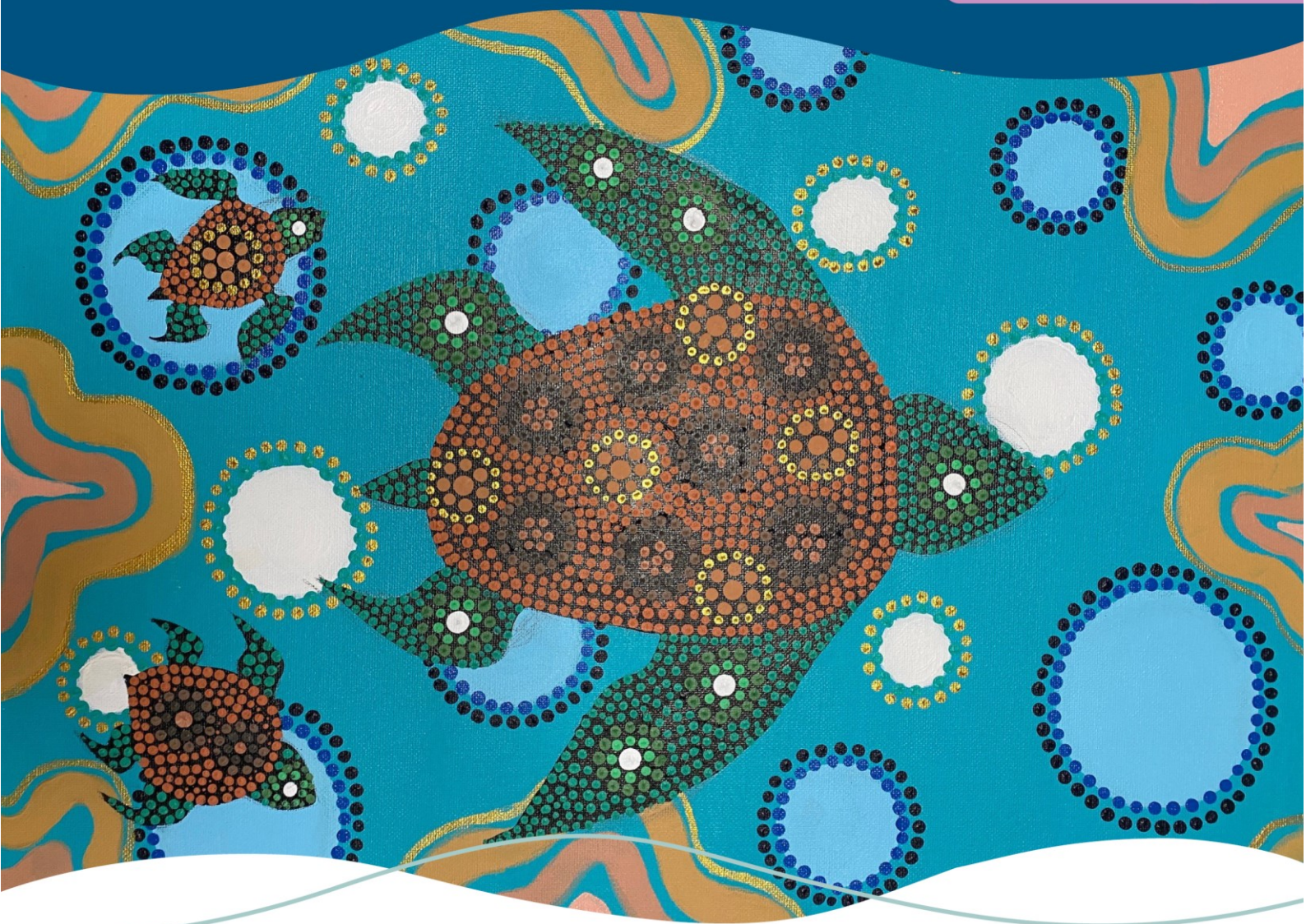


Listening and Learning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families' aspirations within education Queensland



JUNE 2024



Queensland
Family & Child
Commission



Queensland
Government

Acknowledgement of Country

The Queensland Family and Child Commission acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians across the lands, seas and skies where we walk, live and work.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique peoples, with their own rich and distinct cultures, strengths and knowledge. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across Queensland and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the important role played by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and recognise their right to self-determination, and the need for community-led approaches to support healing and strengthen resilience.

Acknowledgement of Participation

QFCC acknowledges the hundreds of First Nations children, young people, communities, Elders and educators who have shared their experiences, insights and knowledge with us to advocate for an education system that celebrates First Nations young people in the fullness of their identities.

About the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) and this report.

The QFCC is a statutory body of the Queensland Government. Its purpose is to influence change that improves the safety and wellbeing of Queensland children and their families. Under the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, the QFCC has been charged by government to review and improve the systems that protect and safeguard Queensland children.



The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If you have difficulty understanding this report, you can contact Translating and Interpreting Service National on 13 14 50 to arrange for an interpreter to effectively explain it to you. Local call charges apply if calling within Australia; higher rates apply from mobile phones and payphones.

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Message from the Commissioner

We have been truly honoured to be entrusted with supporting the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, their families and the cultural communities that care for them.

We welcomed the opportunity to be involved in a process that centred those most profoundly impacted and created space to hold their rights, their aspirations and perspectives as a point of truth, and the foundation for the establishment of mechanisms to advocate and influence in their best interests.

This important point of difference, marked a welcomed departure from the standard approach of industry led consultation, ensuring that future developments in this space, that shape the educational experiences of our students are truly informed by them.

