

Our Way

**A generational strategy for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander children and families**

2017–2037

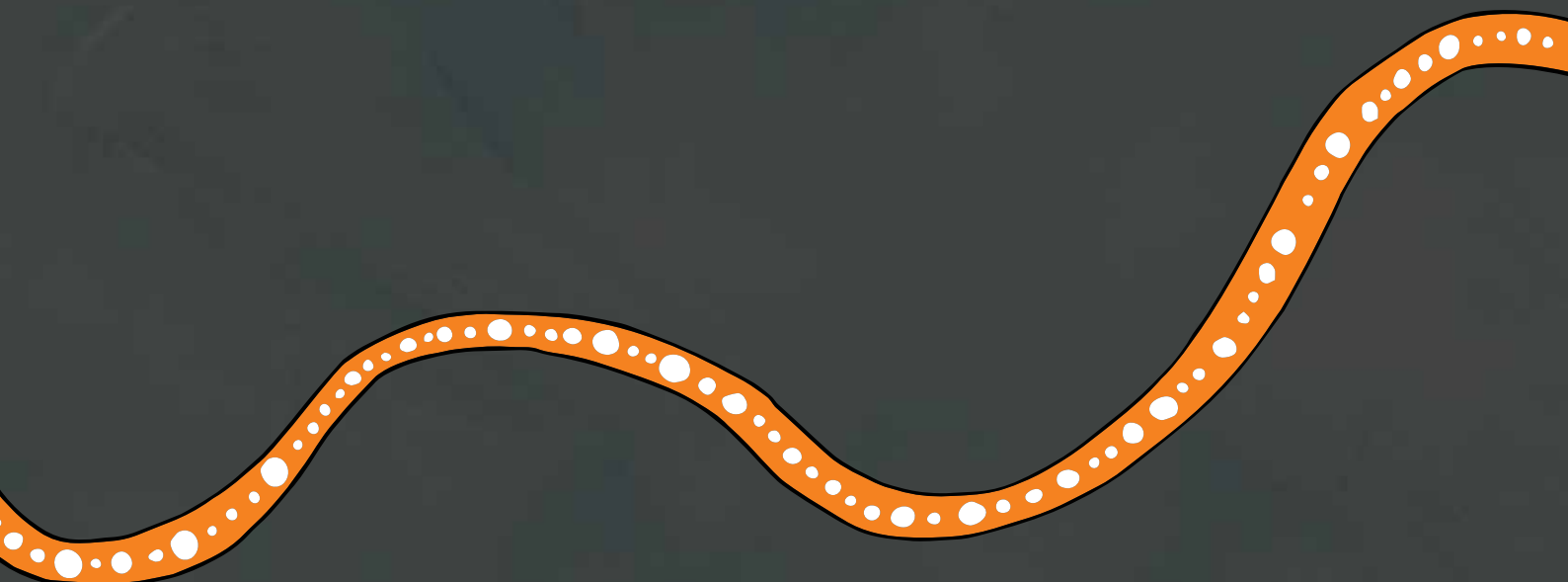
We respectfully acknowledge the First Nations people in the State of Queensland, we acknowledge the cultural and spiritual connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and sea.

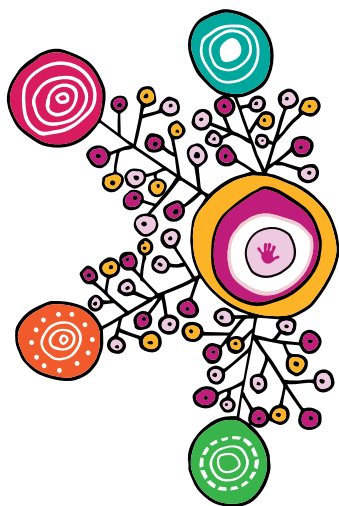
We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique and diverse peoples with their own rich and distinct cultures.

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 strategy represents our shared commitment, and use of the word 'we' throughout refers to the shared voice of the Queensland Government and Family Matters Queensland, and reflects the combined voices of families and communities.

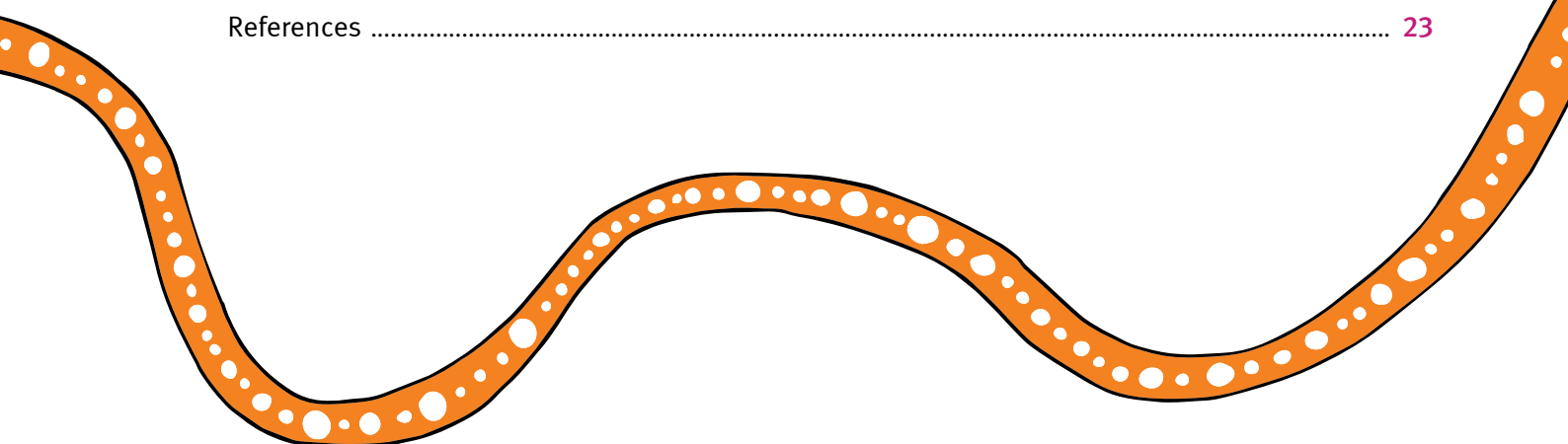
We acknowledge the contributions of Rachael Sarra for the original design of artworks and the creative leadership of Gilimbaa in this strategy.





