

# Partnerships Queensland



## Implementation Progress Report 2006

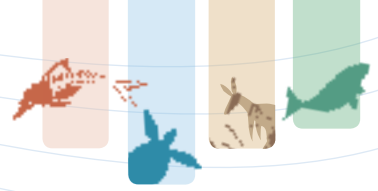
Future directions framework for  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
policy in Queensland 2005–10



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Illustrations by Charlie Chambers and Dennis Nona



## Foreword

In September 2005, the Queensland Government launched Partnerships Queensland, an initiative to deliver lasting improvements to the quality of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

As the Premier of Queensland and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, we are pleased to present this progress report on the implementation of Partnerships Queensland. It is the companion document to the *Partnerships Queensland Baseline Report 2006*, which provides the first comprehensive profile of Indigenous Queenslanders and establishes the benchmark from which changes in outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can be measured.

The progress report provides the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the Queensland community in general with information on recent government action. It also reports on the whole-of-government activity currently being undertaken under the Partnerships Queensland Policy Framework.

The Queensland Government is focused on 'actions that deliver results' and the establishment of the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships within the Department of Communities will ensure that policy is closely aligned with service delivery as well as whole-of-government leadership. The implementation of Partnerships Queensland is designed to drive coordination and cooperation between governments and Indigenous communities and enable sound decision making and effective service delivery to happen at all levels. The establishment of the Government Coordination Office to improve the way government agencies work together on 19 Indigenous communities is playing a key role in this regard. The work being undertaken by the Government Coordination Office will be coordinated with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The challenges highlighted by the baseline report are not unique to Queensland, emphasising the need for the Queensland Government to continue to strengthen its partnership with other sectors and the Australian Government. While governments have significant responsibilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must also assume responsibility for the choices they make about their wellbeing and that of their families and communities.

All Queensland Government Ministers are aware of their shared responsibility to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, within their portfolios, across government, with the corporate and community sectors and through the strengthening of partnerships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

All government agencies are working to improve services and infrastructure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, both through mainstream programs and initiatives (such as the recent \$1 billion Queensland Skills Plan, the \$153.4 million Blueprint for the Bush and the \$6.4 billion Health Action Plan) and Indigenous-specific services, some of which are outlined in this report.

The release of this report and the baseline report, and the commitment to provide similar public reports in the future, confirms the government's commitment to transparency and accountability as we strive to achieve real changes in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

**The Honourable Peter Beattie MP**  
**Premier of Queensland and**  
**Minister for Trade**

**The Honourable Warren Pitt MP**  
**Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander**  
**Partnerships**

## Introduction

### Partnerships Queensland vision and goals

The vision of the Queensland Government is that *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders have their cultures affirmed, heritage sustained and the same prospects for health, prosperity and quality of life as other Queenslanders.*

To realise this vision, the government is making it a priority to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other stakeholders to promote their achievements and improve their social, economic and health circumstances. *Partnerships Queensland: Future directions framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy in Queensland 2005-10* (Partnerships Queensland) provides the government with a policy framework to drive change through immediate and sustained evidence-based actions.

Partnerships Queensland recognises that, to achieve and sustain improvement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders' quality of life, there must be a concerted and coordinated effort across all levels of government and from all sectors of society. The non-government, private and philanthropic sectors, along with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and individuals, also have key roles to play.

Importantly, Partnerships Queensland builds on and draws together three earlier initiatives focussing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - the Ten Year Partnership, Cape York Partnerships and Meeting Challenges, Making Choices - to give a clear strategic direction and confirm the Queensland Government's commitment to *all* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

The individual goals and priorities of these initiatives come together under one set of overarching Partnerships Queensland goals to be achieved:

- Strong families, strong cultures
- Safe places
- Healthy living
- Skilled and prosperous people and communities

The four goals are inextricably linked to one another. Improvements in one goal area are likely to lead to improvements in others.

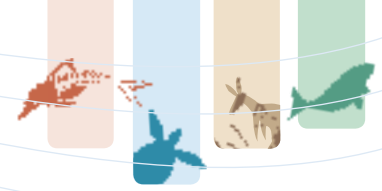
### Partnerships Queensland Baseline Report 2006

The Partnerships Queensland Performance Framework is a key tool to assist agencies and communities to measure improvements in each of the goal areas.

The Partnerships Queensland Baseline Report 2006 (baseline report) collates for the first time data that is mostly publicly available to provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of Indigenous disadvantage from which changes in outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can be measured in the coming years.

