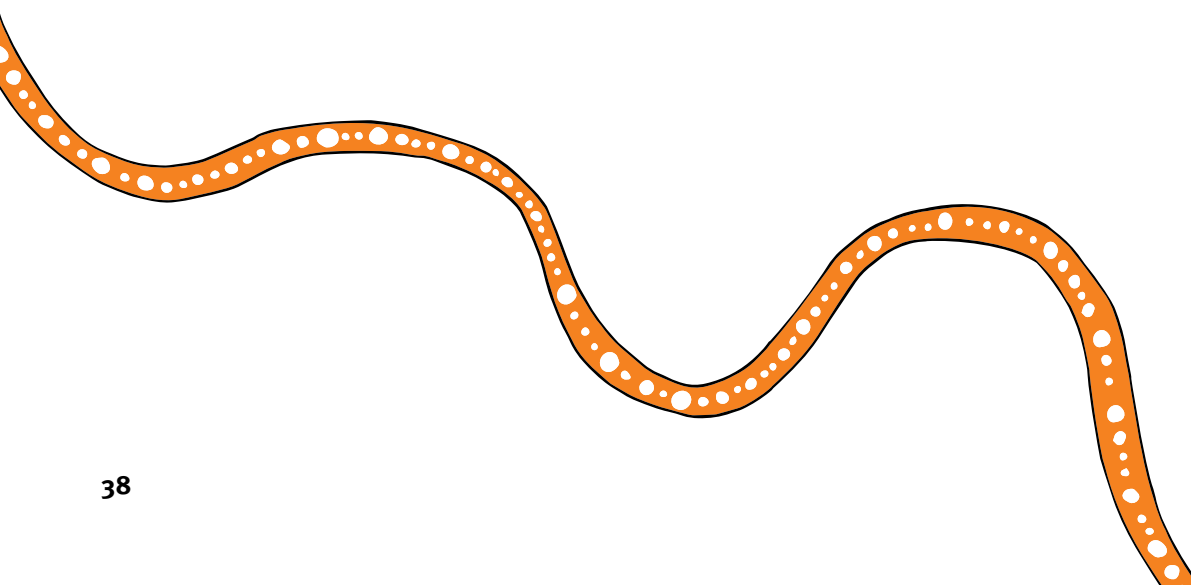
- the coordination of child protection responsibilities across all relevant portfolios have been improved
- the cultural capability of the hospital system engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about their experiences in the health system, connects services and overcomes access barriers
- increased government and community initiatives relating to housing to reduce crowding, improve standards of housing, and home ownership have been implemented
- education attendance, participation, engagement and retention rates have improved.



Actions <small>[See Acronyms, page 45]</small>	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
			Family Matters Building Blocks	Closing the Gap priority reforms	Safe and Supported
7.1 Implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Outcomes Framework across Queensland Government to guide planning and decision-making as it relates to the wellbeing outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.	Implementation and communication plan to develop and trial a training and resources package to increase government agency engagement with <i>Our Way</i> and use of the Wellbeing Outcomes Framework.	DCSSDS All state government agencies		3	8
7.2 Review all Health Equity Strategies 2022–2025 to ensure they contain commitments and actions that will increase access to culturally safe health and mental health services and supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.	Each Health Equity Strategy includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identified actions to increase access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families experiencing vulnerability, including children and families at risk of entering the child protection system and children in care. identified actions to increase the capacity and capability of staff to provide culturally responsive, child-centred practice. Medicare Benefits Schedule 715 Health checks will be provided for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering the child protection system/out-of-home care based on the core elements of the National Clinical Assessment Framework for Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care that was agreed under Closing the Gap (Table 1 pg. 12). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health organisations will be supported to undertake these health checks as the preferred provider where able. The outcomes from these health checks and the services that may be required as a result will be utilised to help inform the deliverables to be embedded in the Health Equity Strategies deliverable above. 	QH QAIHC QATSICPP DCSSDS	 	3	7



