



Towards a Roadmap for  
Investment Reform for Thriving Kids  
March 2024



## Overview

Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP) was instigated in mid-2020 by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) in collaboration with a growing community of Queensland partners and collaborators.

TQKP has emerged as a systems coalition and broker, engaging leaders, practitioners, academics and organisations across Queensland; all with the aspiration that ‘every child in every family and in every community is thriving’. It is resourced until June 2025 (Phase 2) through a combination of philanthropic funding and government funding and in-kind contributions.

TQKP is committed to engaging people from all the systems that relate to young Queenslanders (conception to 24 years), and their families. These include health, early learning, education, family support, mental health, disability, child protection, youth, housing, justice and sports.

TQKP’s ‘value proposition’ is to amplify the value and impact of the philanthropic, industry, not-for-profit, government and tertiary sectors and communities by leading and facilitating systems-level collaborative, integrative and developmental initiatives.



The work of TQKP is underpinned by six interconnected levers known to enable system change to enhance the wellbeing of infants, children and young people and their families.<sup>1</sup> The focus of this paper is on the lever of Smarter Investment, acknowledging its intrinsic links to the other five levers.

A greater part of the value and impact of TQKP will come from the concerted and aligned efforts of partners and collaborators. This is founded on the strength of connections and commitments of partners and collaborators to shared purpose and value, and to joint actions and contributions to what matters and what works. See [Appendix 1](#) for a copy of TQKP’s values, operating principles and approach.

One of ten TQKP Phase 2 deliverables is a Smarter Investment initiative that aims to promote:

- investment in what matters and what works in ways that support evidence and deliver value;
- integration of effort across the investment system through co-investment and commissioning for outcomes and impact; and
- processes that support collaboration, community voice and self-determination, and that reduce waste.

This paper arose in part from a deep dive into the topic of Smarter Investment undertaken at the July 2023 meeting of TQKP’s Leadership Table at the request of its members. It expands upon the key challenges and possible solutions identified by the group, as well as themes arising from discussions across other collaboratives and stakeholders. The Leadership Table agreed to take on sponsorship of this lever, and to continue its provision of strategic input for TQKP’s Investment Reform for Thriving Kids Initiative. The purpose of this paper is to stimulate discussion regarding the Leadership Table’s orientation towards commissioning as a means of progressing the initiative.

<sup>1</sup> Hogan, M., Hatfield-Dodds, L., Barnes, L. & Struthers, K (2021). *Joint Project on Systems Leadership for Child and Youth Wellbeing: Stage 1 Synthesis Report*. Every Child and Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG), Australia. [www.everychild.co](http://www.everychild.co)

## The challenge

We know that children and young people thrive when their needs are met in culturally-informed, developmentally-appropriate ways that are ideally close to home, including through the support of parents/carers, extended family, their wider community and support services.<sup>2</sup> This deep wisdom is embedded in the child-rearing practices of our First Nations people, who have for many generations nurtured their families through strong connection to kin and Country. Their inherent understanding of systems thinking in place has much to teach us about how to foster wellbeing.

Optimal support requires coordinated efforts within, and in some cases across, services, especially for those children, young people and families experiencing life challenges. Holistic, person-centred, community-driven service provision can indeed be healing<sup>3</sup>. It also complements the increasing evidence base regarding promotion, prevention and early intervention, and aligns with contemporary policy direction<sup>4</sup>. A landmark report found that Australian governments are spending \$15.2 billion each year on high-intensity and crisis services for problems that may have been prevented had they invested earlier and more wisely in the lives of children and young people.<sup>5</sup> A timely, effective system response is therefore also an economic imperative.

Wellbeing occurs in communities in which exposure to risk and protective factors directly impacts upon the degree to which individual and collective capabilities develop. Without intervention, existing vulnerability can become even further entrenched to adversely affect current as well as future generations. Collective efforts are also essential to help prepare for the human and financial toll of emerging threats to wellbeing, including climate change, the increased cost of living and intergenerational inequity.

