

**COMMUNIQUE – Forum hosted by the Queensland First Children and Families Board to inform the second Changing Tracks Action Plan
4 – 5 June 2019**

On 4-5 June 2019, the Queensland First Children and Families Board hosted a facilitated forum to inform the development of the second Changing Tracks Action Plan (2020-22). Board members were joined by partners from Queensland Government, non-Government, peak organisations and community representatives from the child protection and family support sector.

Mr Ashley Ruska provided a heart-warming Welcome to Country reflecting the importance of families and culture. Co-chairs Professor Boni Robertson and Mr Mick Gooda challenged forum participants to be bold and innovative in informing the next Action Plan and highlighted that it needs to continue to set the foundations for change across the Child Protection System to reduce the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system by 2037.

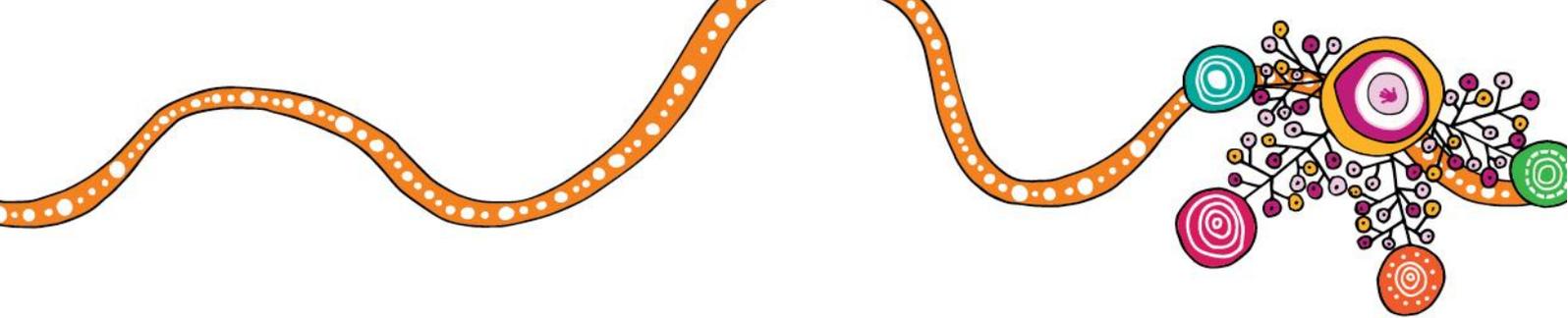
Professor Robertson spoke of the need for the department, all levels of Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to work collaboratively in partnership and with mutual respect, to make the transformational change required. This will ensure that any barriers identified as hindering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families from enjoying a safe and loving social, family and community environment, are identified and appropriately addressed.

To accomplish this, Professor Robertson advised that it is important that we all be honest about the inability of past policies to bring about the type of change that has been sought, and look instead to the communities for advice and inspiration as they know only too well what is required to best address the needs of their families and communities. It will take a great deal of faith from all sides and a redirecting of funding as it currently stands, in order to develop more measurable and proactive community based solutions to address community based concerns.

Ms Naraja Clay, a young CREATE consultant, shared her story and experiences as a former child of out of home care. Ms Clay outlined that cultural plans are important and connection to family and culture is integral to social and emotional wellbeing. She highlighted that families are complex and extended and that we need to think outside the box and do things differently. Ms Clay provided a strong message that we must always consider our actions and responses through the lens of the child or young person.

Director-Generals from the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (Mr Michael Hogan), Department of Youth Justice (Mr Bob Gee) and Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (Mr Chris Sarra) provided an overview of the current environment and strategic direction to provide forum participants with a rich context in which to consider the next Action Plan. An update was then provided on the progress of the first Changing Tracks Action Plan by the Executive Director Mr Ron Weatherall.

Ms Natalie Lewis, Co-Chair, Family Matters and Dr Gerald Featherstone, Queensland Co-Chair, as key partners to Our Way, reminded forum participants of the need for action across the four building blocks 1. Universal and targeted services, 2. Participation, control and self-determination, 3. Culturally



safe and responsive systems and 4. Accountability. Drawing on Family Matters and its membership's rich knowledge and expertise, they outlined the challenges and next steps needed to reduce the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system.

For the remainder of the forum the facilitator, Ms Kristal Kinsela-Christie from Indigenous Professional Services, moved forum participants through a range of activities designed to capture potential actions or areas of interest to enable continued transformational change and to inform the development of the second Changing Tracks Action Plan. At the end of the forum, Ms Kinsela- outlined that the wealth of information from the forum would be used by the Our Way team to develop the second Changing Tracks action plan for further consultation with key partners and community before final endorsement in late 2019.

On Day 1, the Hon Di Farmer MP, Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence talked to forum participants about the commitment and aspirations the Minister holds for this work. Minister Farmer spent time with each of the working groups to hear about the ideas being discussed and generated.

On Day 2, young male performers from the Murri School shared a range of traditional dances from different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from places across Australia in recognition of the diverse places the youth come from to attend the Murri School. This was a powerful reminder of the strength that is found in culture.

In closing, the Co-Chairs thanked forum participants and reminded us that: "There is no greater calling than looking after our kids, which is what we've done the past two days".

Queensland First Children and Families Board Members - In Camera Session

The Queensland First Children and Families Board held in camera sessions over the course of the Forum to progress other key work with Queensland Government including briefings and advice related to the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women draft strategic plan **Supporting Families, Changing Futures 2019 – 2023**, a possible third round of Empowering Families Innovation Grants and on youth justice matters.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for September 2019.

For more information in relation to the Board including previous communiques, please visit the Board's webpage <https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/campaign/supporting-families/background/queensland-first-children-families-board>.

Any other queries can be emailed to the Board Secretariat through the following email address qcfbsec@csyw.qld.gov.au.

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Co-chair

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