



Strong communities. Strong culture. Stronger children.

**FAMILY MATTERS REFLECTIVE PRACTICE TOOL
PHASE 2 TRIAL FINDINGS
2022**

PREPARED BY FAMILY MATTERS QUEENSLAND

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Executive Summary

The *Family Matters National Reflective Practice Tool* was developed for signatories to the national Family Matters campaign to identify their strengths and challenges in implementing the campaign principles and to identify activities to achieve the campaign vision and target. It creates accountability in delivering services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in a way that upholds children's right to grow up safe and cared for by family and community and to remain connected to culture and country.

Vision

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture.

Target

To eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care within a generation, by 2040.

Principles

1. **Applying a child-focused approach**
2. **Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children**
3. **Protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's right to live in culture**
4. **Pursing evidence-based responses**
5. **Supporting, healing and strengthening families**
6. **Challenging systemic racism and inequities**

The phase two trial of the *Family Matters National Reflective Practice Tool* follows an initial (phase one) trial that commenced in late 2019 with three member organisations of the Queensland Family Matters Leadership group. Implementation findings from phase one and recommendations for further development of the tool are presented in the [Family Matters Self-Audit \(Reflective Practice\) Tool Trial Findings \(July 2020\)](#).

Of the three non-government organisations (NGOs) that participated in the phase one trial in 2019, two remained active members of the Reflective Practice Tool Working Group where ongoing learnings are shared to inform further implementation of the tool. An additional five NGOs and teams across the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs commenced use of the tool during phase two. All continue to implement the tool as an ongoing commitment to the campaign vision and target which aligns with Queensland's [Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017 - 2037](#).

A number of learnings and recommendations from the phase one trial in 2019-2020 were reinforced in the phase two trial which include:

- The tool highlights the importance of applying the campaign principles across whole organisations and across government departmental units to affect change that extends beyond practice and incorporates systems level action and advocacy
- Greater investment in cultural leadership, workforce development and partnership strategies are required across the child and family sector (government, non-government and community controlled) to work in accordance with the campaign principles and in particular to actively

uphold children's rights and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in a culturally safe way

- Participants noted appreciation and the uniqueness of having a tool that helps to raise important conversations (such as racism and inequity), address service and system gaps and provide an evidence-based pathway to action and advocacy
- The tool compliments other strategic and operational drivers, such as Reconciliation Action Plans and Queensland's Our Way Strategy, without duplicating other ongoing processes
- The format and design of the tool require improvement to enhance usability
- The tool would benefit from including guidance on types of activities that are considered good practice or benchmarks for each principle.

Hearing and acting on the voices of children and young people remains an important constraint and ongoing challenge for the sector, largely due to the service context of working with adults and limited funding being directed to engagement with children and young people directly regarding their safety and wellbeing.

The action learning approach taken during the Queensland trials provided a platform for the wider child and family sector to share strengths and good practice as well as to discuss potential solutions to challenges in relation to the campaign principles. The group process also allowed participants to gauge organisational self-assessments in relation to learnings from other services using the tool, which was valued in the absence of the tool having any benchmarks or good practice examples for each principle.

In addition to the peer level learning and support generated from the action learning process, direct feedback from Family Matters leaders on the process and outcomes of using the tool reportedly assisted services to promote internal improvements to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families based on evidence and input from community leaders. Organisation-wide uptake of the tool was critical for maintaining accountability to families and communities for upholding actions agreed to in completed tools.

The trial group unanimously agree there is value in using the tool for both Family Matters signatories and campaign leaders to strengthen collective calls for action to uphold the campaign principles across the work of the child and family sector.

Since embedding all five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) in Queensland child protection legislation in 2018, the child and family sector has been progressively improving implementation of the ATSICPP. While the tool assisted services to reflect on achievements and continue to cultivate innovative service responses, they were constrained by not having the resources to engage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to lead the design of cultural ways of working and to be resourced as cultural leads that focus on community engagement and managing community relationships.

The greatest call for action this trial raised is the need to update tendering and reporting processes to ensure investment is directed toward providing every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child with access to culturally safe support designed, implemented and evaluated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with expertise in children's spiritual, social, physical and emotional wellbeing.

1. Family Matters Campaign Overview

[*Family Matters: Strong Communities. Strong Culture. Stronger Children*](#) is Australia's national campaign to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture. The goal of the campaign is to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care by 2040.

Family Matters is led by *SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children* and a national leadership group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from across the country. It is supported by a strategic alliance of over 150 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations. Each of these organisations has signed a [Statement of Commitment](#) to the campaign.

Queensland jurisdictional leadership consists of 15 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations, 10 non-government organisations, 2 peak bodies, and a small number of individual members and representatives from the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA).

2. Reflective Practice Tool Background

The [*Family Matters National Reflective Practice Tool*](#)¹ (Appendix 1, referred to hereafter as 'the tool') was developed for signatories of the Family Matters campaign to:

- identify any strengths and challenges in effectively implementing the campaign's six principles and four building blocks
- provide opportunities to promote and share good practice
- identify additional activities and support needed to achieve outcomes in accordance with each principle outlined in the tool.

The tool invites organisations to evaluate their level of commitment to the campaign by undertaking an evidence-based assessment on an annual basis. It is a key accountability tool for signatories to the campaign to work in accordance with the Family Matters building blocks and principles, which align with Queensland's [*Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017 - 2037*](#). It is also currently the only tool that ensures a cultural lens is applied to reflecting on application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle that is enshrined in the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*.

The tool includes background information on the campaign, details of the campaign's four building blocks and six principles, instructions on how to use the tool as well as who should use the tool and why.

The Family Matters Queensland Leadership Group is using a phased approach to implementation of the tool by government and non-government organisations (NGOs) as described in table 1.

Table 1. Queensland's phased approach to using the Family Matters National Reflective Practice Tool

Phase 1. 2019

¹ Renamed in 2020 after being launched as the *Family Matters National Self-Audit Tool* in July 2019.

The tool was released in July 2019 as the *Family Matters Self-Audit Tool*. Queensland trialed use of the tool from July 2019 – June 2020. The findings from that trial can be read in [Queensland Family Matters Self-Audit Tool Trial Findings \(July 2020\)](#) available on the Family Matters website, www.familymatters.org.au

Phase 2. 2020 - 2022

The tool was renamed and adapted based on some of the recommendations from the phase 1 Queensland trial, with a focus on ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are privileged and partnership approaches are undertaken to provide external support and insight. Phase 2 trial participants implemented the revised *Family Matters National Reflective Practice Tool* under the guidance of the Family Matters Queensland Leadership Group and with peer support through a Working Group.

Phase 3. 2022 and beyond

Family Matters Queensland will continue to work with the National Family Matters Leadership Group to develop the tool further and enhance use of the findings for advocacy and calls for action.

In addition to clarifying the purpose, re-naming the tool and embedding a partnership approach to gain external insights when implementing the tool, other key recommendations from the phase 1 trial that remain current include:


- Establish a robust methodology for application of the principles
- Indicate benchmarks or good practice examples for each principle
- Collectively advocate for systems change based on shared findings.²

3. Phase 2 Trial Overview

Family Matters Queensland campaign signatories were encouraged to participate in the phase two trial, following successful completion of phase one trial in 2020 (Appendix 2. Trial Invitation).

Of the three NGOs that participated in the phase one trial, two remained active members of the Reflective Practice Tool Working Group to continue to share ongoing learnings from use of the tool. An additional five NGOs, as well as the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA), commenced use of the tool during the phase two trial. DCYJMA directed use of the tool internally, and one departmental team promoted and supported external implementation of the tool by services commissioned to provide intensive family support children and families.

The Reflective Practice Tool Working Group met regularly from October 2021 to July 2022 and consisted of key contact people from participating organisations and DCYJMA, as well as a Family Matters Queensland co-chair and the Family Matters secretariat.



It's been so useful to have peer support through this Working Group to hear how others are using the tool

Phase 2 trial participant

² [Family Matters Self-Audit \(Reflective Practice\) Tool Trial Findings \(July 2020\)](#)

The purpose of the working group was to provide peer support and an action learning approach to implementation of the tool, as well as to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership guided use of the tool. Discussions supported a collective learning process and the ability to document learnings throughout the life of the trial to inform this report and future development of the tool. The working group also provided progress updates to the Queensland Family Matters Leadership Group on a monthly basis and to the National Family Matters Leadership Group as requested.