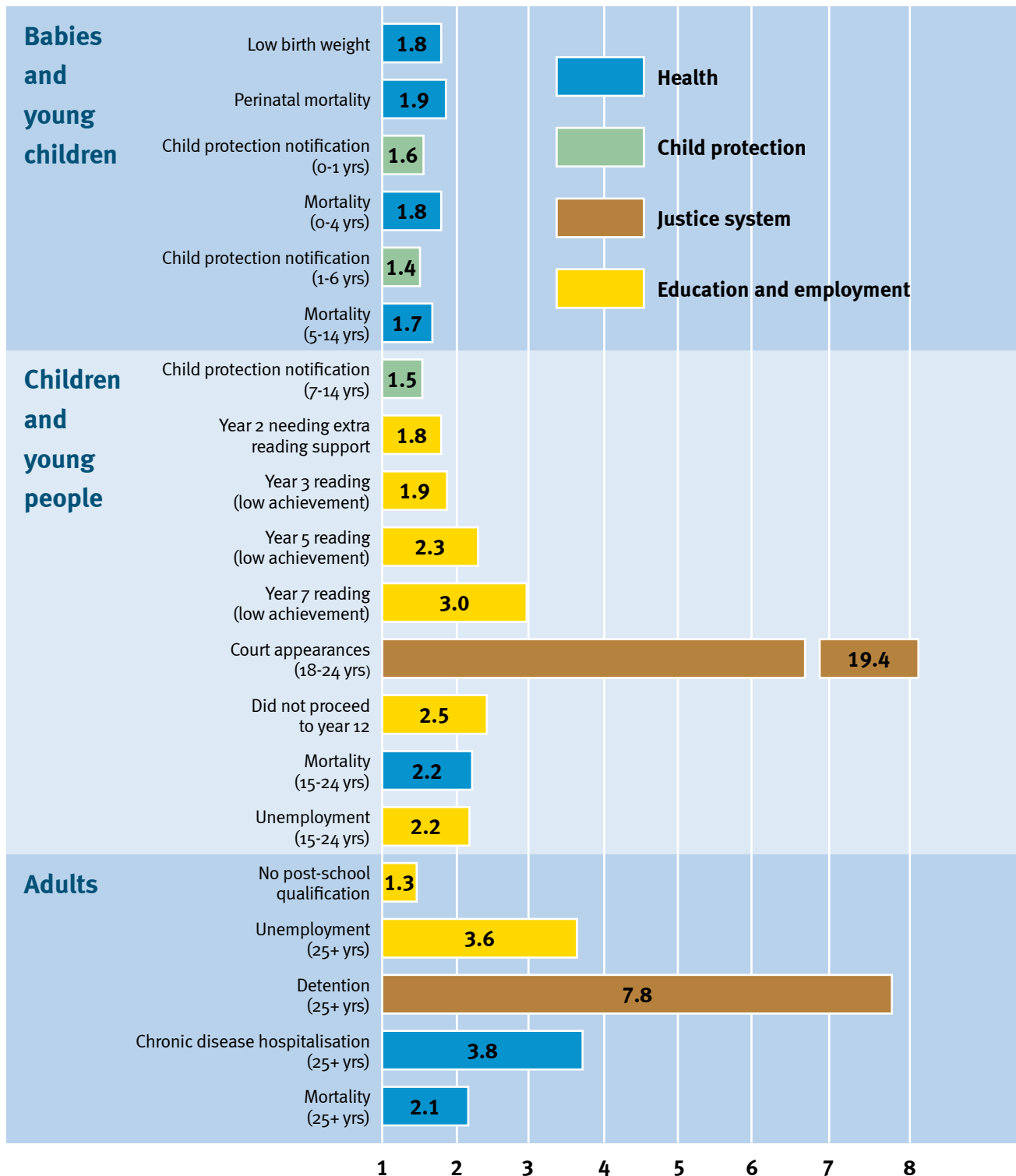
The data are derived from a number of sources, including the 2001 Census of Population and Housing, the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) and government agency administrative data. In some cases the data pre-date recent policy frameworks and initiatives.

This report shows that in most areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders are significantly disadvantaged compared with non-Indigenous Queenslanders, clearly demonstrating the scope of the challenges shared between governments and communities. Diagram 1 provides



a snapshot of selected critical wellbeing indicators which appear in the baseline report. It demonstrates the number of times more likely Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are to experience negative outcomes in relation to these indicators, compared with other Queenslanders.

**Diagram 1: Snapshot of selected critical wellbeing indicators**



**\*Notes on method of calculation:** Rate/ratios are calculated by comparing the actual Indigenous number to the expected Indigenous number if the same rate of the non-Indigenous population was applied to the Indigenous population. For example, Indigenous babies at birth are 1.8 times more likely to be of low birth weight compared with the non-Indigenous babies. All indicators have been orientated so a value of greater than 1 indicates Indigenous disadvantage is (x) number of times greater than the non-Indigenous population. Child protection notifications are only those that have been substantiated. Indigenous unemployment rates include Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) recipients.

The levels of social, health and economic disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders identified in the baseline report are not unique to Queensland. The *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* reports for 2003 and 2005, published by the Productivity Commission, identified similar patterns of disadvantage in all states and territories and for Australia as a whole.

This progress report makes references to data sourced from the baseline report which will provide a reference point for all persons working towards improving the quality of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. While some policy measures and initiatives may have a positive impact in the short term, for many, results will not be demonstrated until the medium to longer term.

## A new way of doing business

The government acknowledges the leadership and efforts demonstrated by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations toward creating strong and sustainable communities and effective services.

Partnerships Queensland commits the government to a new way of doing business with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support these efforts. To better engage and consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the type of services that they need and to strengthen the cultural responsiveness of those services, negotiation tables have been established in 22 locations in Queensland. Each major community has a Government Champion (who is a Director-General of a Queensland Government agency) to advocate across government on their behalf.

This 'new way' has the following key commitments:

- **Community engagement** – working with communities towards local solutions and decision making
- **Shared responsibility** – communities and government taking an active role in service provision, management and monitoring
- **Improved governance** – accountability in communities and government for the delivery of services and allocation of resources
- **Better performing and more accountable service providers** – services working towards achieving set outcomes or results and government reporting on those results and outcomes regularly
- **Capacity building and leadership** – learning and developing the necessary skills by all involved so that the improvements gained are ongoing and increasing.

Most government services and infrastructure that benefit Indigenous people, whether they live in cities, regional centres or remote areas, are delivered through mainstream programs and initiatives. As such, it is difficult to provide a comprehensive picture of total government expenditure on Indigenous Queenslanders. The progress report provides information on a range of key initiatives and specific programs for Indigenous people and communities.

