



QCOSS

Queensland Council
of Social Service

Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan

2015 – 2017



Reconciliation
ACTION PLAN

STRETCH RAP

The art of sharing our story

This painting on canvas titled 'the art of sharing our story' is a colourful and heartfelt artwork that represents the important work being done in the sector and the connections between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, children, families and communities across the state.

The canvas provides an artistic approach and a clear view of QCOSS' Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU) services, with a focus on creating real partnerships, fostering leadership, building true capacity and community-owned outcomes.

The canvas reflects the work that IPSU does and captures the IPSU strategic plan in art form. Communities, educators and sponsor bodies that IPSU work with have made their marks on the canvas. It captures the differences of each community, highlighting their journey around professional development.

The canvas supports different learning styles and IPSU's intent and purpose. The swirls in the river are deliverable outcomes that have been agreed to by our services. This artwork also demonstrates more appropriate ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities throughout Queensland and that every service is responsible for the end result.



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Message from the CEO

I would like to pay my respect and acknowledgement to the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and walk alongside, to Elders both past and present, and the children that are so important to our future vision for this country. I would also like to give thanks and acknowledgment to both past and current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members who have shared their cultures, journey and knowledge to build our cultural integrity and understanding as an organisation.

It has been a real privilege to be a part of the process to develop and commit to this second phase of our reconciliation journey for the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS). It is a continuing journey, and reconciliation is an integral element contributing to our key mission of ending poverty and disadvantage in Queensland. Until we have true reconciliation and understanding as a nation, we will continue to have a significant gap in social, health, and economic outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader Australian community.

The development of this Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was initiated through a participatory process facilitated with all staff, so that everyone had the opportunity to both reflect and contribute to our journey as an organisation. There is an acknowledgement that this journey is also a personal one, and we are privileged to be engaged in this process with many people and communities.

Thank you to Reconciliation Australia who have supported us throughout the process of developing our second RAP.

Mark Henley
Chief Executive Officer

Our vision for reconciliation

QCOSS strongly supports and contributes to reconciliation and is committed to walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a journey to build stronger relationships, understanding and recognition of the history, cultures and diversity that make up Australia's First Nations peoples.

QCOSS' vision incorporates a shared pride as a nation in the richness and diversity of cultures and knowledge that exists in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and embracing opportunities together. Without this commitment there can be no end to poverty and disadvantage for individuals and families in our communities.

Our vision

A Queensland free of poverty and disadvantage.

Our organisation

QCOSS is the state-wide peak body for individuals and organisations working in the social and community service sector. QCOSS is Queensland's leading force for social change, having worked to eliminate poverty and disadvantage for more than 50 years. With almost 600 members, QCOSS undertakes informed advocacy and supports a strong community service sector.

QCOSS' key activities focus on providing effective policy advice, working to strengthen responsive community services and having productive partnerships with the community sector, government, private sector, media and the broader community. This work is done with a Queensland free of poverty and disadvantage front of mind.

QCOSS contributes to a national voice on issues such as poverty and disadvantage through membership of the nationwide network of state and territory councils and the Australian Council of Social Service.

Our members include peak bodies, advocacy and consumer groups, service providers, mutual support and self-help groups as well as individuals. Associate members include not-for-profit organisations and government departments that commit to supporting our purpose.

We have a diverse, skilled and committed team of approximately 50 people working across the state to achieve our mission. Our staff support and advocate for and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities across Queensland. Twenty per cent of our staff identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Our values

QCOSS will always act:

- **courageously**, leading the campaign to end poverty and disadvantage
- **collaboratively**, working together with our members and our stakeholders
- **creatively**, exploring better ways to achieve our vision
- **knowledgeably**, using sound evidence to inform our work
- **inclusively**, respecting the diversity of our communities and sector.

We underpin all of this by behaving with integrity.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan

The QCOSS Stretch RAP 2015 – 2017 is our firm commitment in setting measurable targets to contribute towards reconciliation within Australia.

Our RAP was developed by the QCOSS RAP Committee, a cross functional group of seven whose membership includes the leaders of operational and geographical areas within the organisation as well as staff from across the organisation and is chaired by QCOSS Senior Manager Organisational Services. Fifty per cent of the representatives identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and this is the aim for continuing membership.

QCOSS remains committed to the reconciliation process to drive real change, respect and recognition of the place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have in this nation. We will do this by committing to the actions and targets within our Stretch RAP and by incorporating these into longer term strategies within our business and the work that we do.