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Joint message from Family Matters Queensland and the Queensland Government

In 2017 it is unacceptable that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children do not have the same wellbeing outcomes as their non-Indigenous peers. It is also unacceptable that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are disproportionately represented in the tertiary child protection system at concerning levels.

Together with Family Matters — a national campaign led by more than 150 Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations across Australia — we are committed to eliminating this disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in statutory out-of-home care, within a generation.

As Queenslanders, we are proud to be the first jurisdiction in Australia where government has worked with Family Matters to develop a shared strategy to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture.

We have co-developed this strategy — which outlines *Our Way* to achieve these aspirations — in partnership. Reflected in it are the views and voices of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community members and non-government organisations.

Our Way outlines a framework for transformational change that will occur over the next 20 years. It represents a long-term commitment by government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to work together. We acknowledge that we need to work in a different way to improve the life outcomes of vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and set the right conditions so each child can reach their full potential and thrive. This is *Our Way* to achieve that.

Parents, with support from families and communities, have the primary responsibility and accountability for raising their children and keeping them safe. Setting expectations, attitudes, norms and behaviours that reinforce parental and family responsibilities, and that do not tolerate violence, abuse or neglect, are an essential part of our strategy.

Our role is to work together to support, enable and equip parents with the tools and resources to successfully meet their responsibilities and empower them to make informed decisions where their children are concerned. Together we must take a broad, holistic and cultural perspective to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



‘We can do **anything** if we know who we are.’

Voice of an Elder 2016

Our Way acknowledges the strength, determination and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and that most children are well cared for in their families and communities. It also recognises the devastating and continuing impacts of past and current laws, policies and practices that too often cause disconnection, trauma and disadvantage. Too little recognition, respect and resourcing has been afforded to cultural strengths, responsibilities, connections and leadership.

We commit to respond in ways that support and enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to exercise their responsibilities and to heal, grow and prosper.

We commit to changing the way we do business — our laws, investments, policies and practices and how we work with Queensland’s First Nations children, families and communities — to design, develop and deliver actions that will make a real and meaningful change within a generation.



Family Matters Queensland

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Shannon Fentiman'.

Shannon Fentiman MP

Minister for Communities,
Women and Youth,
Minister for Child Safety and
Minister for the Prevention of
Domestic and Family Violence

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Mark Furner'.

Mark Furner MP

Minister for Local Government
and Minister for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Partnerships



We need a generational strategy

The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children live safely at home and have developed a clear identity linked to their communities and culture. This is because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders have strong and rich cultural and community networks, spirituality and ways of raising children that encourages their development, resourcefulness and resilience. It prepares children for adulthood and their roles and responsibilities to family and community.¹

However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland continue to experience disadvantage. Some live in unsafe situations that leads to their removal from their families, communities and cultures at more than eight times the rate of non-Indigenous children.² Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples also share a continued legacy of pain, trauma, fear, distrust and anger as a result, in part, of government decisions, policies and practices.

Too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience poverty, disconnection, ill-health and addiction, violence, and financial and housing stress, as well as discrimination and racism.

In Queensland, this reality means that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children do not have the same opportunities as other children. If current trends continue, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people will account for more than half of all Queensland children in out-of-home care within five years. We must break this intergenerational cycle.

Clearly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's current experiences of organisations, systems and, at times, community adversely affects their opportunity to grow up safe and well with their families and receive the support they need to achieve their full potential throughout their lives.³

We are deeply concerned about this increasing disparity in life and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This strategy, and associated action plans, seeks to close these gaps. It builds on significant changes occurring through the Queensland Government's *Supporting Families Changing Futures: Advancing Queensland's child protection and family support reforms* program. This includes strategies and initiatives to improve life outcomes and responses to:

- health, mental health and disability
- housing
- early childhood and education
- employment and training
- domestic and family violence and violence against women
- financial resilience.

'Not enough has been done about achieving tangible solutions and actions that are historically informed and respectful, culturally appropriate, and community or kinship sensitive'

— *Family Matters Queensland 2016*

This strategy, at its heart, is about self-determination: empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to exercise opportunities to live well, according to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and beliefs and the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

Realising meaningful change will take targeted and sustained effort over time. It will take a new approach to designing and delivering services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The national Family Matters campaign has set an ambitious target to achieve our shared vision within a generation. All levels of government, the community and families must make a concerted effort over the next 20 years for this to occur.