### CASE STUDY

#### Lockhart River Community Plan

The Lockhart River Community Plan 2004-2008 is a great example of a productive partnership between the Queensland Government and an Indigenous community. The comprehensive community strategic plan grew out of the negotiation table process and has strong community ownership and support. The plan, which works towards improvements in community health and well-being, education, justice, housing, land and sea management, and men's and women's issues, has also improved leadership, capacity and performance within this community in far north Queensland.



## Strong families, strong cultures

Strong families and strong cultures are key to providing a healthy physical, social and emotional environment for children, young people and adults, and are a foundation for effective participation in the civic and economic life of a society. The combination of the breakdown of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and family and authority structures, welfare dependency and diminished opportunities and capabilities in many places to secure family and community wellbeing, and negative and stereotypical images about Indigenous people and social exclusion, has had devastating consequences for both individuals and communities. The impact of this is continuing impoverishment and the erosion of individual and community responsibility.

Governments can assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to re-establish strong families and communities by working together on initiatives that affirm and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, promote positive norms and behaviours, and by ensuring services provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are responsive to their needs and build capacity and resilience.

Additional investments have been made in parenting, grand parenting and family support initiatives to build the capability of families to give their children the care and guidance they require for a good start in life. Child Care and Family Support Hubs have been established in 26 locations across the state including six Indigenous communities. A hub is a multi-functional service that takes the form of a 'one stop shop' or network of services to provide families with child care, parenting support, child health and education services. In addition, the government has provided \$1.6 million under the *Remote Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care Program* to support 35 services to provide culturally appropriate child care and family support services in north and far north Queensland and a further \$1 million to upgrade facilities and equipment. More than \$1.2 million has been invested in delivering child care training to workers in numerous child care services in the Gulf, Cape and Torres Strait Island areas — assisting services to meet their qualification requirements under the *Child Care Act 2002*.

The government has recognised and sought to address a number of key issues in the provision of culturally responsive services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In 2005, the Queensland Government launched *Engaging Queenslanders: A guide to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities*, to assist service providers to engage and consult with communities in appropriate ways. The need for more cultural training for staff of service agencies and the need to train more Indigenous people to work with government in providing services is also being addressed. Since January 2005, cross-cultural awareness training has been provided to over 2000 employees across government agencies through the services of *Wal Meta*, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Public Sector Employment Development Unit. In addition, a number of other Queensland government agencies conduct internal cultural awareness training programs and some, including Queensland Health and the Department of Child Safety, have made this training mandatory for staff. Initiatives such as the Murri Court and Indigenous Recognised Entities have sought to ensure culturally sensitive processes operate in relation to Magistrates Courts and child protection matters.

The Queensland Government has supported the growth and development of Indigenous arts, establishing an Indigenous Regional Arts Development Fund and the Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency (QIAMEA). In 2006, the Queensland Government announced a commitment of \$2 million over four years for the promotion of Queensland Indigenous arts to the international and domestic markets. The Government has also provided \$1 million to small to medium Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultural organisations and the Aboriginal Centre for Performing Arts, in addition to \$500,000 for the Indigenous Regional Arts Development Fund to support community-based arts programs. Support has also been provided for the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures Centre, Dandiiri Maiwar, at the Queensland Museum, an Indigenous knowledge centre, Kuril Dhagun, in the redeveloped State Library of Queensland, and other Indigenous knowledge centres in remote communities.

Other initiatives to affirm and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures include support for National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week activities, and continued access to government historical records to assist people seeking to establish connections to family and traditional homelands.

Respect for the cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their important connections to land and sea is also an essential element in building strong cultures. The *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* and the *Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003* give statutory recognition to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of their cultural heritage. Since 2005, the Queensland Government has established a cultural heritage database and register as required under these Acts. The Queensland Government has also transferred 10 parcels of land, totalling approximately 204,857 hectares, to Aboriginal ownership; concluded 16 consent determinations of native title, including the first in Australia over a National Park; completed nine right-to-negotiate processes associated with mining tenure applications and 516 exploration permit applications utilising expedited native title procedures; and created the environment that led to the registration of 54 Indigenous Land Use Agreements associated with various land use activities. Significant progress has been made on the preparation of the Looking After Country Together strategy to strengthen the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in natural resource management.

#### CASE STUDY

### The Murri Court

Queensland's first sentencing court for Indigenous offenders was established in 2002. The court, known as the Murri Court, is an initiative to address Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system. Individual magistrates, service providers and local Indigenous communities have worked together to establish courts operating in the Adult Magistrates Court criminal jurisdiction and/or the Childrens Court in five sites across Queensland. The Murri Court is a culturally sensitive sentencing court for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders who plead guilty to minor offences. The legal processes of the court have a rehabilitative focus and are more effective than the mainstream Magistrates Court. Murri Courts have been successful in diverting offenders from prison by placing offenders on rehabilitative orders. In 2006, the government allocated \$5.3 million over four years for case coordinators, community awareness campaigns and additional support for Indigenous Elders who participate in the Murri Courts.

#### CASE STUDY

### Cape York Institute Welfare Reform Project

The Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership's Welfare Reform Project, supported by the Australian and Queensland Governments, aims to build individual capabilities in Cape York people to assist in their life choices. It is built around three core elements: a positive shift in basic social norms (for example through positive expectations regarding school attendance and achievement); enabling structures (family support and early intervention); and rational incentives (income support and family benefits which encourage people into work and study). The government is providing support to the design phase of this project and four Cape York communities (Aurukun, Hope Vale, Coen and Mossman Gorge) are participating. A report outlining options for a new welfare deal is expected in September 2007.



