



Queensland

Good jobs  
Better services  
Great lifestyle



# Putting Queensland Kids First

*Giving our kids the opportunity of a lifetime*

**CONSULTATION DRAFT**



Queensland  
Government



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# Acknowledgement of Country

**The Queensland Government acknowledges the First Nations peoples of Queensland: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their connections to the lands, winds and waters we now all share.**

**We pay our respect to Elders, past and present.**




We look to the future with hope and optimism, learning from traditional culture to support thriving children, young people and families, and connected communities.

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

As part of our commitment to reframing the relationship between the Queensland Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we seek to empower First Nations children, young people and families to have a voice in the services and decisions that impact them. We also aim to empower First Nations peoples to lead and control services for their own communities.

For more information, see the [Statement of Commitment](#) to reframe the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Queensland Government.



**We celebrate and acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of First Nations peoples and the strength of First Nations knowledge in raising children.**

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# Consultation

## Guiding questions for consultation

**1.**

What are the core principles you think should inform our early intervention and prevention approach to support children, young people and families?

**2.**

What are the key protective factors in keeping children and young people on positive trajectories, and how can we further boost these?

**3.**

Are there any other priorities you think that Putting Queensland Kids First should consider?

**4.**

How can we best support connection to culture and community for children, young people and families?

**5.**

What would it look like for us to work together as partners, all committed to improving outcomes for children and young people?



## Consultation process

This consultation draft is not Government policy.

Your feedback will inform the development of the *Putting Queensland Kids First* early intervention package for Queensland children, young people and families.

To provide your views, please visit:

**website:** <https://www.qld.gov.au/putting-qld-kids-first>

**email:** [PQKFconsultation@premiers.qld.gov.au](mailto:PQKFconsultation@premiers.qld.gov.au)

**mail:** “Consultation draft: Putting Queensland Kids First”  
Department of the Premier and Cabinet  
PO Box 15185  
City East QLD 4002

Submissions close **Wednesday, 21 February 2024.**

# Putting Queensland Kids First: Giving our kids the opportunity of a lifetime



**The Queensland Government is committed to putting Queensland kids first, giving every young Queenslander a lifetime of opportunities for stronger life trajectories through prevention and targeted early interventions.**

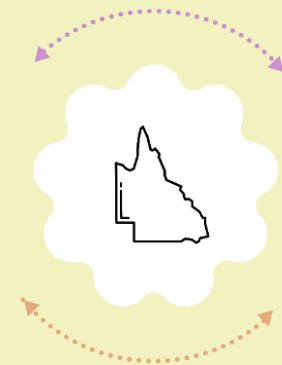
The Queensland Government is committed to delivering good jobs, better services, and a great Queensland lifestyle. We are doing this by supporting every Queenslander to thrive and live meaningful lives, from birth through to adulthood.

We know that early childhood experiences have a significant influence on a young person's life trajectory. This is why the early years are a key opportunity for preventative and early intervention support. We know that investing in children and young people has the power to transform life trajectories with lifelong and multigenerational health, social and economic benefits.

Putting Queensland Kids First is about setting young Queenslanders on positive and healthy pathways for life through education, skills and employment, and diverting people from pathways that may lead to offending and poorer outcomes. By strengthening protective factors around all Queensland children, young people and families through evidence-based prevention and early interventions at critical transitions and periods of development, we will set them up for their future.

Our wellbeing and economy are intrinsically linked. By improving wellbeing from the earliest years of life, we are creating a prosperous economy and brighter future for every Queenslander.

**A strong and sustainable economy** improves social equity and wellbeing



**Social equity and wellbeing** fuels a strong and sustainable economy

# The case for investing in Queensland's children and young people is clear

**Prioritising our young Queenslanders is one of the best investments for the long-term health, wellbeing, safety and prosperity of our community.**

We understand that for some Queensland children, adverse experiences during childhood – including poverty, marginalisation, family violence, parental mental illness or substance misuse, and disrupted access to healthcare or education – can lead to poorer health and wellbeing, reduced educational attainment, increases in unemployment and under-employment, and increased risks of contact with child protection and criminal justice systems.