What we know

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders experience disadvantage and poorer life outcomes at much higher rates than other Queenslanders.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are:

More likely to have a shorter life span, with a **life expectancy gap**

10.8 years less
8.6 years less^A

1.6 x more likely
to die during infancy^B

Health

8.5 x
more likely to
be placed in
out-of-
home care
than non-Indigenous
children^C

Often not placed with families
of the same culture, with
43.5%
of children not
placed with kin
or other Indigenous carers when
placed in out-of-home care^D

Culture and connections

2.6 x
more likely
to experience
very high/
high levels of
psychological
distress
than non-Indigenous
people^E

Mental health and
emotional wellbeing

4.3 x more likely to
experience
unemployment
when aged 15–64 years than
non-Indigenous people^F

Economic wellbeing

Twice as likely
as non-Indigenous children to be
developmentally vulnerable
in early childhood, and continue to have
gaps in literacy and numeracy
throughout their school life^G

Less likely to be in formal education, with
87.2% of children
attending primary school
compared with 93.7%
of non-Indigenous children^H

Learning and skills

5.6 x more likely to
live in households
requiring extra bedrooms
than non-Indigenous households^I

Home and environment

18.2 x
more likely to
be admitted to
youth
detention
than their non-
Indigenous peers^J

3.6 x
more likely
to be a
victim of
violence
than non-Indigenous
people^K

Safety

A: ROGS 2017 (Table EA.47); B: ROGS 2017 (Table EA54); C: DCCSDS June 2016;
D: DCCSDS June 2016; E: NATSISS 2015 Table 23.3; F: NATSISS 2015 Table 20.3;
G: ROGS 2017, Table BA9 (data is for year 2015) (note actual ratio is 2:1). NAPLAN
National Report ACARA (data is for year 2016); H: NIRA 2015–16, Table 13.3 (data
is for year 2016); I: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey,
2014–15, Table 24.3; J: DJAG YJ Performance and Reporting (data is for year 2015–16);
K: QGSO Reported victims of offences against the person, Queensland, 2014–15.

What we want

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland have the right to a bright, healthy and powerful future — a future that is shaped by their own aspirations and unquestionable potential, rather than entrenched disadvantage and low expectations.

Every child deserves an equal chance to grow up well, thrive and achieve their best hopes for their life. These rights are enshrined in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Australia ratified the convention in December 1990. We have a shared responsibility to ensure all children in Australia enjoy these rights.^{4,5,6}

We believe in a Queensland where

Children:

- are **born healthy** and meet developmental milestones
- **grow up safe** in their families and communities
- develop and maintain their **personal and cultural identity** and good community connections
- have the opportunity to **play** and engage with other children and young people in safe environments
- have the opportunity to **learn, develop their skills, maximise their capabilities** and pursue their interests
- live in a society that values their identity and is **free from racism** and discrimination
- are placed with kin, and enabled to **reconnect or reunify with families**, if in out-of-home care
- can grow as **citizens and leaders**, taking their place and strengthening their cultures in contemporary society.

Families:

- are ready and **able to parent**
- have strong kin and **community networks**
- have a stable, **safe and suitable place to live** and raise their children
- have **access to information**, advice and support to enable them to deal with life challenges
- live healthily and **free from violence** and abuse
- have access to **support to heal**, restore and promote their wellbeing
- participate in the economy through **employment** and enterprise and experience financial resilience and independence
- make use of early childhood services, **act as first teachers**, and engage fully with the schooling of their children



- engage in **lifelong learning** by participating in education and training opportunities
- enable access to cultural, recreational, artistic and sporting **opportunities for their children**
- when vulnerable, access **wellbeing** and other specialist services and supports
- when at risk, **access integrated services** and coordinated support
- can exercise **greater choice, control and cultural authority** over decisions that affect them.

Children can rightfully expect to be born into families who:

1. Choose to become parents at a time when they are resourced and supported to provide optimum care for the child who will be born to them
2. Seek appropriate preventative and early intervention medical and cultural supports prior to, during and after the first 1000 days
3. Can nourish them in the mother's womb with good quality nutrition, free from alcohol, smoke and the experience of violence
4. Have loving expectations of them, are hopeful about their future and help them to achieve their life aspirations in powerful and tender ways
5. Participate in their education from birth to ensure that personal aspirations are nurtured and aligned with our people's cultural values, responsibilities and entrepreneurial spirit
6. Provide an appropriately stimulating environment, age-appropriate games, and the ability to grow with siblings and family members who themselves are capable of experienced and knowledgeable caring and parenting
7. Know who they are, where they come from, who they are connected to, who loves them, who advocates for them, who listens to them, and who is responsible for them — culturally, morally, physically, spiritually and emotionally
8. Are part of a healthy, vibrant society shaped by strong kinship relationships and a resilient culture, in which all members thrive, flourish and enjoy the same opportunities as other Australians — without being made the same
9. Have healed and broken free from trans-generational trauma, and are able to transform harmful experiences into a positive future for their children and grandchildren
10. Have the capacity to celebrate their children and offer them ceremonies, rituals, language, songs, stories and environments that strengthen their resilience, encourage their growth and support their choice of identity.

First 1000 Days Australia Council Inaugural Statement ⁷



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

Priority areas for first three years

Meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **young women under 25 years, and their partners, before and during pregnancy and parenting**, especially during the first 1000 days

Increasing access to, and involvement in, early years, health and disability programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **children aged 2–5 years**

Providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **families who have complex needs and children at risk** with the right services

Services and systems

Enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **children and young people in out-of-home care** to thrive, and re-engaging those disconnected from family and kin

Enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **children and young people aged 15–21 years in or leaving out-of-home care** to learn and earn, and stay safe and well

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.

We have made a commitment

The Queensland Government has signed the Family Matters national campaign's Statement of Commitment to ensure Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture. These national-level principles will underpin and guide our strategy.