## CASE STUDY

### Protection of cultural heritage

The *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* and the *Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003*, which commenced in April 2004, are important pieces of legislation which recognise, protect and conserve Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage. Under this legislation all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage is protected whether or not it has been identified or entered onto the cultural heritage database or register. The legislation has expanded the protection of cultural heritage to include significant areas regardless of whether they contain markings or other physical evidence of human occupation. Consequently, under the legislation Ban Ban Springs and Mount Mulligan have been listed on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register.

A duty of care applies to all land users in Queensland to ensure their activities do not harm cultural heritage. Maximum fines for breaching the duty of care are \$750,000 (Corporation) and \$75,000 for an individual as well as imprisonment. Approximately a dozen Stop Orders have been issued under the legislation where cultural heritage has been at risk of harm or is being harmed.

The legislation provides statutory recognition and support to the lead role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples play in the assessment and management of their cultural heritage. Eight Cultural Heritage Bodies have been established under the legislation which will act as a first point of contact for land users seeking to identify the correct Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person to speak for country.

To date approximately 120 cultural heritage management plans have been formally developed under Part 7 of the legislation, in addition to numerous other cultural heritage agreements which have been developed directly with traditional owner groups. The Cultural Heritage Grants Program provides assistance to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Bodies, up to \$10,000. In addition, it enables any party to make application for financial funding for projects which aim to preserve, identify and/or recognise Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, up to \$15,000 for each cultural heritage area. Examples of these projects would include fencing a site, signage, establishing a keeping place and other related initiatives.

## Safe places

The safe places goal of Partnerships Queensland supports the right of all people to live in safety, particularly in their own homes and communities. This goal includes protection of children; reducing the incidence of crime, especially violence against children and women; supporting communities to reduce the impacts of alcohol; creating a fair and equitable criminal justice system; and supporting community capacity to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from injuries, emergencies and disasters.

There are currently high levels of violence, homelessness, assault and injury, victimisation, and substance abuse and misuse in the Indigenous population. Data indicate that young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more likely than non-Indigenous children to experience child abuse and/or neglect and be placed on a protective order. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 7-14 years were placed in out-of-home care at rates between 4.2 and 4.9 times those of non-Indigenous children (2004-05), and comprised 40.2 per cent of all hospital admissions for assault for those aged 0-4 years (2002-03 to 2003-04).

To improve child protection outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, the Queensland Government has reformed the child safety system as specified by the Crime and Misconduct Commission, with a particular focus on the safety of Indigenous children and promoting the use of kinship carers. Since 2005, \$15.6 million per annum in recurrent funds (of which \$12.8 million is new funding) has been provided to achieve state-wide coverage of Indigenous Recognised Entity services that actively participate in significant decisions regarding Indigenous children throughout the statutory system. Sixty four Indigenous child safety support officers have been employed.

The government is also placing a greater focus on preventative and early intervention initiatives, including \$8.5 million for the Referral for Active Intervention (RAI) program. RAI services offer children 0-8 years and their family prevention and early intervention services through a network of supporting agencies and services where it has been identified that there is not an immediate risk of harm or requirement for statutory child protection intervention. The Queensland Government has allocated \$3.3 million for the Indigenous Family Violence Counselling Program, and has partnered with the Australian Government in developing the *Safe Haven Project* in Cherbourg, Coen, Palm Island and Mornington Island. The purpose of safe havens is to provide a timely and integrated case management response to family violence; build community capacity; and develop improved service system coordination.

In relation to homelessness, data indicate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders were 8.1 times more likely to seek the assistance of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program than non-Indigenous Queenslanders (2003-04). From 2005-06 the Queensland Government committed \$235.52 million to the Responding to Homelessness Initiative and over the five years of the Supported Assistance Accommodation Program Agreement (SAAP V) will provide \$165.8 million to homelessness services. Over \$43 million over four years has been provided to establish health outreach teams for homeless people, with a focus on mental health and drug and alcohol use. Although this is not a targeted Indigenous program, northern Queensland teams have a strong focus on support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Excessive alcohol consumption is a significant factor in higher levels of family and other violence as well as increased contact with the criminal justice system. The Queensland Government has responded to this problem by introducing alcohol restrictions including carriage limits and strategies to reduce the demand, supply and impact of alcohol and other substances. These initiatives, including the \$12 million Alcohol and Other Substances Demand Reduction Program, are extremely important in minimising the likelihood of harm resulting from misuse.



This is supported by the delivery of a revised Responsible Management of Licensed Venues training program targeting licensee councils, managers and employees in a number of communities and the imposition of licence conditions on operators of licensed premises in proximity to communities to reduce the amount of takeaway liquor being purchased for transit into nearby communities.

A new \$36 million Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program will be implemented in 2007. The program aims to rehabilitate people charged with certain alcohol-related criminal offences and provide intensive support for parents with an alcohol problem who are involved in the child protection system. The program will be piloted in Cairns (including Yarrabah), Rockhampton (including Woorabinda) and Townsville (including Palm Island). This initiative is also a significant strategy in the government's commitment to reduce the over-representation of Indigenous Queenslanders, particularly young people, in the criminal justice system.

To reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in the criminal justice system, the Queensland Government has allocated \$12.9 million over four years to Indigenous justice initiatives, continued to operate Murri Courts in locations throughout the state, provided Justice of the Peace (Magistrates Courts) training in a number of remote Indigenous communities, and provided support for Community Justice Groups. Community Justice Groups play a vital role in providing community leadership for safer communities, and support to courts and offenders in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. Funding for the 40 Community Justice Groups has been increased from \$2.5 to \$3.5 million. From 2006, \$10.6 million has been committed to enhance youth justice conferencing and community-based services.