This is the second RAP developed by QCOSS. Through the development and implementation of our first RAP we have gained further knowledge and experience which we have used to develop this RAP. A key learning from our first RAP has been that the plan will be a living document that adapts and accommodates change internally and externally to the organisation. QCOSS has achieved the majority of targets outlined in the first RAP and is committed to continuing to leverage respectful working relationships based on trust and understanding, also to continue increasing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, stakeholders and communities to develop the RAP.

During the life of our first RAP, we had the opportunity to build successful partnerships that contribute to advancing policy change and support services that enhance the lives and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities – particularly, in the areas of early intervention, early childhood education and care and energy.

We continue to build on these partnerships to work towards eliminating poverty and disadvantage across Queensland and seek to embrace a deeper cultural learning, understanding and cultural competency.

Past and current QCOSS projects and initiatives

Building communities

Our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities is extended through our work in the Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU). For more than 10 years, IPSU staff have been committed to working holistically with early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This work has recently been extended to support educators in ECEC services to complete their qualifications in Certificate III Early Childhood and Diploma studies through the Footsteps to Finish program.

QCOSS also works in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to contribute to the workforce strategy for early childhood through the Pathways Research Program. This program is about to start a project that will work with communities to coordinate a place-based response to training and employment pathways for early childhood.

IPSU is a program funded by the Department of Education to deliver services under the Inclusion and Professional Support Program and is a project of QCOSS.

Indigenous Professional Support Unit

IPSU works with Budget Based Funded (BBF) early childhood education and care services in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Queensland, and has played an integral part in the development of the RAP. IPSU is part of a national program that works to support educators in childcare centres through professional development in program and practice, quality improvement, governance, and to provide support as required. Many of the services IPSU support are in remote communities in Far North Queensland, across the Gulf and the Torres Strait. The program takes a capacity building and partnership approach to working with services and other stakeholders to deliver quality and responsive support. This support is provided through various channels including workshops, regional forums, service exchanges and the Men's Yarning Network.

Footsteps to Finish

QCOSS' Footsteps to Finish program works to support educators in various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to complete their early learning qualifications in Certificate III and/or Diploma while living in their community.

Support is provided via service residentials in partnership with registered training organisations, service exchanges and a team of mentors based within the community. These community mentors are key to the success of this program. They are leaders selected in partnership with the services to assist educators in their study on a weekly basis through study nights. The mentors are trained, supported and paid in this role through the Footsteps to Finish program.

Pathways Research Program

QCOSS' Pathways Research Program works in partnership with community mentors, ECEC services and universities to explore the barriers to tertiary qualifications for ECEC educators, and what is needed to support this happening into the future. The recommendations outlined by this report will contribute to better education outcomes and employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Coordination Project

QCOSS' Coordination Project seeks to improve the coordination of existing resources and programs supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in terms of ECEC services and an educator's training and development needs. This project explores a place-based model of support and the integration of services in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

1. Relationships



Our relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities is critical to the success of realising our organisational vision for a Queensland free of poverty and disadvantage. We respectfully recognise that all of our work and advocacy with and on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must be done in partnership.

In doing so, we commit to respectful and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities.

Focus area:

Building relationships to improve advocacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
<p>1.1. QCOSS RAP Committee continues to actively monitor RAP development including implementation of actions and tracking progress.</p>	Senior Manager Organisational Services	September 2015, 2016 and 2017	<p>Review RAP Committee membership each year.</p> <p>Minimum of six meetings per year to discuss the implementation of RAP.</p>
<p>1.2. QCOSS will celebrate and participate in National Reconciliation Week (NRW).</p>	Senior Manager Communication	27th May – 3rd June 2015, 2016 and 2017	<p>QCOSS commits to hosting at least one NRW event per year and encourage all staff to participate.</p> <p>Publish NRW dates on the QCOSS website each year and promote on the QCOSS Communication Calendar.</p> <p>Provide an opportunity for all staff to participate in NRW and other events.</p> <p>Utilise QCOSS's sphere of influence to engage, encourage and promote to the wider community, partnerships they can develop with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations.</p> <p>Register QCOSS NRW events on Reconciliation Australia website.</p>
<p>1.3. QCOSS to continue building strong, meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, to ensure strategic advice is provided in all policy and advocacy development.</p>	Senior Manager Practice, Research and Policy	<p>June 2015</p> <p>September 2015, 2016 and 2017</p>	<p>Review established protocols and educate QCOSS employees in relation to the needs and implications of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in program and policy development (including but not limited to the intranet and team meetings).</p> <p>Continue to work in strong partnership with Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak and other organisations to influence appropriate child protection reform support/strategies in Queensland.</p> <p>Consult and collaborate with the Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative groups on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy • research • input to energy and water reference group meetings • advocate for improving utilities issues experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. <p>Maintain a strong productive working relationship with peak and representative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations by organising an annual meeting to discuss common issues and work collaboratively.</p>

