

A Great Start for All Queensland Children

An early years plan for Queensland





Acknowledgement of country

The Queensland Government acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands from across Queensland. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the state.

Statement of commitment

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Queensland Government are building a reframed relationship that acknowledges, embraces and celebrates the humanity of Indigenous Australians. We are proud that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have continuing rights and responsibilities as the first peoples of Queensland, including traditional ownership and connection to land and waters.

In the spirit of healing, we recognise the past acts of dispossession, settlement and discriminatory policies, and the cumulative acts of colonial and state governments since the commencement of colonisation, which have left an enduring legacy of economic and social disadvantage that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have experienced and continue to experience.

It is time to nurture hope and optimism. It is time to focus on strengths and not deficits, and to move from surviving to thriving. We will move forward together with mutual respect, recognition and a willingness to speak the truth about our shared history. Through our continued shared commitment to reconciliation, all Queenslanders will be part of this journey.

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A great start for all of Queensland's children

Getting a great start to life is critical for lifelong learning, health and wellbeing.

In 2018, the Queensland Government released *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities*. **Our vision is for all Queensland children to have a great start in life, supported by their family, service providers and the wider community to improve their life chances and reach their full potential.**

Research shows that a great start to life is the best way to ensure children are able to reach their full potential as happy, healthy and productive citizens. It also shows that achieving a great start requires a holistic view of the child, parents, carers, grandparents, other family members and the communities in which they live, learn and grow.

A Great Start for All Queensland Children is a whole-of-government early years plan for Queensland, setting out the state's vision for children in their early years and placing children at the centre of our community responses. No matter what challenges the world brings for our children, this plan supports families and communities to unite and recover. It brings together the health, housing, education, child safety and communities portfolios to all play a role in ensuring children get a great start in life and make sure services work together seamlessly to support children and families. It also provides parents, carers, families and communities with information about the key influences on children's development in the early years, and how they can play a role in the early learning, health and wellbeing of children.

Our world has been disrupted by the global pandemic and as Queensland navigates through its COVID-19 recovery the Queensland Government is taking targeted action to support our children, families and services. It is more important than ever that our children feel safe, valued, respected and know that they belong.

This plan focuses on our youngest Queenslanders, from conception to eight years of age, and acknowledges parental health and wellbeing and perinatal care as key factors in supporting families to give their children a great start. It also recognises the role of the community in ensuring that all children, including vulnerable children, are in safe and supportive environments that allow them to thrive. The plan complements and builds on other whole-of-government, strategic initiatives focused on improving outcomes for children and families more broadly, and represents a sustained commitment from the Queensland Government to invest in a great start for all our children.

The Queensland Government respects, protects and promotes human rights, and this plan recognises the rights of all children in Queensland to be protected, enjoy their culture, declare and practise their religion, use their language, express themselves, take part in public life, and have access to education and health services.

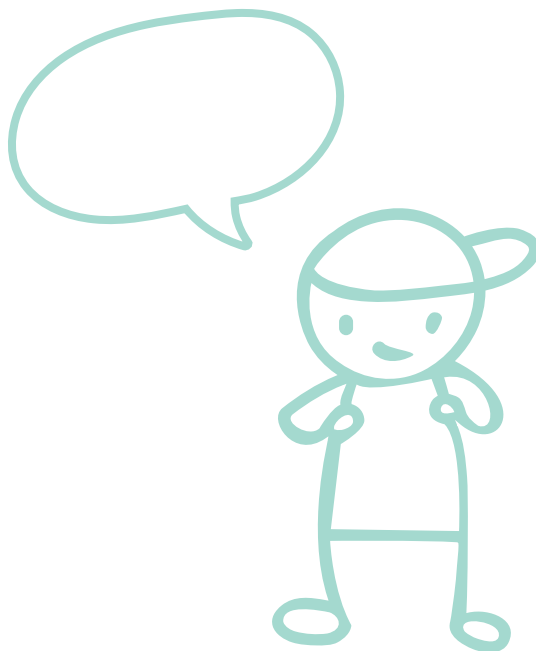


What our children are telling us

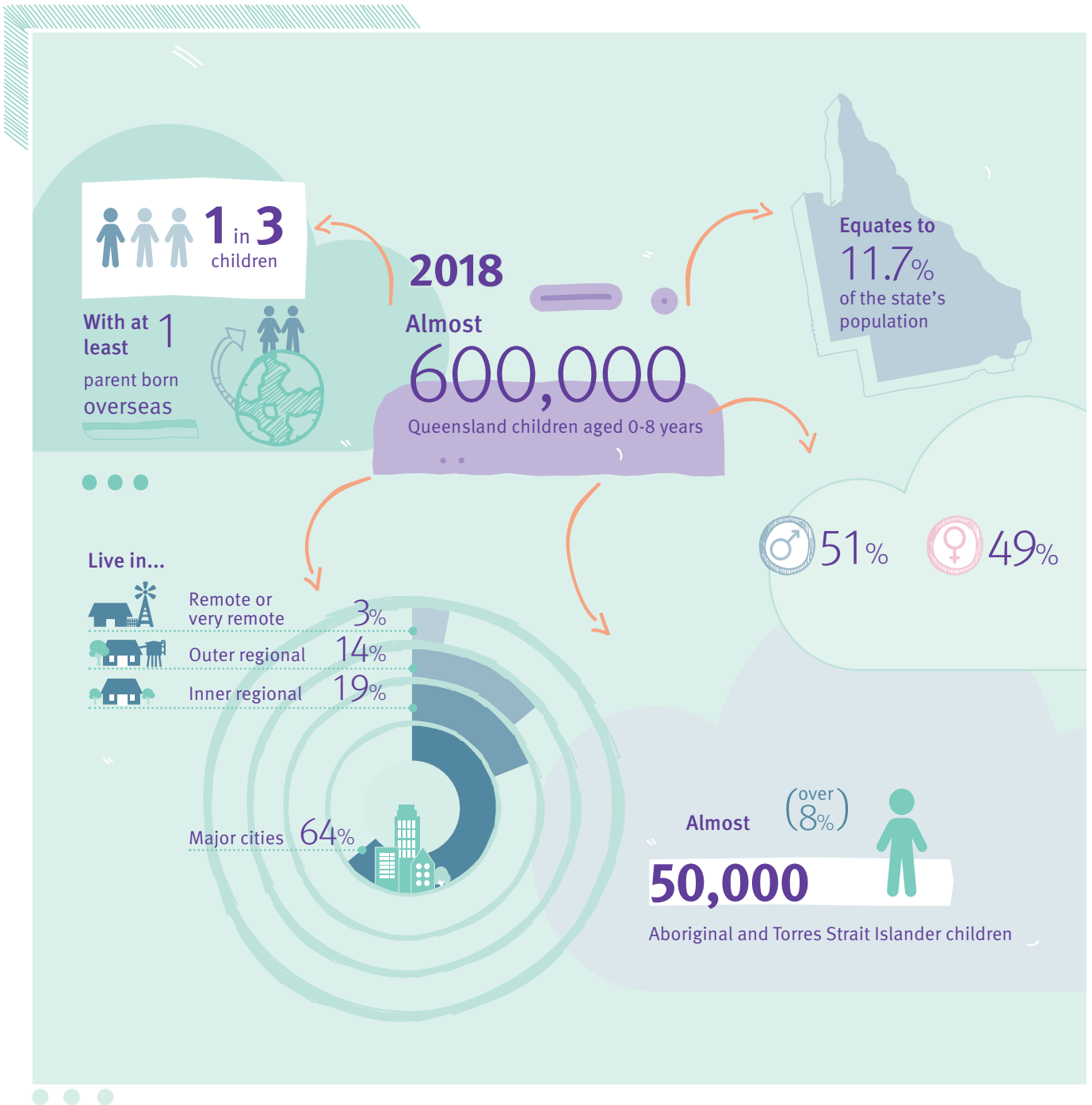
Queensland children and young people are strong, capable and eager to engage in their surroundings and community.