Place-based approaches are being increasingly recognised as powerful tools to ameliorate the effects of lifelong disadvantage<sup>6</sup>. These are defined as a “collaborative, long-term approach to build thriving communities delivered in a defined geographic location. This approach is ideally characterised by partnering and shared design, shared stewardship, and shared accountability for outcomes and impacts”<sup>7</sup> They work best when:

- the focus is on fixing the entire system, not just specific programs or services;
- local people are empowered to take part in decision-making and actions; and
- all stakeholders are open to experimenting with new ideas<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Goodhue, R., Dakin, P., Noble, K. (2021) *What's in the Nest? Exploring Australia's Wellbeing Framework for Children and Young People*. ARACY, Canberra. [www.aracy.org.au/documents/item/700](http://www.aracy.org.au/documents/item/700)

<sup>3</sup> Bulloch, H., Forgarty, W. & Bellchambers, K. (2019). *Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Services: Putting community-driven, strengths-based approaches into practice*. The Lowitja Institute, Melbourne.

[www.lowitja.org.au/content/Image/Aboriginal\\_Health\\_and\\_Wellbeing\\_services\\_DD3\\_FINALwith\\_links.pdf](http://www.lowitja.org.au/content/Image/Aboriginal_Health_and_Wellbeing_services_DD3_FINALwith_links.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Commonwealth of Australia (2023). *National Preventative Health Strategy*. Canberra, Australia.

[www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/12/national-preventive-health-strategy-2021-2030\\_1.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/12/national-preventive-health-strategy-2021-2030_1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> : William Teager, Stacey Fox and Neil Stafford. *How Australia can invest early and return more: A new look at the \$15b cost and opportunity*. Early Intervention Foundation, The Front Project and CoLab at the Telethon Kids Institute, Australia, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Geatches, L., Preston, C., and Putnis, A. for Equity Economics and Development Partners (2023), *Where are we? Place-based approaches to tackling community challenges in Australia*. Prepared for the Paul Ramsay Foundation

<sup>7</sup> Dart, J. (2018). *Place-based evaluation framework: a guide for evaluation of place-based approaches in Australia*. (Commissioned by the Queensland Government Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (DCDSS) and the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

<sup>8</sup> [www.dss.gov.au/place-based-collaboration](http://www.dss.gov.au/place-based-collaboration)

Of the 14 recommendations yielded by the recent Parliamentary Inquiry in Poverty<sup>9</sup>, the following two explicitly identified place-based approaches:

- the Australian Government continue to invest, and consider increasing investment, in early intervention and place-based initiatives to address child poverty. Any initiatives aimed at supporting First Nations families and children must be led by and co-designed with First Nations people, and support existing commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
- the Australian Government, in consultation with stakeholders, continue developing funding of longer-term place-based initiatives aimed at reducing poverty and disadvantage.

Recent funding to establish the National Centre for Place-based Collaboration (Nexus Centre)<sup>10</sup> will accelerate these efforts, as will implementation of landmark policies such as the Regional Investment Framework which articulates a joined-up, flexible and cohesive approach to Australia's diverse regions<sup>11</sup>. Ensuring system investment is embedded in context is thus a vital step in supporting wellbeing now, and into the future.



Investment can also target cohorts who are more likely to encounter adversity. Each vulnerability they experience may predispose people to other risks such that they can present with an intersection of challenges, in turn potentially reducing equitable access to opportunities and services. Vulnerabilities may be compounded by living in places characterised by socio-economic disadvantage, but can exist in every location and cross-section of society. As such, a cohort perspective also needs to be considered alongside place.

In both cases, it's also critical that investment activities are based on and driven by outcomes and shared measurement. The latter has been defined as:

“both the product and process of taking a collaborative approach to learning, acting, and measuring. In terms of the product, shared measurement is any tool (such as a data platform) that can be used collectively to learn, act and measure impact. The process of shared measurement requires strong preconditions for success such as leadership, collaboration, and trust, along with a process that builds shared understanding - through exchanging knowledge, learning, acting and measuring together”<sup>12</sup>

The National Wellbeing Framework<sup>13</sup> articulates measures that capture domains of health, security, sustainability, cohesion and prosperity. These, as well as more local, nuanced measures, should prove the basis for identifying, targeting, resourcing and evaluating strategies that enable Australians to thrive.

