

Reframing the Relationship





Acknowledgement

Queensland Health respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional and Cultural Custodians of the lands on which we live and work to deliver healthcare to all Queenslanders. Queensland Health recognises the continuation of First Nations peoples' diverse cultures and connection to the lands, waters, and communities across Queensland.

We pay respect to First Nations Elders past, present and emerging and recognise the efforts and contributions of our current and past Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

Recognition Statement

Queensland Health recognises that the rights of First Nations peoples are central to health and wellbeing. Consistent with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)*:

- The right to practice culture.
- The right to self-determination.
- The right to make decisions on matters that affect lives and communities.


We acknowledge and celebrate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are two distinct and diverse groups with differing histories, cultural practices, ceremonies, beliefs and relationships with lands and waters; factors which sustain their identity and world view, and their social, emotional and physical health and wellbeing. We will respect, protect and promote human rights in our decision-making.

Respecting identity and connection

Throughout this plan, the terms 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' and 'First Nations peoples' are used interchangeably.

We respect the choice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to describe their own cultural identity or use of other terms, such as references to sovereignty (e.g. Yidinji people or Meriam people), traditional place names and lands (e.g. Meanjin, Brisbane or Waibene, Thursday Island) or language groups (e.g. Yankunytjatjara or Kalaw Kawaw Ya).

Queensland Health recognises and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations peoples in Queensland.



Foreword

The Statement of Commitment to reframe the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Queensland Government is important to moving forward together and recognises the importance of self-determination to First Nations people. Queensland Health shares the Queensland Government commitment to a reframed relationship with First Nations peoples and to work in strong partnership to co-design and deliver services.

The recently released First Nations First Strategy 2032 demonstrates Queensland Health's long-term commitment to achieving health equity and enabling significant health reforms which are co-designed and implemented in strong partnership with First Nations people, communities and organisations. Importantly, these reforms must achieve positive change and enhance health and wellbeing.

As the Director-General and inaugural Chief First Nations Health Officer, we are proud to be in leadership roles that drive positive change, however we all have a role to play in closing the gap and improving health and wellbeing outcomes with First Nations Queenslanders.

Queensland Health is implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equity Framework and legislated Hospital and Health Services Health Equity Strategies, with a key priority focus to actively eliminate institutional racism and racial discrimination, amplify the voice of First Nations people in healthcare design and delivery, and grow the First Nations health workforce across the health system. The new *Public Sector Act 2022* provides a frame to increase First Nations employment and leadership to represent the community we serve, engage in truth-telling about our shared history, promote cultural safety and cultural capability within organisations, and ensure a fair and inclusive public sector.

The Queensland Health Reframing the Relationship Plan 2024-2025 provides a whole of health system response to meeting the mandated responsibilities in accordance with the *Public Sector Act 2022*. The Plan is aligned closely with, and draws upon, the First Nations First Strategy 2032 and the ongoing implementation of health equity strategies at the regional level. Additionally, the Queensland Ambulance Service continues its momentum and commitment through its Cultural Capability Action Plan to ensure the cultural safety and cultural capability of its services. Collectively these strategies form a strong remit to embracing changes to eliminate the persistent systemic barriers to healthcare in Queensland for First Nations peoples.

Please join us in reframing the relationship with our First Nations peoples and committing to achieving *First Nations First*.



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Queensland Health



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Introduction

In **2019** the Queensland Government and the Reparations Taskforce developed a joint *Statement of Commitment to reframe the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Queensland Government (Reframing the Relationship Commitment)*. The Reframing the Relationship Commitment acknowledges, embraces, and celebrates the humanity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and commits us to move forward together with mutual respect, recognition and a willingness to speak the truth about our shared history.

In **2020**, a renewed commitment to Closing the Gap to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australian was made nationally by all three levels of government.