While concepts such as advisory boards, councils and committees are constructs that make sense to those of us working in public policy and institutional

environments, they are not necessarily front of mind for children and young people. But in discussing the right to participation and the significance of representation to carry the messages and to advocate on things that matter to students the insights and ideas really started to flow through. It's an important reminder for us to always focus on the purpose and intent rather than the constraints of working towards an end point that is familiar and comfortable for decision makers. That all important question that we must keep asking ourselves – “who's needs are being met?”.

It is my sincere hope, that as the work progresses and evolves, that the answer to that question is always, unequivocally – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland.

Natalie Lewis

Commissioner

Queensland Family and Child Commission



Executive Summary

First Nations children in Queensland face numerous challenges in the education system that impede their academic success and overall well-being. These challenges are rooted in historical and systemic inequities, including socio-economic disadvantages, cultural disconnection, and insufficient support for maintaining their languages and traditions. Despite various policy efforts and programs aimed at closing the educational gap, First Nations children continue to experience lower school attendance and completion rates, as well as poorer academic outcomes compared to their non-Indigenous peers. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic and culturally responsive approach that respects and integrates First Nations knowledge and practices within the educational framework.

It is important to note that the **Closing the Gap** targets must be recognised and embedded within the structure of the **Queensland Early childhood education, Education and Training Consultative Body (Consultative Body)**. This is crucial as it ensures a structured and focused approach to addressing educational disparities, promoting equality, and supporting the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The QFCC would like to acknowledge that the report has been funded by the **Department of Education** to hear the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families about establishing a **Queensland Early childhood education, Education and Training Consultative Body (Consultative Body)**. This body will be an independent, community-led and managed entity that is eligible for membership of the **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Education Council (NATSICEC)**.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people **aged 3 to 25** and their families from across Queensland were invited to tell us about their experiences in kindy, schooling and training and how they would like the government to hear their views on improving them.



Sianna Murray, Cherbourg

“My painting depicts that journey [leaving school and moving on to new adventures] through the way a sea turtle would live. Out in the open ocean it would tackle every situation on its own... this next step is mine to take. I need to chart my journey just like the turtle. The white dot in the middle of the forehead represents knowledge without sight. That’s why I left the eyes out. I will need to remember what was taught and stand firm on the ones I hold dear.... The little ones behind the larger turtle identify legacy. What am I leaving behind for others to follow. I come from Cherbourg and my father’s people are Gubbi Gubbi People, saltwater people. This connection is not lost and never will be.”

****QFCC would like to note that due to the complexity and sensitivity of the nature of some of these conversations, some quotations have been de-identified to protect the identity of children and young people who participated.*



Background

This report *Listening and Learning* brings together the experiences, knowledge and perspectives of First Nations children, young people, their families and communities regarding opportunities for a **Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early childhood, Education and Training Consultative Body (Consultative Body)** to provide a mechanism for representation of children, young people and their families to address system-issues. The Consultative Body will be eligible for membership of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council represent First Nations people nationally and at the state-level on education matters.

Young people have told us that the education needs to include and value First Nations students and foster cultural connection between students and where they access education. To move forward, First Nations communities need an ongoing voice to education providers and pathways for greater community control over their children's educations.

When First Nations students, families and communities have meaningful input into and control over their education, they have a better chance of achieving their aspirations. Seeing their culture and communities celebrated supports First Nations young people to thrive in education and other areas of life. The Queensland Government has a responsibility to ensure that First Nations children are receiving the education they need.

Consultations took place with First Nations children, young people and their families to inform

recommendations to government on whether, and how, to facilitate the establishment of a Consultative Body, reflective of all First Nations peoples' needs.

It is important to recognise and acknowledge that past government policies and practices in Queensland have greatly impacted how First Nations children, young people and their families interact with government agencies and systems and have often portrayed First Nations children as inherently 'vulnerable', parents as neglectful and families as 'dysfunctional'. Schools and governments need to understand this ongoing history, and the reasons that First Nations peoples may lack trust in educational institutions.

To address these inequalities and to improve educational outcomes for all First Nations children and young people the Queensland government is looking at supporting the establishment of an independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Body. The primary function of a Consultative Body is to support shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Additionally, a Consultative Body has the potential to provide representation for First Nations Queenslanders at local, regional, state and national levels.

This consultative body will focus on shared decision-making and self-determination, achieved through giving voice and influence to all Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in early childhood education, education and training matters.



What we do

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) is an independent Queensland government agency that works to improve both the child protection and youth justice systems by influencing systemic change, assessing systems performance, collaborating with impact and amplifying the aspirations of Qld’s children and their families. QFCC is committed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and the advancement of child rights.

A child rights-based approach, as promoted by QFCC, emphasises the importance of recognising and upholding the inherent rights of all children. This approach aligns with the principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), focusing on ensuring that every child's voice is heard, and their best interests are prioritised in all decisions affecting them.

The child rights standards and principles from the UNCRC are used to guide behaviour, actions, policies and programs, particularly:

- non-discrimination (Article 2)
- the best interests of the child (Article 3)
- the right to life, survival and development (Article 6)
- the right to be heard and taken seriously (Article 12)
- the child’s right to be guided in the exercise of their rights by caregivers, parents and community members, in line with the child’s evolving capacities (Article 5).

QFCC advocates for integrating the UNCRC articles into all aspects of government policy and practice, aiming to create a more equitable and supportive environment for children in Queensland. This involves not only protecting children from harm but also promoting their overall well-being, development, and active participation in the society in which they live.

How we worked

Our project methodology draws on the QFCC Model of Participation, which is based on research, concepts from the UNCRC and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. It is recognised by other organisations and by children and young people as a best practice example of child and youth participation in Queensland.

