Waiben place-based study — October 2017

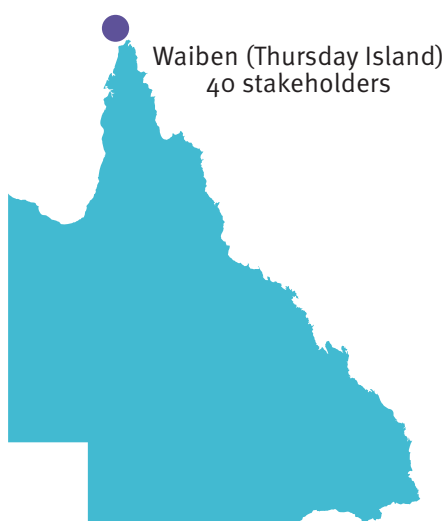## Exploration of local child and family support services

Purpose

- This place-based study was designed to examine family support services in Waiben (Thursday Island) in terms of:
  - service networks
  - access to family support services
  - service quality
  - facilitators and barriers.

Setting

Waiben (Thursday Island)
40 stakeholders

- Waiben is a remote community. Air and sea travel are often the only methods of travel in the region.
- Language, culture and family are inextricably linked on Waiben, and are key considerations for service design and delivery. High value is placed on informal and cultural supports.
- Minimal reform program investment had occurred, and service capacity was of concern to local stakeholders.
- Many services on Waiben provide outreach throughout the Torres Strait. This is time-consuming and often under-resourced.
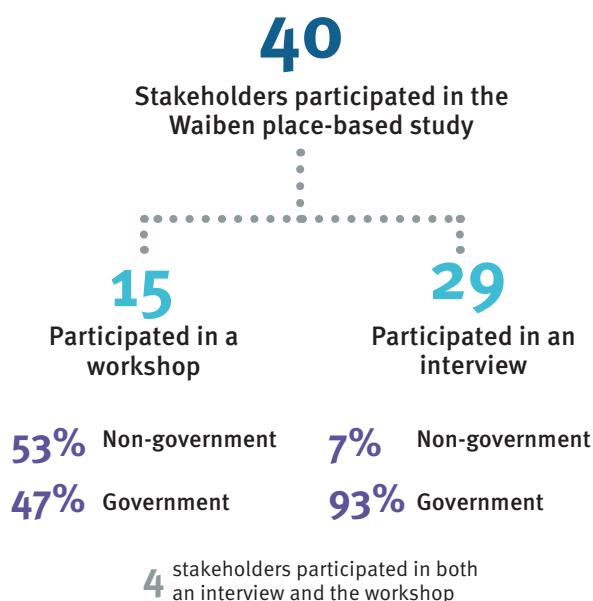
Method

- After a desktop analysis of existing Child Safety Service data, we travelled to Waiben for one week.
- Key stakeholders helped us to identify and contact the target population.
- We ran interviews and a workshop with local stakeholders from:
  - local governance groups
  - government agencies
  - non-government organisations
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations.
- Some stakeholders participated in both an interview and a workshop.

Sample

40
Stakeholders participated in the Waiben place-based study

15
Participated in a workshop

53% Non-government
47% Government

29
Participated in an interview

7% Non-government
93% Government

4 stakeholders participated in both an interview and the workshop

Queensland
Family & Child
Commission

Queensland
Government

Key findings

Context: Facilitators

- Strengths include connections to culture, family, friends, community and country.
- There is a trusted and established secondary support system.
- Strengths-based practice, holistic support and family-led decision making are viewed favourably.
- Informal support networks and religious beliefs play an important role in keeping children safe and families supported.

Improve access to family support services

- Service capacity is limited, and impacted by the provision of outreach to outer islands.
- Service reputation and trust in services are critical to the referral system and client service engagement.
- Informal or cultural supports are often preferred over formal, funded supports.

Establish robust service networks

- There are strong existing networks and governance, but coordination and awareness of service capacity are limited.
- There are mixed views on information sharing and collaborative practice across the sector.
- There is some siloing and duplication of responses for children and families.

Ensure high quality of services

- Practice is increasingly strengths-based and culturally safe.
- Workforce turnover affects client experience and can leave gaps in services.
- Local workers are seen to be more knowledgeable of culture and context.
- Relationships and reputation are key factors influencing perceptions of service quality.

Context: Barriers

- Shame, stigma, mistrust/lack of confidence in services, and language barriers can limit service engagement.
- There is intergenerational trauma and, for some, a fear of asking for help.
- Distance, limited transport options and poor communication structures (i.e. telecommunications) all have an impact on service accessibility.
- There are concerns about the capacity of the service system, workforce turnover, process delays and poor service coordination.