Principle 1: Applying a child focused approach

We recognise that in all actions concerning children, their best interests should be the paramount consideration and that ensuring their safety is essential. Advancing the best interests of children requires the holistic realisation of their rights, including rights to safety, family, housing, health, education, culture and participation. We understand that the best interests of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child can only be properly determined with the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Accordingly, we will:

- ensure that the best interests of the child, informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, is the paramount consideration in all decisions about the care and protection of children
- promote the inclusion of children's voices in all decisions that affect them.

Principle 2: Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children

We believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the strengths and the right to lead change for their own children. Governments and services should provide mechanisms and supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities and organisations to participate in and drive decision-making about the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Accordingly, we will:

- build and transfer capacity to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to provide services that respond to the needs of their communities
- ensure policies and mechanisms to facilitate the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in all decisions that affect them
- recognise the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to drive local solutions to local issues.

Principle 3: Protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's right to live in culture

We recognise that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, connections to their family, community and culture are critical to their wellbeing and positive self-identity. We also recognise the evidence that cultural and community networks support safety for children, and that continuity of cultural identity promotes healthy development. We believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have the right to practise their cultures with their families and communities.

Accordingly, we will:

- promote and enable the full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in line with its intent to maintain quality cultural connections for children throughout their involvement with child protection systems
- develop the capability of organisations and staff to work in culturally safe and competent ways to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.



Principle 4: Pursuing evidence-based responses

We believe that in responding to the issue of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems, our efforts should be based on the evidence of what works. This evidence base critically includes the knowledge, wisdom and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Accordingly, we will:

- respect and practically apply research findings on what is effective to respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, recognising the critical importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in research to the quality of the evidence base
- listen to the knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on how best to respond to the needs of their children and families, including by resourcing and supporting community-led program evaluation and research.

Principle 5: Supporting, healing and strengthening families

We recognise that family is the foundation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's social, cultural and emotional wellbeing and is their most important lifelong support. We acknowledge the unique need for healing supports to address the impacts of intergenerational trauma on families that has resulted from experiences of colonisation, the Stolen Generations and other discriminatory government policies. We recognise and respect the evidence that shows that early intervention is critical to heal and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to care for their children and ensure they thrive.

Accordingly, we will:

- promote and drive increased early intervention supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and increased proportional investment in early intervention as compared to out-of-home care
- support and promote a priority to safely reunify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their families wherever it is possible to do so.

Principle 6: Challenging systemic racism and inequities

We acknowledge that the current challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families result from a history of injustice and racism that remains embedded within the laws, policies and practices of our society, systems and institutions.

Accordingly, we will:

- take actions to ensure law, policy and practice are designed to respond to the root causes of poverty and disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- challenge racism where we see or experience it in laws, policies, procedures or behaviours.

We will enable this commitment by

This strategy is built on four key areas, or building blocks, that we will focus effort on to realise our outcome. We have identified several **supporting conditions**, or enablers, needed to achieve our building blocks. **These are:**

Focus on the child

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.

Empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and communities

When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents are empowered and supported by services that are accessible, culturally respectful and safe, and the importance of culture and connection is deeply understood, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families are more likely to thrive.⁸

Enable self-determination

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have the capacity and capabilities, with the right support, to enable families to safely care for their children. Research affirms the value of unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child-rearing practices, and the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions. We know that continuity of cultural identity is vital to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

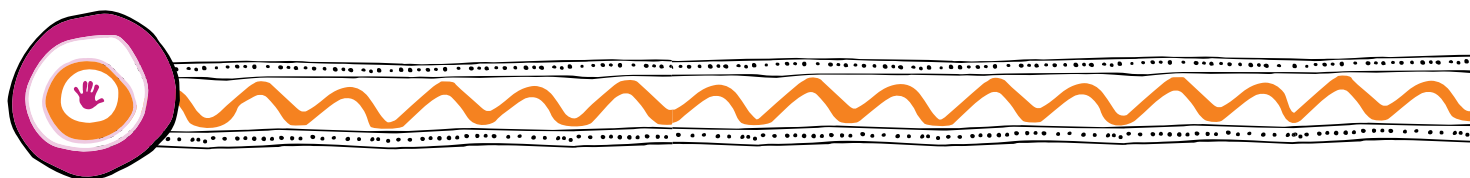
Evidence shows that the foundational element needed to achieve our shared hopes and aspirations is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' choice and self-determination. When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are given the opportunity to design, commission and deliver services in their communities, it is more likely these services will be culturally safe and responsive.

A more just and committed approach to close the gap in outcomes requires genuine actions to support self-determination.^{9, 10}

Set high expectations and positive norms

Expectations are more than just words. They are core beliefs that influence social norms and impact behaviours and decision-making. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders have publicly highlighted the negative impact low expectations have on outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.¹¹

Setting and believing in high expectations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can create a transformational shift in practice that improves outcomes for vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.¹² To achieve change we must put in place a program that embeds high expectations in our systems and symbols and builds positive norms.



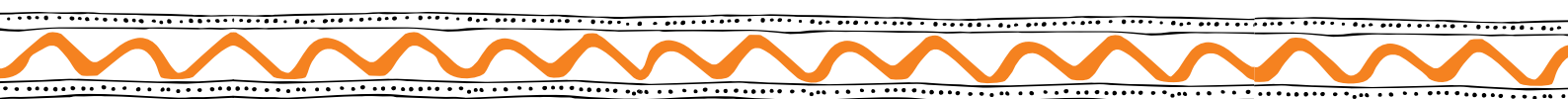


‘For Indigenous populations, the evidence shows that the single biggest factor in improving health and social outcomes is self-determination.