Investing in prevention and early intervention for all children and extending support to caregivers, family, kin and communities ensures we can mitigate the detrimental impacts of adversity to give the next generation the best opportunity to live meaningful, connected and happy lives.



1. Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood (2021); The Urban Child Institute (2023)
2. The Front Project (2019); JAMA (2001)
3. National Institute for Early Education Research (2014); National Bureau of Economic Research (2019)
4. CoLab – Collaborate for Kids (2019)
5. Access Economics (2010).

**80%**  
of brain development occurs before a child is three years old. Experiences in these early years shape a child's entire future<sup>1</sup>

Early childhood development offers the highest rate of economic returns, with **\$2 benefits for every \$1 spent**<sup>2</sup>

Quality early childhood education increases employment likelihood by **26%** and reduces offending rates by **1.5-4 times**<sup>3</sup>

**\$15.2 billion** is spent on late interventions in Australia each year in child protection, crime, unemployment, justice, homelessness, mental and physical health and family violence<sup>4</sup>

The potential value of future benefits from prevention and early intervention in Australia each year is **\$5.4 billion**<sup>5</sup>

# The Government is already investing, but more can be done

## The Queensland Government knows how important good quality services are in supporting positive life outcomes for Queenslanders.

The Queensland Government delivers high-quality, universal services for all Queenslanders across a range of areas, including health, education, community safety, and family services. As just one example, the Queensland Government's \$645 million investment in free kindy for four-year-olds commencing in 2024 strengthens the early foundations for children's wellbeing and healthy development for lifelong outcomes.

Some Queenslanders fall through the cracks and need additional support and that's why the Queensland Government is already investing in targeted early intervention and prevention services. However, the evidence is telling us that we can build on these existing services through better coordination of existing initiatives, and new approaches to supporting children and young people experiencing vulnerability. The opportunity exists to build on existing investments in prevention and early intervention services to better address the complex challenges facing some Queenslanders and achieve better outcomes for vulnerable children, young people, and families.

## Snapshot of existing early intervention and prevention initiatives

### Health

- **Connecting2U** is a free text message service for new parents providing timely and evidence-based messaging to improve parental health literacy, self-efficacy, relationships and responsive parenting.
- **Thriving and On Track (TOTs)** is a collaborative initiative between Government and other partners. TOTs is a health service for children aged 0-5 in Logan and Inala to support families to access early childhood development checks and link them to services.
- **Navigate Your Health** is a partnership with Children's Health Queensland to help children or young people in care access health checks and referrals to services that meets their health needs.

### Education

- **Equity and Excellence Education Strategy** outlines a commitment to realise the potential of every student through educational achievement, wellbeing and engagement, and culture and inclusion, incorporating Educational Precincts and integrated school-based hubs.
- **Student Wellbeing Package** is delivering enhanced wellbeing outcomes for students through the employment of health and wellbeing practitioners at schools, including through the GPs in Schools Pilot.
- **FlexiSpaces** are innovative learning spaces delivered at schools across the State to help retain students at risk of disengaging from school.
- **School food program** provided to children in need in more than 860 state schools.

### Housing

- **Towards ending homelessness for young Queenslanders 2022-2027** is a funded policy & service framework that improves housing outcomes for young people through integrated services.
- **Youth foyers** provide young people aged 16 to 25 years with access to stable housing and a supportive living environment with onsite security and support services. The Queensland Government currently operates foyers in Logan and the Gold Coast, and a third foyer is under construction in Townsville.
- **Immediate Housing Response for Families** provides temporary accommodation and Specialist Homelessness Services support to families experiencing or at risk of homelessness.