Actions [See Acronyms, page 45]	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
<p>7.3 Develop an enhanced integrated service response to address the housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and families in contact with the child protection system to support family preservation, reunification and transition to independence.</p>	<p>Review policies that impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who have contact with the child protection system, including supporting application of the ATSICPP.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Collaboratively develop and implement joint assessment processes and a practice model to support timely access to appropriate housing responses and review prioritisation policies.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Enhance proportion of the social housing portfolio targeted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households.</p>	<p>DOH QATSIH QATSICPP DCSSDS</p>	 	<p>3</p>	<p>5, 8</p>
<p>7.4 Increase the days of learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by supporting schools to implement culturally responsive approaches to discipline.</p>	<p>Development of targeted system-wide initiative to maximise learning days for all students through active reduction of reliance on school disciplinary absences (e.g. suspensions and exclusions).</p>	<p>DOE</p>			





Actions <small>[See Acronyms, page 45]</small>	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
<p>7.5 Recognise and value the language varieties which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and communities' use. Engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' learning by supporting the explicit teaching of SAE. Actively support the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in schools.</p>	<p>Students are learning through the Australian Curriculum in SAE. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students do not speak SAE and find it difficult to access the curriculum. Students require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explicit English as an additional language or dialect specialist support to build their knowledge and understanding of SAE to support their learning across all learning areas and enable proficiency • educators to recognise that Australia is a linguistically and culturally diverse country and value the multilingualism within the education context. <p>.....</p> <p>Studying an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language is part of truth telling and righting past injustice. It can enhance cultural knowledge, pride and identity. The department actively supports schools co-designing with local communities to implement the P–10 <i>Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages</i>, developed by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority.</p>	<p>DOE</p>	<div> </div> <div>3</div> <div>8</div>		
<p>7.6 Increase the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students until the end of Year 12 through supporting and monitoring the progress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.</p>	<p>Improved culturally appropriate support services, monitor student progress and providing study support.</p>	<p>DOE</p>	<div> </div> <div>3</div> <div>8</div>		



PRIORITY AREA

8

Voice, accountability and oversight



Build and strengthen ways for communities to drive and track change

As we walk together along the reform path, it is critical that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and organisations continue to lead and shape the journey. We need strong mechanisms to elevate the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities and ensure both governments and services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The QFCFB is the authorising and oversight body that holds the Queensland Government and *Our Way* partners accountable to the strategy and action plans. This eminent group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders plays an important role in bringing all partners to the table to work collaboratively to progress the reform agenda. The establishment of a Youth Advisory Group to the QFCFB is evidence of their commitment to ‘listen to the voice of the child’ and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to engage in and influence policy and practice.







To improve accountability within the system, we must improve the way data and information is collected, shared and reported. The evaluation of the *Changing Tracks* implementation phase and successive Family Matters Reports noted significant concerns about data sovereignty, collection, sharing and use. Data collection and performance reporting measures must be co-created with the sector. Timely access to locally relevant and meaningful data is essential to enable informed decision-making, monitor and assess the impact of our efforts, and track progress towards *Our Way* and Closing the Gap targets. Alongside this work, we must continue to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research, critical to the development of an evidence base that reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews, knowledge and expertise.

We commit to elevating the voices and cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and increasing shared accountability and transparency within the child protection system.



We will know we have been successful when:

- *Our Way* governance structures and processes respect cultural ways of knowing, being and doing
- there is shared responsibility and accountability by government and the sector to achieve improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families
- data design, collection, interpretation, use and ownership adhere to the principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data sovereignty and supports us to understand the impact of our efforts.