Guiding principles – for genuine youth participation, our projects need to be:

Collective

Activities/projects promote collective wisdom and impact through collaborative practices

Mutually beneficial

Activities/projects create shared value and are action oriented

Empowered

Young people are given the resources and opportunities they need in order to be heard

Responsive

We respond to the voices and needs of children and young people in a meaningful and timely way

Equitable

We use different approaches to be inclusive of diversity and culture

Ethical

We use an ethical lens in planning opportunities with children and young people



The two key approaches the QFCC has adopted and combined to establish meaningful youth participation are engagement and advocacy. These are both important practices in youth participation that produce genuine results for young people, and

when they are applied together, we achieve more genuine and mutually beneficial youth participation. This approach is critically important because children in general are regularly seen as without agency and opinions on their needs, wants and futures.

Connect by creating opportunities to hear the views of young people in ways that work for them. This involves being proactive and adaptable, and creating an approach that is safe and suited to the young people you want to hear from.



- Key considerations when **connecting** with young people are:
- setting intentions – knowing who you’re focusing on and why
 - understanding influence – ensuring they know what they will be able to influence
 - identifying the cohort – welcoming young people into an appropriate environment
 - being youth friendly – not just duplicating adult processes and structure.

Support young people by putting processes and mechanisms in place to ensure they feel welcome, safe and confident in expressing their views. This involves offering a tailored approach that meets the needs of the young people who are participating.




- Key considerations when **supporting** young people are:
- co-designing with them – involving them in the planning and development stages
 - minimising any risk – assessing and mitigating risks and document processes regarding confidentiality and privacy
 - creating safety – providing qualified support people
 - having appropriate engagement activities – tailoring activities to suit the age and maturity of those who are involved, and allowing them to control them
 - providing compensation – providing age-appropriate compensation.

Amplify by promoting the views of young people in an accurate way. This involves understanding how, what and where young people want to share, and making sure it is done in respectful, safe and culturally appropriate ways.



- Key considerations when **amplifying** the voices of young people are:
- asking young people – asking them if they want their views shared and how they want to share them
 - understanding nuances – not always expecting individual young people to speak on behalf of all young people, and making sure they cannot be identified by their views
 - not filtering – not diluting or distorting what young people say
 - sharing your experience of youth participation – telling stakeholders about your experiences in working with young people, and providing feedback to Aboriginal and Torres Strait elders and communities.

Influence by incorporating the views expressed by young people into decision-making processes in meaningful ways. Young people’s views should be taken seriously, with feedback provided when any action is or isn’t taken.



- Key considerations to support young people in **influencing** change are:
- incorporating young people’s views – advising them about action taken as a result of their contributions
 - keeping young people informed – following through on committed action and providing clear updates
 - honouring reciprocity – recognising the work of young people by giving them copies of publications to which they’ve contributed and involving them in promotional activities if they are interested
 - establishing direct connections – connecting young people with decision makers in organisations and the community
 - involving them more than once – helping young people to remain an important part of your organisation.



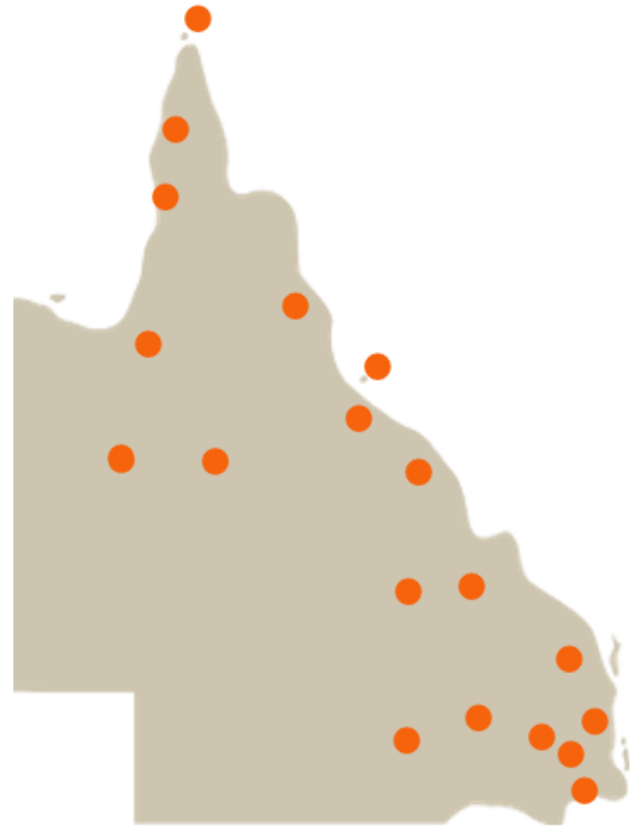
Who we heard from

The QFCC engaged 19 organisations including First Nations Community Controlled organisations that deliver programs to children and families, First Nations early education providers, First Nations businesses, school-based education providers and mainstream non-Government agencies.

It was important that the QFCC engaged and empowered local communities to lead engagements with children and young people and step away from a typical and at times tokenistic approach.