## Snapshot of existing early intervention and prevention initiatives

### Youth Justice

- **Early Action Groups** in Townsville, Cairns and Mt Isa (led by Youth Justice) provide coordinated cross-agency early intervention services to young people at risk of engaging with the youth justice system.
- **Community Youth Response and Diversion** provides location specific responses and alternative activities for at-risk young people including after-hours support, cultural mentoring, bridging to education, and case management.
- **Transition 2 Success** builds partnerships with community organisations to deliver tailored vocational education programs, that reduce and prevent reoffending for young people involved in, or at risk of entering, the Youth Justice system.

### Child safety

- **Family and Child Connect** operates across the state, linking families to advice, information, and appropriate support services.
- **Intensive Family Support Services** respond to families with multiple and complex challenges, using a case management approach to address risk factors and improve family functioning.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services** are delivered by community-controlled organisations and enable families to access support to improve wellbeing and build the families' capacity to safely care for and protect their children.

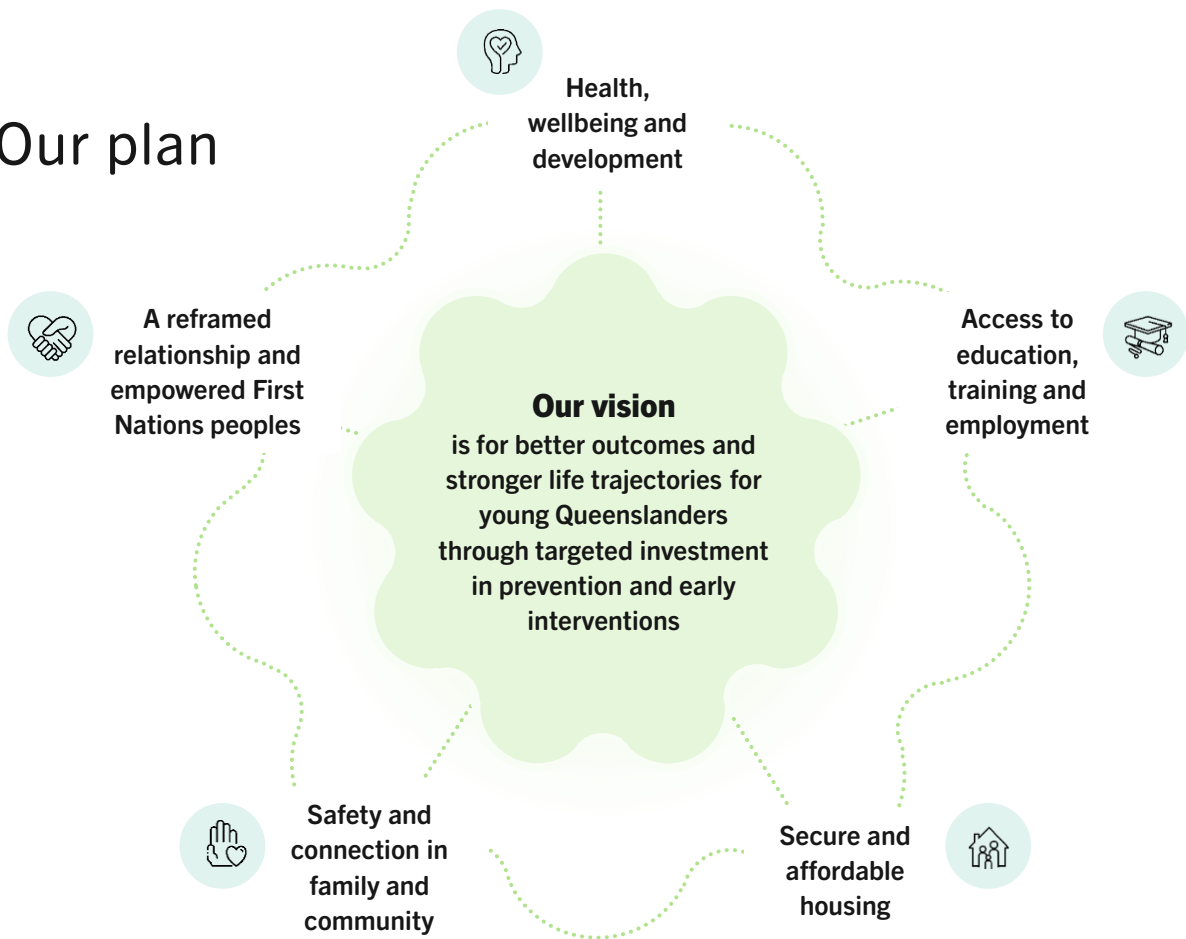
*All these services aim to intervene early and prevent children and families from entering the statutory child protection system.*