To enhance partnerships, a state-wide network of Cross Cultural Liaison Officers (sworn officers), Police Liaison Officers (PLOs) and local police continue to work with communities and Indigenous Community Consultative Groups to provide local responses to community safety issues. The PLO scheme has also been expanded to incorporate over 140 officers, the majority of whom are drawn from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Police Citizens Youth Clubs and Activity Centres continue to operate and offer a range of sustainable skills development activities and programs for children.

The government has also supported the roll-out of a new Probation and Parole service, including the establishment of Probation and Parole offices in Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Normanton and Thursday Island. Queensland Corrective Services officers in these centres are able to supervise and monitor offenders in the community and deliver programs at a local level. This initiative represents a significant improvement in service delivery for these areas and offers an option to the courts to divert Indigenous offenders from prison. To prevent re-offending, \$3.8 million has been allocated for the Post Release Employment Assistance Prisoner Program which aims to assist offenders prior and post release to become work ready and gain sustainable employment. Although this is not a targeted Indigenous program, assisting Indigenous offenders is a key focus.

To prevent and reduce the impacts of disasters and emergencies, \$2.2 million has been allocated for the Indigenous Communities Safety Enhancement Package. Other initiatives include Disaster Risk Management Guidelines for Indigenous communities, extra Emergency Service cadet groups, new facilities, and the upgrade of aero-medical and air rescue services.

## CASE STUDY

## Alcohol supply and demand management

The Queensland Government has worked with 19 communities to develop individual Alcohol Management Plans aimed at reducing alcohol related-violence. Most of the Alcohol Management Plans incorporate some form of alcohol restrictions, including licence conditions on operators in or close to the discrete communities. These are reviewed after the first year of operation, providing the communities and government with an opportunity to discuss issues and work toward common goals. All but one of the first round of reviews has been completed. A review of Palm Island's Alcohol Management Plan will be due after July 2007. While not everyone has supported alcohol restrictions, it is clear from the review process to date that most people agreed there was a need for action and that the changes had brought some positive improvements including fewer disturbances in communities. There are still many challenges ahead which will require a concerted effort by the Queensland Police Service, the Liquor Licensing Division, Education Queensland, Queensland Health, the Department of Communities, and other government departments working with local government, the Australian Government, councils, Community Justice Groups and the people who live in these communities to achieve greater community ownership.

The Alcohol and Other Substances Demand Reduction Program aims to provide support for local initiatives that will reduce demand for and use of alcohol and other substances in communities and complements the supply restrictions of the Alcohol Management Plans. The program funding includes \$12 million over four years from the Queensland Government and \$1.97 million from the Australian Government. The government has allocated \$2 million to eight communities to date, with other applications under assessment. In 2007, the program will engage with the discrete communities to develop comprehensive and effective three-year demand reduction plans that include a range of diversionary and other activities.

Several agencies have responsibility for programs and services that focus on supply of, demand for, and harm minimisation/treatment related to alcohol and other substance misuse. Government has begun a review of policy and program settings across portfolios that will ensure that agencies work in an integrated, coordinated and effective manner.

## CASE STUDY

## Junior Indigenous Community Safety Program

The Department of Emergency Services has designed the Junior Indigenous Community Safety Program to help nurture future Indigenous leaders in Queensland's emergency services. It currently operates in schools on several Torres Strait islands and will be expanded to remote communities in far north Queensland throughout 2007. The program involves community members working with the school to deliver important life lessons to students in Years 4 to 7. There are 20 lessons throughout the year, including topics such as boat safety, knot tying, bushcraft, navigation and mapping, fire safety, accidents and junior first aid.



## Healthy living

The healthy living goal of Partnerships Queensland is focussed on attending to the social, cultural and environmental factors which affect the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Compared with other Queenslanders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience a higher burden of preventable, chronic, infectious, environmental and parasitic diseases. The government is tackling these issues by allocating \$68.8 million over four years to improve the health of Indigenous Queenslanders. The *Queensland Government Implementation Plan 2004-2008* for the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2003-2013* (*Queensland Government Implementation Plan*) outlines the priority areas for this funding including prevention and early intervention in chronic disease; supporting healthy and safe children, young people and families; strengthening responses to alcohol and substance misuse; and improving environmental health. In addition, capital funding includes continuing investment in primary health care centres at Thursday Island and Yarrabah through an additional \$10.25 million in 2006-07.

Evidence suggests that the foundations for good health are established before birth with the health of women in the pre-pregnancy and pregnancy periods. Poor maternal health can impact directly on foetal growth and is a significant risk factor for the higher rates of low birth weight babies. Low birth weight places babies at greater risk of perinatal death, disability, failure to thrive, chronic disease and reduced cognitive, physical and behavioural development. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies in Queensland were between 1.6 and 1.9 times more likely to be of low birth weight than non-Indigenous babies (2002-03 to 2003-04), while infant mortality rates in babies born to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers were between 1.7 and 2.5 times those of non-Indigenous babies (2000 to 2002).

To ensure the best start in life and optimal development for children, the government is implementing Indigenous-specific strategies for women and babies as part of the response to a recent review of maternity services in Queensland. This includes initiatives to promote a healthy lifestyle during pregnancy and to increase access to antenatal services, particularly in remote areas.