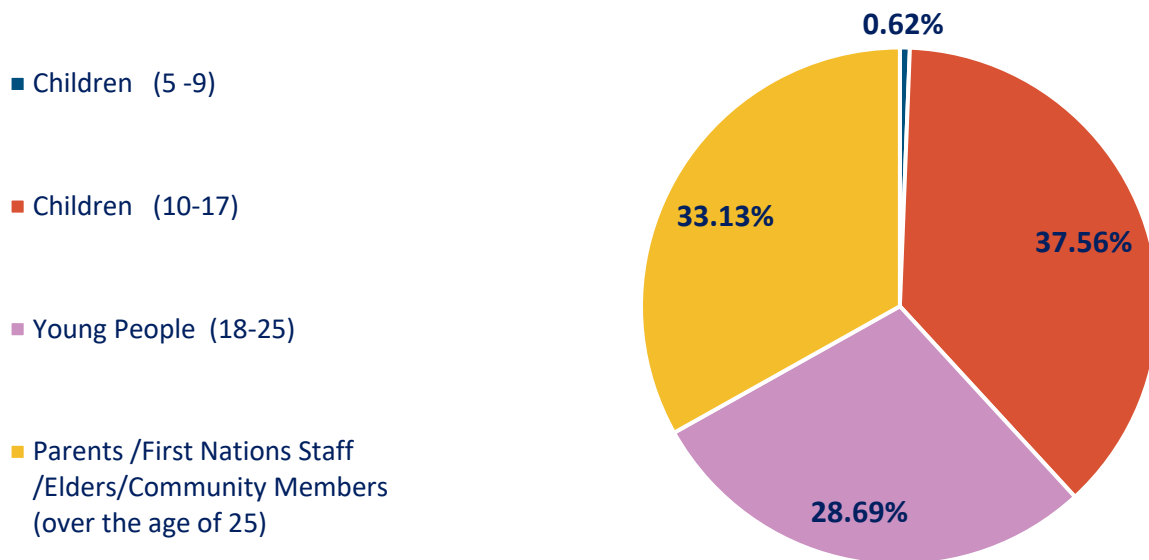
These partners engaged a total of **812 participants**.

- 5 (3 – 9-year-olds)
- 306 (10 – 17-year-olds)
- 233 (18 – 24-year-olds)
- 269 (parents, guardians, First Nations staff, Elders, and community members)



Percentage of Participants from Organisational Consultations

(approx 812 across Qld)



These organisations submitted reports summarising the views of children, young people, their families and communities on what mattered to them and if the establishment of a Consultative Body could and would advocate for them on these matters.

Each organisation had agency over when and how they led their engagements, including but not limited to the guiding questions outlined in the [QFCC’s online discussion paper](#). Consultation questions and topics were tailored to each age group demographic. This allowed for rich and deep discussions in a culturally safe and responsive way, that upheld self-determination and self-determining practices.

For example, in North Queensland, Connecting the Dots through Culture held structured yarns with over 100 young people, families and Elders via interviews, focus groups and online meetings. Palm Island Community Company spoke with 161 members of the Palm Island community, including 55 children and young people, by holding individual and group yarns at existing community events. They also spoke to stakeholders such as the Shire Council, educators and government agencies.

Gundoo Early Learning in Cherbourg utilised their existing Mums and Bubs and Parents groups to engage in conversations regarding lifelong learning. They commissioned a local artist to produce artwork that reflected hopes and dreams in education and what they wanted their future to be.

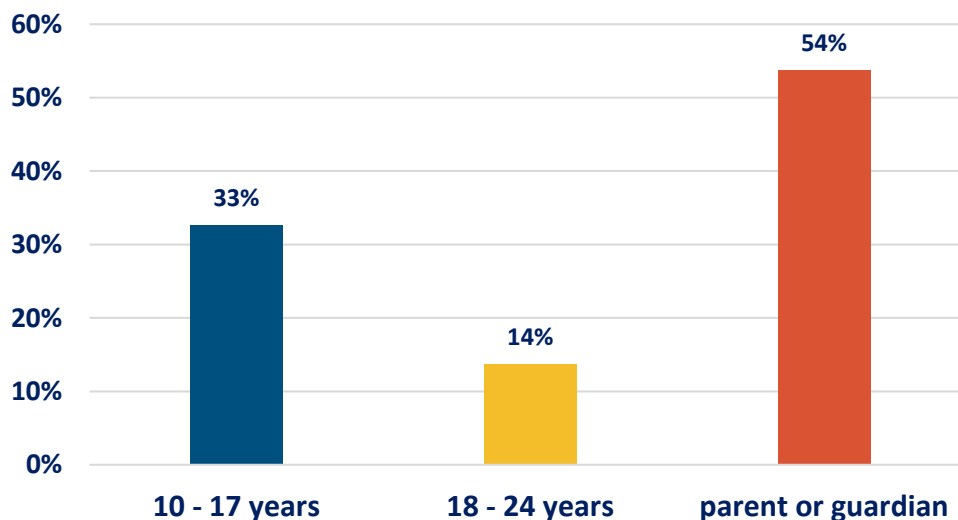
In addition to these organisational reports, which gave us insight into the concerns and hopes of First Nations young people across the state, QFCC conducted its own online survey. This survey was conducted from February to May 2024.

We asked questions about their education and training experiences, including questions about what they liked and didn’t like about schooling, cultural safety and what could improve their experiences.

The *online survey* had a **completion rate of 98%**, with **417** individual First Nations participants, comprising:

- **136** children aged 10-17 years old
- **57** young people aged 18-24 years old
- **224** parents or guardians

Online Survey Participants (over 400 across Qld)