Actions [See Acronyms, page 45]	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
			Family Matters Building Blocks	Closing the Gap priority reforms	Safe and Supported
8.1 Continue to support the QFCFB to oversee, guide and advise on the implementation of <i>Our Way</i> and accompanying action plans.	Quarterly meetings of the QFCFB.	DCSSDS QFCFB FMQ DTATSIPCA	 	1	7
8.2 Establish an ongoing mechanism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to have voice and shape the implementation of <i>Our Way</i> and accompanying action plans.	Implementation plan to establish a Youth Advisory Group to the QFCFB to ensure reform of the child protection system is grounded in and shaped by the diverse realities, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Establish the Youth Advisory Group.	QATSICPP QFCFB DCSSDS	 	1	7
8.3 Through a coordinated approach with QATSIC members, identify opportunities to embed the voice, needs and aspirations of children and families into Queensland's implementation of the Closing the Gap priority reforms, outcomes and targets.	The Closing the Gap implementation plan for Queensland includes the actions identified in both the <i>Breaking Cycles</i> 2023–2025 action plan and <i>Safe and Supported</i> 2023–2026 action plan to ensure that accountability and investment is embedded and a coordinated effort is undertaken to support Queensland in meeting its Closing the Gap targets. The Closing the Gap implementation plan includes additional actions that meet the aspirations of communities as identified in the community consultation report including increased investment in ATSIcco services.	QATSICPP QATSIC DTATSIPCA	 	1, 2	7



Actions [See Acronyms, page 45]	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
8.4 Develop and implement a Child Rights monitoring and reporting framework to ensure the application of a child rights approach to systemic accountability across the child protection system.	Annual publication of the Queensland Child Rights Monitoring Report, the Queensland First Nations Children and Young People Report, and the Principle Focus Snapshots.	QFCC		4	3, 7
8.5 Continue to expand and develop through technology, policy and legislation, the data sharing and ownership capabilities delivered through Unify to the ATSICCO sector to achieve data sovereignty.	<p>An implementation approach for DCSSDS which outlines how the department will respond to data sovereignty actions under <i>Safe and Supported</i>. Working with QATSICPP, identify the data needs of the ATSICCO sector and how data can be shared.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Establish <i>Safe and Supported</i> data sovereignty working group with subject matter experts across DCSSDS.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Continue to develop and enable data sharing at the state, regional and local levels, through ongoing consultation with QATSICPP and consistent with the strong data and information sharing elements contained in the <i>National Agreement on Closing the Gap</i> (clause 71).</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Enhanced mechanisms and infrastructure developed through Unify to enable data sharing at the state, regional and local levels.</p>	DCSSDS QATSICPP QFCC		4	3



Actions <small>[See Acronyms, page 45]</small>	Deliverables	Lead agency and partners	Policy alignment		
8.6 Continue to support the QATSICPP COE to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence is at the forefront of driving change in the Queensland child protection system and to ensure culturally strong evidence is utilised in delivering outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.	<p>Opportunities for increased partnership and investment in the COE are explored by DCSSDS to ensure ATSICCOs are enabled to develop and define their own evidence base.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Evidence-based research and frameworks produced by the COE form the basis for increased investment and development of new programs and services by the Queensland Government to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.</p>	QATSICPP DCSSDS		4	3
8.7 Continue to monitor and evaluate the implementation, impact and outcomes of the Breaking Cycles phase of the <i>Our Way</i> strategy.	<p>Monitoring, evaluation and learning plan for the Breaking Cycles phase of <i>Our Way</i>, based on the <i>Changing Tracks</i> 2017–2022 evaluation findings, program logic and theory of change.</p>	DCSSDS QFCFB All partners		3, 4	8



