



Blueprint

A Children's Plan for Queensland

Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Children's Commissioner

For most children, Queensland is a great place to grow up. But ensuring that most children thrive is not enough.

It has been more than a decade since Queensland last had a comprehensive plan for children. The Queensland Government now has an opportunity to support and invest in children with smarter, more coordinated action. A Children's Plan will provide a shared vision and practical roadmap, ensuring every dollar spent delivers real outcomes for children, families and communities.

This Blueprint offers a practical, actionable path to develop a Children's Plan for Queensland.

Why does Queensland need a Children's Plan?

To improve life outcomes for all children, we must work across government to make children a central focus in decision-making. This will require a shift from reacting to episodic crises to cooperating on long-term, foundational improvements. The shelf life of children's policy must be longer than election cycles.

Importantly, coherent child-centred policy provides a strong structural foundation for the implementation of the Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 by aligning governance, regulatory, and service delivery frameworks around children's rights and wellbeing. It ensures clarity of purpose across agencies, minimises duplication, and strengthens monitoring and accountability mechanisms. A child-centred policy orientation also enhances the efficiency of government administration by integrating safety standards into planning, funding, and performance systems, creating consistency in implementation. For government, this approach strengthens administration by reducing duplication, improving accountability, and directing resources where they have the greatest impact. This coherence not only reduces risk and strengthens public confidence but also enables government to drive more sustainable, system-wide improvements in child safety outcomes.

What is a Children's Plan?

A Children's Plan will translate aspiration into action with steps that deliver measurable results for children, families and communities. It will:

- provide a clear, unified vision for childhood in Queensland that is accepted by State Government
- connect children's voices and experiences to policy, so decisions are relevant, effective and grounded in the realities of their families, schools and communities
- serve as a central strategic framework for all policies, strategies and decisions affecting children
- detail clear investment strategies and action plans that deliver real outcomes.

A Children's Plan will enable a genuine shift from reaction and response to prevention and early intervention. This is widely recognised as the best and most cost-effective way to achieve outcomes for children and the community. It will go beyond just bringing together existing plans and strategies—it will simplify and connect these efforts into a unified system focused on children.

The Children's Plan will also set a clear direction for working across different levels of government, recognising the roles of local, state and federal governments. It will align with the national reform agenda, including initiatives like *Closing the Gap and Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031*, ensuring that policies support ongoing national goals.



Scope

A Children's Plan will cover all children under the age of 18. It will recognise the fundamental role of families and the relationships that nurture, support and sustain children as they grow.

The early years of a child's life set the foundation for their future. Investing in these formative years of cognitive, social, emotional and physical development is proven to deliver substantial social and economic returns. Strong families, good nutrition, quality healthcare and positive relationships directly enhance children's lifelong potential. They reduce future costs associated with poor health, violence and youth offending. Prioritising children not only nurtures resilient, responsible citizens but builds stronger, safer communities across Queensland.

Principles

A Children's Plan will recognise and value the agency, lived experiences and expertise of children. In contrast to traditional welfare or charity-based approaches, which focus on providing 'help', a Children's Plan will address systemic barriers to health and happiness. It will ensure government policies, programs, services and interventions are guided by the following principles:

- › culturally safe, strength-based practice
- › non-discrimination
- › best interests of children
- › children's development to their fullest potential
- › quality participation
- › accountability.

What would a Children's Plan include?

Putting children at the centre

A key feature of a Children's Plan is to put children at the centre of decisions that affect their lives, using their experiences and views to shape how policies, programs and services can be improved. Actively involving children in every part of the plan is not only right—it is smart. Policies created with input from those they affect are more effective and efficient, leading to better outcomes and resource savings.

Children's involvement must be meaningful, safe and well-supported. It should never be tokenistic. At every stage, the level of children's participation will depend on their evolving capacities, their potential for change and any limitations on their influence.