As part of the \$68.8 million over four years to improve the health of Indigenous Queenslanders, \$21 million has been allocated to strategies which are designed to implement prevention and early intervention approaches, address health inequalities through improving health in the perinatal period and early childhood, minimise the risks of chronic disease in adulthood and improve children's safety. These initiatives will be implemented under the *Queensland Government Implementation Plan* and the *Strategic Policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People's Health 2005-2010*. This investment includes the recruitment of a skilled Indigenous child health workforce across the state, specialist child health positions, a hearing health team, sexual and reproductive health workers, Indigenous child health workers in schools, young parent support workers and maternal and child health educators.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults experience significantly higher rates of chronic diseases (such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes and renal disease) that can be prevented by a healthy lifestyle and are 3.2 times more likely to be admitted to hospital for chronic disease than their non-Indigenous peers (2002-03 to 2003-04). Preventable chronic disease accounts for a significant percentage of the high levels of premature mortality amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. The *Queensland Strategy for Chronic Disease 2005-2015* has been developed to prevent and manage chronic diseases by reducing risk factors, enabling early diagnosis, and providing effective chronic disease care.

Rates of bacterial sexually transmissible infections such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis are substantially higher in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. Research has indicated that this is often due to poor access to treatment, rather than numbers of sexual partners. To address this issue, an additional 29 Indigenous Sexual and Reproductive Health Workers will be employed across Queensland under a new Indigenous Health Package between 2005 and 2009.

A new Workforce Development Officer will support them to ensure they have access to quality training and development programs. A state-wide social marketing campaign, including a targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander campaign, will also be implemented during 2007. Since 2005, the Queensland Government has funded and implemented the Health Women's initiative in Cape York, Mount Isa and Charleville Health Service Districts to increase screening of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women for sexually transmissible infections and cervical cancer.

The risk of poor health increases where people's environments are unhealthy due to factors such as unsuitable or overcrowded housing, poor water quality, inadequate waste disposal, and limited or inadequate environmental health services. The government acknowledges the high rates of overcrowded housing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and has taken steps to provide long term solutions to this issue through the development of a new service delivery model, supported by Housing Improvement Plans for the construction and maintenance of community houses. The new model commenced operation in late 2006 and is expected to significantly improve responsive maintenance and the efficiency of housing construction in the short term, while leading to longer term improvements in the sustainability of housing assets.

Since 2005, the government has approved \$134.4 million in total for housing in 34 communities, including an additional \$20 million in 2006-07 for the maintenance and upgrading of houses. Other housing-related projects include the completion of property condition audits and tenant surveys of approximately 4000 rental houses in 34 Indigenous communities, the establishment of three housing resource workers in the Torres Strait region, the construction of women's shelters in the Northern Peninsula Area and in Aurukun, and \$2.377 million expenditure on a number of Community Renewal projects at Palm Island, Cairns, Logan and Caboolture.

In addition, the government has committed \$100 million for the Indigenous Environmental Health Infrastructure Capital Grants Program for the provision of water, sewerage and waste management infrastructure to communities. As part of the \$68.8 million over four years to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, Environmental Health Workers have been funded in 34 Indigenous communities. This funding also provides for dedicated animal management workers and the implementation of an animal management program in selected Indigenous communities. Responses to emergent public health concerns have also been implemented. For example, Queensland Health, in partnership with the Australian Government, commenced an eradication campaign in 11 outer Torres Strait islands in mid-2005, following the identification of an exotic dengue vector mosquito. Thirteen million dollars in recurrent funding has also been allocated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Assistance under the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme.

Significant steps have also been taken to encourage healthy lifestyles through investment in sport and recreation programs and infrastructure, and health promotion initiatives. An Indigenous Sport and Recreation Strategy is being finalised, with \$9 million committed for implementation. In addition, \$5.5 million has been allocated for the construction of major sport and recreation infrastructure to support increased participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, and over \$2 million per annum has been allocated to employ community-based sport and recreation officers through the Indigenous Community Development Program. Investment has also occurred in a number of health promotion initiatives. For example, 80 Indigenous-specific events have been funded to promote smoke free messages and the Smoke Check Tobacco Brief Intervention Program has resulted in 400 health workers being trained to provide quit smoking support to Indigenous clients.



## CASE STUDY

### Badu Island – Healthy Kids for Life

Health Promotion Queensland funded Education Queensland and the Badu community to address healthy eating and physical activity on Badu Island in the Torres Strait. This demonstration project is one of three across the state. Strategies include addressing the supply of sugary drinks and fatty foods in partnership with the take-away shop, tuckshop, council and school. The project will also improve the local environment to support physical activity. Nutrition and physical activity promotions will also be implemented and evaluated. The project steering group is the Badu Island Intra-agency Group, which includes representatives from government, non-government organisations, churches, Elders and the council, and will be in place from 18 months to two years.

## CASE STUDY

### Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service Mums and Babies Program

In February 2000, the *Mums and Babies* Program commenced at the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service (TAIHS). A collaborative model of antenatal and postnatal care for women was developed under a partnership arrangement between the Queensland Health Child Health Unit and the Aboriginal and Islander Health Team, the Kirwan Women's Hospital and TAIHS. The program encompasses regular antenatal and postnatal medical examinations, pregnancy nutrition advice, birthing information and support, supervised child care, and a transport service. The program has seen a decrease in perinatal deaths by 62%, pre-term births by 44% and the incidence of low birth weight by 26% since 2000. The *Mums and Babies* clinic also sees large numbers of infants and children who are regularly monitored for growth, development and hearing. The program has also been extended to include primary health care for children up to eight years of age.