The recent *Growing Up in Queensland* project used surveys, postcards and art activities to gather insights about what is important to children and young people, what their communities are like and what their hopes and dreams are. The project found that 60 per cent of Queensland children and young people who responded to the survey reported they felt positive or very positive about their future. They expressed their hopes and dreams and said that to achieve these they need to be heard and to feel safe, valued, respected and included in their communities. They saw their community as a place of connection, relationships, social engagement and support in tough times.

Queensland children valued opportunities to play, including access to parks, playgrounds and other outdoor areas. They were aware of their surroundings and concerned about the health of the environment, the negative impacts of climate change and human activity, and the issues they may be inheriting. Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children discussed the importance of caring for country to keep culture strong. Children valued the diversity of their communities and the relationships and connections they have there. They wanted to participate meaningfully in community life and live in safe communities with support for families when it is needed.



A snapshot of Queensland children



How we are faring

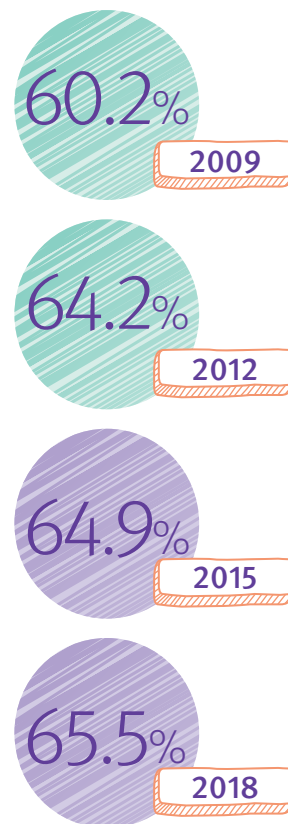
All parents want their children to grow up in happy, caring homes, engage with the broader community, have healthy diets, learn through experiences at home and within the community, and develop the necessary resilience to face the challenges life presents.

Many Queensland children are already getting a great start to life, which sets them up for success and enables them to reach their full potential as individuals and make productive contributions to their families and communities.

However, families and children can experience times of vulnerability, including as a result of child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, homelessness, engagement with the justice system, family breakdown, or domestic or family violence, which affect their physical and mental health, financial security and wellbeing. Key times that Queensland children and families may need – and will most benefit from – additional support are from conception, during the early months of life, in the early years before school and in the first few years of schooling.

Queensland is home to families of many different types and make-ups, and children from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of different needs, including children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from rural and remote areas, refugee and migrant children, children in care, and children with a disability.

Queensland children on track on four or more domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)



A Great Start for All Queensland Children will use the three headline indicators from the Give All Our Children a Great Start priority under the Queensland Government's Our Future State initiative to demonstrate over time whether its vision is being achieved:

- increase the number of babies born healthier – by 2025, there will be a 5 percentage point increase in babies born with a healthy weight
- increase childhood immunisation rates – by 2022, 95 per cent of Queensland children aged one, two and five years old will be fully immunised for vaccine-preventable diseases in accordance with the National Immunisation Program Schedule
- improve wellbeing before school – by 2025, we will reduce the percentage of Queensland children developmentally vulnerable in one or more AEDC domains to 22 per cent.

Approximately 19 per cent (111,043) of Queensland children aged zero to eight years live in highly socio-economically disadvantaged areas with limited access to social and material resources and ability to participate in society. Some babies (more than 3000 in 2018) are born outside the healthy weight range (i.e. below 2.5kg or above 4.5kg) and some communities and groups need support to ensure immunisation rates reach 95 per cent for children at one, two and five years of age.

