

2024-2026

Reframing the relationship Plan



Queensland
Family & Child
Commission



Queensland
Government

Acknowledgement of the traditional custodians

The Queensland Family and Child Commission respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this land. We extend our respect to Elders, past, present and emerging. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Queensland.

Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique peoples, each with their own rich and distinct cultures and knowledge systems. They form the world's oldest living culture.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination is a right enshrined in the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The significance of self-determination is also explicitly recognised in the Queensland Human Rights Act 2019.



Message from the Commissioners

The QFCC has a long-standing commitment to the First Nations children, families and communities and this Plan is an opportunity to advance our commitment. It is firmly aligned with our strategic commitment to advocate to ensure that the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are free from systemic racism.

This plan also aligns with the Commission's enduring organisational values:

- Diversity and respect
- Cultural safety across all aspects of our work
- Investment in building trusted relationships
- Upholding the dignity of children and families that we work with.

We have a vision – that all Queensland children are loved, respected and have their rights upheld. This vision will only be achieved when we share power with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and create systems that advance the rights of children.

This document and the implementation plan provide a point of accountability, and we welcome the opportunity for change. It outlines our six key commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities and staff:

- 1. Respect the right to self-determination** - The QFCC will advocate for an independent and adequately resourced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner in accordance with commitments under *Safe and Supported – the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*.
- 2. Facilitate and promote truth telling** - The QFCC will facilitate truth telling as part of Treaty readiness and contribute to building an accurate understanding of history and the continuing impacts of colonisation on children and families.
- 3. Systems performance** - In line with our mandate, the QFCC will continue to monitor the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in statutory child protection and youth justice systems in Queensland and advocate for the best interests of children.
- 4. Equal partnerships, participation and shared decision making** - The QFCC will ensure that our policies, programs and positions are deeply informed by those who are most affected by inequality and that we respect cultural authority, leadership and eldership.
- 5. Data sovereignty** - The QFCC will reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests, values and priorities in our research. All data will be collected with free, prior and informed consent, and it will be used to advance self-determination and the best interests of children.
- 6. Strengthening our cultural capability** - The QFCC will improve rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation across our workforce and commits to building a strong culture of effective allyship.

This Plan is designed to be a living document and will support the QFCC to strengthen our cultural capability as a necessary foundation for a reframed relationship and a path to Treaty.



Luke Twyford
Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission



Natalie Lewis
Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission



Alignment with whole-of-government priorities

The Queensland Government has committed to a suite of First Nations whole-of-government reforms including:

- Path to Treaty and truth telling
- Queensland Government Closing the Gap Implementation Plan
- *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017-2037*
- Commitments related to *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031*.

Background

The *QFCC Reframing the Relationship Plan 2024-2027* (the Plan) has been developed to support the QFCC in its commitment to implement requirements under ss19-23 of the *Public Sector Act 2022* (Qld) (PS Act).

The Public Sector Act (the Act) acknowledges that public sector organisations have a unique role and obligation to reframe relationships and recognise, promote and respect the importance of self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Act requires reframing entities to fulfil their role by:

- (a) recognising and honouring Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Queensland; and
- (b) engaging in truth-telling about the shared history of all Australians; and
- (c) recognising the importance to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the right to self-determination; and
- (d) promoting cultural safety and cultural capability at all levels of the public sector; and
- (e) working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to actively promote, include and act in a way that aligns with their perspectives, in particular when making decisions directly affecting them; and
- (f) ensuring the workforce and leadership of the entities are reflective of the community they serve; and
- (g) promoting a fair and inclusive public sector that supports a sense of dignity and belonging for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and
- (h) supporting the aims, aspirations and employment needs of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the need for their greater involvement in the public sector.

To affect real change and to legitimately fulfil our legislative function, the Queensland Family and Child Commission must work in trusted and equal partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, because they are essential agents of change.