## Skilled and prosperous people and communities

The fourth Partnerships Queensland goal is to build skilled and prosperous people and communities through improvements in the attainment levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and adults in relation to education and vocational skills, and to support opportunities for employment and economic independence that come with higher levels of education and skills.

While many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are achieving great success, others are falling behind in primary school, which increases the likelihood that they will disengage and withdraw from studies prematurely. By Year 7, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are approximately three times more likely to be achieving low literacy results than non-Indigenous children. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are also more than twice as likely as non-Indigenous students to withdraw from school before Year 12.

Improving school attendance and numeracy and literacy skills in the early and middle years of school is a key focus for government. The Queensland Government has developed new initiatives to support improvements in the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, investing \$19.4 million recurrent funding and \$9.2 million capital funding to assist students in Cape York, the Torres Strait and other Indigenous community council areas. The *Partners in a Learning Culture* and the *Bound for Success* strategies (Cape York and the Torres Strait) provide a comprehensive response to the obstacles Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children must overcome to attend school and remain engaged in education.

Key initiatives under these strategies include the development of Regional Indigenous Education Plans across the state based upon identified local needs; the development of individual learning plans which identify each child's strengths and areas of learning need with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy skills; support for the training and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in remote areas; transition support for children who need to travel away from home to attend high school; and support through the development of resources and other learning tools for teachers and principals with high numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Centres of Excellence in Indigenous Education and Australia's first Indigenous Education Leadership Institute have been established to support the continued growth of best practice in curriculum, teaching and assessment. These initiatives build on the government's earlier and ground-breaking initiative: *Education and Training Reforms for the Future*.

The successful attainment of secondary education and/or vocational skills increases employment opportunities, civic participation and the capacity of individuals to create wealth. Increasing work participation is also critical as this contributes substantially to economic security, feelings of self worth and societal connectedness, and increases the chances of experiencing good health and wellbeing. The baseline report indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and adults were between 2.3 to 3.6 times more likely to be unemployed than non-Indigenous Queenslanders (2001).

The Queensland Government provides support for vocational education, training and enterprise development through a variety of training and business development initiatives. In 2005-06, \$29.5 million of training (equating to over 2 million hours of accredited training) was provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through TAFE Queensland, with additional funding for Indigenous Student Support Officers. The government is also supporting the increasing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander apprentices with culturally appropriate mentoring, support and referral services to ensure the same retention and completion rates as non-Indigenous Queenslanders are achieved.

In 2006, as part of the comprehensive \$1 billion Queensland Skills Plan, an additional 20 Indigenous Employment and Training Support Officer positions were established, along with 12 Indigenous Employment and Training Managers. Since 2004-05, annual funding of \$2.3 million has been



allocated under the Cape York Training and Employment Strategy for vocational education and training linked to employment or voluntary community work. Another employment initiative that specifically targets and supports Indigenous jobseekers is the Indigenous Employment Policy for Queensland Government Building and Civil Construction Projects (20% Policy) that requires all government funded construction projects in selected communities to ensure that a minimum of 20% of total labour hours be undertaken by Indigenous people recruited from the local community.

To support opportunities for employment and to build Indigenous business capacity and skills, as well as supporting the establishment and expansion of Indigenous businesses, \$2.5 million per year for four years has been allocated to the Indigenous Business Development Program, including for three Indigenous Business Hubs and five Indigenous Enterprise Development Officers, to support Indigenous economic development throughout Queensland. Since the start of the Indigenous Business Development Program more than 60 businesses have been supported and in excess of three hundred jobs, both part and full time, have been created.

Since 2004, the Queensland Government has hosted Reconciliation Business Forums which have engaged and facilitated networks between Indigenous business people, communities, traditional owners, government and non-government organisations, and the private sector. The government also allocated \$175,000 to Tourism Queensland to prepare a Cape York and Torres Strait Tourism Development Action Plan to identify sustainable tourism opportunities for the region, and \$100,000 over three years has been committed to assist in implementing the plan.

To develop skilled and prosperous communities, a high priority is supporting the development of increased community capacity and improved governance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local governments and non-government Indigenous community organisations which deliver many of the services funded by government. Since 2005, the government has provided \$6 million under the Community Governance Improvement Strategy for the provision of support and capacity building activities for Aboriginal shire councils and Island councils. Significant initiatives include the Councillor Training Program, the Council Employee Administration Training Program, and support for council staff undertaking the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) Diploma. The government is also implementing the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations initiative and has committed \$1.3 million per annum for three years commencing 2006-07, including six regionally-based Indigenous positions as part of a specialist team to support Indigenous organisations. Under the Blueprint for the Bush initiative, the government has allocated \$2.7 million over three years to strengthen rural Indigenous non-government organisations.

## CASE STUDY

### Puchiwu Fishing Company

The Puchiwu Fishing Company was established in Lockhart River with assistance from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and Indigenous Business Establishment Grant funding from the Department of State Development and Trade. Since its inception, the project has enabled the community to establish an incorporated Indigenous company governed by a 12-member board and to train 19 community members to gain commercial diving qualifications. The training has been a major investment in workforce skills development and provides increasing employment opportunities for community members within the mainstream industry.

In 2007, Puchiwu Fishing will seek to develop its commercial cray fishing expertise and consistently market live crayfish through Cairns wholesalers. The company will also explore options to diversify into other seafood products such as live mud crabs.

