



**Queensland Kids
Partnership**
every child thriving



aracy

Toward a Family and Child Wellbeing and Safety System

Summary of the Queensland Kids Partnership (QKP) / ARACY submission to the Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry and to the Queensland Government

Acknowledgements

- QKP/ARACY acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands across Queensland, First Nations leaders and organisations, and First Nations ways of centring children, families, kin, culture and community.
- QKP/ARACY acknowledges the lived experience of young Queenslanders and their families/carers engaged by the Child Safety System, and that systems have generally not addressed well the adversities they experience, and in too many situations, have caused systems-related harms with inter-generational impacts.
- QKP/ARACY have developed this submission in collaboration with peak and advocacy bodies and with input from members of QKP's Inter-Generational Stewardship Table and Management Board. It is a QKP/ARACY submission and is not made on behalf of partners and collaborators.
- QKP/ARACY commends submissions and recommendations made by peak bodies and networks, the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC), the Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner (OATSIC), and the Queensland Mental Health Commission (QMHC).

About QKP and ARACY

- QKP is a partnership initiated by ARACY with a shared vision for all young Queenslanders to thrive.
- QKP focuses on shifting systems and environmental conditions and circumstances so all young Queenslanders can thrive, especially those experiencing the greatest adversities and inequities.
- QKP recognises the need to support First Nations leadership, knowledge systems, and community-led solutions as foundational to systems transformation.

Science-based frames and tools

- QKP/ARACY uses a suite of core frames and tools - [The Nest Wellbeing Framework](#), The Resilience Scale, and a Human Connections and Capabilities Framework - to guide our work.

- These frames and tools synthesise science, evidence, lived experience, and together with First Nations knowledge and other cultural perspectives and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, provide a holistic, developmental and universal way of seeing and relating to children, young people and families.
- These frames and tools help bring coherence and alignment to policies, programs and practices, and need to be adopted in Queensland systems, including the Child Safety System.

A paradigm shift

- Systems deliver the results they are designed, resourced and equipped to deliver.
- The Child Safety System needs a bold, transformative reform and investment agenda.
- QKP/ARACY propose a paradigm shift to a '**Family and Child Wellbeing and Safety System**' that takes a holistic, developmental, life-course and inter-generational approach.
- This requires structural, cultural and transformative shifts in relationships, power dynamics, resources and mental models.
- QKP/ARACY propose design principles for this transformation. In particular, that this requires a pivot to **child connection** and **child development**.
- QKP/ARACY highlight the approach and results in Scotland that have taken a concerted and integrated approach to family and child wellbeing and safety over the past two decades, through the whole of government *Getting It Right for Every Child* initiative. Over the ten years to 2024, the number of children in care was reduced by 26%.

High priority systems reforms

- QKP/ARACY submission makes 18 recommendations for high priority systems reforms.
- These include proposals that the Commission recommend that the Government:
 1. Commit to an integrated '**Whole Systems Approach**' including a **statement of operating principles** on what families and children should expect in their interactions with all services and systems.
 2. Re-frame the Child Safety System as a **Family and Child Wellbeing and Safety System**, re-oriented to relational, trauma and neuro-informed care, connection and capability development, with a cultural lens, across life-stages.
 3. Implement the **national Thriving Kids initiative** in accord with the design of the National Thriving Kids Advisory Group, with a particular focus on families with children with developmental delays, neurodiversity and disabilities at risk of coming into, or already in, the Child Safety System.
 4. Adopt and operationalise a shared **Child, Youth and Families Wellbeing Outcomes Framework**, based on *The Nest* Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework.
 5. Co-develop an integrated '**Whole Child / Whole Family Plan**' tool that coordinates supports and services, facilitates information sharing, aligns case work across multiple government and non-government agencies and programs, and helps a child / family carry their story, including their cultural context, through a fragmented service system.
 6. Co-develop integrated **Thriving Families Plans** at local or regional levels to ensure all services, services and systems are working well together and are fit for both purpose and context.