For self-determination to be effective, two things must occur — Indigenous peoples assume leadership, governance, authority over their lives and communities using a balance of traditional methods and contemporary realities (Aboriginal Terms of Reference), and develop their own vision of their futures.

Second, governments and non-government agencies admit that “business as usual”, with them in power and control, is a major part of the problem. They must be willing to change and give up some of that power and control.’

– Associate Professor Gregory Phillips 2016





Take a holistic and life-course approach

A child's early years are the ideal time to make the greatest impact on long-term wellbeing. Both positive and negative early life experiences shape children's health, learning, growth, relationships, safety, identity and culture. To ensure children develop well and flourish, identifying needs early and making sure the right support and services are available at the right time are critical.^{13,14,15,16} This approach must continue as children grow into young people and transition through life stages.

Recognise culture as a protective factor

Cultural connectedness is one of the best protective factors to keep children safe within their families. We trust that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are strongest in their cultures when connected to family, community and country. Long-term strategies must recognise and enable informal community and family networks that support children within their community.¹⁷

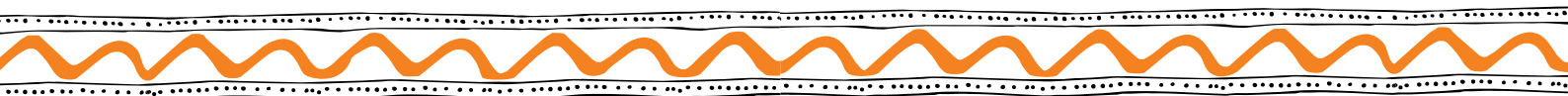
Address trauma and enable healing

The trauma experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a result of colonisation and past government policies has had a devastating effect on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to move forward and heal, they must have responsibility for and control over the design, development and delivery of approaches that support their own healing.¹⁸

Share power, responsibility and accountability

Everyone has a role to play in keeping Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children safe, healthy, happy and thriving. This shared responsibility includes communities, governments, businesses and services. Services must be decided, designed and delivered in genuine partnership and through trust to ensure they are appropriate and meet the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

We acknowledge that there are times when some families and children will need help in a crisis and in some cases statutory child protection services will be required. During these times, it is critical that government and service providers appreciate the impact of harmful practices and policies of the past, focus on the current, and look to the future. All agencies and organisations must understand the full scope of the responsibility they have to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to prevent repeating similar patterns.





Shift and balance investment

The majority of current government investment in child and family support is concentrated on the tertiary child protection system. As quickly as possible, investment needs to be rebalanced with a greater share provided to universal and secondary services, with a particular focus on prevention and early intervention services. In addition, too little of the current investment goes to community-led or controlled organisations, which are best placed to determine, design and deliver services that will meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Provide accessible and coordinated services

Integrated services represent a culturally appropriate way to provide for a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' needs and align to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' views of holistic health and wellbeing. Integration enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to navigate the system by linking individuals and families to services they need, when they need them. It gives families more control through greater choice and improved access to a range of services.¹⁹

Create partnerships

Genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are essential. For these partnerships to be effective, we must work within a culturally competent framework, and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations in an authentic and collaborative way.

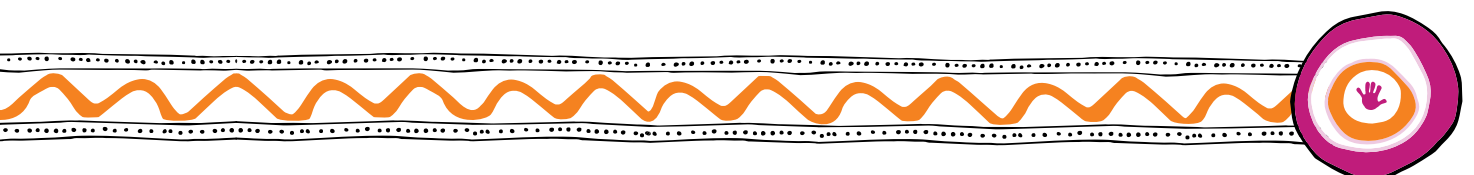
Innovate, build evidence and adjust

To lead best practice responses that are innovative and create sustainable change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' wellbeing, we must develop a contemporary awareness and deeper understanding of the ongoing inequity experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

It is vital that we listen to the knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community services to pursue innovative solutions and learn from what works. We must commit to action learning and continue to adapt our responses to meet changing needs.



We must remain committed and accountable to the long-term vision of the strategy and ensure that every action we take contributes to enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead solutions so their children grow up healthy and safe in family, community and culture.



We will build on other initiatives

To achieve our vision and target, we must **align our strategy** and action plans **to the goals of other national and state initiatives and strategies**, and leverage their efforts.

At a **national** level, these include:

- Council of Australian Governments (COAG) *Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage*
- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children Third Three Year Action Plan, 2015–18, *Driving Change: Intervening Early*
- *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022*
- *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy*
- *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework*
- National Disability Insurance Scheme.