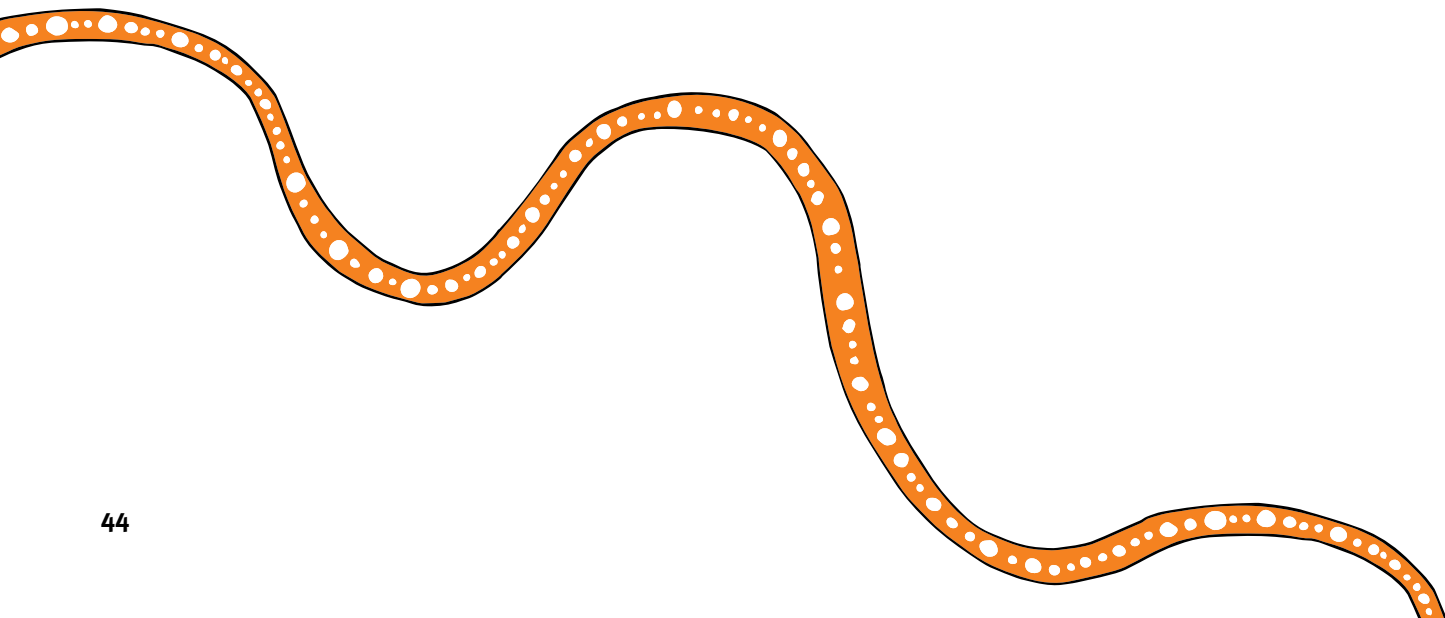
Supporting documents

Appendix A — *Our Way* Theory of Change

Appendix B — *Our Way* Program Logic

The following documents support and/or inform *Breaking Cycles 2023–2025* and can be found via the following links:

- [Breaking Cycles actions in detail](#)
- [Breaking Cycles community consultation report and flagship forum finding report](#)
- [A Wellbeing Outcomes Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland](#)
- [Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037](#)
- [The Family Matters Report 2021](#)
- [The Family Matters Report 2022](#)
- [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#)
- [The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021-2031](#)