### Police

- **Police Citizens and Youth Clubs** deliver a range of intervention, prevention, and diversion programs and activities aimed at keeping young people engaged and on the right track.
- **Project Booyah** utilises adventure-based learning, leadership skills, decision making/problem solving exercises, resilience training, policing strategies and family inclusive principles, to help young people aged 14-17 years make better life choices
- **RESPECT**, the follow-up program to Project Booyah, utilises a positive, interpersonal, and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approach to enhance the resilience, self-esteem, anger regression and other key protective factors for at risk youth.



# Our plan



## Our objective

To strengthen protective factors around children, young people and families through targeted investment in prevention and early interventions.

## Our investment priorities

Our priorities ensure all children and young people have the best possible start in life, remain connected to education and achieve healthy outcomes with a focus on those at risk of entering the youth justice system. Through these priorities, we will leverage opportunities across important stages in the lifecycle, including:

- conception and early life
- supporting families
- healthy development
- confident transitions
- partnering for integrated services.

## Our outcomes

We will measure improved outcomes for children, young people and families using indicators at key stages of life – from conception, through the early years, adolescence and into early adulthood:

- health, wellbeing and development
- access to education, training and employment
- secure and affordable housing
- safety and connection in family and community
- a reframed relationship and empowered First Nations peoples.

## Understanding our impact

Through consultation, we will develop robust measures and indicators that contribute to Closing the Gap targets and monitor our progress towards outcomes.

## Our approach

The following principles underpin our approach.



### Child and young person centric

- Placing children, young people and families at the centre of everything we do
- Informed by the voices and experiences children, young people and families
- Underpinned by child safe principles and protecting their human rights.



### Prevention and early intervention

- Prevention and early intervention services through a mix of universal, targeted and intensive supports
- Shifting the balance of investment to preventative care and early intervention to achieve the best possible outcomes and return on investment.



### Integrated ways of working to connect Queenslanders

- Connecting Queenslanders to the support and services they need, when they need it, through a person-centred approach
- Partnering and collaborating to integrate service offerings for seamless access for Queenslanders.

## 1. Consultation question



What are the core principles you think should inform our approach to supporting children, young people and families?



### Culture, equity and inclusion

- Promoting equity and recognising the diverse needs, lived experience and cultural safety of all children, young people and families
- Focusing on equity in outcomes for all – including First Nations peoples, people with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people living in rural and remote areas.



### Strengths-based

- Focused on the strengths of community and cultural knowledge in raising children and promoting wellbeing
- Empowering parents, caregivers, kin and families to create the conditions for their children to thrive.