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
<p>1.4. QCOSS will seek to strengthen relationships by embedding culturally appropriate engagement practices across all of our work, with and on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.</p>	<p>Senior Manager Practice, Research and Policy</p>	March 2015	Collate information from all QCOSS regions of current/potential relationships and/or activities, including engagement processes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.
		March 2015	Review and update the current engagement model to ensure respectful engagement and/or consultation between QCOSS and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities is achieved.
		May 2015	In consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies, develop a guide of the analysis of the impact of policy initiatives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.
		July 2015, 2016, 2017	Develop and implement a plan to enhance QCOSS's existing engagement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for effective response and development of policies around issues as they arise – particularly in rural and remote communities (for example, early childhood, housing and utilities).
<p>1.5. Build stronger relationships and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations through promoting and encouraging QCOSS membership opportunities.</p>	<p>Senior Manager Communication</p>	June 2015	Identify the number of and establish one year complimentary memberships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations/groups with whom QCOSS would like to work with, who are not currently QCOSS members.
		June 2016 June 2017	Review the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations/groups choosing to retain QCOSS membership post complimentary year.
<p>1.6. Engage, advise and promote effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups through dispersion of information in all available media channels.</p>	<p>Senior Manager Communication</p>	June 2015	In consultation with community develop two e-training modules on cultural integrity and capability for sharing via Community Door.
		September 2015, 2016 and 2017	Provide targeted advocacy in support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups by utilising all available QCOSS communications channels to engage and promote effectively the support services available.
		September 2015, 2016 and 2017	Continue to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media and provide with all media releases. Provide specialised alerts regarding policy / submissions releases with features of specific relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



2. Respect



QCOSS respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and acknowledges the continuing contribution that First Australian peoples, organisations and communities make towards achieving a Queensland free of poverty and disadvantage. We also believe it is important to understand and acknowledge the right to self-determination for First Australian peoples and move towards reconciliation for all Australians.

Focus area:

Respecting and embracing the unique cultures of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples such that we all understand and acknowledge the right to self-determination and move towards reconciliation as Australians.



Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
<p>2.1. Engage all QCOSS staff in cultural learning to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples histories, cultures and achievements.</p>	Senior Manager Organisational Services	<p>March 2015</p> <p>September 2015, 2016 and 2017</p> <p>September 2015, 2016 and 2017</p> <p>September 2015, 2016 and 2017</p> <p>September 2015, 2016 and 2017</p>	<p>Staff cultural induction video developed to rollout to all QCOSS current and new staff, providing a cultural connection to West End, delivered by a respected Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or Elder.</p> <p>Encourage and provide the opportunity for all staff to participate in at least one basic cultural experience/learning (such as staff visits, Walk in My Shoes or Share Our Pride available on Reconciliation Australia website).</p> <p>Encourage and provide the opportunity for all staff to engage in 'Yarn Up Tok Blu Yumi' – a six month cultural journey.</p> <p>Develop and review annually actions into staff performance, development and review, and individual cultural development plans at different stages of their cultural competency training.</p> <p>Investigate the opportunity for staff to participate in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural immersion (such as Garma, Laura Festival, Mirrabooka and Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre tours).</p>
<p>2.2. QCOSS staff are encouraged to undertake the appropriate protocols established around Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.</p>	Senior Manager Communication	<p>September 2015, 2016 and 2017</p> <p>September 2015, 2016 and 2017</p> <p>September 2015, 2016 and 2017</p>	<p>Continue to ensure all staff meetings and events include an Acknowledgement of Country of the local traditional owners, of which the meeting takes place.</p> <p>Continue to ensure all major events of significance include a Welcome to Country from a traditional owner.</p> <p>Develop and implement a protocol which encourages QCOSS senior managers to personally reply to a Welcome to Country.</p> <p>Develop, maintain and communicate a list of Traditional Owners as a resource for QCOSS staff.</p>
<p>2.3. Celebrate and participate in NAIDOC Week and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to engage with their culture and community during the week's activities.</p>	Senior Manager Organisational Services	<p>1st Sunday – 2nd Sunday July 2015, 2016 and 2017</p>	<p>Host a NAIDOC Week event each year at QCOSS West End and Townsville offices.</p> <p>Encourage and provide the opportunity for all staff to participate in at least one NAIDOC Week event each year.</p> <p>Support and provide the opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to access cultural leave to participate in NAIDOC Week events.</p>
<p>2.4. Recognise and respect the value of the knowledge internal and external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders bring to QCOSS' work and successes.</p>	<p>Senior Manager Community Capacity Building and Inclusion</p> <p>Senior Manager Practice Research and Policy</p>	<p>June 2015, 2016 and 2017</p>	<p>Leverage internal cultural knowledge to maximise outcomes for QCOSS programs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander importance including IPSU, Footsteps to Finish and EMBRACE.</p>