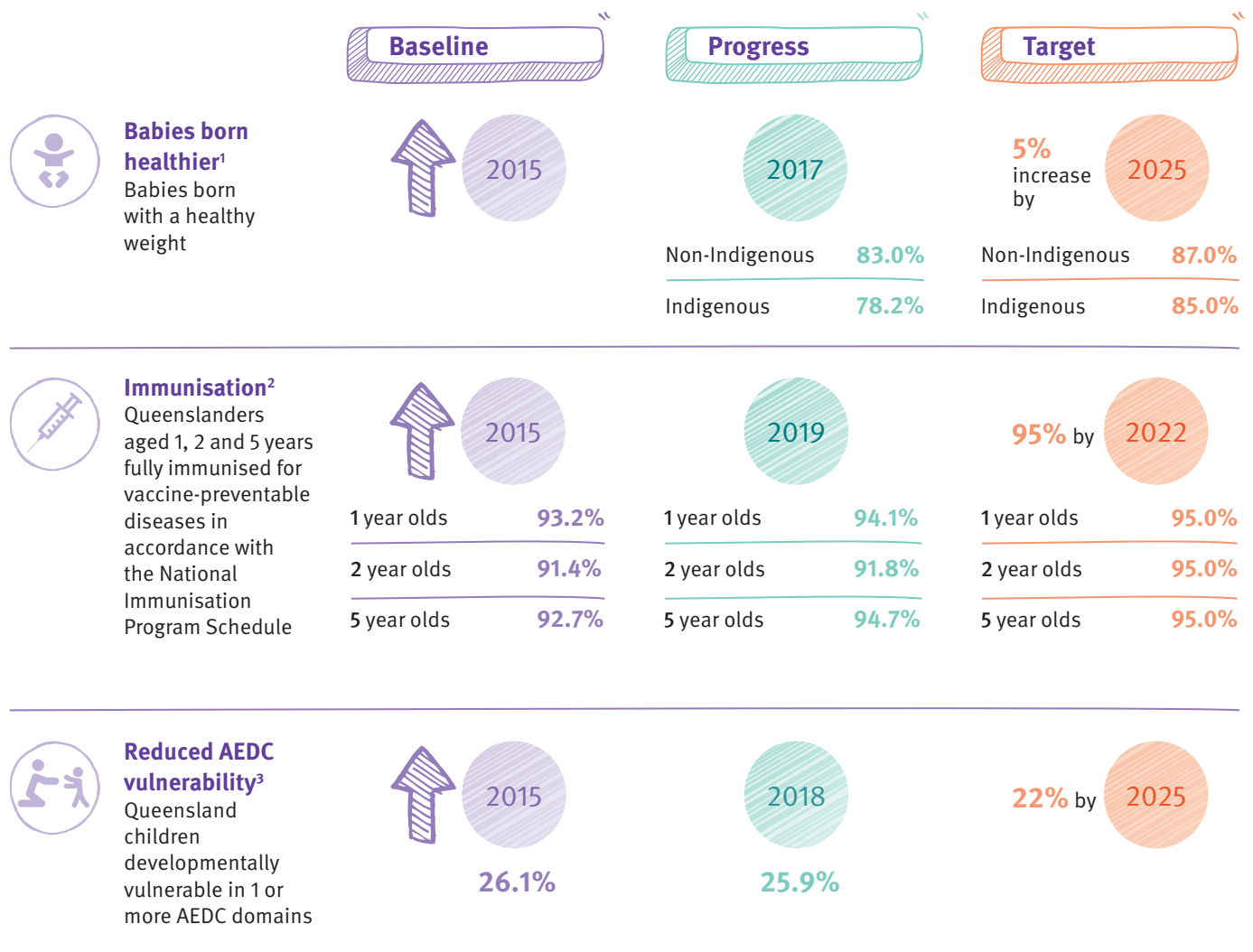
The AEDC is a nationwide data collection that shows how young Australian children have developed as they start their first year of full-time school. It measures five important domain areas:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills
- communication and general knowledge.

These factors are important predictors of children's later health, wellbeing and academic development.

Developmental vulnerability has decreased in Queensland more than any other state or territory since 2009. In 2018, 65.5 per cent of Queensland children were considered on track in four or more domains of the AEDC. This is an improvement from 60.2 per cent in 2009, 64.2 per cent in 2012 and 64.9 per cent in 2015. While improvements since 2009 have been significant, 25.9 per cent (15,954 children) of all children, and 42.5 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, are currently assessed as vulnerable in one or more of the five domains on the AEDC (2018).

The Government's priorities to give all our children a Great Start – our progress



In addition, the Queensland Government has signed-up to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap early years targets:

- Target 2: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91 per cent – noting that the Early Years Plan acknowledges the importance of protective factors such as healthy birth weight.
- Target 3: By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95 per cent – noting the importance of early childhood education throughout the Early Years Plan.
- Target 4: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the AEDC to 55 per cent – noting that AEDC is one of the measures in the Early Years Plan.

1 Birthweight statistics are published annually through the Queensland Health Perinatal Data Collection.

2 Immunisation data is made publically available quarterly through the Australian Government's Department of Health website.

3 The AEDC is collected once every three years by the Queensland Department of Education and provided to the Australian Government. Results are published the year after the collection.

Guiding principles

The following principles will guide our decision-making, service delivery and priority actions.

Child-centric

Children are our most precious asset. In all our considerations, policies and actions we keep a focus on children, their needs and welfare. Children’s need for structured and unstructured play and stimulation is recognised and valued. Services are age-appropriate and children of all abilities and backgrounds are included and valued in community life.

Tailored and inclusive

Supports are tailored to the needs of families and children, ranging from more intensive supports for the families experiencing most vulnerability to universal programs for all. They are culturally safe and inclusive.

Targeting prevention and early intervention

A strong focus is placed on parent, baby and child health from pre-conception, including the need for secure attachments and safe homes and communities. Childhood developmental vulnerabilities and trauma are identified and responded to through appropriate practices and as early as possible to improve future outcomes.

Seamless and collaborative

Service providers and communities work together to make families’ and children’s experiences seamless and place-based. A clear framework provides a shared language that guides delivery of services to children and their families.

Evidence-informed

Programs and services are informed by the best available evidence about children’s development, supports needed from the people and organisations in a child’s life and how children can best be supported in a changing world.



Focus areas

This plan focuses on the strategies and actions that can be pursued by families, government and the broader community to guide and support children in the key phases of their early years.

- Nurturing in the first 1000 days (conception to two years of age)
- Thriving in the wider world (three to four years of age)
- Enriching young minds (five to eight years of age)

It also identifies a range of strategies to be pursued by the Queensland Government during the recovery phase of COVID-19, and makes strong connections across life phases and services. The focus areas within the plan take a strengths-based approach. It recognises children are competent, capable and resilient individuals throughout their early years, and acknowledges the importance of protective factors such as healthy birth weight, secure attachment, access to quality early learning and play environments and connection to culture and community.