4. Key Findings

This section reflects collective feedback and reflections regarding the process and outcomes of implementing the tool since July 2020 when the phase one trial completed. Note that some participants continued use of the tool seamlessly from phase one, while other phase two trial participants commenced use at various stages during the phase two trial period from July 2020 to July 2022.

4.1 Uptake of the Reflective Practice Tool

Gaining buy-in

Most organisations, as well as DCYJMA, that participated in the trial have strong leadership support for the Family Matters campaign and are active in the campaign space. All participants joined the trial due to a genuine intent to work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations to end over-representation of children in the statutory child protection system.

Participants reported that a communication strategy was required internally to move from organisational commitment to Family Matters Queensland to participate in the trial to an internal understanding of and commitment to implementing the tool within the organisation. This involved sharing information about the tool and the campaign through discussion and provision of written material across all areas of the organisation (such as human resources, administration, management, practitioners).

As an example, the following excerpt is from an internal communication distributed within one organisation, accompanied by a copy of the tool (Appendix 1) and the Family Matters Queensland Position Statement on the tool (Appendix 3):

(Name of organisation) will implement the National Reflective Practice Tool using a phased approach under the guidance of the Family Matters Queensland Leadership Group and in agreement with (list of Directors with oversight of the tool).

The findings from using the tool will be collated to determine our current operational view on how [name of organisation] can invest in the right cultural and operational solutions as per our Values and our Reconciliation Action Plan. Through our meaningful reflection we can understand where we have come from, to know where we stand to inform our operational future.

Excerpt from an organisation-wide communique promoting the tool

The above approach was used to raise awareness of use of the tool throughout all levels of the organisation. The communicate also demonstrated senior management endorsement of the Family Matters campaign and accountability for implementation of the tool. It recognises that the tool aligns with other strategic instruments including Reconciliation Action Plans.

Within DCYJMA, a similar approach was used wherein the Office of the Chief Practitioner facilitated internal statewide use of the tool. However, with external agencies funded by DCYJMA to provide intensive family support (IFS) to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, the department sought a limited number of IFS services to participate in the trial, which was at the request of Family Matters Queensland.

Challenges

1. There was a high level of interest in using the tool after the phase one trial and it was important to limit participant numbers for phase two knowing that more development work was outstanding from the phase one trial recommendations. Family Matters leaders made the decision to limit phase two participation to allow for further learnings to inform development of the tool and endorsement by national campaign leaders prior to expanding use of the tool.
2. The following excerpt from the phase one report, [Queensland Family Matters Self-Audit Tool Trial Findings \(July 2020\)](#), remains current:

The tool does not provide benchmarking or a way for services to gauge their self-assessment and outcomes in relation to best practice. Participants noted it would be useful to have guidance on steps that can be taken along the way to fully achieving the actions identified for each principle in the Statement of Commitment, recognising that behavioural and cultural change within organisations and service systems is progressive over time (pg. 4).

Layout of the tool

Participants were in unanimous agreement that the tool in its current form is not user-friendly but that it was adequate in meeting the intent of the tool.

Positive feedback from trial participants included *“the structure of the tool meets the aim of the tool as a conversation starting and practice building tool that can help explore the commitment to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve long-term outcomes for children and families and establish how this can be realised in practice.”*

Participants reported that “the action plan assists to prioritise areas for improvement” and found it most effective to identify actions to be taken in short, approximately three month, periods of time and to focus on one challenge area at a time to realistically have capacity to achieve improvements.

On several occasions, the tool was altered to be more fit for purpose, including:

- One organisation adapted the tool to include culturally designed artwork and improved the format and layout of the tool, maintaining original content, before rolling it out to ten teams across two locations.

- A second organisation independently adapted their approach and included components of the tool within their own Cultural Responsiveness Framework that addresses the principles and practice approaches for both Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
- Similarly, a third organisation attached the tool to an existing cultural competency framework, noting that, while the tool is not user friendly in design, the purpose of attaching the tool to the cultural competency framework was effective in linking with other actions relating to cultural safety measures the organisation can take.


Challenges

1. Some services altered the tool in design only to make it more user-friendly, but on one occasion it was altered significantly to integrate the tool into other service initiatives for efficiency. It is worth noting that this trend in adapting the tool may have occurred in the absence of higher-level development of the tool between trial phases. This presents a level of risk for the campaign in maintaining integrity of the tool and the campaign principles should there be developments that vary from original intent.
2. While there was limited uptake of the option to include a case study in the phase two trial, a phase one trial participant stated that the case study approach *“was useful to record a point in time picture of practice and to dive deeper into how services are provided to clients and to include their voices”*. Case examples are provided in Appendix 5 which reflect stories shared during Working Group meetings.
3. Participants expressed being uncertain of how much detail to include in the written tool, especially given that the nature of the tool is to generate reflective discussions. The shift from yarning about the principles to knowing what to record for each principle was reportedly difficult.

Perspectives gathered to complete the tool

To complete the tool, in most cases trial participants held internal reflective discussions with a mix of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous staff. As in the first trial, findings show that First Nations staff ratios are incredibly low in comparison to the number of First Nations families accessing services. Where there was capacity and resourcing, First Nations staff lead use of the tool.

It cannot be relied on that the existing limited numbers of First Nations staff will have organisation-wide influence, nor that they



Aboriginal people don't know it all culturally. We are learning together. This ongoing learning approach is reflected in changing the language of cultural plans to cultural journey – because a plan has a start and finish whereas a journey carries forward indefinitely.

Phase 2 trial participant

represent the views of an entire community and the diverse range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families accessing services.

An outcome reported by one organisation that completed the phase one trial was that *“it assisted the organisation to realise there needed to be more than one identified position”*. During the phase two trial, this organisation doubled the number of identified staff positions in Queensland from one to two, with one worker focusing on community engagement and frontline family support while the other influences strategy and service design.

A key learning from the phase one trial that was emphasised to phase two trial participants was the importance of embedding a partnership process in implementing the tool to:

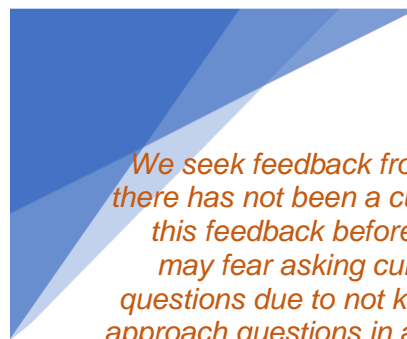
- ensure teams receive external insight when reflecting on strengths and challenges
- strengthen partnerships with community controlled organisations to identify and deliver actions that elevate operating in accordance with the campaign intent to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

A minority of trial participants gained external input on their self-assessment through yarning to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations or community members on existing committees (such as Reconciliation groups).

DCYJMA was effective at gaining external perspectives due to strong existing relationships with peak body Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) and included a strong contingent of First Nations practice leaders employed across DCYJMA regions.

The partnership process not only brought new views, but it mitigated the risk of cultural blindness or unconscious bias impacting on self-assessment. A team who had thought that their cultural capability was high reported six weeks later that *“after meeting and yarning with community partners and asking for advice and ideas they had learned so much more and management reported noticing a real shift in their practice”*. As noted in the phase one trial, providing benchmarks, in addition to gaining the views of external parties, may assist to balance this self-perception phenomenon.

Two participating NGOs had first-hand experience of using the [SNAICC Genuine Partnerships resources and audit tool](#) and strongly recommended this suite of resources not only to enhance working relationships for completing the tool but to achieve principle two, particularly enabling communities to drive local solutions to local issues.



We seek feedback from families but there has not been a cultural focus to this feedback before. Practitioners may fear asking culturally specific questions due to not knowing how to approach questions in a way that isn't awkward or uncomfortable, because they worry this will impact on their engagement with the family on the ongoing basis.

I think it will just take time to get more comfortable with the conversations, content, context, and themselves to be able to deliver the questions in a way that their discomfort isn't transferring to the family.