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<sup>9</sup> [www.apf.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Community\\_Affairs/PovertyinAustralia/](http://www.apf.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/PovertyinAustralia/)

<sup>10</sup> [www.dss.gov.au/place-based-collaboration](http://www.dss.gov.au/place-based-collaboration)

<sup>11</sup> See [www.infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities/regional-australia/regional-investment-framework](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities/regional-australia/regional-investment-framework)

<sup>12</sup> Inspiring Impact (2013). *Blueprint for shared measurement*. <https://npproduction.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Blueprint-for-shared-measurement1.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Australian Government (2023). *Measuring what matters: Australia's first wellbeing framework*. <https://treasury.gov.au/policy-topics/measuring-what-matters>

## The aspiration

TQKP consultation with key stakeholders in recent months has yielded important insights regarding investment reform to better support the wellbeing of Queensland's children, young people, and families:

**TQKP Leadership Table  
July 2023 – Deep Dive**

Reform themes:

- Funding process reform
- Place as a starting point and anchor;
- Centring the voice of children and families,
- Community engagement in local recommissioning; and
- Outcomes based.

**Thriving Kids Integrated Service Systems Collaborative**

June 2023 - Aspirations

A capable, informed system underpinned by concerted leadership that enables learning and improvement, and is sustainably resourced to maximise engagement, value and impact

**Consultation with Thriving Places, Thriving Kids Collaborative, April 2023 – Opportunities**

Explore

- Demonstration sites for place-based co-investment trials
- Ways to coordinate place investment across government

Create

- Shared accountability – not just shared measurement across investment
- Localised system ecologies

Advocate for

- Funding that is long-term, flexible and includes adequate resources for evaluation, innovation, capacity building and operations

**Country Collaborative August 2022 – Themes**

- Flexible funding tailored to local need;
- Collaboration over competition;
- Long-term;
- Nimble and responsive to opportunities to innovate;
- Better regional engagement in service design and commissioning;
- Address differential service access; and
- Attract additional investment into country

Optimal outcomes are predicated on access to resourcing that aligns with local data and contemporary evidence, matches present as well as predicted need and is recurrent (or at least of sufficient duration to yield discernible impact and enhance workforce stability). Just as service delivery needs to be coordinated across the system to reduce fragmentation and improve outcomes, investment requires coordination to maximise the reach and impact of limited resources.

In recent years there has been a growing movement towards a more relational approach to designing and investing in social services according to community need. In a distillation of knowledge across Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, Sydney Policy Lab noted that good commissioning needs to adopt four key principles: centering on the need to build relationships and trust; elevating the role of communities in planning and delivery; embedding learning and flexibility to allow for experimentation, reflection and evolution; and rethinking funding models to invest in people and communities<sup>14</sup>. If such approaches deliver an even modest improvement in