In **2022** the Queensland Parliament passed the *Public Sector Act 2022 (the Act)*, which introduced a new framework to give effect to the Reframing the Relationship Commitment. The Act requires all government agencies to develop annual Reframing the Relationship plans to develop their cultural safety and cultural capability when providing advice to government and delivering services to the community. The Act defines cultural capability as the integration of knowledge about the experiences and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into the entity's workplace standards, policies, practices and attitudes, to produce improved outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In **2023**, the Path to Treaty Act 2023 was passed in Parliament to establish the First Nations Treaty Institute to prepare a framework for treaty negotiations with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to support Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in treaty negotiations, and to provide for the establishment of the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry to inquire into the continuing impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In **2024**, the Queensland Health Reframing the Relationship Plan reflects the key priority initiatives targeted to address health inequities and enhance cultural safety, in particular the recently released *First Nations First Strategy 2032*, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equity Framework and legislated Hospital and Health Service Health Equity Strategies, and the Queensland Ambulance Service Cultural Safety Framework and Cultural Capability Action Plan. Importantly, these health system initiatives have strong alignment with the mandated principles enabled by the *Public Sector Act 2022*.

Queensland Health key actions

The inaugural *Queensland Health Reframing the Relationship Plan 2024-2025* (the Plan) is the health system's response to the obligations under the *Public Sector Act 2022*, in particular [Chapter 1, Part 3 of the Act](#). The Plan is a single overarching plan for the prescribed entities being the Department of Health and the Hospitals and Health Services established under the *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011, section 17* as well as the *Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS)* which is opting-in but not obligated under the Act.

The Plan aligns directly with established state-wide, whole of system commitments and objectives including:

- **Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equity Framework**
- **Health Q32 First Nations First Strategy 2032**
- **Queensland Health role in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap**
- **Queensland Ambulance Service Cultural Capability Action Plan 2023 -2026.**

These strategies have significant whole of system commitment, are actively being progressed across the system and support the Reframing the Relationship Commitments and legislative requirements. A selection of objectives and commitments have been aligned to the QH Reframing the Relationship Plan to highlight the strong connectivity of effort between the strategies and the agency responsibilities and obligations.

1. Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equity Framework

Queensland Health and the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) are placing First Nations peoples and voices at the centre of healthcare service design and delivery through **Making Tracks Together - Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equity Framework**.

Making Tracks Together was released to support Hospital and Health Services to develop and implement First Nations Health Equity Strategies and establish policy to ensure adherence to provisions in the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 and Hospital and Health Boards Regulation 2023. These strategies outline the actions Hospital and Health Services will deliver to achieve health equity, actively eliminate racial discrimination and institutional racism, and influence the social, cultural and economic determinants of health by working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, health services, communities, consumers and Traditional Custodians.

The voices, leadership and lived experiences of First Nations peoples are driving the health equity reform agenda.

A cornerstone of the First Nations health equity agenda is the legislative requirement passed by the Queensland Parliament in 2020 and 2021 for Hospital and Health Services to co-develop and co-implement Health Equity Strategies. For the first time, a commitment to working in partnership with prescribed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders is embedded in the legal framework guiding the public health system in Queensland to:

- achieve health equity and improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes;

- eliminate institutional racism and racial discrimination from the health services,
- influence the social, cultural and economic determinants of health,
- deliver sustainable, culturally safe and responsive healthcare services, and
- strengthen decision-making and power sharing arrangements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the design, delivery, monitoring and review of health services

There is also an embedded legislative requirement to increase workforce representation of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people across all levels of health professions and employment streams to levels at least commensurate with the health service area's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. Strengthening First Nations leadership is fundamental to driving reform and creating integrated culturally safe services.

Provisions set out in the *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011* and the *Hospital and Health Boards Regulation 2023* have created the strongest public health system legislation ever enacted in Queensland Health's history by requiring Hospital and Health Services to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations to design, deliver and monitor healthcare in Queensland. In direct consultation and co-design with prescribed First Nations stakeholders and partners, all 16 Hospital and Health Services across Queensland have released their inaugural Health Equity Strategy and have commenced their initial three-year implementation cycle.