Phase 2 trial participant

Family feedback was rarely gathered directly for the tool but instead organisations relied on existing feedback processes to gauge family perspectives on the assessment areas. Using existing feedback was more favourable than asking families to provide input additional to that already gathered. However, as existing feedback forms do not always ask questions that are directly relevant to the cultural needs of the child and family or the campaign principles, and non-Indigenous practitioners may experience fear or hesitancy in asking for feedback.

One participant noted that they hope to create a short survey to give families, including a child friendly survey, for families that want to provide anonymous feedback, and will work with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practice Lead to ensure questions are culturally appropriate.

Challenges

1. It was not uncommon for large (state-wide and national) organisations to have only one or two identified positions within the entire organisation which limits internal cultural input and the capacity for First Nations staff to engage with communities and families accessing services to work together toward the campaign goal. This finding echoes that of the phase one trial that identified:

“a need for organisations to create Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and partnership strategies with measurable targets across all levels and program areas” ([Queensland Family Matters Self-Audit Tool Trial Findings \(July 2020\)](#), pg. 15).

2. Time constraints were reported as a significant barrier to engaging external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations in gaining their perspectives, as participants wanted to ensure significant time was dedicated to the activity to allow for an open dialogue about how the community perceives support offered and improvements that can be made.
3. Gathering children and young people’s perspectives was deemed highly difficult due to the primary clientele of participating organisations being adults rather than children and young people themselves. One service that worked directly with young people in foster and residential care noted that they are “*constantly gathering input from young people on connections so hoping that input will transfer across [to the tool]*”.

Difficulties in gaining children and young people’s perspectives for both completing the tool and during service delivery was also raised during the phase one trial:

“without being funded to work directly with children, services feel unable to gain children’s views on decisions impacting them, despite it being evidenced as best practice and part of the Family Matters principles” ([Queensland Family Matters Self-Audit Tool Trial Findings \(July 2020\)](#), pg. 13).

Resources required to complete the tool

Participants reported that in addition to lead-in discussions to arrange use of the tool, the preferred method for using the tool was to hold a series of meetings to discuss the tool, giving ample time for

reflection as well as action planning. Rarely did a team complete the tool in one sitting. One participant held a series of meetings to allow for deep discussion of one principle at a time, and consequently completed the tool over a period of several months.

Overall, it can be estimated that the tool required a minimum of three hours or 30 minutes per principle initially for *completing* the tool, particularly when completed without external community voice. In some cases it was reported to take 12 hours where external input was also gathered. The tool can be time intensive as it requires lengthy discussion, written recording, feedback and quality assurance from external partners and the logistics of arranging meetings both internally and externally. Time investment is then immediately required to *implement* the actions raised in the tool and *monitor* progress regularly.

It was reportedly difficult to partner with community controlled organisations and community members for external input given that this activity was not resourced outside of existing funding. Participants expressed concern that it would be a burden to community, particularly community controlled organisations that are grossly underfunded to meet the demand of families at risk of entering, or in contact with, the child protection system.

An organisation that supported several teams across the state to use the tool formed a Cultural Connections group made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to provide peer support, peer supervision and drive cultural responses internally through use of the tool.

The forming of this group was an action identified during initial completion of the tool in 2021, however it required the organisation to acquire necessary resources to support its implementation and to prioritise the activity in staff workplans. In 2022, it is reported that the Cultural Connections group has been able to increase cultural responsiveness for families accessing the service by providing a pathway for First Nations staff to drive culturally designed ways of working.

A shared learning was that resources are required to achieve and sustain momentum for implementing service improvements, as well as to support frontline workers to balance direct practice with time to undertake cultural leadership activities which requires a reduction in caseload.

Challenges

1. When the tool is applied with only an internal lens, the strength of input was determined by the ability of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce to voice opinions and promote change within organisations. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community sector workers, their roles are focused on casework and do not incorporate time to conduct community engagement to foster and maintain strong working relationships with community networks to gain input on the tool.
2. Funding discrepancies were noted between government and non-government services, including community controlled, regarding the resourcing of cultural responses, expertise and leadership. While DCYJMA has a network of Cultural Practice Advisors across the state that do not have a caseload, very few NGOs have an equivalent workforce and where a cultural lead does exist it is a single worker in most cases. Similarly, it is common for government departments, as well as academics from universities, to provide payment for requests for accessing the cultural knowledge and expertise of Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander community controlled staff (examples include for Welcome to Country or to undertake family mapping), however NGOs report not having sufficient or dedicated funds for this purpose.

3. Following these engagement constraints in completing the tool with a cultural lens, a major challenge for participants was not having funds or contract flexibility to implement the suggested improvements to service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families which then hinders accountability to community to deliver on their input.

4.2 Integration of the Reflective Practice Tool with business as usual

Participants reported that the tool integrated with existing strategic and operational mechanisms. *“The tool has an interface with existing strategies including the Our Way Strategy and the reform work, including the move to Delegated Authority, being undertaken by the department, in partnership with QATSI CPP and community controlled organisations.”*

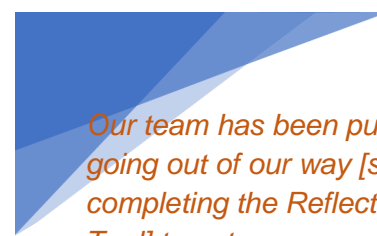
In particular, actions arising from the tool were either already noted in, or were then incorporated into, Reconciliation Action Plans and operational or strategic plans. When asked if the tool created duplication, one participant explained *“not at all, we used the tool to find gaps and identify what needs to be improved and present to management”*.

In one case the key contact responsible for implementing the Reflective Practice Tool joined up with the organisation’s lead for reconciliation and together identified where the tool would be a good fit in regard to geographic location and program type. Leadership level encouragement of cross-team collaboration was highly successful in supporting comprehensive implementation of the tool and ensured greater oversight and accountability for monitoring and completing action plans.

One participant group queried if findings would be used for individual performance management, however this is not the nature of the tool and use of the tool itself made it clear that the focus is to improve practice to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Having pathways for families to provide feedback outside of exit from the service could help alleviate this fear, due to exit processes commonly being completed by the family’s case worker, focusing on areas of accomplishment (goals achieved) and ongoing needs or referrals.

The tool was best integrated into business as usual where specific actionable goals were documented with dates for completion, and where review processes were in place through regular supervision or team meetings. One team incorporated the Family Matters principles into their team meetings as a standing agenda item to better incorporate them into everyday practice.

While the tool is designed to be used on an annual basis, the design of incorporating an action plan for each principle assisted teams to break down actions into short-



Our team has been purposefully going out of our way [since completing the Reflective Practice Tool] to get resources developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including books and cards to engage children, and having continuous conversations about the campaign principles and what to do to uphold them.

Phase 2 trial participant

term and long-term goals. Regular monitoring assisted to keep the action plan on track and to effectively embed changes into practice.

Challenges

1. Competing priorities and unexpected events challenged the planned timeframes for reviewing the tool in some cases and in expanding use of the tool to other geographic or program areas. For instance, during the trial period the sector experienced flooding, COVID-19, maintaining Human Services Quality Framework (HSQF) licensing requirements and changes to program areas particularly growth of foster care programs.
2. Participants often preferred to focus on one area of action or change at a time, rather than all six principle areas. Some focused on addressing one principle for three months, and on completion of goals moving to a new principle to focus on for the next three months. Participants reported difficulties having capacity and resources to address actions across all six principles simultaneously.



In my organisation the Reconciliation Action Plan sits at a higher level, senior management level, and focuses on systemic changes.

The Reflective Practice Tool brought the conversation to the frontline.

Phase 2 trial participant

4.3 Emerging themes from using the Reflective Practice Tool

Action research discussions during the trial period, as well as the completed tools themselves, highlighted key themes that emerged for participants as areas to focus action to address the campaign principles. Appendix 4 presents collated content from completed tools and Appendix 5 presents case examples from trial participants, both of which were analysed to inform the findings in this section.

Need to improve cultural responsiveness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

The reflective nature of the tool allowed teams to engage in discussion on whether existing practice frameworks were adaptable and appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and whether further development was required as an organisation to improve cultural capability of staff working directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

While it remains the case that “one-size fits all practice approaches and frameworks are often applied to service delivery despite a significant proportion of clientele being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” ([Queensland Family Matters Self-Audit Tool Trial Findings \(July 2020, p. 13\)](#)), participants reported that the tool assisted “*in looking at real fundamental change and not making culture an add-on at the end of a case plan*”.