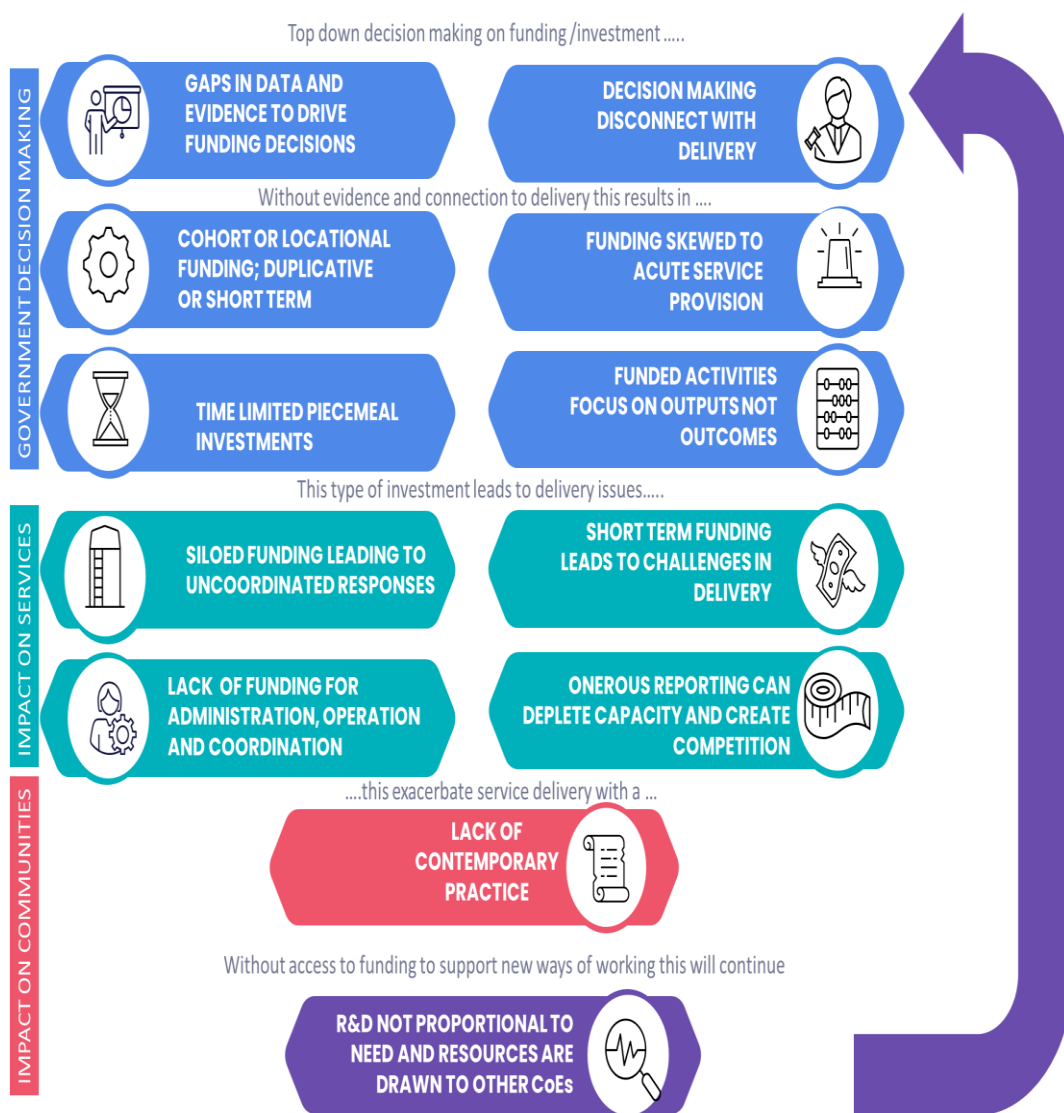
<sup>14</sup> Goodwin, S.; Stears, M; Riboldi, M.; Fishwick, E.; Fennis, L. (2020). *All together: A new future for commissioning human services in New South Wales*. Sydney Policy Lab, University of Sydney. <https://apo.org.au/node/306604>

total expenditure effectiveness (e.g. 20%), this may more than offset the expenditure to institutionalise long-term, stable place-based systems.

## The reality

Funding challenges appear to be the norm, with waste, duplication and inefficiency cited as sequelae of current system approaches.<sup>15</sup> Stakeholder feedback suggests that improved outcomes have not necessarily materialised despite significant investment<sup>16</sup>, with this especially apparent in the case of the National Disability Insurance Scheme<sup>17</sup> and Closing the Gap initiative<sup>18</sup>.

Funding challenges are numerous and include the following:<sup>19</sup>



Several key drivers underpin these challenges, and include the following:

<sup>15</sup> Hogan, M., Hatfield-Dodds, L., Barnes, L. & Struthers, K (2021). *Joint Project on Systems Leadership for Child and Youth Wellbeing: Stage 1 Synthesis Report*. Every Child and Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG), Australia. [www.everychild.co](http://www.everychild.co)

<sup>16</sup> Discussion with senior Queensland cross-sectoral service representatives. Thriving Kids Integrated Service Systems Collaborative, August 2023.

<sup>17</sup> [www.ndisreview.gov.au](http://www.ndisreview.gov.au)

<sup>18</sup> Productivity Commission 2023, *Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, Draft Report*, Canberra, July [www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/closing-the-gap-review/draft](http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/closing-the-gap-review/draft)

<sup>19</sup> Image generated by Natasha Doherty, Ethicol Consultants based on discussion from the TQKP Leadership Table deep dive into the smarter investment lever, July 2023.