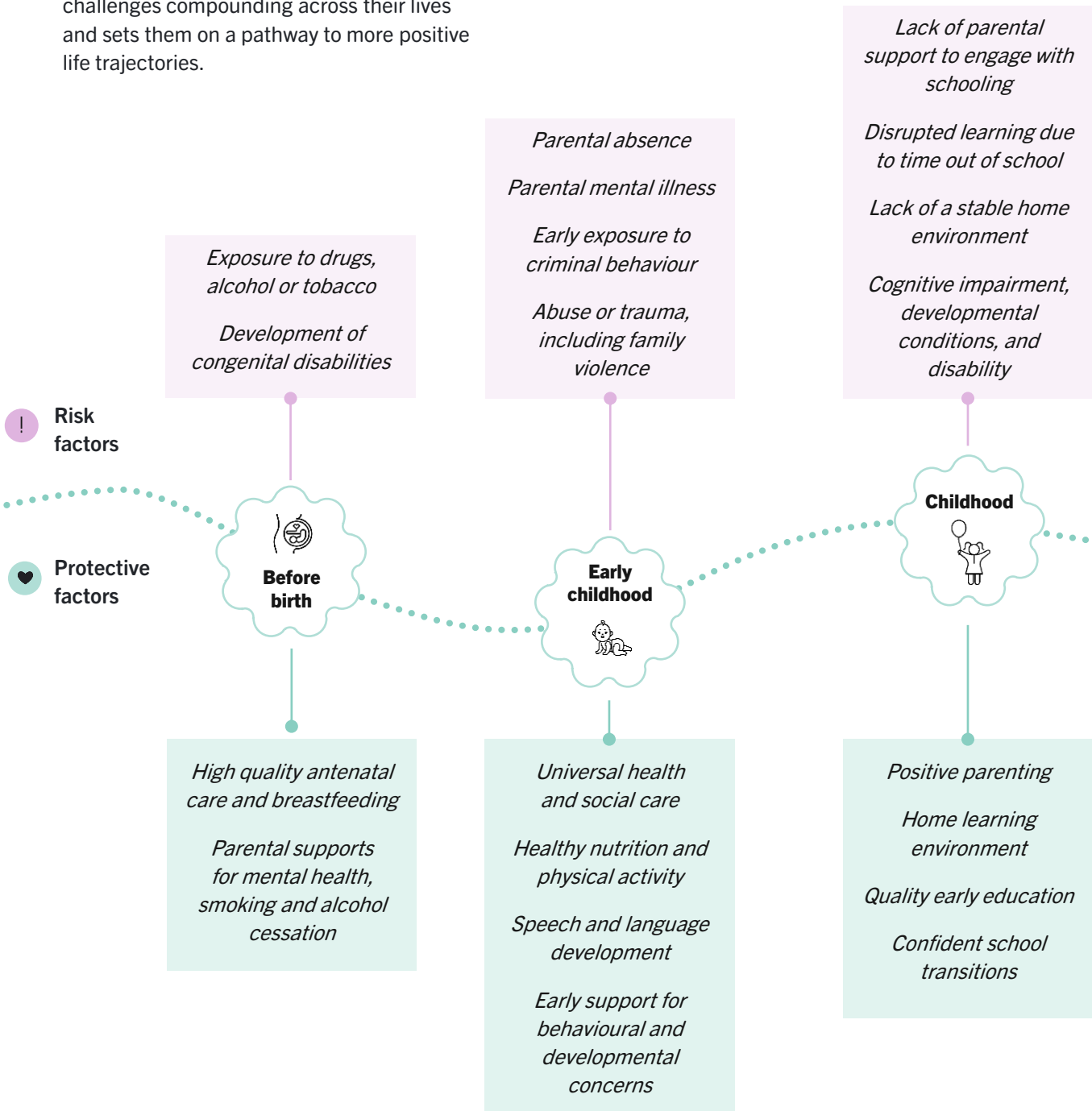


### Evidence-informed

- Informed by the evidence of what works for children, young people and families in Queensland
- Continuous improvement and learning, informed by multi-agency whole-of-system research to understand the impact of our current investment and what should be considered for future investment.

## Strengthening protective factors at key intervention and transition points improves life trajectories.

Enhancing protective factors and intervening early to address risk factors in children and young people’s lives helps to prevent challenges compounding across their lives and sets them on a pathway to more positive life trajectories.



Non-exhaustive. Adapted from Queensland Productivity Commission, Risk factors and contact with the criminal justice system (2019); Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, Intervention Points (2015); Wellbeing Outcomes Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland (2019).