In regard to practice discussions, the tool raised a frequently noted concern that services tend to apply cultural diversity responses that lump minority groups together including migrants, refugees, Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, and LGBTQI+ community members. It was raised that even within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander frameworks, much work needs to be undertaken to expand on the particular needs of Torres Strait Islander children and families as different to that of Aboriginal children and families.

Rather than use the tool as is, one organisation undertook a process to develop a Cultural Responsiveness Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and to incorporate key aspects of the tool into the framework (details included in Appendix 5). The participant organisation developed a process for workers to spend time gaining informal cultural guidance from mentors to explore their own learning, biases, cultural understanding and improve accountability to families.

It was noted by trial participants that there are concerns about applying a single cultural framework to a large clientele group inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and CALD communities. Leadership provided during the phase two trial on this matter by Family Matters co-chair Michael Currie included that *“it is important to honour the history of First Nations peoples and work with integrity”*.

Participants raised that services require appropriate resourcing to uphold cultural integrity which is not currently provided for in funding agreements.

Ongoing efforts to enhance understanding and implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

Fully implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) is a commitment campaign signatories agree to under Principle 3: Protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s right to live in culture and it is also included in section 5c of the *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld). As described in the tool’s explanatory notes to principle 3: “connections to family, community and culture are critical to wellbeing and self-identity ... and that continuity of cultural identity promotes healthy development” (Draft Family Matters National Reflective Practice Tool, p. 5).

Discussions held within DCYJMA led this participant group to consider use of the placement hierarchy for all families, not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, as best practice. This was echoed by another trial participant that *“if it works for mob, it will benefit all children in the system”*.

The tool assisted participants to reflect on recent efforts to improve implementation of all five elements of the ATSICPP to the level of active efforts. One participant shared a team reflection that *“the ATSICPP puts culture at the forefront of minds always”*.

One innovation resulting from feedback from a young person to improve the documents used by the organisation was to place the five elements of the ATSICPP as a watermark on forms and documents used by every team, including the business unit. This resulted in re-designing templates that carry young people’s cultural journeys and stories, as well as those that are used with carers who have First Nations children placed in their care, to incorporate the language of the ATSICPP across all points of contact for children and young people receiving care services.




Services need to develop cultural capability and cultural safety. This can be done by strengthening cultural frameworks for practice and also using the Reflective Practice Tool for reflection.

Again, participants raised that services require appropriate resourcing to actively implement the ATSICPP which is not currently provided for in funding agreements.

Phase 2 trial participant

Expanding organisation-wide application of the campaign principles

In some trial sites, the tool also was applied beyond frontline family support work to the internal operations of organisations. Where the tool was used by Human Resources and Operational Managers, for example, actions identified and completed during the phase two trial included improvements to workforce diversity (recruitment) and policies and procedures to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff through access to First Nations counsellors via Employee Assistance Programs and Cultural Leave Policies. One service's business unit reportedly started actively seeking First Nations providers in procurement of services.



The tool helped teams understand the applicability of all 5 elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle outside of the out of home care context and to see culture as a strength and to notice disconnection from culture as an area practitioners can support that can be a symptom or cause of current issues families face.

Phase 2 trial participant

The structure of roles and responsibilities were often considered as well, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff identifying that direct service delivery is hampered if time is not also allocated to engaging with community to build trust and rapport at the community level.

A common thread in feedback was that changes identified because of using the tool were aligned with Reconciliation Action Plans and quality standards. However, they were seen as 'good to have' and senior managers struggled with shifting actions into 'must have' due to funding parameters being strictly aligned with case work.

Trial participants found that the process highlighted the struggle between balancing funding schedules and outputs with elevating community voice and accountability to community.

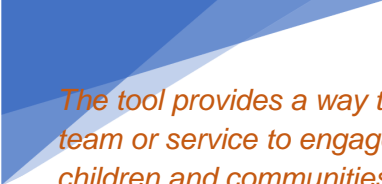
Financial and skills gaps regarding community engagement and relationship management

A common theme found across completed tools was *"the need to value and enable the community connections, relationships and roles that First Nations staff bring with them personally into their professional roles"*, Family Matters co-chair Michael Currie.

Non-Indigenous and community controlled organisations both require resourcing to work in more collaborative and integrated ways that extend beyond stakeholder meetings to implementing shared projects with shared resourcing. Often participants completing the tool were hesitant to ask more of an already burdened community controlled sector, which limited the inclusion of community views in completed tools. It also highlighted that NGOs are rarely progressing beyond networking and into committed and sustained relationships that include financial investment in the community controlled sector.

As mentioned previously, the most effective relationship management with external community members evidenced during the trial was by the most highly resourced participant group, DCYJMA.

Participants reported that children and young people impacted by service delivery were the most difficult group to engage for input into the tool because services are primarily funded to work with



The tool provides a way to develop a team or service to engage the voice of children and communities, and to honour that voice by guiding practice to deliver the outcomes children and families seek, not just funding body outcomes.

Family Matters Qld Co-Chair Michael Currie

the annual review period to achieve. Participants reported that future directions and line of sight and responsibility for those changes were sometimes uncertain, particularly for systemic issues that require government and other stakeholder action.

The tool would benefit from a way to delineate issues that are longer-term and strategic in intent, which may involve advocacy and campaign level action, from short-term internal changes that can be made within existing resources. Linking actions in the tool to Reconciliation Action Plans can go some of the way toward addressing longer-term change, but the sharing of completed tools to Family Matters presents an opportunity to have a unified approach to raising collective issues and solutions to achieve the jurisdictional campaign goal of eliminating over-representation of First Nations children in Queensland's child protection system.

Need for access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander based evidence and cultural guidance

The trial revealed that using the tool presents an opportunity to employ community and place-based approaches to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and organisations to lead responses for children and families.

Participants voiced wanting to engage locally-based cultural specialists and organisations for guidance and direction in their work with families, however resources are required to do this effectively.

Community input into completed tools was limited to resources available and quality of relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and organisations, and children's voices were rarely documented in service delivery in general across all trial sites. This means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wisdom and knowledge, particularly around child-rearing practices known to keep children safe in culture for 65,000 years or more, are rarely being drawn on and supported when NGOs or DCYJMA engage with families.

Likewise, limitations were noted by participants in sourcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific research to inform practice or having funds to implement community-wide evaluation of services. Most services collect feedback from adult service users on completion of their individual case plan goals and support received, but not more broadly on meeting cultural needs.

adults. There was an interest and willingness to engage children and young people with funds permitting, but a gap in workforce skills and confidence to approach young people for input on how to better meet their needs in a safe way that does not cause distress relating to their unmet needs or existing trauma.

Clear lines of responsibility and accountability to uphold actions identified

As with the phase one trial, there are broader systems level issues that need to be advocated for change that often require management level advocacy and generally take longer than

5. Broader considerations for Family Matters campaign

The trial group found the tool highlighted gaps and challenges in meeting the campaign goal that could inform the Family Matters campaign efforts to advocate for systemic changes.

Campaign signatories are in a position to collectively use findings of completed tools to address service and system barriers to actively implementing the ATSICPP. Supporting children and families across all of the ATSICPP elements (prevention, partnership, participation, placement and connection) in a culturally safe way, with culturally designed and evidence-informed practice frameworks, is imperative to achieve the campaign goal to keep children safely connected to family, community, culture and country.

The following is a list of considerations for collective action and advocacy to be taken by campaign signatories arising from analysis of trial findings:

- 5.1 The need to review position descriptions and formal qualification requirements to value lived and professional experience and enable community connections, relationships and roles that First Nations staff bring personally into professional roles. Coinciding is the need for better resourcing of culturally safe work practices such as external clinical supervision, cultural supervision, debriefing and mentoring.
- 5.2 External community engagement needs to be resourced in service contracts and embedded in workforce and partnership strategies that include cultural leadership roles and culturally designed ways of working with community, families, children and young people. This includes the need for brokerage funding to engage and resource community to be involved in service delivery (such as funding of Elders groups, Elder-in-residence programs and provision of cultural advice). It also includes adequate resourcing for ATSICCOs to have capacity to genuinely partner with NGOs.
- 5.3 Tender processes for service delivery need to prioritise evidence of application of the ATSICPP and Family Matters principles, as well as cultural capability. Evidence required could include:
 - 5.3.1 genuine partnerships with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
 - 5.3.2 cultural competency training that builds knowledge about local history and protocols and addresses cultural privilege, biases and subconscious or overt racism
 - 5.3.3 culturally designed practice frameworks for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- 5.4 Reporting processes need to be refreshed to enable evidence-gathering, including improving data systems, regarding the child and family sector's implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle to the level of active efforts. This includes enhancing outcomes reporting, rather than focusing on output (hours) reporting, particularly given the time required to uphold working with the wider family and community network and working holistically across multiple domains to uphold children's rights and safety.