3. Opportunities



By creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through all aspects of our work, QCOSS ensures to leverage off the improved knowledge, relationships and promotion within the Queensland community services sector as our contribution to reconciliation and self-determination. Our efforts focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and people experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness.

Focus area:

Leveraging capacity and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples faced with poverty and disadvantage.



Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
3.1. QCOSS will continue to contribute to the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and employment through traineeships and other employment opportunities where appropriate.	Senior Manager Organisational Services	September 2015 September 2016 September 2017	QCOSS commits to employing 10 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait peoples. Establish one identified Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander traineeship at QCOSS. Continue to ensure professional development opportunities are available to existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
3.2. Encourage diversity of and increased utilisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suppliers.	Senior Manager Organisational Services	September 2015 September 2015 December 2015	Review procurement strategy ensuring that there are no barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers/providers to participate. Explore the opportunity to partner/engage with at least one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier. Investigate participation with Supply Nation.
3.3. QCOSS will continue to proactively advocate and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities to work towards ending poverty and disadvantage among all Queenslanders.	Senior Manager Practice, Research and Policy	June 2015, 2016 and 2017 September 2015 September 2015 September 2015 June 2015, 2016 and 2017	Identify and develop potential opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities across Queensland in order to engage and provide a better service for people facing homelessness. Develop a data collection tool to record homelessness statistics. Develop and implement a plan to provide Capacity Building opportunities for stakeholder agencies to address housing and homelessness issues. Develop and provide an annual report to the QCOSS board on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations engaged for input in work towards ending poverty. Develop and provide an annual report to the QCOSS board on the number of homeless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples surveyed including the outcomes achieved.
3.4. QCOSS to provide a quality service delivery information portal to support issues of disadvantage and capacity building.	Senior Manager Communication	December 2015 December 2016 December 2017	Review and update currency of all material available within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander section of Community Door. Develop and implement a plan to improve capability within Community Door. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander website portal to link to all relevant material published within QCOSS's communications channels (including reports, publications, blogs).

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
<p>3.5. Provide high quality, flexible and innovative professional development support to meet the needs of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's services and their staff and other early childhood education providers seeking to provide culturally appropriate education.</p>	<p>Senior Manager Community Capacity Building and Inclusion</p>	<p>July 2015</p> <p>December 2014, 2015, 2016</p> <p>December 2014, 2015, 2016</p> <p>December 2014, 2015, 2016</p>	<p>QCOSS commits to ensuring 32 students from Footsteps to Finish program successfully graduate with early learning qualifications in Certificate III and/or Diploma.</p> <p>Develop, communicate and implement high quality professional development resources (measured in evaluations and surveys) across the Footsteps to Finish, IPSU and EMBRACE programs.</p> <p>Deliver high quality professional development sessions/workshops via IPSU and EMBRACE programs as measured in evaluations/surveys.</p> <p>Develop and implement targeted, quality forums and/or workshops to build capacity within early childhood education services supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and cultural inclusion.</p>

Tracking progress and reporting



Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
4.1. Report achievements, challenges and learnings to Reconciliation Australia for inclusion in the RAP Annual Impact Measurement Report.	Senior Manager Organisational Services	By 30th September 2015, 2016 and 2017	QCROSS to complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.
4.2. Develop and implement reporting mechanisms and system to record/register all RAP related material and activities undertaken and achieved.	Senior Manager Practice, Research and Policy Senior Manager Communication	September 2015 September 2015	Develop, implement and communicate an internal submissions/papers register system to record RAP implementation. Develop and implement a mechanism for recording and reporting on publication of media releases, other external reports and events with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities significance.

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