- Access to resources (including data) is inextricably linked to power, and at times political, professional and/or regional agendas. Whether conscious or otherwise, reconfiguring funding may therefore be viewed as a threat at the system, sector, service and/or individual level that can preclude a spirit of true collaboration and an openness to change;
- Lack of concerted leadership and designated accountability across all sectors that impact child development and wellbeing;
- Misalignment of programs, funding cycles, geographical boundaries and/or governance scope, especially in a federated system where there may be a lack of connectivity between state and federal jurisdictions;
- Consideration and resourcing of place-based approaches has remained at the margins of state and federal decision making;
- Funding allocation is based on processes that may not adequately take into account the impact of additional costs frequently experienced by regional, rural and remote areas, including increased cost of living, workforce shortages and more limited social infrastructure.
- Lack of establishing and articulating common goals across systems and policy settings, resulting in a focus on individual portfolios and programs;
- Lack of policy frameworks or accountability for funding provision, including limited analysis of reporting, linkage of investment to outcomes or value placed on/resourcing of evaluation;
- The ecosystem is currently oriented towards a procurement approach rather than a compact between community services and government. As such, there is a more emphasis on individual management and accountability than a community development approach with a focus on stewardship, public service and shared responsibility.

The following examples demonstrate the inter-dependencies at play, and the need to take a place-based approach to maximise impact and return on investment:

- Expenditure Efficiency:** Program A in Community X delivers at only 80% efficiency as the capacity of local providers is not monitored and progressively improved;
- Expenditure Effectiveness:** The benefits delivered through Program B in Community X are 50% negated because of the unintended consequences of Program C;
- Preventative Dividend:** A stronger focus on preventative action in Community X progressively and permanently reduces demand for Programs C, D and E in that community; and
- Investment Alignment:** Through place-based effort, Australian, Government, Local Government, Philanthropic and Private sector investment is better aligned to leverage the intended benefits of Program F, increasing program effectiveness by 75%.

## The precedents

Reform is challenging and takes courage, with multiple forces at play to retain the status quo. However, the need to do better is abundantly clear with an emerging appetite for change.

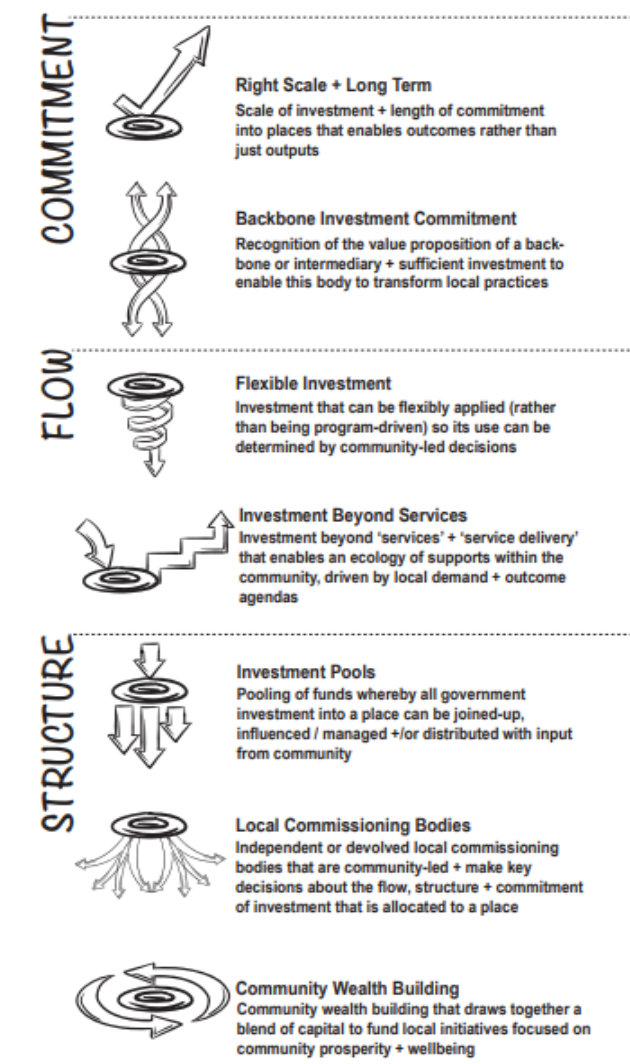


Figure One: Opportunities for changing investment of + into place-based initiatives have focused on changing commitments, flows + structure of funding

Exploratory work in this area is being undertaken by the Innovation Lab<sup>20</sup>, which in July 2023 produced a summary of strategies posed in the field regarding investment flows, structures and commitments for place-based work (see [Figure 1](#)). Their intention into 2024 is to test and learn about how investment can be reshaped and reimagined to enable place-based initiatives to deliver better outcomes in and with communities.