- 5.5 To meet the cross-sector call for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander based evidence of effective ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, ATSICCOs need funding to develop their own data, research and evaluation.

6 Recommendations for future Reflective Practice Tool implementation

The trial group unanimously agree there is value in using the tool for both Family Matters signatories and campaign leaders that can strengthen collective calls for action to uphold the campaign principles and principles across the work of the child and family sector.

For future development and use of the tool the trial group recommends:

- 6.1 Reformat and incorporate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander design style to make the tool more user-friendly
- 6.2 Establish a robust methodology to using the tool, incorporating benchmarks and measures to achieve over a phased approach, as recommended in the [Queensland Family Matters Self-Audit Tool Trial Findings \(July 2020\)](#). The Reconciliation Action Plan process presents an example of a phased approach that is built on over time and Appendix 5 of the first trial report includes prompt questions and measures mapped to each of the six campaign principles. This will mitigate the risk of cultural blindness and unconscious bias in completing the tool and provide guidance on progressive actions to take, recognising change takes time and resources.
- 6.3 Create a clear process (such as moving the tool to an online system) for findings to be shared with Family Matters campaign leaders. This will enable shared findings to be used by the campaign for collective advocacy for systems change and it can provide further feedback on service improvements to individual organisations to enhance their self-assessment findings.

Appendix 1. Family Matters National Reflective Practice Tool (2020)



National Reflective Practice Tool

Background

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have grown up safe, well and cared for in their families, communities and cultural traditions for thousands of years. The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to thrive within their families, communities and cultures. However, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children face ongoing challenges that stem from colonisation and its inter-generational impacts. More than twenty years since the ground-breaking Bringing Them Home report on the experiences of the Stolen Generations was released it is devastating that the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care (OOHC) continue to rise. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are now 11 times more likely than other Australian children to be removed from their families and placed in OOHC.

Our campaign

Family Matters: Strong Communities. Strong Culture. Stronger Children is Australia's national campaign to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture. Family Matters is led by SNAICC – National Voice for our Children and a group of eminent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from across the country. It is supported by a strategic alliance of over 150 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations. The goal of the campaign is to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC by 2040.

Signing the Family Matters Statement of Commitment reflects a genuine intent to work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their organisations to end this over-representation. The national self-audit tool has been developed for signatories of the Family Matters campaign to deeply reflect on their practice on an annual basis and identify any strengths and challenges in

effectively implementing the principles and building blocks of the campaign to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are safe, well and cared for in their families, communities and cultures.

Campaign building blocks

The Family Matters building blocks have been designed on the basis of evidence, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and experience of what is needed to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child development, well-being and safety – which are interdependent and interrelated issues, requiring a holistic strategy of redress. Addressing only one without paying attention to the others will, over time, impede the achievement of sustainable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The building blocks are as follows:



1. All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive.

Early intervention is required to strengthen families and provide long-term social and economic benefits by preventing trajectories that lead to health problems, criminalisation, and child protection intervention. Service engagement and availability barriers must also be addressed to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are able to access a full range of culturally safe and acceptable universal early childhood, education, health, housing, legal and other social services. High-quality trauma-informed practice needs to be applied in all states and territories across family support, child protection, health, education, and related adult services under the leadership and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and community representatives must genuinely be included in the decisions that are made about their children at all stages of child protection decision making. Government and mainstream service providers need to progressively step away from direct service provision to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and instead actively hand service delivery and decision-making responsibility to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.



3. Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive.

A transformation of services is required to create a culturally safe and competent child health and wellbeing sector. This requires the development of laws, policies and practices that respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and reflect a priority to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC. The agenda of all services supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children must include: full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle; amendment of policies and procedures which discriminate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; and the development of cultural competence across policies, staff and service provision.



4. Governments and services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Efforts to address over-representation must include public measures of accountability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the oversight of reforms, including the development and monitoring of measures of success. All governments, services and institutions must prioritise the removal of racism, cultural blindness, and direct and indirect discrimination towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. By completing this self-audit tool, signatories can build on their accountability and the audit can be used as a means for the Family Matters leadership group to monitor progress towards the overall campaign goal.

Your commitment to the campaign

All signatories of the Family Matters campaign have made a commitment to working in accordance with the following six key principles, and to implementing all corresponding actions (included in the self-audit tool below):

1. Applying a child focused approach
2. Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children
3. Protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's right to live in culture
4. Pursuing evidence based responses
5. Supporting, healing and strengthening families

6. Challenging systemic racism and inequities

What is the self-audit tool and why use it?

The Family Matters self-audit tool has been structured around the above six core principles and their corresponding actions. At a broader level, these principles and actions support the four building blocks of the campaign. It is an expectation that organisations will complete each of the assessment frameworks for all six campaign principles on an annual basis. Annual completion of the self-audit tool will provide a consistent means to promote and share good practice with other services, reflect on areas for improvement and encourage consideration of additional activities and support where needed. Regular use of the tool will also generate valuable progress information to feed into broader evaluation of redressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations have had negative experiences of tokenistic collaborations with non-Indigenous organisations. This has led to a level of mistrust that governments and mainstream services may sign on to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander campaigns to ‘tick the box’ of cultural competence without engaging with the deeper commitment of the campaign. Tokenistic involvement does not lead to better services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Tokenism can, in fact, hold up progress as organisations that appear to be culturally responsive but fail to adjust their service delivery create deeper levels of mistrust, maintain power imbalances and fail to promote reconciliation.

In light of this, the self-audit tool is designed to push further than a simple ‘tick box’ exercise. It is a conversation starting and practice building tool that can help you explore your deeper commitment to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve long-term outcomes for children and families and establish how this can be realised in practice.

Who should use the self-audit tool?

All organisations that are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families are encouraged to complete this self-audit tool. Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are safe, happy, healthy and able to thrive is a shared responsibility. We can only reach our goal with the commitment and action of every individual, family, community and organisation, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous, who touch the lives of children. The self-audit tool holds particular relevance for non-Indigenous organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as it is a supportive measure to ensure the delivery of culturally safe and responsive services. A whole of practice approach is required to meaningfully engage with this self-audit tool. This approach will look different in each organisation but could, for example, include executive, policy, managerial and direct practice leaders.

How to use the self-audit tool

Below are suggested stages for completing the self-audit tool, including ideas to assist in carrying out each stage.

Stage 1: Come together to discuss and reflect on the values that underpin your organisations commitment to Family Matters

Start by checking-in about why you have signed the Statement of Commitment and what is important to you in the way you go about fulfilling this commitment.

Stage 2: Complete the self-audit tool

Work through each of the self-assessment frameworks to deeply reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of your organisation in implementing the corresponding actions of the campaign principles.

Stage 3: Ensure you plan the way forward to respond to the audit outcomes

This is a critical stage to ensure that plans are made and action is taken to address the issues and priorities identified in the audit. Talk through priority actions and assign responsibility and timeframes for completing them.

Stage 4: Share the outcomes of your self-audit tool to the Family Matters leadership group (optional)

We invite you to provide the outcomes of your self-audit tool to the Family Matters leadership group in your state or territory and/or to the national leadership group. This information will be used to reflect on the progress of the campaign and a member of the relevant leadership group may contact you to discuss any challenges you are facing in carrying out your commitment to the campaign. With the permission of services who submit the outcomes of their self-audit, Family Matters may also publish case studies of best practice. Family Matters may also publish de-identified data collected through the audit process.