Priority areas

The Children's Plan will focus on systemic areas that are key to creating safe, thriving children and communities. These interrelated areas encompass rights protected under the Queensland *Human Rights Act 2019*:

- › standard of living
- › supportive families
- › connection to culture
- › freedom from violence
- › health and wellbeing
- › child justice
- › quality care and early education
- › healthy environment.

Among these, education, youth justice and child protection are high-risk areas that significantly impact community safety, economic productivity and public confidence in government.

Poor decisions can lead to serious, long-term consequences for children and the broader community. They also expose government to reputational and financial risk. A clear, coordinated plan will support early intervention, reduce demand on crisis services and strengthen public trust.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Urgent action is needed to close the gap in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children when compared with non-Indigenous children. In our oversight role, we consistently observe over-representation in the child protection and youth justice systems and under-representation in good health, education and housing outcomes.

Areas for priority action will be determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations, using a culturally-led process, with meaningful involvement of children. This may include creating a specific strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that aligns with the Children's Plan. It will ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives are fully integrated into policies and actions.

How can a successful Children's Plan be delivered?

Governance and accountability

- Appoint a dedicated and resourced Minister for Children to oversee the wellbeing of children under the age of 18. Supported by a Ministerial Taskforce, this Minister will have a clear mandate and authority to coordinate and implement the plan across State Government.
- Establish an independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner to focus on the rights and advocacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Commissioner would develop a specific plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and have accountability for its implementation, with the ability to intervene when the rights of children are not upheld.
- Support statewide education on the rights and responsibilities of children. This would improve decision-making across government, strengthen community understanding, build respectful relationships, and help children and adults prevent issues before they escalate.
- Develop quick, fair and age-appropriate pathways for children and families to raise concerns and resolve issues. Streamlined, child-friendly complaints processes reduce the burden on formal systems, improve early resolution, and ensure vulnerable children are not left behind.
- Use practical tools to ensure government resources are delivering the best possible return on investment. Tools like child impact assessments and child-responsive budgeting help government departments assess risks, make informed decisions and strengthen accountability.





Law reform

Complete the outstanding review of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* (Qld), including the Commission's suggested amendments below:

- › Establish a dedicated and independent commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, with appropriate powers and resources. All Australian governments agreed to this under Action 7A of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023–26, developed under *Safe and Supported the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–31*.
- › Establish compatible powers in the Act for both Commissioners to exercise Queensland Family and Child Commission (the Commission) functions.
- › Add a more explicit role in the Act for the Commission to 'promote the rights of children and young people'.
- › Add a new objective in the Act to 'promote the rights, development, wellbeing and best interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people'.
- › Add new functions in the Act to 'promote a culture of accountability for upholding the rights of children and young people in Queensland' and 'promote the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives'.

Policy and strategy

- › Ground the Children's Plan in the Queensland's *Human Rights Act 2019* and the core principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, including non-discrimination, child participation, best interests, and survival and development.
- › Develop a broad policy covering all areas of children's rights and adequate resourcing for its implementation.
- › Ensure the plan's development includes active consultation with children and those working with children.

Targets and resources

- › Ensure children's rights are incorporated into budget processes, with mechanisms for public and child participation.
- › Set real, achievable targets for children's economic, social, cultural and civil rights, with specific goals and implementation measures. Regularly assess their effectiveness, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- › Allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources for the implementation of all policies.





Awareness raising and training

- › Resource child rights education for children and young people. When children and young people learn about their rights, they are empowered to claim and enjoy them and equally, they develop the understanding needed to respect the rights of others.
- › Resource child rights education for professionals, parents, caregivers and officials to ensure they respect and protect children's rights in practice.

Monitoring and data collection

- › Collect comprehensive, disaggregated data on children's rights, including those from marginalised groups.
- › Set down clear, agreed outcomes and actions to be jointly pursued across government agencies and regularly reported to Queensland Parliament.
- › Report on the realisation of children's rights through a public Child Rights Report by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner.



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