Children are influenced by their environments, and the people and experiences that surround them as they grow up. This plan recognises that Queensland children bring a variety of different backgrounds and experiences to their dealings with government

and community services, while their families bring different levels of knowledge and skill relating to parenting. Our services and community responses need to cater for cultural and linguistic diversity, various abilities and be cognisant of the impact of life events and trauma on our youngest citizens and their families. They need to be available across the state, including in regional and remote communities, to support all families and children.

The plan acknowledges the benefits of place-based and other partnership initiatives, where communities come together to give children and their families the best opportunities in life. These empower communities to collaborate and respond to their own unique challenges, and support a whole-of-government, cross-sector and whole-of-community commitment to improve experiences for people living in these places. Initiatives such as Logan Together, Every Child Central Queensland, and Cairns South Collective Impact Project are responding to the need of local communities and have a specific focus on improving the wellbeing of children, from birth to eight years of age. Building on experience with other place-based responses, the Queensland Government is also partnering with the Commonwealth and other states and territories on Stronger Places, Stronger People – a national approach to place-based initiatives to improve life outcomes for children.



Nurturing in the first 1000 days



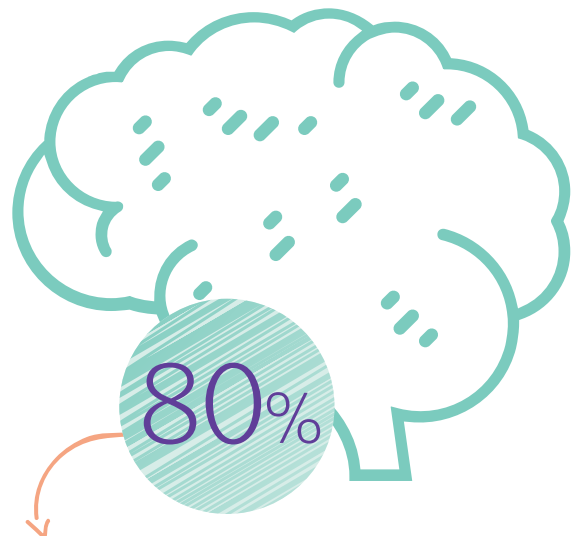
The first 1000 days of a child's life, from conception to their second birthday, is a unique period of rapid development.

In the pre-conception and conception period, maternal health and wellbeing is critical to a child's healthy development. Parents need to be supported to handle the financial, social, health and relationship impacts of the transition to parenthood, and to build parenting knowledge and skills.

Much progress has been made in understanding the importance of the first 1000 days in a child's cognitive, language and early learning skills. In these earliest years, children develop best by forming secure attachments in nurturing and stimulating environments that enable them to explore and make sense of their world. Time spent playing, talking, singing, listening, watching and practising what they are learning with the important adults in their life is essential for a child's healthy development.

However, at times a child's living environment may not support such activities, or may present exposure to stress, toxins through parental smoking, alcohol or illicit drug use, poor nutrition, or a lack of secure attachment between a child and their caregivers.

Queensland has a strong and adaptable universal healthcare system that shifts to cater for differing circumstances, as most recently evidenced in its swift expansion of telehealth provision during COVID-19. Our healthcare system has highly effective engagement with parents pre-conception



80%
of brain development occurs before a child is 3 years old

and in the first year of a child's life. Uptake of protective measures such as prenatal nutrition and breastfeeding have improved child health and wellbeing, and maternal smoking is declining overall. Immunisation rates remain high, though more can be done. Queensland has a network of community services, partnerships and early years spaces that provide integrated services for families and their children in the early years of life, including support for families affected by domestic violence.

Building on this strong foundation, parents, families, the wider community and government must work together to focus on key factors that affect a child's health, wellbeing and development in their first 1000 days. This means supporting families to provide a caring and stimulating environment for their children and making appropriate services available to ensure no child falls through the cracks.

Making a great start

From conception to two years of age, we want babies and toddlers to:

- be healthy, growing and expressing an interest in the world around them
- have a sense of connectedness and wellbeing through loving attachments
- have increasing social and emotional and language skills, including through play and enjoying rhymes and songs
- engage with their environment, with increasing fine motor, gross motor and sensory skills.

Case study

Deadly Ears

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experience the highest rates of middle ear disease and associated conductive hearing loss, according to the health literature. The first 1000 days are crucial because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children may develop this condition earlier and more severely. As a result, every health check should include ear and (if possible at this young age) hearing assessments. Concerns should be immediately managed in primary health with consideration of referrals to audiology, speech pathology, and ear, nose and throat professionals. Advice and support is available from the Deadly Ears Program, which provides frontline clinical services to 11 rural and remote locations across Queensland, and also oversees the state's "Deadly Kids, Deadly Futures" policy to improve outcomes in health, early childhood development and education.

More information

- [Deadly Ears Program](#)
- [Deadly Kids, Deadly Futures](#)

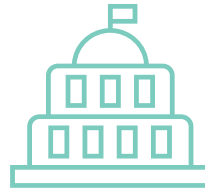
Supporting families

The stages just prior to and throughout pregnancy are critical to providing babies the best start in life. There are a range of supports on offer for soon-to-be parents and new parents. One of the best sources of support is the family doctor who can provide information and advice to prospective and new parents.