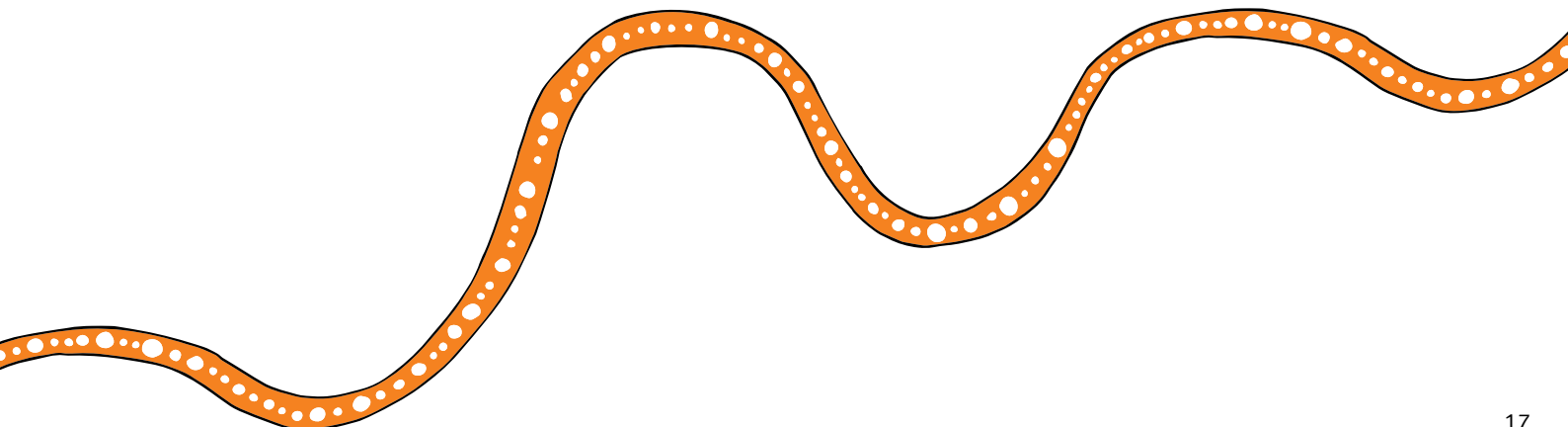
At the **state** level, implementation of this strategy and associated action plans will **build on** work underway through *Supporting Families Changing Futures: Advancing Queensland's child protection and family support reforms*, which is supported by a \$425 million investment over five years from 2014. This includes current and future initiatives:

- increasing information and support to parents, grandparents and carers through the Queensland Family and Child Commission's (QFCC) *Talking Families* campaign
- empowering parents through universal access to the Queensland-based Triple P — Positive Parenting Program
- reviewing Queensland's child protection legislation
- establishing a Queensland-wide network of community-based service gateways — Family and Child Connect (FACC) services, which include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led FACCs
- building capacity through the Strengthening the Sector initiatives led by the QFCC
- investing more than ever before in community-based family support and intervention services
- auditing all children in out-of-home care and reforming out-of-home care
- strengthening engagement and advocacy so that children's voices and experiences are heard
- implementing specialist investigation, assessment and support teams in the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
- strengthening child safety practice and practice leadership and reviewing departmental systems and the sector
- improving governance and oversight of the child protection system, including through the Child Protection Reform Leaders Group and the QFCC.



Implementation of this strategy and associated action plans will also **work together** with other Queensland Government strategies and initiatives, in particular:

- *Jobs Now, Jobs for the Future*
- *Moving Ahead: A strategic approach to increasing the participation of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland's economy 2016–2022*
- *Queensland Youth Strategy: Building young Queenslanders for a global future*
- Queensland housing strategy (to be released in 2017)
- *Every student succeeding: State Schools Strategy 2017–2021 and Advancing Education: An action plan for education in Queensland*
- *Deadly Kids, Deadly Futures: Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Ear and Hearing Health Framework 2016–2026*
- *Queensland Financial Inclusion Plan* to support improved financial literacy for families and enhance responses to financial hardship
- *Making Tracks toward closing the gap in health outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders by 2033*
- *Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016–2022 and the Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026*
- *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019*
- *Queensland Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2015–2017*
- *Proud and Strong: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Action Plan 2016–2018.*



We will deliver this through

Joint implementation

The strategy will be implemented through a series of action plans that will move us towards our vision over the next 20 years. We will take a flexible approach to developing future action plans based on the outcomes achieved, new challenges and priorities, emerging evidence, innovation and opportunities. Each action plan will continue to build our evidence base to inform future directions.

The **first action plan**, *Changing Tracks*, builds on the prevention and early intervention approach of *Supporting Families Changing Futures: Advancing Queensland's child protection and family support reforms*. It will be delivered over three years from 2017 to 2019 with discrete actions implemented over this time. The plan will focus on setting the foundations to place Queensland on a new track to achieve our vision and target by 2037.

The Family Matters Roadmap sets the foundation of intended outcomes for this strategy through the following sub-targets:

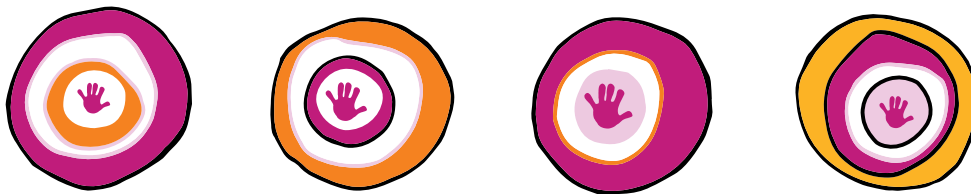
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enjoy equal access to early intervention and prevention services as non-Indigenous children by 2020
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care enjoy equal rates of reunification with their parents or family as non-Indigenous children by 2025
- Eliminate the over-representation in rates of notification of child abuse or neglect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by 2030
- Eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to a substantiation of child abuse or neglect by 2035
- Eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to an order of removal into out-of-home care by 2035.²⁰

This implementation approach is designed to allow action learning to be incorporated into each action plan. In this way we can ensure we continue to reflect and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We will determine our efforts and associated investment within an accountability framework that is agile, and evolves as we learn what works best for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Each action plan will be implemented through a formal partnership agreement — the **Queensland First Children and Families Partnership Agreement** — which will be developed by representatives of Family Matters Queensland, the Queensland Government and relevant non-government organisations. This partnership agreement will detail the specific obligations and responsibilities of community and government in delivering the actions and meeting the outcomes described in the strategy and action plans. The Australian Government will be invited to be a party to the agreement, and other organisations will also be encouraged to commit.