In addition:

(1) In 2016, the NSW Government launched '*Their Futures Matter*' (TFM) - a whole-of-government reform with a budget of \$190 million over four years aimed at delivering improved outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and their families. It resourced the design and commissioning of evidence-based pilots, data analytics work, staffing for the implementation unit and secretariat support for the board and cross-agency collaboration. In addition, funding for programs targeting this cohort (totalling \$381 million in 2019–20), was combined to form a nominal 'investment pool' to direct and prioritise resource allocation to evidence-based interventions for vulnerable children and families in

<sup>20</sup> A new partnership between Griffith Centre for Systems Innovation, the Brisbane South PHN and South Moreton Bay Island (SMBI) Listeners Inc. See <https://medium.com/good-shift>

NSW. An audit<sup>21</sup> of the reform initiative found that an evidence-based whole-of-government early intervention approach for vulnerable children and families in NSW – the key objective of the reform – was not established. This was attributed to several challenges including the following:

- Governance arrangements were not effective to deliver the intent of the reform;
- TFM reform has started building an evidence base and laid other important foundations, but these were not used to make key decisions in reprioritizing funding or scaling up promising or proven pilots,
- The TFM evidence base is insufficient to drive greater direction of resources from crisis to early intervention;
- The TFM Board and Unit were tasked with establishing an investment approach for supporting vulnerable children and families, but not given sufficient powers to do so; and
- TFM did not effectively brief government on risks to achieving the reform's objectives.

(2) The *New Zealand Productivity Commission* in June 2023 released a broad-sweeping review<sup>22</sup> into strategies necessary to ameliorate persistent disadvantage, resulting in the following recommendations for government as well as a related roadmap:

- Set a clear long-term direction and priorities for wellbeing;
- Establish measures for a social floor that enables social inclusion;
- Put in place roles and institutions that foster stewardship; support locally led and whānau (family)-centred wellbeing; and give greater voice to vulnerable groups, including future generations;
- Commit the long-term resourcing needed to see the work through;
- Strengthen public accountability for reducing persistent disadvantage and enhancing mana (prestige, influence and power) and wellbeing; and
- Take overall responsibility for public management system learning and improvement, underpinned by appropriate monitoring and reporting.

(3) Place-based public service budgets have also been posed as a means of public policy reform in England.<sup>23</sup> It is suggested this be achieved via the following strategies:

- The total public spending in each local authority area is identified;
- Different services work together and with local communities to establish priorities; identify how well current needs are being met; and set out how public money could be better used to those ends; and
- All relevant local and national agencies delivering public services are empowered and required to collaborate financially and in the delivery of services to produce better outcomes.

The authors suggest this transformation be achieved via the following principles: Mapping public expenditure; collaboration; community power; place-based accountability; and reform at the centre.

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<sup>21</sup> Audit Office of New South Wales (2020). Performance Audit – Their Future Matter. [www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/their-futures-matter](http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/their-futures-matter)

<sup>22</sup> [www.productivity.govt.nz/assets/Inquiries/a-fair-chance-for-all/Fair-Chance-for-All-Final-Report-June-2023.pdf](http://www.productivity.govt.nz/assets/Inquiries/a-fair-chance-for-all/Fair-Chance-for-All-Final-Report-June-2023.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> New Local (2024). *Place-based public service budgets: making public money work better for communities*. <https://www.newlocal.org.uk/publications/research-reports/place-based-budgets>

- (4) The *Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children*<sup>24</sup> was announced in May 2023 as a new initiative comprising a \$100 million philanthropic funding pool matched by the federal government to undertake community-led innovation and reform efforts over the next 10 years that make a positive difference for children, families and their communities. It thus has a strong place-based perspective in leveraging knowledge and drawing upon local strengths and needs to transform lives through a coordinated, systems-level approach to wellbeing.
- (5) Queensland's *Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services* is currently formulating an integrated child and family strategy to establish joint commissioning approaches and move to an outcomes-focused system. This will be underpinned by a transition of resources to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation sector and centering the voices of children, young people and families in setting the agenda.
- (6) The Queensland Mental Health Commission's *Shifting Minds Plan 2023-2028* notes as one of its whole-of-system strategies the provision of long-term flexible funding focused on gaps, needs and impact. Its related actions will be to "review current funding models and identify ways to improve outcomes, accountability, sustainability and local responsiveness".
- (7) The *Torres and Cape Health Care Commissioning Fund* (TORCH) is a landmark reform proposal as one of several Queensland sites that secured a federal Health Innovation Fund in 2021. It will put decision-making on community health needs in the hands of a local representative Indigenous-led board. TORCH aims to improve health outcomes in the Torres and Cape by better coordinating care pathways, funding, governance and decision making across health services. It will support improved access to culturally appropriate healthcare services, integrate and coordinate care across multiple providers, and provide quality data and transparency of costs and funding.