## CASE STUDY

**Indigenous Education Leadership Institute**

The Indigenous Education Leadership Institute, located in Cherbourg, is the result of an innovative partnership between the Department of Education, Training and the Arts and the Queensland University of Technology. The Institute develops and delivers leadership programs for principals, supports principals' and schools of excellence networks and develops better in-service and induction programs for teachers assigned to schools with a high Indigenous student body. The Institute hopes to replicate its success across all schools in Queensland.

## CASE STUDY

**Remote Area Teacher Education Program**

The Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in rural and remote communities with an opportunity to gain professional, portable qualifications and is a partnership between James Cook University, Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE and Education Queensland.

The program has been recognised formally through a number of awards, including the 2006 Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Committee Award for Partnerships, Pathways and Policy, and the Partnerships and Reconciliation Award of the 2004 Premier's Award for Excellence in Public Sector Management.

Since its inception, 113 RATEP trained teachers have graduated with Bachelor of Education qualifications, while hundreds more have gained Certificate III to Diploma qualifications. In 2006, four additional RATEP sites were established and work is underway to further build on the success of RATEP by establishing new external provider arrangements and increasing certificate-level enrolments in the Far North Queensland Region.

## CASE STUDY

**Partnerships Queensland Corporate Engagement Strategy**

The Partnerships Queensland Corporate Engagement Strategy was developed to support the skilled and prosperous people and communities goal of Partnerships Queensland. It aims to make it easier for the Australian corporate sector to partner with government to provide business and economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For example in 2005-2006, the strategy brokered a partnership with Accor Hotels to provide school-based apprenticeships to Indigenous senior students in the hospitality industry. Up to 20 students have taken up school-based apprenticeships in the fields of customer service, cooking, bar and room attending. Students are undertaking paid employment for one day a week as part of their senior studies in Accor Hotels located in Cairns and Brisbane. Additional school-based apprenticeships will be offered in Townsville during 2006-2007.



## CASE STUDY

### Indigenous Business Development

Indigenous Business Development grant funds of \$150,000 were provided in 2005-06 to Northern Project Crushing (NPC), for the purchase of equipment for operation of an ore sidings removal and crushing service owned, managed and staffed by Indigenous people from the Waayni Nations in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The equipment increased NPC's contribution to the joint venture partnership contract to provide road base and other products and services for Zinifex at its Century Mine. This relatively small government investment allowed the Indigenous enterprise to take a larger equity share in the business and increase its overall profits and expansion.

Production levels exceeded the requirement of the contract, and the enterprise was able to meet increasing demand and produce double the initial requirements. NPC changed its company name to Waayni Mining Services (WMS) in 2006 partly to reflect its increased services and a vision to have a training and employment arm to enable the company to provide a labour pool for a number of other related contracts in the region. Up to seven full time jobs were created with training provided for nine local Waanyi people and an engineering degree scholarship paid for which will ensure WMS has the capacity to take over the crushing contract at a future date. It is anticipated that up to 30 further jobs may be created with future contracts for roadworks including work with the Department of Main Roads and the Burke Shire Council. An ore handling project and a soil stripping project have also been secured with work on these projects commencing in early 2007.

NPC received a Premier's Award for Excellence in 2005 in the Joint Venture category.

## CASE STUDY

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education to Employment Scheme

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education to Employment Scheme grew from a program of three scholarships to an extensive collaborative venture between 15 state government departments. A total of 918 students have applied for scholarships since the scheme's inception with 242 having successfully graduated from the scheme.

The Department of Main Roads has coordinated the scheme since its inception in 1998. The government's Interdepartmental Taskforce on Indigenous Education recently recommended that the scheme be expanded by a further 50 placements across the Queensland Public Sector in 2007-08 and work be undertaken to secure another 50 places on the scheme via private sector sponsorship.

## Future directions

To achieve the four goals of Partnerships Queensland, Queensland government agencies are working together on a number of key initiatives for change. These include:

- developing and implementing the Partnerships Queensland **Five Year Action Plan**, which focuses on priority reforms and service improvements. The baseline report and significant response planning work across government since the launch of Partnerships Queensland will inform its development
- driving integrated and innovative service delivery through the new **Government Coordination Office** and Indigenous Service Coordinators working with the 19 Meeting Challenges, Making Choices communities
- continuing the **Community Governance Improvement Strategy**, which provides capacity building initiatives for Aboriginal shire councils during the transition to full shire council status over the next two years. The strategy will continue to provide accredited and non-accredited training and development for councillors and staff and will assist councils to examine and implement alternative service delivery arrangements. Additionally, in response to the recommendations of the Auditor-General, the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation will be implementing a range of new measures to specifically improve the financial management and accountability of councils
- repositioning the former Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy within the Department of Communities to provide **strengthened whole-of-government leadership** and early intervention and response capacity at a state, regional and local level
- strengthening the **Partnerships Queensland Corporate Engagement Strategy** to broker partnerships between government and the private and non-government sectors and develop business and economic opportunities
- developing **Local Indigenous Partnership Agreements** with discrete Indigenous communities as well as regional level agreements
- improving support for **negotiation tables** and the **Government Champions** program
- holding **Ministerial Indigenous Roundtables**, chaired by the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, to discuss critical issues and solutions to the challenges facing Indigenous Queenslanders.

The Queensland Government will continue to place a priority on initiatives and programs that are directed to achieving the goals of Partnerships Queensland. A sustained and coordinated approach is required across governments, along with partnerships with the private and community sectors and, most importantly, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations. Only such an approach can make a real and lasting difference to the life outcomes and opportunities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.



## Further Information

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For further information on Partnerships Queensland or to view/download a copy of the Partnerships Queensland Policy Framework, visit: <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au>

## Or contact:

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