We can only succeed in realising *Our Way* with the support, commitment and action of all Queenslanders, organisations and communities, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous, who directly or indirectly touch the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.



Joint governance

In recognition of the enabling principle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and decision-making, this strategy will be implemented within a robust accountability framework led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As a priority, we will establish a **Queensland First Children and Families Board**, which will include representatives from the Queensland Government, Family Matters Queensland and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The majority of members will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Investment decisions will be carefully considered in partnership with the Queensland First Children and Families Board with a focus on impact and value.

The board will guide the implementation of the strategy, and inform the evaluation of its impact and effectiveness. This will ensure the application of a cultural perspective, and keep government and partners accountable to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.



Shared accountability

To ensure we remain accountable to the vision and target of the strategy, and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we will measure the progress and change being made in the lives of children and families as a result of the initiatives outlined in each action plan.

Reporting

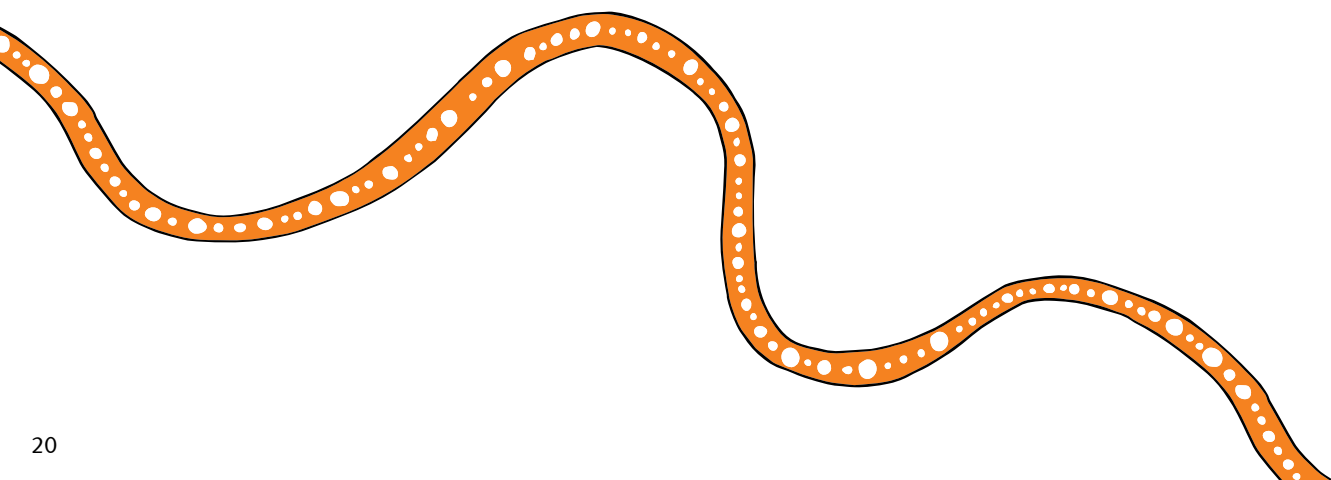
A **publicly available report** will be produced annually for the Queensland Cabinet and national Family Matters, and will act as a report card of the progress in achieving our targets.

A governance and accountability framework led by the board will ensure the strategy and action plans are responsive to the needs of the Queensland Government and community and reflect the Family Matters partnership. The board will also report quarterly to the Minister for Child Safety and the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

An **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Wellbeing Outcomes Framework** will be developed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, communities and organisations as part of the first action plan. It will be a whole-of-government and cross-sectoral tool to identify outcomes, indicators and measures to inform investment decisions, align efforts and help track progress.

Evaluation

The board will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to **evaluate the strategy and action plans**. The QFCC will support the board to design the evaluation and monitoring framework, aligned to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Wellbeing Outcomes Framework. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will evaluate the strategy and action plans to ensure the evaluation is culturally informed.



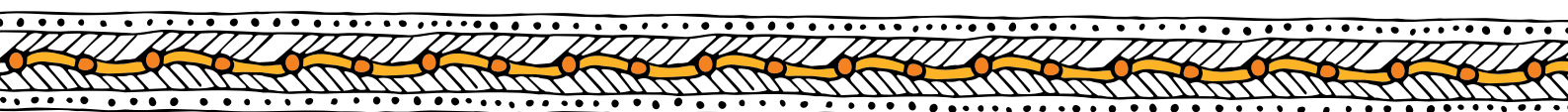
Appendix 1

What we heard

This strategy and first action plan are informed by the voices of more than 800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from across Queensland, plus other stakeholders with an interest in improving the life outcomes of Queensland's most vulnerable children.

We conducted a range of consultation activities over 18 months. We heard that we need to:

- recognise that connection to culture, country and kin are primary protective and resilience factors
- value and trust that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is best placed to determine how to meet the needs of their children, families and communities
- support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector to focus on prevention and early intervention, early childhood development, young parents and life-stage transitions
- have a shared vision and commitment to a strategy and to work in partnership
- ensure the enabling environment is facilitated through sound legislation, policy, practice and procedures that align all agencies involved in providing child and family support services, and promotes multi-agency collaboration
- have good governance at the community, service provider, and government levels
- empower communities to develop and implement strong governance arrangements and effective community development and service delivery capabilities
- provide children and families with the right support services necessary to meet their needs at the right time
- move language from negative and deficit based to positive and strengths focused in the action plan
- invest in culture
- acknowledge community and cultural strength, and enable communities to provide their own solutions
- value and support cultural connectedness
- support a child to form and maintain relationships with culture and community through improved engagement with families
- continue on our journey to improve family support as one way to support child wellbeing
- share power
- continue to build skills and capacity to ensure more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are in leadership roles.