Our journey so far

In 2022 the Commission outlined an explicit commitment to First Nations Children and Families within its new strategic plan and formed a dedicated First Nations and Child Rights Advocacy Team. The explicit strategic plan priorities for First Nations families are to:

- Conduct systemic reviews to increase our understanding of the dynamics and drivers of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in statutory systems and recommend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led solutions.
- Advocate to ensure the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are free of systemic racism.
- Promote the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and community-controlled organisations, and advocate for their full participation and control of decisions – to ensure the best interests of every child are met.
- Highlight the voices, experiences and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families as part of our business-as-usual approach.
- Consult with the appropriate cultural authority, at each stage of research, development and production, when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.
- Actively seek to increase our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce across all functional areas.
- Strengthen our organisational culture by embedding approaches that help staff partner with, and respond to the views and voices of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In April 2023 the QFCC Executive Leadership Board (ELB) participated in a Cultural Integrity Workshop, a safe space where members discussed reframing QFCC's relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities. Participants explored their understanding of cultural integrity for the organisation in the context of Truth-telling, Treaty making and a Voice to Parliament. Members of the Interim Truth and Treaty Body (ITTb) – Co-Chairs Ms Cheryl Buchanan and Ms Sallyanne Atkinson – and Board Members Ms Marg O'Donnell, Mr Mick Gooda and Natalie Segal-Brown spoke to Executive staff and expressed the opportunity to leverage the QFCC's independence and role in advocacy and holding systems to account in Truth-telling processes. They urged the QFCC to intentionally self-reflect and consider how the QFCC can contribute, in both Truth-telling and Treaty making and supporting Treaty Parties.

During the month of May 2023 QFCC staff participated in the *QFCC 20-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge*, a commitment to deepening their understanding of, and willingness to confront, racism for 20 days. Over the 20 days QFCC staff were tasked with completing at least one action (listening, watching, reading, noticing, engaging) to further their understanding of power, privilege, supremacy, oppression and equity. Reflecting and journaling was a crucial piece of the challenge. QFCC staff were asked to take time every day to reflect on the action they chose to do, what they were learning, and how they were feeling. A *Reflection Tool* was provided to participants to assist with their individual and team reflections over the 20 days.

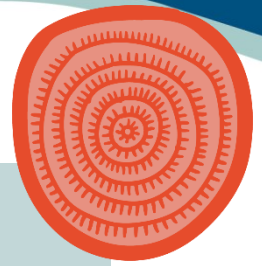
By participating in this challenge QFCC staff were able to raise their awareness, reflect on their perspectives and experiences, grow their understanding, and shift their behaviour.



In November 2023, the QFCC requested and received permission from the Public Service Commission to have the ability to work on 26 January 2024 and substitute a separate day off. This occurred in acknowledgement of the historical impact of this day, and enabled staff to voluntarily choose how to reflect and utilise the Australia Day public holiday.

Throughout 2024 this journey led us to establish a Reframing the Relationship Plan Working Group – focused on improving the internal culture and capability of the Commission, and ultimately resulting in this plan.





Statement of Commitment

We recognise and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples. We pay tribute to the rich and resilient cultures that continue to sustain and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We recognise the lands and waters in modern Australia are and will always be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands and waters.

We recognise the past acts of genocide, dispossession, settlement and discriminatory policies. We recognise the cumulative acts of colonial and state governments since the commencement of colonisation have left an enduring legacy of economic and social disadvantage that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have and continue to experience.

We commit to focusing on strengths not deficits and we will nurture hope and optimism. This can only be done by the QFCC doing things in partnership "with" Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, not "to them".

We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

We demonstrate courage and humility in holding systems accountable for addressing First Nations inequality, including the ones that we are a part of and have responsibility to oversee.

We show gratitude to those who help us live up to our values.

We are personally accountable for our own cultural integrity and recognise that developing knowledge and understanding is an individual responsibility.

We recognise the emotional labour and disproportionate burden that educating others about racial inequity places on those with lived experience and strive to alleviate the load.





Our Plan

1. Respect the right to self determination

- (c) Recognising the importance to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the right to self-determination.
- (g) Promoting a fair and inclusive public sector that supports a sense of dignity and belonging for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In 2024-26 the Commission will:

1. Advocate for an independent and adequately resourced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commission in Queensland.
2. Advocate for greater resourcing of community-controlled initiatives that improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.
3. Intentionally strengthen and amplify the messages of the community-controlled sector in the child protection and youth justice sectors.
4. Defer to the First Nations leaders and knowledge-holders to lead discussions and shape recommendations, including on the Child Death Review Board.