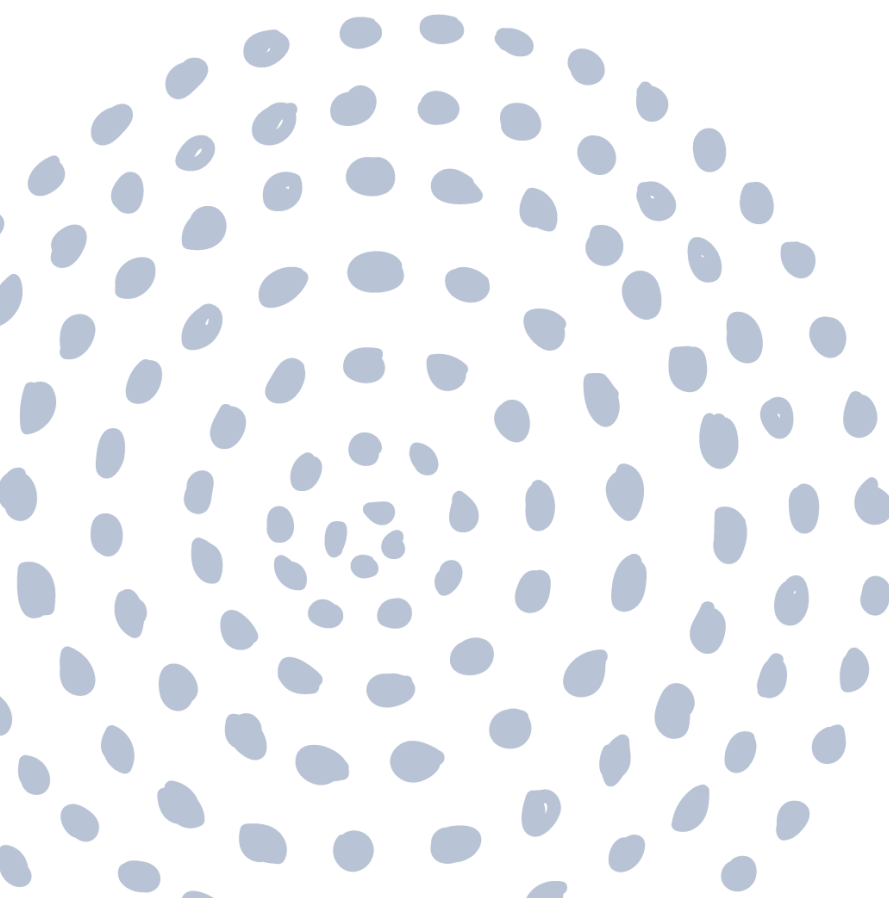


Respondents to the survey came from locations across the state, from the Torres Strait Islands including the outer Islands, Bamaga, NPA, Cairns, Townsville, Sunshine Coast, Rockhampton, Roma and surrounds, and the Southeast corner, including lower Gold Coast.



CONSULTATION AND SURVEY PARTICIPANTS LOCATIONS ACROSS QUEENSLAND		
Rockhampton	Emerald	Edmonton
Cherbourg	Gold Coast and surrounds	Sunshine Coast and Surrounds
Cloncurry	Moa Island	Townsville
Karumba	Yarrabah	Tuncurry
Mt Isa	Kubin Village	Bilinga
Greater Brisbane	Palm Island	Wallumbilla
Ipswich	Toowoomba	Lowood
Logan	Bamaga	Weipa
Cape York	Thursday Island	Normanton
Hervey Bay	Horn Island	Cunnamulla
Kingaroy	Thursday Island	Cairns
Roma	Groote Eylandt	Mudgeraba/Talai
Mithcell	Coleyville	Yarrabilba
Bundaberg	Mackay	Oakey

To create an overview of all these different sources of knowledge, we identified and sorted this feedback by key themes, and undertook a quantitative analysis of survey data. The messages from young people and their communities were consistent and clear.



What we heard from children, young people and their families

“ Hymba Yumba’s model of embedding First Nation’s ways of knowing, being and doing in education is the key to success and should be adopted by more schools.

- Hymba Yumba

First Nations young people said they care deeply about their education. They love learning and are motivated to find educational pathways towards a full future and good life outcomes. Young people told us that school provides a crucial sense of connection – where they could develop independence, see their friends, get physically active and expand their horizons. A young person from the JT Academy can attest to this as they have said,

“ My goals is to get a job, fencing mechanic or go to the mines. I can do that with the support of the JT Academy. It makes me feel good that the younger ones look up to me as a role model.

- Young person, JT Academy

This kept them engaged with schooling even as they faced major challenges inside and outside of the formal educational setting, and even when the education provider had let them down. Sometimes, these negative experiences were too much, leading to disengagement from learning. Unacceptably, First Nations young people sometimes faced exclusion even when they worked hard to stay engaged.

“ Then after my mum complained about the way the teacher treated me and I had told some of my school friends what happened I was taken to a meeting room with the deputy principal and indigenous support teacher and was told that I shouldn't have told people anything and I'm ruining the teacher's reputation. Then I had to give my laptop back, empty my locker and they said they didn't want me to come back to the school. It was very upsetting, and I miss my new friends but I am enjoying home school.

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young person

In one face-to-face conversation with a young person in Brisbane, who had both a youth justice and child protection experience, they spoke about how they were excluded from learning due to trauma related behaviours and because they were not able to keep up with schoolwork. The young person said that several schools they were enrolled to attend over a period of years were not flexible enough to meet their needs when they were experiencing trauma or other social complexities. This young person said that when they experienced periods of homelessness, they were unable to enrol in schooling. Other young people moved placements often, leading to disruption in their schooling. They often were not consulted around changes to placement or schools (Aboriginal young person, Brisbane).

A number of issues that children and young people face when interacting within an educational setting include inequalities both inside and outside of the education system including, racism, engagement and exclusion and the need for more robust understanding of culture and connection and the impact children and young people face when that is lacking.



What happens outside school profoundly affects the educational experiences of students. Young people told us that, if schools could better understand and respond to the unique challenges that First Nations peoples experience when they enter an educational setting – as well as the unique strengths and contributions they bring – then the educational experience could be transformed.