7. Accelerate implementation of the ***Closing the Gap*** and ***Our Way Strategies***, maintaining the Child Placement Principles, and continuing the transfer of resources and powers, including legislated functions and pathways, to community-controlled and led Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.
8. Engage in the ***QKP-facilitated Enabling Workforces and Organisations, Childhood Builders, Brain Builders and Childhood Stewards initiatives*** to build shared knowledge, language, skills and tools across all the workforces that work with children, young people and families experiencing adversity.
9. Create an ***independent cross-sectoral vehicle for implementing and guiding transformative reform and learning*** of the Child Safety System, hosted by the QFCC.
10. Introduce legislation based on Victoria's ***Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2025*** to mandate a whole-of-government approach to child safety and wellbeing, and to enable 'community parenting' based on the Victorian ***Children, Youth and Families (Supporting Stable and Strong Families) Bill 2025***.

Five key systems issues

A. Whole Systems Approach

- The "Child Safety System" is a complex interaction of multiple systems and environments that shape child and family wellbeing and safety.
- A 'Whole Systems Approach' is needed to reform the system, with a focus on relational, trauma-informed, healing-oriented, and culturally embedded care and supports.
- Queensland needs an integrated 'Whole Systems Approach' that seamlessly integrates child safety with other systems like health, early learning, education, housing, disability, mental health, community services, income support, and systems that provide food security and other material basics.
- Key reforms include developing a Families Strategy and a Children's Plan, implementing well the Thriving Kids initiative, adopting a shared wellbeing outcomes framework, establishing integrated service planning and delivery at the local/regional level, developing integrated family plans, and building workforce capabilities.

B. Investment rebalancing and reform

- Queensland has historically under-invested in universal/primary prevention and early intervention, leading to over-reliance on costly tertiary interventions.
- Investment should be rebalanced through prioritising investment in a whole-of-government approach to evidence-informed prevention and early intervention for family and child wellbeing, and supporting place-based initiatives and integrated service models.
- Major investment, commissioning and contracting reform is needed to drive better value, impact and balance across the continuum of support.
- Reforms should include pooled funding, long-term outcomes-focused investment plans, and relational, value-based commissioning and contracting.

C. First Nations self-determination

- Queensland has made progress but has much more work to do to fully enable First Nations self-determination and community control in the child safety system.

- Reforms should accelerate the transfer of functions and resources to First Nations community-controlled organizations, further invest in Indigenous community-controlled services, make healing and cultural connection core attributes of the system, and strengthen the role and independence of the Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner.

D. Children's voices and rights

- Queensland needs to fully enable children's participation in design and decision-making, and fully realise children's rights in the Child Protection Act and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in policies and practices, and to fully enable the voices and agency of children, young people and families in systems design, in policies, programs and practices, and in accountability and learning processes.
- Reforms should enable greater participation in decision-making and review, and access to advocacy and peer support.

E. Accountability and Learning

- The current "superstructure" of accountability mechanisms is complex but limited in its focus on rights and results for children and families, and the ability to enable systems learning and reform implementation.
- Reforms should establish an independent vehicle to guide system transformation hosted by the QFCC, adopt a shared wellbeing outcomes framework, and coordinate oversight bodies to enable more strategic and impactful reform implementation, learning and evaluation.

Conclusion

- Queensland's Child Safety System, like other jurisdictions, is a legacy system built across generations.
- From science, evidence and lived experience, there is a compelling case for generational change - that it is time for transforming not tweaking.
- QKP/ARACY's position is that Queensland requires an ambitious whole-of-government, whole-of-community effort to reimagine and manifest a new paradigm: a more effective and equitable, holistic, developmental and culturally grounded **Family and Child Wellbeing and Safety System**.
- This requires a 'whole systems approach' underpinned by significant investment rebalancing and reform, enabling of First Nations self-determination, realising children's rights, and reorienting accountability and learning.
- This is a complex, long-term challenge requiring the collective efforts of governments and communities, with strong systems stewardship, public engagement and cross-sectoral partnerships.
- The full QKP/ARACY submission (see link below) provides a more comprehensive systems-lens and a suite of 18 recommendations to flesh out this reform agenda.
- QKP/ARACY are committed to contributing a systems-lens and partnership approach to this vital endeavour.

Find the full QKP/ARACY submission here: <https://tkp.org.au/child-safety-coi-submission>

For more information about QKP and ARACY, visit: www.qkp.org.au and www.aracy.org.au