2. Facilitate and promote Truth-telling

- (b) Engaging in Truth-telling about the shared history of all Australians

In 2024-26 the Commission will:

1. Establish a QFCC working group to undertake Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry planning and readiness processes.
2. Examine and document the historical impacts systems have had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
3. Facilitate and support children and young people to lead and be part of the Truth-telling processes.
4. Ensure all processes respect story-telling sovereignty

3. Systems performance

Queensland Government Closing the Gap Implementation Plan Safe and Supported – National Framework for Protecting Australia's children.

In 2024-26 the Commission will:

1. Continue to monitor the **over-representation** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people as part of the QFCC's **Principal Focus** program of work.
2. Extend the principle focus commitment to include monitoring of disproportionate rates of representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in interactions with the youth justice system.
3. Continue to monitor the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP)
4. Consider the viability of a dedicated project to strengthen the child and family sector and human services workforce.



4. Equal partnerships, participation and shared decision making

(e) Working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to actively promote, include and act in a way that aligns with their perspectives, in particular, when making decisions directly affecting them.

In 2024-26 the Commission will:

1. Map an approach for the QFCC to incorporate Close the Gap priority reforms, targets and transformation elements (priority reform 3, paragraph 59) in our policy analysis and advice to the Queensland Government (Partnership and Shared Decision Making; Building the Community-Controlled Sector; Transforming Government Organisations; Share Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level).
2. Commit to consistently using the language of 'shared decision making' as reflected in the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms.
3. Conduct a biannual partnership survey to track the quality and progress of our partnerships.
4. Improve the engagement of First Nations elders, subject experts and leaders within the work of the QFCC to build relationships based on integrity and reciprocity and to broaden knowledge and perspectives.
5. Explore the viability of developing an Elders in Residence program to ground the work of the Commission.
6. Update the QFCC youth participation framework in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with a focus on quality participation.
7. Strengthen connections with the **Queensland Indigenous Youth Leadership Program**.

5. Data sovereignty

(c) Recognising the importance to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the right to self-determination.

(e) Working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to actively promote, include and act in a way that aligns with their perspectives, in particular, when making decisions directly affecting them.

In 2024-26 the Commission will:

1. Incorporate the principles of **Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance** into day-to-day QFCC operations, including our research ethics applications.
2. Develop staff training on the practical application of the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

6. Strengthening our cultural capability

(f) Ensuring the workforce and leadership of the entities are reflective of the community they serve.

(g) Promoting a fair and inclusive public sector that supports a sense of dignity and belonging for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

(h) Supporting the aims, aspirations and employment needs of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the need for their greater involvement in the public sector.



In 2024-26 the Commission will:

1. Conduct a survey with First Nations staff to identify their levels of cultural safety within the organisation and to identify priority actions.
2. Embed anti-racism capability across the QFCC through annual anti-racism training and staff participation in the **QFCC 20-Day Racial Equity Challenge (20-Day Challenge)**.
3. Incorporate individual commitments to improving cultural safety/capability intentionally into all QFCC employee **Professional Development Plans (PDPs)**.

Governance and Reporting

As a living document the Plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains current and impactful for QFCC staff and organisational culture, ensuring the continuation of staff learning to raise awareness, improve understanding, challenge their perspectives and shift behaviour.

The QFCC is committed to the successful implementation of this Plan. Implementation of the Plan will take a collaborative approach that invites and encourages the participation of all staff, prioritises the expertise and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and seeks staff input about opportunities for involvement.

The Plan will be staged over three years in line with our strategic planning cycle and overseen by the ELB and the Reframing the Relationship Working Group. Respective lead QFCC teams will support the implementation, ongoing monitoring, review and evaluation of the Plan and it will be a standing agenda item at all team and ELB meetings.

Updates on the progress and implementation of the Plan will be periodically provided to the Queensland Public Sector Commission through the annual reporting and audit processes required under the Public Sector Act. While a self-audit process is prescribed, the QFCC will commit to engage externally to conduct an audit of the Implementation Plan, maximising transparency and underscoring our commitment to real and appreciable progress.