Becoming a new parent or being a parent to any newborn baby can feel overwhelming. However, there are activities and strategies that families can engage in to confidently support their children's health and development in the first 1000 days. These include:

- accessing pre-conception care and pregnancy planning services, and midwives or child health nurses to ensure continuity of care for the birthing experience and build a trusting relationship between new parents and healthcare experts
- spending time with their children playing, talking, singing, listening, reading and nurturing their development and creativity
- maintaining healthy eating habits, staying physically and mentally active and accessing available perinatal care services
- engaging in outdoor and nature play with their child
- restricting consumption of alcohol and other drugs as recommended by the *Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol*
- ensuring good nutrition during pregnancy, providing a nutritious diet once their baby is born, including breastfeeding for at least six months where possible, and introducing early oral health practices, such as tooth brushing, age appropriate toothpaste and regular dental visits
- having appropriate vaccinations during pregnancy, and ensuring their child is up-to-date with vaccinations as per the National Immunisation Program Schedule
- providing a stable and safe home environment and helping their child to explore their world safely
- regularly engaging with a child health nurse, GP, allied health professionals, health workers and early childhood educators
- identifying and participating in programs to support parenting skills and confidence, including in relation to secure attachments and emotional regulation
- registering with Playgroup Queensland by their child's first birthday to receive a free 12-month family membership, or joining a community supported playgroup in their local area
- joining the Families are First movement, an initiative aiming to improve understanding about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have raised happy and healthy children and overcome challenges for more than 60,000 years.

Resources that can help parents meet some of the challenges they may face, and a range of parenting supports, can be found at www.qld.gov.au/families/babies/advice/resources.



What the Queensland Government is doing

We are supporting parents and babies to have a healthy pregnancy, experience a safe birth and transition into a safe and supportive family life by:

- providing ongoing access to healthcare nurses and other health professionals to support mothers and babies throughout their first 1000 days, including specialist antenatal, postnatal, and infant mental health services as required
- expanding targeted programs to improve rates of healthy pregnancy, including addressing the impact of smoking and alcohol consumption
- evaluating the *right@home* pilot, a relationship-based Australian model of sustained nurse home visits delivered by highly trained professionals, and expanding the program from its current locations in Logan, Browns Plains and Beenleigh to an additional location in Caboolture
- ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers and babies have access to integrated and culturally capable maternity services by implementing actions of the *Growing Deadly Families Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maternity Services Strategy 2019-2025*.

We are helping families to create a safe and supportive family unit where babies develop and grow into healthy toddlers by:

- promoting community commitment to reduce the incidence of vaccine preventable diseases in children by implementing the actions in the *Queensland Health Immunisation Strategy 2017 – 2022*

- accessing and communicating to paediatric specialists the latest research on baby development, health and wellbeing through partnerships with other national and international paediatric specialists, and using exemplars to share knowledge and embed these learnings in practice
- improving child and family screening to advance early detection of emerging problems by encouraging more families to access growth and development checks for their children and associated supports
- continuing to emphasise the *Deadly Ears* program's role in reducing the rates and impacts of middle ear disease and conductive hearing loss for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across Queensland.

We are supporting families as first teachers and ensuring early learning is accessible and engaging by:

- promoting playgroups and other early learning opportunities for babies and toddlers, ensuring families have access to integrated services and the support of early years professionals
- continuing to build on the success of the *First 5 Forever* program, in which the State Library of Queensland works in partnership with local government to deliver free Baby time, Rhyme time and Story time sessions at local libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres across Queensland.

Thriving in the wider world



While the first 1000 days are crucial, ongoing support is required for families and children to ensure continued growth and development as children enter the three to four year age group.

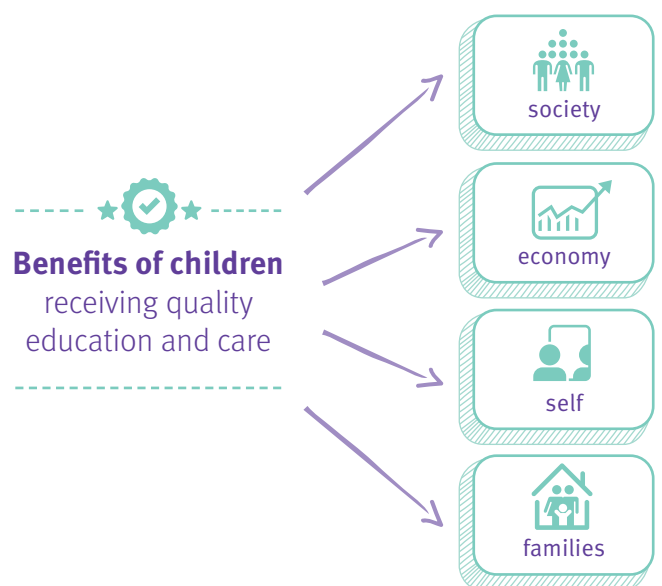
During this period, children’s physical development remains rapid. This is accompanied by considerable social and emotional growth, with more connections being made beyond the family. Children’s language skills progress quickly and play becomes a critical part of learning. Positive experiences during this period set children up for success in later life.

It is important for all children to experience the social, emotional and mental health benefits of a safe and supportive home, quality early childhood education and care that is enriching and nurturing, and access to appropriate health and community services when extra help is needed.

Some Queensland children have developmental vulnerabilities which mean they may fall behind their peers. There needs to be multiple opportunities to identify children with such vulnerabilities and address these issues as early as possible. The Queensland Government aims to help families and children experiencing

vulnerabilities by providing supports for children’s health, wellbeing and early learning. Key protective factors in preventing and addressing some vulnerabilities are healthy food, physical activity, strong parent-child relationships and participation in quality early childhood education.

The Queensland Government has taken significant steps to reform and invest in early childhood education and care over the past 10 years. Remarkable progress has been made in lifting kindergarten participation rates in the year before school, from 29 per cent in 2008 to over 95 per cent in 2018, improving the quality of early childhood education and care, facilitating children’s transition from early childhood education and care to school, and increasing the uptake of nature play and outdoor learning initiatives and physical activities. Our early childhood sector continues to provide quality care for our youngest Queenslanders in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Making a great start

In the three to four year age group, we want to see children:

- initiate, engage and actively participate in play, and be aware of their surroundings
- grow and learn, including developing early literacy and numeracy
- play safely, be healthy, understand boundaries and manage their personal hygiene
- express their emotions in positive ways and convey their thoughts, imagination and views
- begin to demonstrate confidence and independence in daily activities and interactions with others.

Case study

Elders as Storytellers

Through the Elders as Storytellers campaign, unscripted messages from Elders and community leaders showcased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in an organic and authentic way. Since launching in 2017, the campaign has travelled to eight communities in Queensland and listened to the stories of almost 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and leaders. While there has been great success in the campaign videos, radio ads, articles and songs in language, the true success of the campaign has come from the process of walking together with community and hearing their voices from day one.