Suggested resources

The following resources may assist you with identifying evidence to support your assessments and establish actions for improvement. They can be accessed online through the [Family Matters](#) and [SNAICC](#) websites.

- [The Family Matters Roadmap](#)
- [The Family Matters Report](#)
- [Understanding and Applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle](#)
- [The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A Guide To Support Implementation](#)

National Self-Audit Tool Draft

Date:

Name of organisation:

Names and positions of people completeing this audit tool:

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, signatories commit to:

Ensuring 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.

Promoting the inclusion of children’s voices in all decisions that affect them.

Assessment:

A: Always **B:** Often **C:** Sometimes **D:** Rarely **E:** Never

Evidence & case studies to support this assessment





Please attach additional pages if more space is required.

Strengths:

Challenges:

Strengths:







Challenges:

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Recommended actions for improvement | | |
| Action plan 1. Who will action this? 2. When will it be actioned by? 3. What supports will be required? 4. How will you measure improvement? | 1. 2. 3. 4. | 1. 2. 3. 4. |
| Relevant Building Blocks |  Building block 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision-making.  Building block 3: Appropriate laws, policies and practices that are culturally safe and responsive. |  Building block 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision-making.  Building block 3: Appropriate laws, policies and practices that are culturally safe and responsive. |

PRINCIPLE 2: ENSURING THAT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE 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.

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| <p>Accordingly, signatories commit to:</p> | <p>Building and transferring capacity to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to provide services that respond to the needs of their communities.</p> | | <p>Ensuring policies and mechanisms to facilitate the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in all decisions that affect them.</p> | | <p>Recognising the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to drive local solutions to local issues.</p> | |
| <p>Assessment: A: Always B: Often C: Sometimes D: Rarely E: Never</p> | | | | | | |
| <p>Evidence & case studies to support this assessment</p> <p>Please attach additional pages if more space is required.</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> | <p>Challenges:</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> | <p>Challenges:</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> | <p>Challenges:</p> |

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| Recommended actions for improvement | | | | | |
| Action plan 1. Who will action this? 2. When will it be actioned by? 3. What supports will be required? 4. How will you measure improvement? | 1. 2. 3. 4. | 1. 2. 3. 4. | 1. 2. 3. 4. | 1. 2. 3. 4. | |
| Relevant Building Blocks |  <p>Building block 1: Access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services.</p>  <p>Building block 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision-making.</p> |  <p>Building block 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision-making.</p> |  <p>Building block 1: Access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services.</p>  <p>Building block 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision-making.</p>  <p>Building block 3: Appropriate laws, policies and practices that are culturally safe and responsive.</p> | | |






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.

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| <p>Accordingly, signatories commit to:</p> | <p>Promoting and enabling 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.</p> | <p>Developing 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.</p> |
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| <p>Assessment: A: Always B: Often C: Sometimes D: Rarely E: Never</p> | | |
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|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <p>Evidence & case studies to support this assessment</p> <p>Please attach additional pages if more space is required.</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> | <p>Challenges:</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> | <p>Challenges:</p> |
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| <p>Recommended actions for improvement</p> | | |
| <p>Action plan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who will action this? 2. When will it be actioned by? 3. What supports will be required? 4. How will you measure improvement? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. |
| <p>Relevant Building Blocks</p> | <p> Building block 1: Access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services.</p> <p> Building block 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision-making</p> <p> Building block 3: Appropriate laws, policies and practices that are culturally safe and responsive.</p> | <p> Building block 3: Appropriate laws, policies and practices that are culturally safe and responsive.</p> <p> Building block 4: Governments and services held accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> |

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.




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| <p>Accordingly, signatories commit to:</p> | <p>Respecting and practically applying 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.</p> | | <p>Listening 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.</p> | |
| <p>Assessment A: Always B: Often C: Sometimes D: Rarely E: Never</p> | | | | |
| <p>Evidence & case studies to support this assessment</p> <p>Please attach additional pages if more space is required.</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> | <p>Challenges:</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> | <p>Challenges:</p> |

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| <p>Recommended actions for improvement</p> | | |
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| <p>Relevant Building Blocks</p> | <p> Building block 1: Access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services.</p> <p> Building block 3: Appropriate laws, policies and practices that are culturally safe and responsive.</p> | <p> Building block 1: Access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services.</p> <p> Building block 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision-making</p> <p> Building block 3: Appropriate laws, policies and practices that are culturally safe and responsive.</p> |




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 life-long 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.

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| <p>Accordingly, signatories commit to:</p> | <p>Promoting and driving increased early intervention supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and increased proportional investment in early intervention as compared to OOHC.</p> | <p>Supporting and promoting a priority to safely reunify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their families wherever it is possible to do so.</p> | | |
| <p>A: Always B: Often C: Sometimes D: Rarely E: Never</p> | | | | |
| <p>Evidence & case studies to support this assessment</p> <p>Please attach additional pages if more space is required.</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> | <p>Challenges:</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> | <p>Challenges:</p> |

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| Recommended actions for improvement | | |
| Action plan 1. Who will action this? 2. When will it be actioned by? 3. What supports will be required? 4. How will you measure improvement? | 1. 2. 3. 4. | 1. 2. 3. 4. |
| Relevant Building Blocks |  Building block 1: Access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services. |  Building block 1: Access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services.  Building block 3: Appropriate laws, policies and practices that are culturally safe and responsive. |

| PRINCIPLE 6: CHALLENGING SYSTEMIC RACISM AND INEQUITIES | | | | |
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| 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, signatories commit to: | Taking 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. | | Challenging racism where we see or experience it in laws, policies, procedures or behaviours. | |
| Assessment: A: Always B: Often C: Sometimes D: Rarely E: Never | | | | |
| Evidence & case studies to support this assessment Please attach additional pages if more space is required. | Strengths: | Challenges: | Strengths: | Challenges: |

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| <p>Recommended actions for improvement</p> | | |
| <p>Action plan</p> <p>1. Who will action this? 2. When will it be actioned by? 3. What supports are required? 4. How will you measure improvement?</p> | <p>1. 2. 3. 4.</p> | <p>1. 2. 3. 4.</p> |
| <p>Relevant Building Blocks</p> | <p> Building block 1: Access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services.</p> <p> Building block 3: Appropriate laws, policies and practices that are culturally safe and responsive.</p> | <p> Building block 4: Governments and services held accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> |

Thank you for completing the Family Matters National self-audit tool. If you would like to submit the outcomes of your audit please forward it to (section to be completed).

Appendix 2. Trial Invitation

8 September 2021

RE: Family Matters Reflective Practice Tool Phase 2 Trial



Dear Family Matters signatory,

Thank you for your interest in implementing the national [Family Matters Reflective Practice Tool](#) ('the tool') during its Phase 2 Trial, currently underway to April 2022.

The Family Matters Queensland Leadership Group is using a phased approach to implementation of the tool and continuing to seek partnership with stakeholders (including government, non-government organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations) to advance use of the tool.

Queensland is the first jurisdiction to trial this accountability tool that was developed in 2019 for signatories to the national Family Matters campaign to identify their strengths and challenges in implementing the campaign principles and to identify activities to achieve the campaign vision and target. Importantly, this is currently the only tool for reflecting on practice against the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

Queensland trialed use of the tool from July 2019 – June 2020 (Phase 1). Participants (consisting of non-government organisations) reported that the tool supported them to take a partnership approach to engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives about strengths and challenges in effectively implementing the principles and building blocks of the campaign. Learnings from the phase 1 trial resulted in continued development of the tool and can be read in [Queensland Family Matters Self-Audit Tool Trial Findings](#) (July 2020).

Specific learnings from the Phase 1 trial³ that inform the Phase 2 trial include:

- The tool is complimentary to existing strategic and practice mechanisms such as Human Services Quality Framework action plans, Reconciliation Action Plans, cultural practice frameworks and practice standards specific to program areas.
- The tool presents an opportunity to highlight and celebrate achievements within teams, as well as to apply an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lens in a practice context.
- There is flexibility in how to use the tool, such as in a particular service location or within a specific program area, whilst also engaging a wide cross section of organisational

³ <https://www.familymatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Qld-Family-Matters-Self-Audit-Tool-Findings-July-2020.pdf>

representatives (from policy, practice and management) to enable behavioural and cultural change organisation-wide.