It is important to monitor, learn from and, where appropriate, align with the implementation of these and other initiatives<sup>25</sup> to inform the development of strategies relevant to the wider Queensland ecosystem. Besides addressing the barriers identified in the Their Futures Matter reform, additional factors that would underpin the success of reform initiatives include the willingness to listen, take risks, place trust in others and be relentless in demanding better outcomes for our children, young people families and communities.

## A proposition

### What

Woven together, these themes point to the need to establish mechanisms to generate, administer and oversee distribution of commissioning funds for Queensland initiatives aimed at enhancing the ability of children, young people, families and communities to thrive. Ideally this would involve pooled commissioning funds from both the state and federal government, and in the first instance target an identified cohort/s within a defined area.

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<sup>24</sup> [www.aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/investment-dialogue-for-australias-children](http://www.aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/investment-dialogue-for-australias-children)

<sup>25</sup> This will include commencement of the first state's Closing the Gap pilot site in Doomadgee to identify how to best rollout priority programs (e.g health, housing, early childhood) in First Nations communities through community-led decision-making in the Path to Treaty. See <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/95924>

We can again learn from the innovative approach currently being undertaken in New Zealand. Through its Social Sector Commissioning 2022-2028 Action Plan<sup>26</sup>, the New Zealand Government is working with non-government organisations and communities to transform the way supports and services are commissioned. It aims to remove current barriers that make a relational way of commissioning difficult; build on existing initiatives and successes, and support major social reforms underway; and use continuous learning, monitoring, and information sharing to ensure change.

Valuable lessons can also be applied from the Their Families Matter reform audit to ensure robust governance processes, provision of sufficient authority, application of emerging learnings and the development of a clear and enacted risk management strategy.

It is recommended that regional Queensland authorities be vested with the responsibility to engage stakeholders and coordinate resources across all areas of investment informed by community need and the available evidence. This approach should be outcomes-based, utilise shared measurement and harness the power of collective decision-making. This includes explicitly seeking out and acting upon the experiences of children, young people and families, especially from a First Nations' background, and engaging local government. It would culminate in the production of a 10-year regional investment plan that would be agreed between the regional authority and government and would secure funding across the entire period.

Implementation of such an approach would require an agreed definition of place-based integration so that consistent interventions could be established through new investment approaches. It should also include evaluation of the social return on investment, as well as the impact on measures such as expenditure efficiency and effectiveness, preventative dividend and investment alignment.

### How

Funding to support the establishment and resourcing of this investment reform could be achieved by one or more of the following strategies:

**Administration of a levy** – such an approach was undertaken to resource *Better Care Together*<sup>27</sup>, Queensland's plan for new investment in state-funded mental health and alcohol and drug services 2022 - 2027. The state government's introduction of a new levy on businesses with annual Australian taxable wages over \$10 million from 1 January 2023 yielded \$1.465 billion in new funding to resource the above plan<sup>28</sup>.

**Repurposing of Queensland grant programs** involving at least partial temporary cessation. This equates to a considerable cross-departmental sum, totalling \$4.1 billion in 2021-22 with the lion's share distributed for employment and community purposes (\$1.3 billion each)<sup>29</sup>.

**“Skimming” a small percentage from human service budgets** of Queensland Government departments. While services are operating in an increasingly tight fiscal environment, it could be argued that current resource allocation is not being optimised according to need and so a more planned strategy would release dividends for all.

