

**COMMUNIQUE – Queensland First Children and Families Board Meeting 30 November and 1 December 2021**

On 30 November and 1 December 2021, the Queensland First Children and Families Board (the Board), convened to discuss and guide a number of key priorities supporting the implementation of the *Our Way strategy: a generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017-2037*.

The Board welcomed new members, Mrs Ivy Trevallion, Mr Dion Tatow and Mr David Baird who will contribute their cultural leadership and expert knowledge to the Board. The Board also acknowledged that Mr Mick Gooda has been reappointed for a second term to guide the Board as co-chair with Professor Boni Robertson.

# Highlights – Day 1

The Director-General, Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, Ms Deidre Mulkerin provided an update on the department’s key priorities including amongst others:

* Shifting investment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations,
* Partnering with the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak (QATSICPP) to develop the blueprint for the state-wide implementation of delegated authority,
* Placement Reform, to reduce placement pressures and provide better outcomes for children, through:
	+ Finalising a new kinship care model, *Family Caring for Family*, in partnership with QATSICPP
	+ doubling the number of children placed with kin,
	+ halving residential care placements, and
	+ repurposing investment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

Family Matters Queensland Co-chair, Mr Michael Currie, provided an overview of the annual Family Matters Report 2021 with particular focus on:

* Active efforts to embed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle across all parts of the child protection system,
* greater proportion of investment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations,
* increased reunification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care and placement with kin,
* the need for the Report on Government Services (ROGS) definition for intensive family support services to be redefined to broaden the scope of risk,
* the successful implementation of delegated authority, and
* the development of a new kinship care program, in partnership with QATSICPP.

Indigenous Strategy and Partnerships briefed the Board on the development of the next Our Way action plan, *Breaking Cycles (2023-2025)*.

* A Road Map was tabled outlining how the Breaking Cycles actions will be co-designed in partnership with the Queensland Government, Family Matters Queensland, QATSICPP and partner agencies.
* The importance of interagency support to ensure a coordinated response from government was emphasised, as well as, ensuring that through state-wide stakeholder consultations, the voices of Aboriginal and Torres strait islander children, families, and communities, were included in the co-design process and incorporated in Breaking Cycles 1.

# Highlights – Day 2

**Our Way baseline evaluation**

Day two of the Board meeting commenced with a presentation by Deloitte and Murawin on the Baseline Evaluation Report – Our Way, Changing Tracks. Presenters noted the following;

* Some positive changes in policy and legislative settings
* Amendments to the Child Protection Act laid the foundation for key actions such as active efforts to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle across the CP system, and the implementation of delegated authority and family led decision making.
* There have been observed changes in systems, policies and collaborative working approaches between government agencies, key partners and service providers to enable implementation *Our Way*
* Communities felt that both the intent of the legislation and policy direction are appropriate and echoes their aspirations, yet to date has not achieved the desired impacts due to implementation issues
* There are early indications that the Queensland Government has been prioritizing investment in ACCOs,
* There is evidence of increased availability of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and, in some instances, improved client access (e.g. to Family Wellbeing Services) as a result of *Our Way*.
* Frustration was expressed that the vast majority of policies and practice continue to be culturally unsafe, unresponsive and inflexible to localized needs.
* *Our Way* has provided a platform for deliberate and concerted efforts across multiple government agencies to address the discrepancies in life outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders.
* Noted that some agencies do not have the necessary channels in place to collectively seek and monitor performance on accountability from service providers relative to the agreed approach to service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The recommendations and suggested course of action are designed to guide the Department, Board and Our Way partners in the design of future priorities and actions under the strategy.

The final baseline report will be shared with Our Way strategy partners following endorsement by the Co- chairs and Director-General DCYJMA.

# Health Queensland Update

The Chief Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Officer and Deputy Director General, Ms Haylene Grogan, addressed the Board regarding *Making Tracks Together: Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equity Framework.* Ms Grogan shared that legislation passed in 2020 and supporting regulation in April 2021 means that Queensland Health is mandated to provide health outcomes and appropriate culturally responsive services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and enabling the elimination of racism.

# Path to Treaty

Director-General, Seniors, Disability Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DSDSATSIP), Dr Chris Sara, provided an update on the, Path to Treaty – key actions truth telling and healing process, and establishment of a treaty institute. Board discussion covered the need for one National Voice, to get healing right so we can move forward (recognize trauma and respond accordingly) and the need for a whole of government approach to implementing the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Strategy (Healing Strategy).

# Minster Linard

The Board was joined by the Honorable Leeanne Linard MP, Minister for Child Safety, Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, who congratulated new members on their appointments and reiterated the Board’s vital role in providing independent advice and leadership to government to achieve the Our Way vision and target.

# Delegated Authority update

The Board was provided with a joint presentation on Delegated Authority by Julieann Cork, Regional Executive Director, Sunshine Coast & Central Region, DCYJMA, Jason Field, CEO, Central Queensland Indigenous Development, Darcy Cavanagh, CEO, Refocus, and Garth Morgan, CEO, QATSICPP.

Some of the learnings shared included;

* the need for more flexibility in commissioning and longer-term funding,
* cutting red tape/ streamline process for sign-off of Instrument of Delegation,
* developing relationships at all levels is a must, as is trust, transparency and respect,
* CQID and Refocus have felt well supported,
* departmental and sector readiness needs to be a key focus going forward, and
* agreed that the Action Research project has provided valuable insight and guidance going forward.

It was noted that any expansion of DA will require funding and commissioning to deliver outcomes, and that the state-wide implementation blueprint should consider use of an implementation team to support expansion to new locations and government as an enabler.

QATSICPP advised it will canvas readiness of other organisations to take part in delegated authority to inform blueprint.

# Structured Decision-Making Tool

The Chief Practitioner Officer provided an update on the review of the Structured Decision-Making Tool. Pursuant to the recent independent review of the Family Risk Evaluation (FRE) and Family Risk Re Evaluation (FRRE) elements of the SDM tool, DCYJMA has undertaken a review of all remaining elements.

The Board was advised that all elements of the SDM tool will be amended (to differing degrees) and the FRE/FRRE elements will be replaced. Going forward decision making tools will be strengths-based, focus on where support is needed to help families and children increase safety, likelihood, and probability, embed active efforts in application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle, include local consultation.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for 15 and 16 March 2022.

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

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