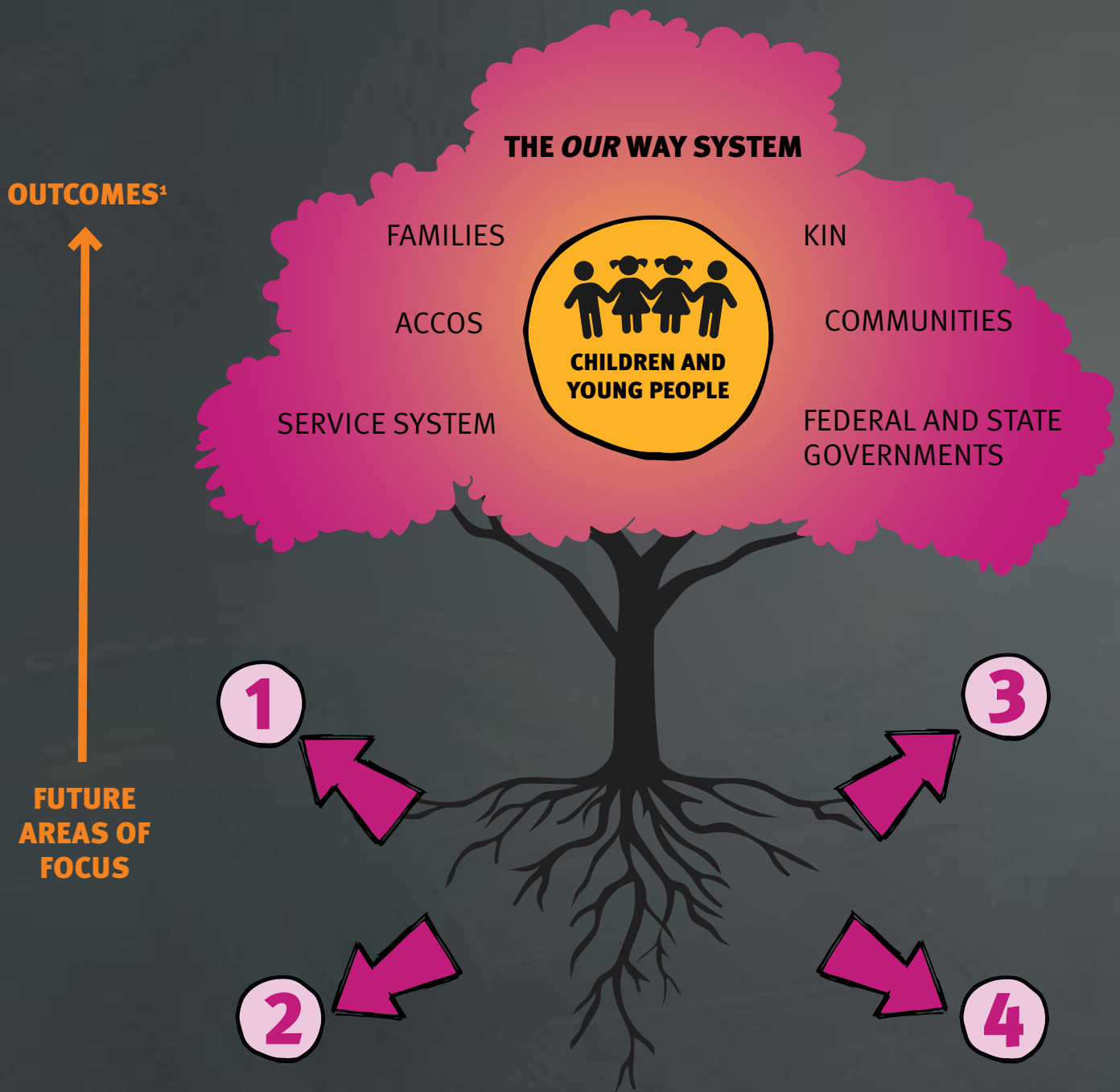




Acronyms

Abbreviation	Title
ATSICCO	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ATSICPP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle
COE	Centre of Excellence
DCSSDS	Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services
DJAG	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
DOE	Department of Education
DOH	Department of Housing
DTATSIPCA	Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts
DYJESBT	Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training
FPP	Family Participation Program
FWS	Family Wellbeing Services
QAIHC	Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council
QATSIC	Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition
QATSICPP	Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak
QATSIH	Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing
QFCC	Queensland Family and Child Commission
QFCFB	Queensland First Children and Families Board
QH	Queensland Health
QMHC	Queensland Mental Health Commission
SAE	Standard Australian English
SDM	Structured Decision Making
SNAICC	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
SQW	Skilling Queenslanders for Work

Our Way Theory of Change



The four areas of focus and enabling activities within each represent the roots to the *Our Way* system. Actions and changes must be collectively undertaken by stakeholders to provide a strong foundation for the *Our Way* system to thrive.

¹ The outcomes represent the Family Matters Building Blocks that are included in *Our Way*

OBJECTIVES OF THE OUR WAY STRATEGY:

Eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system and close the gap in life outcomes by 2037



All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe universal and targeted services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive



Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children



Governments and community services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

1

Recognise and enable transformational change in the system

- Commit to genuine co-design processes that implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander solutions
- Enable the right to self-determination of focus
- Elevate Indigenous voice, leadership and governance

3

Re-orient Government mechanisms

- Acknowledge and address systemic racism
- Strengthen data collection to measure changes in First Nations' children's lives
- Improve cultural safety and competency
- Improve shared responsibility and accountability
- More equitable funding and procurement processes

2

Sustainably develop the community-controlled sector

- Strengthen the capacity and capability of ACCOs
- Scale effective and innovative place-based responses

4

Whole-of-system commitment

- Whole-of-system awareness and commitment to *Our Way*
- Understand the socioeconomic structural drivers to over-representation
- Focus on early intervention and prevention

If this can be achieved, the four outcomes will be achieved and enable children and young people to grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture.