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<sup>26</sup> See [Social Sector Commissioning 2022-2028 Action Plan \(msd.govt.nz\)](https://www.msd.govt.nz)

<sup>27</sup> [www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/strategic-direction/plans/better-care-together](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/strategic-direction/plans/better-care-together)

<sup>28</sup> Sourced from [5722T1277-5322.pdf \(parliament.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/5722T1277-5322.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Sourced from [www.qao.qld.gov.au/understanding-grants](https://www.qao.qld.gov.au/understanding-grants)

**A phased approach** starting with pooled funds from the largest funding agencies such as health and education. This could include trialing application of a place-based approach to identified cohort/s, and in a defined geographical area/s, to identify and address challenges and analyse learnings in a more targeted way before going to scale.

It is suggested that this reform adopt a ten-year transition plan. This would include evaluation and adjustment processes built in to track investment, processes, activity and outcomes against agreed shared measures, such as those related to The Nest. Overall planning for a 25-year horizon would match the timeframe required for intergenerational change. This may include alignment of local government areas with city regions to facilitate regional commissioning. Robust governance processes to support this reform would bring together First Nations people, those with a lived experience, service providers and local thought leaders to provide and reflect on data, evidence and experience to help shape and evaluate regional commission efforts, including ascertaining return on investment.

Ministerial accountability for child wellbeing and development would be assigned and provide oversight of a coordinated investment strategy. This new role would have cross-portfolio leadership and coordination responsibility for child development and wellbeing in Queensland, supported by the authority and resourcing to influence policy design, implementation and reporting of all state government departments that intersect with children. This role would be bound by clearly defined outcomes, and have regular, transparent reporting mechanisms. Inclusion of this focus is commensurate with the October 2023 announcement of establishment of a Victorian Minister for Children,<sup>30</sup> and the campaign for establishment of a NSW counterpart<sup>31</sup>, as well as one currently underway at the national level<sup>32</sup>. It also aligns with the emerging international focus on “children in all policies”<sup>33</sup>. It is suggested the role be referred to as the Minister for Families and Children to reflect the critical role of families. They would maintain close links with the leads of all Queensland’s Commissions including – but not limited to – the Queensland Family and Child Commission.

### Who

Interest could be explored through further conversations with stakeholders with the scope to drive investment reform, including Queensland Treasury and Department of Premier and Cabinet, as well as the Public Service Commission. Others with an identified/vested interest could also be engaged to stimulate discussion, including the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, other state government departments, the Queensland Mental Health Commission and place-based representatives including local government.

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<sup>30</sup> See [www.premier.vic.gov.au/new-cabinet-keep-delivering-victorians](http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/new-cabinet-keep-delivering-victorians)

<sup>31</sup> See [www.fams.asn.au/2023/03/the-next-nsw-government-should-have-a-nsw-minister-for-children/](http://www.fams.asn.au/2023/03/the-next-nsw-government-should-have-a-nsw-minister-for-children/)

<sup>32</sup> See [www.smilingmind.com.au/our-kids-count](http://www.smilingmind.com.au/our-kids-count)

<sup>33</sup> See <https://cap-2030.org>

## Appendix 1. TQKP values, operating principles and approach



**our values:**  
equity  
inclusion  
**integrity**  
respect  
generosity

### operating principles & approach

- People-centred**  
We put the interests, agency, rights and voices of people – especially children & young people, and their families and communities – at the heart of what we do.
- Co-creative**  
We prioritise collaboration and bring a generous and creative mindset to co-produce the results we collectively want, optimising the resources and capabilities available to us.
- Integrative & holistic**  
We value connectivity, we take a whole of systems approach and we work to reduce fragmentation.
- Innovative & implementable**  
We encourage experimentation, innovation and demonstration, sound scaling and embedding.
- Distribute resources & power**  
We work to ensure that resources, power and benefits are distributed fairly and used appropriately.
- Humbly audacious**  
We have audacious goals that reflect what parents, our communities and our leaders want for kids, and we approach this with the humility that none of us alone can accomplish them.
- Developmental & enabling**  
We are developmental and endeavour to build connections, capabilities and capacities as a result of what we do and how we work.
- Inquisitive & appreciative**  
we question positively and respectfully, listen intently and discover together.
- Rigorous & evidence-based**  
We value facts, are robust in our methods, are driven by data, evidence and experience, and build and share knowledge.
- Always learning & accountable**  
We model and enable learning and accountability through continuous assessment, reflection and improvement.

 Thiving Queensland Kids Partnership  
connect • catalyse • learn