More information

- [Elders as Storytellers](#)
- [Let's yarn about kindy](#)

Supporting families

As children grow, play is crucial. It is essential for children's brain development and one of the key ways children learn. Through play, children develop their motor skills and extend their physical capabilities; build confidence and wellbeing; learn social skills; develop language and communication skills; and experiment and solve problems.

A broad range of activities and strategies can help families foster their child's development during this phase, including:

- engaging with their children in play-based activities in the home or community settings to promote physical, emotional and cognitive development, and assist with development of competencies such as interacting with others, emotional self-regulation, resilience, creativity and perseverance, and language development
- building consistent, high quality relationships between their child and caregiver/s, whether in the home environment or in an early childhood education and care setting
- maintaining resilience and wellbeing by reaching out to parent and early childhood support services, such as *Talking Families*, to ask for help before problems escalate
- accessing toy libraries across Queensland to borrow toys designed to support children's imagination and skill development
- joining groups that promote positive parenting for fathers and provide support and connection for new dads
- helping children develop social skills and try new things with encouragement and praise
- monitoring growth and development, and receiving parenting support, through GPs and Child Health Services
- continuing vaccinations as per the National Immunisation Program Schedule
- providing a balanced and nutritious diet, and regular health checks that continue to monitor growth and development
- organising outdoor and active play activities to help children start building a positive relationship with physical movement and improve resilience, confidence, competence, independence, concentration and physical literacy
- accessing the *Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters*, a program offered by the Cathy Freeman Foundation to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and carers to work directly with their young children to improve their school readiness
- ensuring their child attends a kindergarten program to help them develop and get ready for school in a play-based learning environment
- accessing local activities for children and visiting Queensland Government Early Years Places (earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/funding-and-support/rural-remote-and-indigenous-programs/early-years-places), which provide a range of early childhood activities and supports in one location
- accessing the Early Childhood Education and Care (earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/early-years) and Raising Children Network (raisingchildren.net.au) websites for information on early education activities
- engaging in Nature Play QLD initiatives such as a Passport to Amazing Childhood, Places to go and Things to do lists, Early Learning Nature Play, Challenges before Prep and Loose Parts Play (natureplayqld.org.au).

What the Queensland Government is doing

We are continuing to support families as first teachers and quality early learning to lift developmental outcomes by:

- supporting provision of quality kindergarten in the year before school, including targeted funding for children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage
- continuing to advocate for ongoing federal funding for kindergarten in Queensland
- implementing communication programs to increase kindergarten participation through:
 - [Early years targeted webpages](#) to support parents to engage in positive early learning literacy and numeracy activities and promote the importance of families engaging in play and home activities
 - various social media platforms that communicate with a wider range of parents and children
- exploring new early learning options, including targeted programs for children experiencing vulnerabilities.

We are strengthening whole-of-family wellbeing and capability to improve their child's developmental outcomes by:

- providing additional parent support opportunities to improve children's outcomes by enhancing adult wellbeing (such as through family support programs, and therapeutic and counselling programs, including Parentline and parent groups/peer support)
- piloting *KindyLinQ*, a play-based program that families can attend in the year before their child starts kindergarten, in priority locations

- helping parents to build skills and confidence in parent-child interactions and relationships, including through parenting programs, home visiting programs, supported playgroups and Early Years Places
- providing free membership to the State Library of Queensland, including rich resources for families and children, and promoting membership of local libraries for access to locally-relevant material.

We are supporting children's health and wellbeing (including physical and mental health) by:


- continuing to provide specialist mental health resources and services
- promoting Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS), an evidence-based screening tool that elicits and addresses parental concerns about development, health and wellbeing
- developing the *Connect 4 Children* strategy to support communities to create local solutions for local priorities to help give all children a great start
- supporting the operation of Early Years Places in more than 50 communities across Queensland, providing a one-stop shop where families can access multiple support services for their children and themselves.

Enriching young minds

In the first years of school through to age eight (Year 3 of primary school), children continue to gain greater independence, manage their emotions more effectively, develop their social skills and engage in more complex cognitive and intellectual activities. What happens in these years will significantly influence how children view themselves as individuals and learners as they continue to progress through primary and secondary school and beyond.

Queensland has been a standout performer in terms of improvements to educational outcomes in the early years of school. A significant amount of work has been done already to ensure that teaching and learning engages the minds of our young people. Our schooling sectors shifted quickly from face-to-face to remote learning to support Queensland's efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

But learning cannot occur without a positive base of wellbeing. There is strong evidence acknowledging that children learn best in environments where their social, emotional and physical wellbeing is secure. In the early years of school, it is critical to support children to be healthy, resilient, and confident — developing emerging skills, considering their own learning aspirations, facing learning challenges and grasping opportunities as they progress through their learning journey.



Children, families and schools exist within communities and they reap benefit when the connection to school is positive and ongoing.

Dockett and Perry 2014



Making a great start

In the five to eight year age group, we want to see children:

- developing interpersonal, communication and social skills as a foundation for learning
- building resilience to assist them to manage any challenges they may face
- exploring and connecting with their community to understand how it contributes to their sense of belonging and shapes a part of their identity
- successfully transitioning from kindergarten to school and throughout the early years of schooling
- caring for their environment, respecting others and being inclusive
- thinking critically and creatively to become confident and autonomous problem solvers
- engaging in play and making connections through imagination and creativity
- enjoying team sports and physical activities
- becoming more aware of their own bodies, including how to keep healthy, remain active, stay safe and know when to seek help
- developing gross and fine motor skills, including handwriting
- using information and communication technologies effectively and appropriately
- developing literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful ways to support their interactions and learning in school and beyond.

Case study

Be Well Learn Well

Luke was referred on entry into pre-Prep into the Be Well Learn Well program for speech pathology and occupational therapy support around communication/speech, hearing support, attention, behavioural support, and sensory processing skills. As a result of the wrap-around Allied Health support Luke received, he tolerates wearing his hearing headband for up to 30 minutes as he understands why it is important and knows when he should use it. Luke initiates communication through vocalisations and is now making requests in sentences, which has decreased his levels of frustration and adverse behaviours.