Our Way

System-level program logic model

Future areas of focus

(guidance to influence the design of action plans)

1. Recognise and enable transformational change in the system

- Commit to genuine co-design processes that implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander solutions
- Enable the right to self-determination
- Elevate Indigenous voice, leadership and governance

2. Sustainably develop the community-controlled sector

- Strengthen the capacity and capability of ACCOs
- Scale effective and innovative place-based responses

3. Re-orient government mechanisms

- Acknowledge and address systemic racism
- Strengthen data collection to measure changes in First Nations' children's lives
- Improve cultural safety and competency
- Improve shared responsibility and accountability
- More equitable funding and procurement processes

4. Whole-of system commitment

- Whole-of-system awareness and commitment to *Our Way*
- Understand the socioeconomic structural drivers to over-representation
- Focus on early intervention and prevention

Short term and medium term outcomes

Improved life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

1. The needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are met before and during pregnancy and parenting, especially during the first 1,000 days
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong*
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have access to affordable and appropriate medical care as well as a healthy lifestyle from birth to adulthood
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years*
5. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years*
6. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up in an environment that is free from poverty as their parents, carers and family have access to economic opportunities
7. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in education*
8. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways*
9. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enjoy high levels of social, mental health and emotional wellbeing*
10. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have a strong sense of identity and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages*
11. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up in secure and appropriate housing that is aligned with their priorities and needs*
12. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are able to exercise their agency in the communities and environments in which they live, learn and work
13. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up in loving and supportive environments where they are free from all forms of harm and abuse*

* Queensland Closing the Gap Implementation Plan outcomes

Credit: Deloitte Access Economics

OBJECTIVES OF THE OUR WAY STRATEGY:

Eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system and close the gap in life outcomes by 2037

(Outcomes achieved through implementation of the Breaking Cycles and Hitting Targets action plans)

Long term outcomes

Achievement of Our Way's objectives

Sustainable development of the community-controlled sector

14. The community-controlled sector is supported to strengthen its capacity and capability to deliver high quality services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
15. The community-controlled sector has access to data and information on their community
16. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children are able to access the services of their choice
17. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and community organisations lead all policy and decision making processes related to their communities

Successful re-orientation of government mechanisms

18. Funding, procurement and commissioning processes are equitable and reflect the shift in investment and power to the community-controlled sector
19. Strengthened accountability mechanisms at all levels to ensure the service needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are met
20. All government agencies and service providers change governance arrangements to reflect the genuine partnership with the community and community-controlled sector

Whole-of-system transformation is achieved

21. All government agencies and service providers demonstrate strong awareness of and commitment towards *Our Way*
22. All government agencies and service providers understand their roles and the shared responsibility to achieve the objectives of *Our Way*
23. All government agencies and service providers embed the principles of *Our Way* in its strategic planning, policy development and frontline service delivery processes
24. Improved collaboration among system stakeholders to enable the delivery of seamless and culturally appropriate supports
25. All government agencies and service providers change services and systems to prioritise community and family-led decision making
26. All government agencies and service providers are culturally competent and redress instances of structural racism within their organisations
27. All government agencies and service providers commit to genuine co-design processes and work in true partnerships with the community and ACCOs
28. All government agencies and service providers elevate Indigenous voice, leadership and governance in its strategic planning, policy development and practice

L01.

Improvement in the life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people

L02.

Eliminate the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system*

L03.

All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe **universal and targeted services** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **children to thrive**

L04.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and **have control over decisions that affect their children**

L05.

Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive

L06.

Governments and community services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