Some young people who participated in a face-to-face consultation facilitated by a mainstream non-government organisation and supported by QFCC employees talked about their experiences as children in care and the multitude of barriers they experienced when trying to engage in learning. One young person advised that they often had to move schools due to being removed from parents or had a change in placement. Due to this, they experienced severed relationships with friends, teachers, and networks as well as workers in the Child Safety system. Another young person spoke about how they weren't adequately supported by Child Safety and were required to work whilst going to school. This young person worked to provide financial support for siblings still living at home with their parents. This young person was keen to learn however was often too tired to study.

Young people connected with their schools when they felt understood and saw their culture valued. They spoke about the importance of programs run by Indigenous organisations, First Nations-focused curriculum and community and parent engagement. They told us that family and community involvement is the most critical factor in creating a positive school experience.

“
Kalwun ELP is culturally safe, my child absolutely loves going to 'school' and is thriving - I believe she is ready for school thanks to Kalwun ELP! I like that there is the local language incorporated and they do a lot of cultural learning.
 ”
 - Aboriginal parent in the Gold Coast

“
If adults have 3 life events or challenges at one time they can't function or do their jobs. But kids in care have far more to deal with but are expected to show up, behave and learn.
 ”
 - Aboriginal young person, Brisbane

A jarjum (young person) from Hymba Yumba Independent School (HYIS) even commented that the “*curriculum at HYIS introduces the true history of Australia, that people don't really know*”. When asked to reflect further on this, they stated that they felt like HYIS presented a curriculum which prioritised First Nation's history and showcased the resilience of First Nation peoples, so that jarjum got to learn more about their heroes and role models. This is attributed to the school's compulsory bi-weekly cultural lessons, where jarjum's can explore contemporary 'freedom fighters' and First Nation peoples who are excelling in numerous fields. It is HYIS's intention in this work to offer jarjum's a true narrative of what it means to be an urban First Nation's person as well as aspirational examples of excellence (Educator, Hymba Yumba Independent School).





Taylor-Lee Scollay

(Young Black and Proud Scholarship winner 2023)

This is my story of the unique learnings of First Nation jarjums.

In Aboriginal culture knowledge is passed down through storytelling and natural art, which is what is illustrated in this painting. Through symbols and colour pallet, my painting expresses the passing on of knowledge from elders to jarjums. Jarjums Footprints illustrates the diverse culture of first nation children (jarjums) and their bond with nature. The U symbols at the bottom left represent the elders and their knowledge. From the elders, there are footprints going up to a yarning circle of jarjums, this shows the passing on of knowledge through generations. Surrounding the yarning circle is my depiction of the ocean and its ecosystem. Between the coral, rocks and sea flowers, there is two turtles. These turtles are a symbol of the guidance given by elders to educate the future generations of their invaluable knowledge and understanding of the land and seas around us. This piece conveys my burning passion for learning and connecting to my cultural roots. Finally, Jarjums Footprints, is brought together by its vibrant colour pallet and fine detail.



Opportunities for a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early childhood education, Education and Training Consultative Body (Consultative Body)

The establishment of a Consultative Body embodies a significant advancement in upholding the right to inclusive and equitable quality education enshrined in child rights-based frame. **If established** the Consultative Body must ensure that First Nations educators, policy makers, students, young people and communities diverse voices are heard and considered in education planning, decision making and beyond.

This must be responsive to addressing the unique needs of First Nations children and young people, by empowering them, and provide for a mechanism of transparency and accountability, and reinforcing the fundamental right to an equitable education.

Young people, their families, their education providers and communities shared their thoughts, knowledge and concerns about the structure and representation of the Consultative Body, its remit, authority and resources. If a Consultative Body is going to change rather than reproduce the inequalities and exclusions experienced by First Nations students, it needs to be developed in line with to the aspirations and needs of First Nations peoples themselves.

Participants within the consultative process, both in person and online have said that there is merit and perceived benefit in the establishment of a consultative body, however the body itself must be accountable to children and young people, not to inform government agendas.

“ There is a degree of apprehension about the effectiveness of consultative bodies due to previous iterations of such bodies.

- Hymba Yumba Report ”

Even with great aspirations, some participants had concerns about the potential Consultative Body. These included scepticism about a top-down model that may not be representative of their communities, particularly in regional areas outside Southeast Queensland. Parents, Elders and teachers particularly noted their concern about the efficacy of bureaucratic bodies that consume education resources but make little difference to schools, communities and the lives of young people.

For these participants, the effectiveness of the consultative body hinged on its powers, resources and whether it was truly informed through the aspirations of children, young people, their families and communities.

When asked if a Consultative Body may assist children and their families with local issues, one parent said,

“ There is no support from the school directly. I do feel I can speak up though. Although I don't feel there would be a shift. ”

- Aboriginal parent in Moreton Bay Region

All the young people consulted do see a Consultative Body as a potential vehicle to create change, but only if it included certain features. They told us that the body needs to centre the voices and expertise of First Nations young people and communities, rather than speaking for or about them. It needs to have real structural capacity to influence and articulate community needs and views at every level; local, regional and state-wide.



“

There’s no understanding from people down south and in government of what it’s like, and what’s needed. We’ve been working at this a long time. It’s our lives. Other people, even with no experience of our lives, always think they know best... We need good, real information, and then we need the power to make things happen too.

”

- Bama Elder, Cape York

Children and young people said that some of the core functions of the consultative body should be to advocate, influence and promote accountability.

Participants during consultations held by Groove Co in Rockhampton said that non-negotiables must include an actions-based approach, there must be transparency and effective governance and reporting. The Consultative Body must,

“

...maintain open communication channels and regularly publish reports, progress updates and outcomes to stakeholders, promoting transparency and accountability in achieving educational goals for Indigenous peoples.

