

## Queensland

Queensland is the first jurisdiction in Australia to have a dedicated target and strategy, through the *Our Way* strategy, to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in statutory child protection systems.

*Our Way* outlines a framework for transformational change that will occur over the next 20 years. It represents a long-term commitment from the Queensland Government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to work together. The strategy is now in its second year of rollout; and is approaching the end of its first triennial action plan, which comes under the first implementation stage *Changing Tracks*.

Family Matters Queensland is a lead partner to the Strategy and has been working with the *Our Way* strategy team within the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women. Our focus has been to drive and deliver on our implicated action measures, in line with the strategy and the first action plan, whilst also placing a strong emphasis on retaining independence as a campaign to ensure that we hold government to account.

As a whole-of-government strategy, *Our Way* demands integrated, cross-departmental action. Family Matters Queensland has been advocating for the need for maintained commitment and active efforts across the entirety of the Queensland Government, if we are to achieve our vision and targets.

There has been some progress with implementation of identified activity measures in the first action plan. For example, all 33 family wellbeing services have now been funded and commenced operations across the state; and we have seen a rise in investment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector.

The legislative backdrop against which we operate has also been subject to change, with commencement of legislative amendments under the *Child Protection Amendment Bill 2017*. The last stage of these amendments will be introduced come November 2018, and will include:

- Full incorporation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and each of its five elements;
- Removal of reference to the Recognised Entity and introduction of Independent Persons; and
- The ability to delegate functions and powers to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation.

We are also pleased to report that the Family Participation Program (FPP) initiative, which entails the state-wide roll out of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-led decision-making, has now been progressed, with all services commencing the implementation phase. This is a deliverable under *Our Way* and correlates with key campaign priorities.

It is also noteworthy that the Queensland First Children and Families Board (QFCFB) has been appointed and will convene for the first time on 1 November 2018; commencing its important role in providing independent monitoring and oversight for the *Our Way* strategy; and guiding future action plan development.

However, there are still a number of actions to be implemented across respective departmental portfolios before the end of 2019. Furthermore, while the Queensland Government committed to the development of Family Matters data priorities in 2017, we are unable to report significant progress in this regard. While data on proportional investment to community-controlled services has now been provided for the first time, this was the only data priority responded to as part of the 2018 Family

Matters data request. However, it is anticipated that data pertaining to access to and use of family support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families will be available in 2019.

While there is considerable progress to be made, we believe that through sustained and collaborative efforts across both government and non-government sectors, we can achieve measurable and targeted improvements that contribute to the safety, wellbeing and connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

A priority for Family Matters Queensland for the upcoming period will also include pursuing greater accountability of service providers through development of a self-audit tool that ensures faithful adherence to the Family Matters Principles and Building Blocks. The aim is to ensure that the guiding principles and Building Blocks of the campaign are given true effect, as opposed to passive acknowledgement. This is important across all aspects of the campaign's priorities; but particularly pertinent to Building Block 4, which encapsulates service providers' and governments' accountability to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.