- The reflective process strengthens partnerships as it is essential to ensure external support and insight from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders during the process.
- Engaging with the tool improves understanding of the campaign, the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, and the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

We welcome campaign signatories to participate in the Phase 2 trial. We ask that you nominate a key contact person to lead your organisation in using the tool during this trial period (see attached *Family Matters RPT Phase 2 Trial Timeline*). Your contact person will be supported by Family Matters campaign leaders with experience in using the tool and key contact people trialling the tool in other organisations via regular working group meetings.

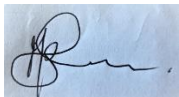
To assist the collective learning process, we ask that your key contact person feedback their learnings and recommendations for improvements to the tool to Family Matters Qld at the meetings. Findings will be documented (maintaining confidentiality of trial participants and organisations) in a trial report expected to be released on the Family Matters website in April 2022.

Key points of interest to be collected from all trial participants include:

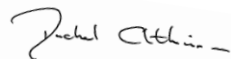
- Who completed the tool (maintaining confidentiality but indicating representation from internal levels of the organisation and types of external partners)?
- Did the tool instigate conversations of relevance (about the campaign and practice)?
- Is it worded and formatted in a way that contributes to reflection on the impact of policies, programs and practice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families?
- Does the wording and layout of the tool help your organisation identify areas of improvement to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve long-term outcomes for children and families?
- What could be improved to enhance use of the tool?
- What was required in time and staffing to complete the tool?

To commit to, or discuss, the trial further please contact the Family Matters Qld secretariat at QATSICPP, Eva Ruggiero, at qldfamilymatters@qatsicpp.com.au

Thank you for your consideration and for being a supporter of the Family Matters campaign.
On behalf of the Queensland Family Matters leadership group.



Michael Currie
Queensland Family Matters Co-Chair



Rachel Atkinson
Queensland Family Matters Co-Chair

Appendix 3. Family Matters Qld Position Statement on Reflective Practice Tool

Position Statement on Family Matters National Reflective Practice Tool

Prepared by Family Matters Queensland, November 2020

The Family Matters Queensland Leadership Group is committed to driving the continued development and use of the Family Matters National Reflective Practice Tool (referred to as 'Reflective Practice Tool').

Family Matters is Australia's national campaign to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and ensure children grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture.

Family Matters is led by *SNAICC – National Voice for our Children* and a group of eminent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from across the country. It is supported by a strategic alliance of over 150 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations.

Signing the Family Matters Statement of Commitment reflects a genuine intent to work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their organisations to end this over-representation.

The Tool

The Reflective Practice Tool is developed for signatories of the Family Matters campaign to deeply reflect on their practice on an annual basis and identify any strengths, challenges and corresponding actions to effectively implementing the six core principles and four building blocks of the campaign to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are safe, well and cared for in their families, communities and cultures.

The Reflective Practice Tool is an accountability mechanism that assists signatories to reflect on how they are upholding their commitment and to identify actions to take in accordance with each principle as outlined in the tool.

This is currently the only tool that ensures a cultural lens is applied to reflecting on application of the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP): connection, participation, prevention, partnership and placement. It is complimentary to national and state standards under which we work in Queensland, including the Human Services Quality Framework, the Our Way Strategy and Reconciliation Action Plans.

The Approach

The Family Matters Queensland Leadership Group is using a phased approach to implementation of the Reflective Practice Tool and continuing to seek partnership with stakeholders (including government, non-government organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations) to advance use of tool.

Phase 1. 2019

The tool was released in July 2019 as the Family Matters Self-Audit Tool. Queensland trialed use of the tool from July 2019 – June 2020. The findings from that trial can be read in [Queensland Family Matters Self-Audit Tool Trial Findings](#) (July 2020) available on the Family Matters website, www.familymatters.org.au

Phase 2. 2020 - 2021

The tool has been adapted based on some of the recommendations from the phase 1 Queensland trial with a focus on ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are privileged and partnership approaches are undertaken. Queensland signatories are now welcome to participate in the phase 2 trial of the revised Family Matters National Reflective Practice Tool for further development, under the guidance of the Family Matters Leadership Group.

Phase 3. 2021 and beyond

The National Family Matters Leadership Group will continue to work with Family Matters Queensland to develop the tool further with a goal to launch the tool as an online resource available publicly during the Family Matters National Week of Action in May 2021.

To further discuss the Family Matters campaign or the Reflective Practice Tool, please contact the Family Matters Qld secretariat, Eva Ruggiero, at qldfamilymatters@qatsicpp.com.au or (07) 3518 0071.

Appendix 4. Collated content from completed Reflective Practice Tools

| Principle 1 APPLYING A CHILD FOCUSED APPROACH | | |
|--|---|---|
| Strengths | Challenges | Actions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion and engagement with child, family, kin and/or their Independent Person. • Listening to young people's cultural needs and wants. • Obtaining culturally appropriate placements as per the ATSICPP. • Making young people aware of their rights. • Awareness of cultural considerations for young people. • Developing and distributing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific resources and tools. • Access to legal representatives. • Clear legislation and policy expectations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information in referrals including cultural identity and child's voice. • Limited culturally appropriate placements. • Difficulty identifying local kin and family. • Difference in practice standards across the state. • Limited focus for funding. • Need for a greater investment to increase staffing and program capacity. • Limited implementation and adherence to legislation. • Limited access to culturally appropriate supports for children and family. • Lack of respect for child's contributions in decision making. • Not fully upholding children's rights. • Assumption the ATSICPP has been followed when referrals have been received. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific resources. • Developing a collection of books authored by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers. • Utilising a variety of culturally appropriate resources and services for families. • Developing meaningful cultural support plans with measurable actions. • Actively promoting the ATSICPP. • Engage with children and families to gather feedback. • Improve the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff as cultural expertise within forums. • Access to cultural training. • Better ways to embed the ATSICPP into practice. |

| Principle 2 ENSURING THAT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATE IN AND HAVE CONTROL OVER DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR CHILDREN | | |
|---|--|---|
| Strengths | Challenges | Actions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in cultural reference groups. • Networking with and increasing access to health and educational services. • Collaboratively developing action plans with young people, family and services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers and organisations are unaware or have limited knowledge of local level issues. • Limited details are available on the specific needs of young people. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued inclusion of cultural consultations within meetings. • Increase family engagement • Improve prominence of cultural lead within existing processes, policies and practice. |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement and stepping up in lead roles in community spaces to improve organisational responses to local issues. • Awareness and consideration of the ATSCIPP. • Partnerships and relationship building with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations. • Access to increased funding. • Establishment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific programs and forums to support practice. • Good relationships between providers. • Use of cultural care plans. • Providing access to significant events and sorry business. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hesitancy by families to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services. • Limited control regarding information sharing to the wider community. • Time constraints. • Availability and recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners. • Reluctance to eliminate power and authority in decision making situations. • Lack of trust in staff capabilities. • Blue cards. • Limited funding. • Limited progress with specific programs. • Adjusting current practice to existing policies and procedures. • Referral inconsistencies between regions. • Lack of clarity and recording of the cultural identity of young people. • Lack of accountability on information gathering. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain information sharing pathways with services. • Introduce longer period of family engagement. • Increase resourcing, partnerships and authentic relationships with staff and community. • Review implementation of current practice. • Review learnings and outcomes of previous sites with similar programs. |
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| Principle 3 PROTECTING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN’S RIGHT TO LIVE IN CULTURE | | |
|---|--|---|
| Strengths | Challenges | Actions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with services and family members. • Promoting a culturally safe workspace which in turn helps make young people feel culturally safe and engage with family/kin. • Having a lead role in a local stakeholders group. • Supported by cultural practice lead and cultural reference group. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to collaborate to develop meaningful support plans with measurable actions. • Limited availability and number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners. • Poor family mapping and use of genograms. • Lack of consistency on how all elements of the ATSCIPP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting staff and families to understand the ATSCIPP and the child protection system. • Implement cultural awareness training. • Improve cultural responsiveness in practice. • Strengthen purpose and intent of cultural practice roles. |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarning circles with cultural practice leads. • Internal use and promotion of the ATSICPP. • Recognising the introduction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific principles in legislation. • Efforts to recruit, retain and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. • Recognition of cultural events. • Inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff on interview panels and leadership. • Application of cultural capability plans. • Use of ATSICPP watermarks within documents. • Highlighting the importance of addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system. | <p>are implemented in practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with families. • Cultural protocols not being followed. • Inefficient utilisation of resources. • Lack of a cultural lens. • Lack of support for self-determination. • Limited knowledge on utilising the ATSICPP within assessments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to recommendations on Active Efforts. • Promote family mapping. • Improve skills acquisition. • Implement legislation and policy training. • Data set development in IT systems. • Promote and action outcomes from planning reviews. • Implementation of cultural capability plans. |
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| Principle 4 PURSUING EVIDENCE BASED RESPONSES | | |
|---|--|--|
| Strengths | Challenges | Actions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of research findings found anecdotally within practice. • Availability of cultural awareness training. • Utilising and receiving support from the cultural practice lead. • Completing surveys to gauge service needs and improvements. • Hearing the stories from families. • Data collection. • Evaluation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of research available from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific sources. • Limited practice tools and frameworks specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. • Limited number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners. • Difficulty and differences in applying research findings to practice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a presence at the SNAICC conference. • Staff to engage in searches for research papers and literature. • Establish an internal system for information sharing. • Reporting on progress. • Maintain current leadership meetings and consultations with external organisations. • Establish forums with Aboriginal and Torres Strait |