More information

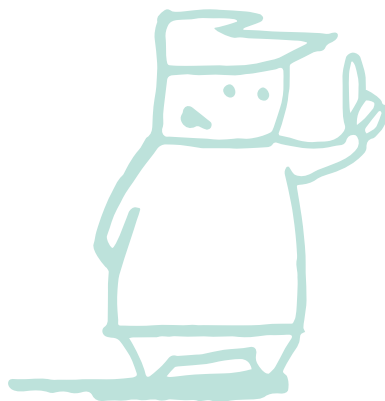
- [Be Well Learn Well](#)
- [CheckUP](#)

Supporting families

Families are a child's first educators and key to ensuring Queensland children become lifelong learners, healthy individuals and constructive participants in their community.

A nurturing and supportive home environment builds resilience in children. As first educators, families can use a range of resources, activities and strategies to support their child's development, health, welfare, learning and engagement and their own family wellbeing. This may include:

- providing regular supervised unstructured play time every day, outdoors and in nature when possible and indoors when it is not, to encourage creativity, physical movement and activity
- accessing resources to engage with and support their child's developing literacy and numeracy skills (e.g. reading before bedtime or counting items with their child) – visit www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au
- engaging with community events and opportunities, such as visits to public libraries, and promoting positive childhood friendships
- enrolling their child in sports or other outdoor physical activities to encourage a love of movement, exercise and the natural environment
- encouraging their child to pursue creative activities such as art, music and dance
- engaging with their child's teacher, school and school community to be involved in their child's learning, development and social life outside the home
- promoting positive approaches to their child's learning and development in and outside school, showing interest in their child's schoolwork, talking with their child about their learning and school day, monitoring screen use and encouraging their child to be active
- supporting their child through times of uncertainty, providing opportunities to talk through challenges and employing strategies to problem-solve and build resilience
- seeking support from the school or external organisations in relation to developmental or wellbeing concerns about their child, including the development of English language skills
- if required, engaging with a general practitioner to plan a catch-up vaccination schedule.



What the Queensland Government is doing

We are engaging families in the early years of school and their child's education by:

- providing resources for children and families to support online safety and safe use of social media, and information about cyber-bullying
- using the *Parent and Community Engagement Framework* to encourage genuine relationships between parents and teachers, promote a clear and open sharing of information and ideas between schools and families, and help parents discuss their child's learning
- consulting and collaborating with families about how to tailor learning and making reasonable adjustments for children with disability.

We are supporting healthy growth, development and wellbeing of children as they progress through the early years of school by:

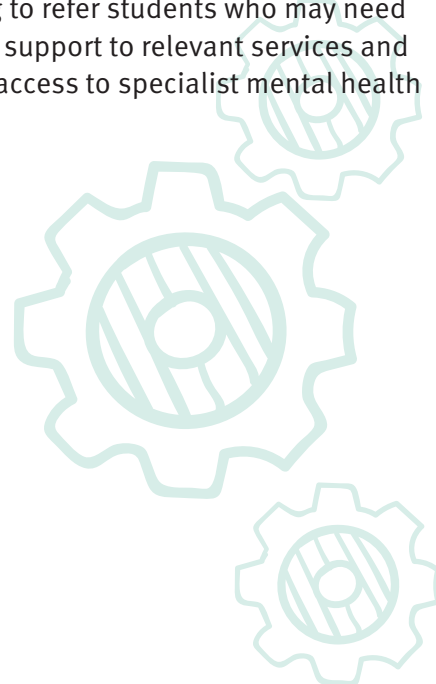
- providing vision screening services for all Prep children in primary schools across Queensland
- providing schools with access to the *Respectful relationships education program for students in Prep to Year 12*, giving students opportunities for social and emotional learning
- enhancing equity and inclusion in physical activity and reducing barriers to participation through the FairPlay financial subsidy for children and young people who need it the most
- delivering the *Community Active Partnerships* pilot project in Logan to address barriers to physical activity for children from birth to eight years of age
- providing outdoor education opportunities to encourage children from birth to 12 years of age to connect with the outdoors and be physically active.

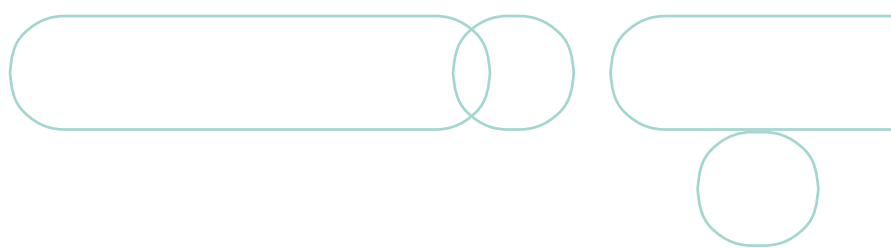
We are lifting early years learning outcomes by:

- developing shared understandings between early childhood services and schools about teaching and learning practices that promote continuity of learning by:
 - implementing the *K-2 Continuity and Alignment Framework*, which promotes age-appropriate pedagogies and enables the benefits of kindergarten to carry over into school and beyond
 - supporting Prep teachers' understanding and use of kindergarten transition statements
- implementing evidence-based, best practice approaches to monitoring and assessment in the early years of school with a focus on foundational skills to support learning in the later years of schooling
- building strong leadership capability in the early years of schooling to ensure successful outcomes for young learners
- supporting schools to join together to embed early years priorities in their school improvement agenda
- building capability for ongoing monitoring of student literacy and numeracy development in the early years of schooling, using tools such as Early Start, and the P–10 Literacy continuum and the draft P–10 Numeracy continuum
- providing professional learning opportunities for school leaders and members of school governance structures, to support them in local decisions that facilitate quality early learning and teaching.