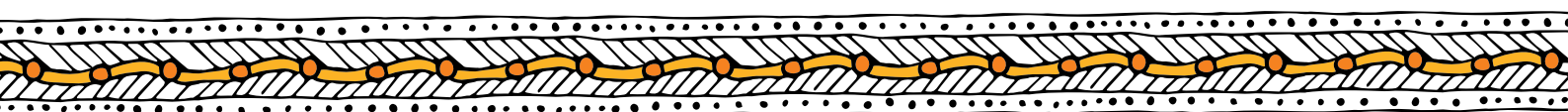
Appendix 2

Family Matters — Strong communities. Strong culture. Stronger children

National Family Matters and Family Matters Queensland are part of an historic campaign led by more than 150 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations across Australia who are committed to eliminating the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in statutory out-of-home care, within a generation.

The Family Matters campaign in Queensland focuses on creating evidence-informed solutions to better enable family strengthening and children's wellbeing, and re-orientate service delivery from crisis intervention to prevention.

For more information visit www.familymatters.org.au



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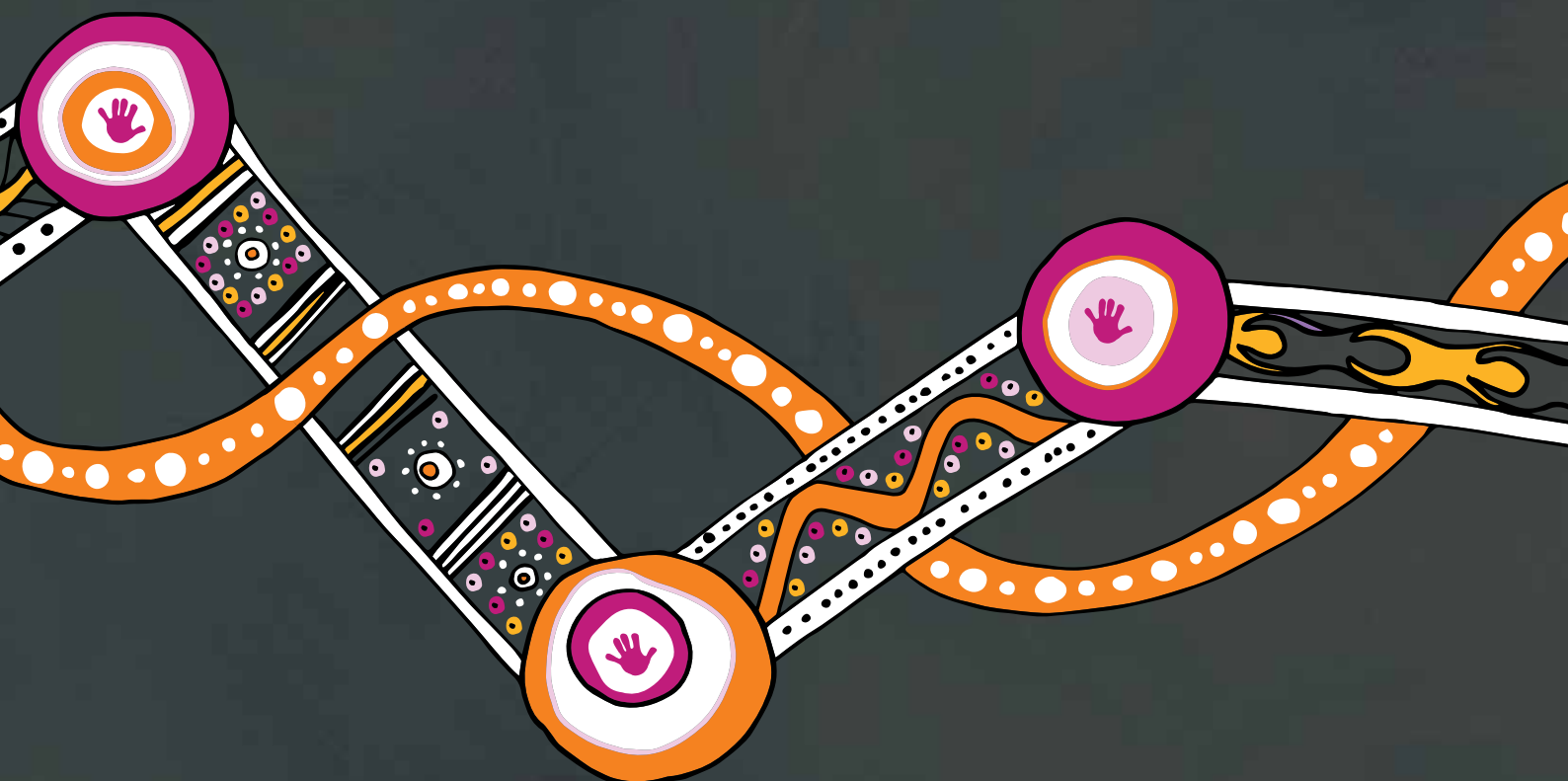
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Story of the motif

The motif artwork was created by Rachael Sarra, an Indigenous artist and designer from creative agency Gilimbaa. Rachael originates from the Bunda People in Goreng Goreng country.

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. Through the woven orange line it 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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