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|---|---|---|
| <p>programs, forums and initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships with peak bodies and other services. • Improved staff ratios. • Attendance at yarning circles and the SNAICC conference. • Participation within co-design committees. • Membership to SNAICC. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited understanding on the importance of data accuracy. • Investment in implementation and embedding. • Lack of knowledge around self-determination. • Community politics. • Data transparency lacking across the sector. • Tokenistic consultations. • Exclusion of voices from children and families in rural and remote areas. • Cultural protocols not being followed. | <p>Islander staff for future planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding the ATSICPP into current practice. |
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| Principle 5 SUPPORTING, HEALING AND STRENGTHENING FAMILIES | | |
|--|--|--|
| Strengths | Challenges | Actions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing the right service at the right time. • Presence of reporting pathways to influence social policy and funding decisions. • Increased number of self-referrals to the service. • Participating and leading small community projects such as yarning circles. • Employing an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander worker for initial engagement to provide a familiar environment. • Established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific programs. • Engaged in reviews for specific age groups. • Placing priority on reunification within legislation, policy and procedures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited funded responses to DFV for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. • Limited capacity to actively support reunification. • Limited capability within the workforce. • Location of kin. • Level of needs for children and families. • Access to cultural knowledge. • Lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased support to families to decrease the likelihood of entry into OOHC. • Increase presence in community. • Establish and maintain relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations. • Improve networks, knowledge and understanding of programs with service providers. • Review funding agreements. • Work to the level of Active Efforts. • Continuation of reviews and projects for specific age groups. • Prioritise roles and involvement of cultural practice leads. |

| Principle 6 CHALLENGING SYSTEMIC RACISM AND INEQUITIES | | |
|--|--|--|
| Strengths | Challenges | Actions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts to recognise and challenge racism effectively. • Cultural consultations to discuss racial issues that impact on service delivery. • Staff speak up if made aware of racist attitudes and/or comments. • Our Way Strategy. • Introduction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practice roles. • Implementation of internal programs addressing diversity. • Access to resources to promote cultural confidence for staff. • Completion of induction with cultural lead roles. • Production and release of podcast discussing current work and impact across the state. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment challenges and limited number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners available. • Limited engagement with young people and families affecting relationship and rapport building. • Risk of over-compensation/change in practice when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. • Difficulty in recognising who may be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. • Need for a national commitment to the work. • Systemic racism. • Personal bias. • Poverty. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop consistent messaging to mitigate racist comments. • Continued open conversations with staff to reflect on their own biases and beliefs. • Building connections with other community services and workers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. • Building partnerships and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and organisations. • Influence national frameworks. • Increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the workforce. • Increase partnerships with other sectors such as, health and education. • Provide culturally sensitive and appropriate advice. • Creating a safe space for non-Indigenous staff to feel comfortable asking hard questions. |

Appendix 5. Case examples

The following are examples of findings and actions noted during use of the phase two trial of the Family Matters Reflective Practice Tool. Examples were collected during action research meetings with trial participants and as part of the reporting process at completion of the trial.

1. A service reported that they were engaged to support a young person who was “in a trauma state from not being heard” at meetings with DCYJMA. The young person had previously had their foster carer and a Community Visitor act as an Independent Person (IP) in a meeting with DCYJMA and both were ineffective. The service was able to provide the young person an IP who identified as Aboriginal and also had extensive experience working in the sector for both community controlled organisations and for DCYJMA. This person reported “*having an IP that understands the system assisted a better outcome for the young person, however if everyone in the care team was doing the right thing then a knowledgeable IP would not be needed*”. Doing the right thing here means listening to the young person’s voice and focusing on their best interests from a rights based and cultural based perspective as per the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.
2. A participating Foster and Kinship Care service reports that often biological families are not meeting foster carers during their children’s placement, even in cases of reunification. This service has advocated to DCYJMA that actively supporting parents to meet carers become an essential part of case plans and this is resulting in good outcomes. In one case, a father was learning parenting strategies from the carers directly, which he reported as being his first time learning such skills and improved his confidence and preparedness for the reunification process and the transition to full-time parenting.
3. Following completion of the phase one trial, and in alignment with the organisation’s Reconciliation Action Plan, a number of identified positions (frontline workers) and a Cultural Lead position were developed in one region. While this has improved performance to the degree possible, reflections during phase two trial highlighted that gaps in practice remain because each program needs a different approach and specific resourcing for being culturally appropriate. For instance, the knowledge, skills and community connections of an identified worker applied in the reunification space to help with finding family and mapping kin and cultural identity are different to the knowledge, skills and community connections required to provide culturally safe family support (early intervention) in a family home. This team reported that Cultural leads are stretched too thin and if there is a conflict of interest or family declines working with the only identified worker in their region then there is no other support option (due to there being no other identified worker). This service would like greater resources to employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander frontline workers as well as to “*grow their own skills and abilities to be cultural leads and make connections and give advice amongst their own team members*”.
4. A trial participant has introduced a new intergenerational trauma training program for the workplace due to existing cultural competency training not equipping non-Indigenous frontline workers with adequate connection of the history of colonisation to the lived reality families endure today. Using an Aboriginal way of storytelling and truth telling, this program involves telling first-hand stories of removal and experiences of racism. This was important as “*workers were breaking*

down into tears when families did choose to open up about Stolen Generations histories because they were caught completely unaware". This service reflected that they have an organisational responsibility to prevent burdening families and individual identified workers with being teachers to non-Indigenous staff. The service identified a need to provide emotional wellbeing support in addition to localised cultural competency training as *"the sector we work in brings up trauma for everyone"*.

5. More than one service noted a major challenge of having time-specific engagement periods for working with families to address child protection worries. One service stated a systemic barrier they struggled to determine action for is only being funded to work with a family for a 9-month period. The tool encourages growth and development of organisations to understand the impacts of intergenerational trauma and to use a healing-informed practice approach, however it raises issues on current limitations of funding requirements and output-based performance measures. *"You can't put a timeframe on healing and trauma and why a family needs support parenting their children"*. It was reportedly difficult to maintain the motivation of staff to uphold trauma-informed practice given their high workloads and that it involves extra effort and time working with the wider family network and across multiple domains, but that work is not able to be captured in existing outcomes and reporting processes.
6. Rather than use the Reflective Practice Tool as is, whilst also designing their own cultural framework, one organisation incorporated elements of the tool into a new Cultural Responsiveness Framework to guide how they work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families as well as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families. The organisation's Cultural Responsiveness Framework is designed to ensure community is involved in how services operate through collaborative yarning with families accessing services and with hopes of later expanding to broader community input. The Cultural Responsiveness Framework includes a unified set of principles (organisation-specific, not Family Matters principles) but separate practice approaches for CALD families and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Both the self-assessment guide and the practice improvement plan, that are components of the Cultural Responsiveness Framework, align with each of the six Family Matters principles.