- Groove Co

”

Likewise, those children and young people from Cape York said that

“

...any First Nations Education and Training Consultative Body must focus on ensuring the State meets its most basic obligations to the most disadvantaged children in terms of attendance, staffing, responding to special needs, behaviour, and health.

- Cape York children and young people

”

Children and young people said that incorporating truth telling, First Nations histories and knowledge systems into educational curriculum and policies is imperative to the advancement of system accountability.

In response to what the body should focus on: *“Having a Black school that not only teaching white society stuff but learning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Black Culture!”* (Aboriginal young person, Roma)

“

Put the changes in place that need to be in place to ensure that Aboriginal history is not hidden in the past because it needs to be brought into the future, brought into the schools, studied as a subject so all people are aware of the suffering and generational trauma that has been created by the genocide that occurred during settlement

”

- Aboriginal parent, Brisbane

When asked what the consultative body should focus on, *“the children, education, schools, Indigenous ways of learning, maintaining school engagement and decreasing disengaged youth, cater to strengths-based approaches to learning, their own culture and history, family connections to land (if they know where they’ve come from, they’ll know where they’re going). A youth centred approach and inquiry led curriculum. Embed Indigenous perspectives. Cultural awareness—the background of families.”* (Gundoo).

“Cultural content for curriculum” (Aboriginal parent in North Brisbane).



“It is often difficult to access services for jarjums when they are at risk of disengagement or to engage services to help with the delivery of programs, so extending the membership to other service areas may help to develop a more coordinated and holistic approach.”

- Hymba Yumba

On a systemic level, some participants recognised the importance of the consultative body having the authority and resources to enhance community control through shifting power and resources from government departments to communities. This shift would enable localised decision-making and solutions by communities who know their young people, education needs and culture best. The body was also seen as a valuable tool for communities to hold government to account in its responsibilities to uphold rights to education and culture, with the core issues and advocacy priorities that should be in scope to achieve equity and enable excellence for all First Nations students.

“Importance of shifting power from government departments to the communities they serve” (Palm Island Community Company).

“We need good, real information, and then we need the power to make things happen too.”

- Bama Elder, Cape York

The Consultative Body is also seen as a vehicle to support and address broader issues faced by First Nations students, including areas of Youth Justice, Health, and Child Safety. Groove Co participants expressed that *“this approach enables the application of effective strategies from across different sectors, fostering a more cohesive and impactful response to educational challenges”* (Groove Co).

Overwhelmingly, responses about the consultative body spoke about the significance of First Nations control over who participates, how it is established, supported and safeguarded in the process of implementation. Young people expressed an interest in youth led initiatives to be embedded within the Consultative Body and participants during the Cloncurry engagements spoke to their desire to have a platform where their voices are prioritised, and all decisions made are inclusive of their perspectives and experiences.

“... There is a unanimous consensus among young people, their families, and the school community regarding the necessity of establishing a consultative body.”

- Cloncurry

Many spoke about the importance of balance of representation and identified the value of having parents and Elders on the consultative body, given their experience as advocates for their children, and their local knowledge of community.

“Most definitely our Elders of our Community as I think they have the best impact on our youth.”

- Torres Strait Islander parent, Brisbane



“

... Parents express a preference for a parent-led consultative body that focuses on identifying pertinent issues within the school community and taking proactive steps to address them. They seek a forum where parental concerns and priorities are central, allowing for effective collaboration between parents and school authorities to enhance the overall educational experience.

”

- Cloncurry PCYC

“

The election of members should be done by the First Nations community and not governments or peak agencies...Elders interviewed spoke about the importance of any First Nations entity being accountable to the community it services and that mechanisms should be in place to ensure a fair process for membership and decision-making.

- Hymba Yumba

”



What the online survey told us

Questions within the online survey focused primarily on opportunities for a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early education, education and training consultative body. Participants of the online survey could answer freely. 335 people answered this question, and 82 people skipped it.

The question was:

If a group were formed to represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people about education and training matters:

Answered: 335 Skipped: 82

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
How should children and young people be involved (e.g. in-person, online, social media) and how can we encourage other young people or children who want to be involved?	96.72% 324
How would you make sure that your voice and other mob's voices are heard?	94.63% 317
Should children or young people be part of this group?	97.91% 328
What should this group focus on the most?	97.31% 326
Who do you think should be members of this group?	99.40% 333

How should children and young people be involved (e.g. in-person, online, social media) and how can we encourage other young people or children who want to be involved?



How would you make sure that your voice and other mob's voices are heard?

addressed Regular meetings social media page
 part go involved members Principal Raise someone teaching staff
 community voice representative TV coverage
 Ensure surveys Speaks school group people person don t know
 advertise tell awarenesssure Face face
 held make Social media TV report Racism school say
 discussions Elders Attend Talking meetings know Ask
 Attend meetings forums issueteachers need mob
 change local member Talking issues sharing
 elder community community members supported

Should children or young people be part of this group?

age appropriate
 children extent
 Depending
 Yep groups
 teens Yeah Yes sure heard
 make age Absolutely
 know think young people
 definitely



What should this group focus on the most?

importance teachers culturally safe impacting children
 children faced Addressing issues gaps within school educating
 First Nations Aboriginal Torres Strait Torres Strait Islander workingembed
 change history curriculum needsteaching know families faced
 Children s day issues children support help pathways Issues affecting
 don t know Keeping better kids Aboriginal Equipment
 going safety Cultural **culture** learning future People need help
 Supplies sure Youth young us Making
 community **education school** students ways
 people need support Attendance Addressing young people Indigenous Idk content
 Cultural awareness Nations People need First Nations People
 outcomes Problems Everything Implementing
 background Problems today todays society Education training
 problem children faced

Who do you think should be members of this group?

representatives Youth workers local indigenous
 Parents teachers Strait Islander people Grandparents
 Education Aboriginal Teachers parents Indigenous
 experience principal Anyone **community** youth teachers Yes including
 experts children Local **Elders** students staff leaders voice
 Definitely sure Young people **Everyone** Kids school support
 Murri members **parents** people families Idk group
 Aboriginal Torres Strait workers teaching staff
 adults young community members Torres Strait Islander
 know First Nations people parents guardians Identified



Where to from here?