We are supporting children experiencing vulnerability to excel by:

- coordinating education support plans for eligible children in care to ensure resources are identified to improve educational outcomes
- raising awareness among health care professionals of the additional needs of children and young people in care via Communities of Practice, a digitised health pathway and information and communication strategies and products to support assessments and referrals to manage health needs
- expanding the *School Breakfast* program to an additional 51 schools in regional and remote areas, with funding to P&Cs or Scripture Union for delivery of the program
- building the capability of staff working with children in the early years of school to notice the early signs that a student's wellbeing or mental health is at risk and take appropriate steps to ensure that the student receives additional support
- facilitating parent and school partnerships to ensure appropriate supports are in place for children with disability to access, participate and achieve in education
- building teacher capability to identify and support English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) learners, including recognising contact language varieties (e.g. creoles and Aboriginal English dialects) and providing differentiated EAL/D pedagogy in the classroom
- continuing to operate *Early Childhood Development Programs* for children from birth to five years of age with significant educational support needs arising from a diagnosed or suspected disability
- responding to outcomes of the evaluation of the *Be Well Learn Well* program, providing allied health therapy services to eight remote state schools in Far North and North Queensland
- implementing a whole-school approach to support mental health and wellbeing of all Queensland students
- continuing to refer students who may need additional support to relevant services and providing access to specialist mental health services.





Making stronger connections

The Queensland Government is focused on the recovery phase of COVID-19 and is a responsive government building social cohesion and making services easy to access and use. A range of services and strategies are being provided to ensure every Queensland child is supported to have a great start in their early years.

The commitments made throughout this plan include actions that span service provision across the Queensland Government and community organisations. We will support communities to thrive so people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities can participate, are included, develop resilience and enjoy high levels of social and economic wellbeing.

Good service delivery in remote and discrete Indigenous communities will be built upon

through the Local Thriving Communities reform that reframes the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Local Thriving Communities involves the establishment of Local Decision Making Authorities with a goal to move decision making authority closer to the community and improve community outcomes from investment.

Place-based initiatives join up the efforts of all community stakeholders (citizens, industry, diverse non-government organisations and all levels of government) to improve the social, economic and physical wellbeing of a defined geographical location, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The application of place-based initiatives on complex, interrelated or challenging issues in socio-economically disadvantaged communities is valuable in driving positive community, family and individual outcomes ([Framework for Place-Based Approaches](#)).

Case study

Birdie's Tree

Events like storms, cyclones, floods or fire can be very frightening and upsetting for babies and young children. Birdie's Tree has been designed to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of babies and young children, their parents and families, in relation to severe weather events and other natural disasters. Playing a therapeutic game or reading a story with a caring adult can help a young child work through the scary experiences and 'big feelings'. Birdie's Tree provides a suite of resources for parents and carers, including stories and interactive games, as well as information sheets and booklets and links to other relevant websites for further advice and support.

More information

- [Birdie's Tree](#)

Our services need to be delivered to all children, parents and carers across Queensland, including those experiencing vulnerabilities. Supports must be designed to be inclusive and seamless, incorporating efforts across multiple government portfolios and the community.

The Queensland Government is always striving to create strong connections across providers and services that focus on:

- the wellbeing and social participation of Queensland children and families by:
 - implementing a Queensland children’s wellbeing framework promoting our aspirations for every child
 - delivering the Yarrabilba Family and Community Place, a purpose-built, cross-agency hub offering *Stay and Play*, supported playgroups, *Get set for Prep* and *First 5 Forever* programs
 - providing Birdie’s Tree resources to help parents and carers talk to their children about the impacts of natural disasters, including storms, cyclones, floods or fire
 - delivering stable housing for families with children from birth to eight years of age
 - delivering Family and Child Connect services, including those run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and servicing refugee and Pasifika communities
 - exploring the Family Wellbeing Services model as an exemplar of culturally safe human services delivery, providing access to quality universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to thrive and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations participate in, and have control over, decisions that affect their children
- improving the health of Queensland children and families by:
 - designing services in a way that supports parents and carers to navigate family life events and optimises care of their children through key life stages
 - expanding the integrated maternity hub to include early childhood education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers and babies
 - delivering enhanced support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families facing challenges with their children’s behaviour through Indigenous youth and family case workers
- targeted support for our early learners, ensuring we set the foundations for their successful lifelong learning by:
 - providing quality regulation of the early childhood education and care sector, so that all Queensland approved providers are delivering compliant, high quality services that are continuously improving.
 - developing a best practice Early Years Places program model focused on priority locations.



Where to find more information

The following organisations and resources provide support or information for families with children in their early years.

- Newborn drop-in services and child health clinics www.qld.gov.au/health/children/babies/clinics
- 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) – for confidential child health advice or breastfeeding support, ask to speak to a child health nurse
- Pregnancy, Birth and Baby Helpline (1800 882 436) – for confidential general advice about babies in their first year
- Early Years Places Child and Family Hubs earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/funding-and-support/rural-remote-and-indigenous-programs/early-years-places
- Raising children network raisingchildren.net.au
- Early years resources website www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au
- Elders as Storytellers www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/early-years/activities-and-resources/resources-parents
- Children's health, parenting and pregnancy www.qld.gov.au/health/children
- Australian Breastfeeding Association, Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 686 268
- Red Nose, formerly Sids and Kids rednose.org.au
- Children's Health Queensland (including Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health) www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au
- Parentline 1300 301 300
- Quitline 13 QUIT (13 78 48)
- Interpreter Service (Help with English) 131 450
- Domestic Violence Hotlines:
 - DVConnect Womensline 1800 811 811
 - DVConnect Mensline 1800 600 636
 - 1800Respect 1800 737 732
- Playgroup Association of Queensland 1800 171 882
- The Fathering Project thefatheringproject.org
- Family and Child Connect 13 32 64 familychildconnect.org.au
- Queensland Family and Child Commission www.qfcc.qld.gov.au
- Talking Families talkingfamilies.qld.gov.au
- Oneplace (community service directory) www.oneplace.org.au
- Australian Early Development Census www.aedc.gov.au
- Positive Parenting Program www.Triplep-parenting.net.au
- Local Thriving Communities www.datsip.qld.gov.au/programs-initiatives/tracks-treaty
- State Library of Queensland: First 5 Forever www.slq.qld.gov.au/first-5-forever
- Nature Play Queensland www.natureplayqld.org.au