*Anti-social peer networks*

*Undiagnosed or unmanaged disability*

*Excessive consumption of alcohol or drugs*

*Poor academic engagement and performance*

*Mental illness*

*Homelessness*

*Experiences of racism*

*Leaving school early without moving onto other education or employment*

*Loss of housing or employment*

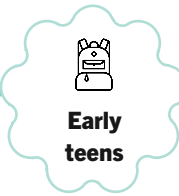
*Imprisonment and contact with offenders*

*Damage to relationships due to imprisonment*

**2. Consultation question**



**What are the key protective factors in keeping children and young people on positive trajectories, and how can we further boost these?**



*Engagement in learning*

*Parent engagement in their child's learning*

*Stable positive adult role models and support people*

*Supporting transitions at key phases of learning*

*Skills development, career pathways and supportive transitions*

*Community connectedness and participation*

*Access to suicide prevention and mental health support*

*Preventing substance misuse and educating young people on physical, sexual and mental health*

*Programs to keep young people out of court and out of detention*

*Safe and stable living environments*



At every stage of life, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are a strength, and protective factor for children and young people.

# Investment priorities

Children and young people's wellbeing flourishes when they are happy and healthy, feel nurtured, safe and belong.

We help young Queenslanders to thrive when they have opportunities to grow, learn and participate in the world around them, and to connect to their culture, kinship systems and community. This is particularly important for First Nations peoples.

## 3. Consultation question

Are there any other priorities you think that Putting Queensland Kids First should consider?



### Wellbeing from conception and the earliest years of life

Ensuring children are born healthy, raised strong in their families, and are supported to meet developmental milestones so they have the right foundations for lifelong wellbeing.



### Supporting families and strengthening communities

Strengthening families and communities and responding to the needs of parents, caregivers and kin to create the best conditions for children and young people's health and wellbeing.



### Identifying and responding to needs for healthy development and positive life courses

Supporting young Queenslanders' healthy development through the earliest possible access to appropriate needs identification and targeted interventions.



### Supporting confident transitions into learning, education and training

Encouraging confident transitions from home, to early childhood settings, to school and across key phases of learning, education and training to set strong foundations for future learning and pathways.



### Partnering for integrated, place-based and First Nations-led delivery

Building collaborative partnerships with non-government organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations for place-based responses to local needs.



## Wellbeing from conception and the earliest years of life



**Healthy development in the early years supports young Queenslanders with the strongest start for wellbeing and learning, so they become happy and resilient young people, and are equipped with the skills to embrace their potential.**

From conception onwards, a child's physical, social and emotional wellbeing matures at a rapid rate which offers a golden opportunity to establish the foundations for a healthy and resilient future.

Experiencing adversity during this critical period can weaken a child's brain development that underpins long-term wellbeing. There is strong evidence about how to establish positive trajectories for all children from the start, as well as the additional supports for those who need it.

*Every child deserves a bright, happy future*



### **Opportunities include:**

- improving access to integrated health care during pregnancy to prevent birth and developmental complications
- supporting families to raise children with good quality nutrition and environments free from alcohol, smoke and the experience of violence
- providing education and support for parents and families about their child's health, wellbeing and development needs at key phases of life
- ensuring families have access to essentials, such as material basics and safe sleeping spaces for their children
- giving children and young people and families the opportunity to learn, develop their skills and grow in safe, nurturing environments.

#### 4. Consultation question

How can we best support connection to culture and community for children, young people and families?



## Supporting families and strengthening communities

**A child's wellbeing is founded in their family, kin and personal relationships, their community and culture, and the wider world in which they live, learn and grow.**

In their earliest years, children's development is best supported by forming secure attachments in nurturing and stimulating environments that enable them to safely explore and make sense of their world.

Whole of family health and wellbeing is critical to a child's healthy development. Caregivers need to be supported to handle the financial, social, health and relationship impacts of the transition to parenthood, and to build knowledge and skills to support their child's wellbeing.