“ The work of any First Nations Education and Training Consultative Body must focus on identifying and diffusing success from individuals, families and remote communities who are defying the odds which remain stacked against them under closing the gap. ”

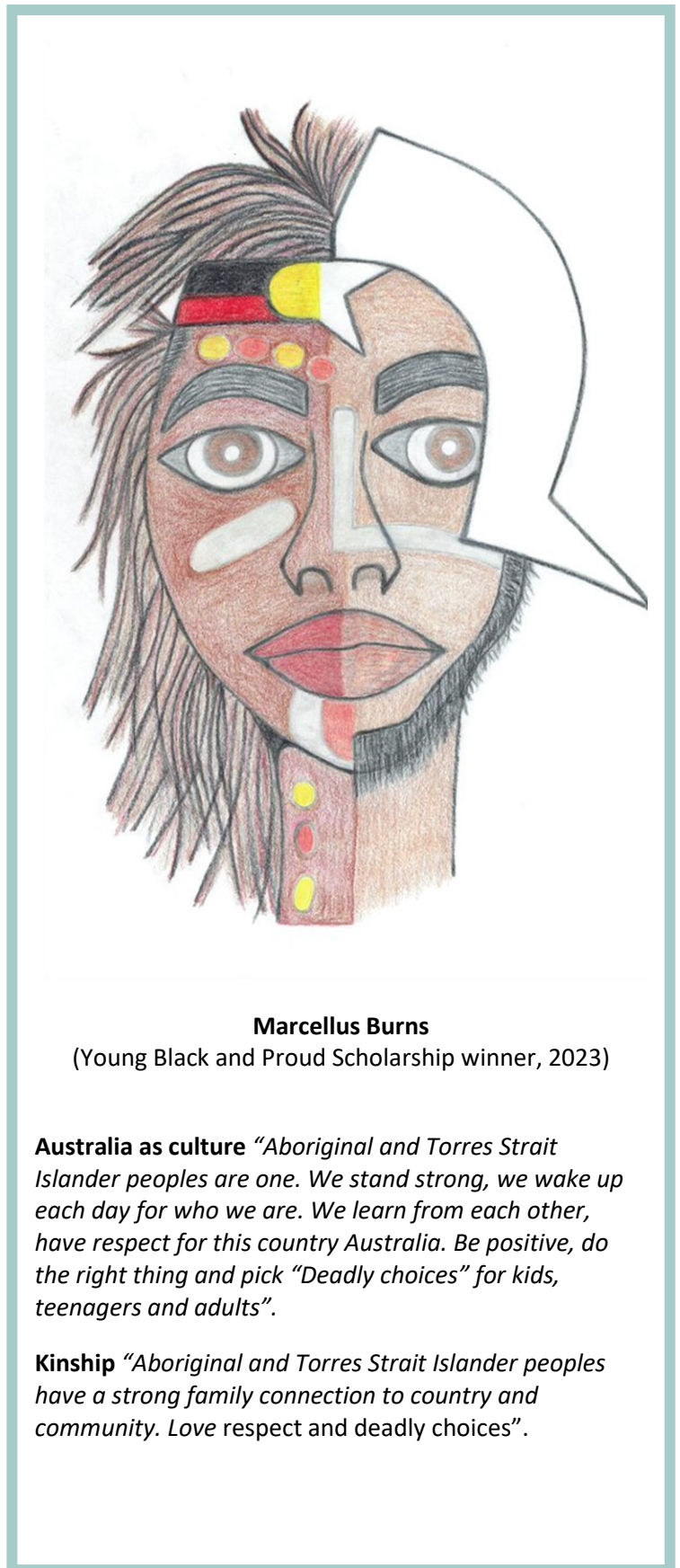
- Cape York consultations

In conclusion, addressing the barriers that First Nations children and young people face in accessing equitable and fair education across Queensland is imperative. The government must take decisive and informed action to eliminate these inequalities, ensuring that all First Nations students have the opportunity to succeed.

Recognising self-determination and sovereignty of First Nations children and young people by integrating First Nations knowledges, addressing systemic inequality on all levels, and building genuine partnerships is essential within the establishment of the Consultative Body.

The Consultative Body and its core functions must align with the Closing the Gap priorities, focusing on reducing disparities in educational outcomes and fostering environments that respect and integrate First Nations cultures. By prioritising these actions, the Consultative Body could create a more inclusive and just educational system that empowers First Nations children and young people to achieve their full potential and contribute to their communities and society at large.

Through these active efforts, the Consultative Body can create educational environments where First Nations children and young people feel empowered and inspired to pursue their aspirations, ultimately leading to meaningful and transformative outcomes that honour their identities and potential.



Marcellus Burns

(Young Black and Proud Scholarship winner, 2023)

Australia as culture *“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are one. We stand strong, we wake up each day for who we are. We learn from each other, have respect for this country Australia. Be positive, do the right thing and pick “Deadly choices” for kids, teenagers and adults”.*

Kinship *“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a strong family connection to country and community. Love respect and deadly choices”.*