2. First Nations First Strategy 2032

Queensland Health is actively placing First Nations peoples and their voices at the forefront of healthcare service design and delivery in Queensland.

Delivered as part of [HEALTHQ32](#), the First Nations First Strategy is one of the system priorities that will drive the future direction for health in Queensland.

The [First Nations First Strategy 2032](#) will accelerate the reform efforts over the next 10 years to achieve excellence in care and health equity for all First Nations people in Queensland.

The First Nations First Strategy 2032 is built upon four inter-dependent focus areas that are critical to reform:

1. Eliminate racism.
2. Re-shape the system.
3. Transform care.
4. Strengthen the workforce.

Outcomes of the First Nations First Strategy 2032 align with the broader HEALTHQ32 system outcomes which are:

Outcome 1: Queenslanders have access to high-quality and safe healthcare with equitable outcomes.

Outcome 2: Queenslanders have overall improved health, a good start to life, healthy ageing and a good end of life experience.

Outcome 3: Queensland has an innovative, connected and sustainable health system.

Outcome 4: The Queensland health workforce is valued, respected and empowered to lead the delivery of world-class health services—each working to the top of their scope of practice.

Implementation will be guided by a series of action plans over three horizons. These action plans will be used to operationalise and detail the deliverables relevant to each focus area.

- Horizon 1 (2023-2024) – Design and implement (released)
- Horizon 2 (2024-2028) – Strengthen and grow
- Horizon 3 (2028-2032) – Consolidate and renew.

3. Queensland Health's role in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The Closing the Gap policy agenda is Australia's national approach to improving the economic, social and cultural wellbeing with First Nations peoples. After a national commitment made in 2007, the first agreement was released in 2008 (*the National Indigenous Reform Agreement*) and included six national targets related to health, early childhood, education and employment. The second agreement, the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, was released in July 2020 and includes 17 targets and four priority reform areas. Unlike the 2008 agreement, the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (2020) was developed in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

It is acknowledged that to 'close the gap' and achieve parity, government policies and programs must be co-designed and co-implemented with First Nations peoples.

Governments need to transform how they work with First Nations peoples and share decision-making authority in the design and delivery of policies and services.

Priority Reform 1 – Formal Partnerships and decision making

Priority Reform 2 – Building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector.

Priority Reform 3 – Transforming Government Organisations

Priority Reform 4 – Shares access to data and information at a regional level

The Closing the Gap priority reform areas are embedded in Queensland Health's work to achieve health equity for First Nations Queenslanders. The *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (2020) includes three health targets:

- **Outcome 1** – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enjoy long, and healthy lives.
Target: Close the Gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031.
- **Outcome 2** – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong.
Target: By 2031 increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a health birthweight to 91 per cent.
- **Outcome 14** – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing.
Target: Significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero.

The life expectancy gap

In 2020-2022, the Queensland life expectancy gap was estimated at 7.4 years for males and 7.0 years for females. A First Nations boy born in Queensland in 2020-2022 had an average life expectancy of 72.9 years. A First Nations girl born in the same period had an average life expectancy of 76.6 years.

Measuring progress on Closing the Gap

Queensland Health provides data on a routine basis to the Australian Government Productivity Commission for inclusion on the [Closing the Gap Dashboard](#).

4. Queensland Ambulance Service Cultural Capability Action Plan 2023 -2026

The [QAS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Framework](#) incorporates the strategies, policies, procedures and commitment to deliver culturally safe and responsive services and build organisational capability. The framework includes a Statement of Commitment, a Cultural Safety Policy and the QAS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Action Plan 2023-2026.

The QAS Action Plan aligns with the Queensland Government Cultural Capability Framework and is underpinned by the following guiding principles which align with Reframing the Relationship:

1. Valuing culture.
2. Leadership and accountability.
3. Building cultural capability to improve economic participation.
4. Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and businesses.
5. Culturally responsive systems and services.