For First Nations families, this support must be culturally responsive and recognise the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge in raising children.



#### Opportunities include:

- helping parents and caregivers so they are ready and able to parent, strong in culture, kin and community
- enhancing housing supports so that every family has a stable, safe and suitable place to live and raise their children
- connecting people to information, advice and support to enable them to deal with life challenges – particularly when people are facing adversity or disadvantage
- providing practical supports to live healthily and free from violence and abuse, with access to support to heal, restore and promote their wellbeing
- providing support to participate in the economy and experience financial resilience and independence through access to skills development and employment.





## Identifying and responding to needs for healthy development and positive life courses

For young Queenslanders with developmental delays, the potential for improved long-term outcomes relies on the earliest possible access to appropriate identification, interventions and support.

Some Queensland children have developmental vulnerabilities which mean they may fall behind their peers, or experience developmental challenges that may be overlooked without access to supports. Children with developmental disorders or delays can often experience additional challenges later in life in education, unemployment, mental illness and involvement in youth justice.

The early years of life are a key time to identify developmental vulnerabilities and respond as early as possible, so they are ready to transition into school with confidence and prepare them for the best future outcomes.

*Healthy development requires nurturing relationships, environments and experiences*



### Opportunities include:

- enhancing access to universal health services for all children, young people and families
- supporting families to access integrated services and other specialist supports for their wellbeing – particularly in regional, rural and remote areas
- improving inclusive and responsive supports for children and young people with disability
- providing earlier access for children with developmental conditions to improve access to interventions as early as possible
- inclusive education and social supports for children and young people living with disability and developmental conditions.



## Supporting confident transitions into learning, education and training



**Confident and successful transitions from home, to early childhood settings, school engagement, and subsequent training and employment achievements are a critical foundation for personal wellbeing and future prosperity.**

Children and young people who experience positive engagements with learning environments are more likely to be happy at school and improve their academic and social skills, setting them up for better educational and engagement outcomes across their schooling, training and employment journey.

Ensuring schools are child-ready, and able to meet the individual learning and wellbeing needs of children entering and engaging in classrooms relies on schools, educators, service providers and families working together in positive, flexible and individually responsive ways.



### Opportunities include:

- supporting parents and caregivers as first teachers to engage in their children's learning
- continuing to promote quality and safety in the early childhood sector and enhancing access to early childhood services
- ensuring Queensland children and young people have access to healthy, nutritious food and engage in healthy behaviours
- improving supports and professional recognition for critical early childhood educators and teachers
- strengthening transitions between home, early learning environments and phases of schooling
- connecting families and children with more supports to engage positively in education, training and employment, and to access a range of integrated services, particularly when experiencing disadvantage
- partnering with communities to design and deliver trauma informed, culturally safe learning experiences
- improving responses to complex behaviours and wellbeing needs that impact children and young people's engagement in learning, training and employment.

## 5. Consultation question



What would it look like for us to work together as partners, all committed to improving outcomes for children and young people?



# Partnering for integrated, place-based and First Nations led delivery

**Partnerships with non-government organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to deliver local, place-based and targeted interventions that respond to the needs of Queensland children, young people, families and communities.**

Reaching across health, education, employment, community support, housing and justice sectors, the Queensland Government is the state's largest social service provider and we are finding new ways to connect Queenslanders to the services they need, when and where they need them. This includes partnering with those providers best placed to engage with vulnerable children and families across the State.

First Nations co-design and stewardship of delivery promotes culturally responsive services that respond to the needs of First Nations children, young people and families, and help to close the gap in outcomes for First Nations peoples.



### Opportunities include:

- improving responses to local community needs with children, young people and families at the centre
- improving access to integrated services such as child safety, disability, health, housing, education and employment to support children, young people and their families within communities
- strengthening investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations
- partnering with local communities, families and First Nations peoples in the design of services so they can exercise greater choice, control and cultural authority over decisions that affect them.





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Government