Queensland Health Reframing the Relationship Plan 2024 / 2025

The reform agenda being implemented by Queensland Health and Queensland Ambulance Services strongly delivers on the intent and focus of the Queensland Governments commitment to Reframing the Relationship.

Reframing entities, as providers of public services to the people of Queensland, have a unique role in supporting the State government in reframing its relationship with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We will achieve this by:

- **recognising and honouring** Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Queensland
- engaging in **truth-telling** about the shared history of all Australians;
- recognising the importance to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the right to **self-determination**;
- promoting **cultural safety and cultural capability** at all levels of the public sector;
- working in **partnership with** Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to actively promote, include and act in a way that aligns with their perspectives, in particular **when making decisions** directly affecting them;
- ensuring the **workforce and leadership** of the entities are reflective of the community they serve;
- promoting a **fair and inclusive public sector** that supports a sense of dignity and belonging for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and
- supporting the **aims, aspirations and employment** needs of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the need for their greater involvement in the public sector

Recognition and honouring

Recognising and honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Queensland through:

- Actively eliminating racial discrimination and institutional racism within the service.
- Providing culturally welcoming environments where First Nations culture is celebrated and acknowledged.

Truth telling

Engaging in truth-telling about the shared history of all Australians through:

- Building capability of all staff to understand how race and racism contributes to the health inequities of First Nations peoples.

- Ensuring services, systems and processes are informed by contemporary mandatory anti-racism and cultural capability learning, education and policy.
- Ensuring our facilities and capital infrastructure is delivered through recognition and respect of local cultural authority and the contributions of First Nations peoples to public infrastructure resulting from previous policies and practices.

Self determination

Recognising the importance to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the right to self-determination through:

- Recognising and valuing the cultural authority and lived experience of First Nations staff in the design and delivery of healthcare.
- Enabling and empowering flexibility and adaptability in how the workforce delivers care, including across service boundaries to meet the cultural and clinical care needs of First Nations peoples.

Cultural capability and cultural safety

Promoting cultural safety and cultural capability at all levels of the public sector through:

- Transforming culturally and clinically safe models of care.
- Understanding and supporting a holistic approach to the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations staff.
- Building stronger partnerships across the healthcare continuum to collectively design and deliver culturally appropriate and meaningful solutions.

Partnerships and decision making

Work in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to actively promote, include and act in a way that aligns with their perspectives, in particular when making decisions directly affecting them through:

- First Nation representation on all Hospital and Health Service Boards
- Working with First Nations peoples to co-design and deliver integrated, accessible and self-determined care
- Enabling funding, commissioning and performance mechanisms to improve responsiveness to local health needs and enable community-led innovation and partnerships.
- Closing the Gap with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enjoy long and healthy lives
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing.



Workforce and leadership

Ensuring the workforce and leadership of our department reflects the community we serve through:

- First Nations Chief Health Officer and executive leadership across the Department of Health and Hospital and Health Services.
- Enhancing the systems leadership and governance mechanisms to strengthen accountability for the achievements of better First Nations health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Growing First Nations workforce representation across clinical and professional streams to represent the population.
- Addressing pay gap and disparity between First Nations men and women and the public sector.

Fair and inclusive public sector

Promote fair and inclusive public sector that supports a sense of dignity and belonging for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples through:

- Reshaping the healthcare system to enable an environment that meets the needs of First Nations peoples.
- Enabling the perspective, priorities and knowledge of First Nations peoples and culture throughout all service and infrastructure planning and decision making.
- Improved recruitment practices and embedded culturally safe HR policy.

Aims, aspirations and employment

Support the aims, aspirations and employment needs of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the need for the greater involvement in the public sector through:

- Accelerating the growth of the First Nations health workforce across all roles (clinical and non-clinical) and locations.
- Prioritising the ongoing career and leadership development of First Nations people and enable working to the full scope of practice, particularly in rural and remote regions.
- Expanding labour market development through VET and university pathways, including partnerships for shared workforce development with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled sector.