

Youth Justice Framework for Practice Foundations

Our way of working

Acknowledgement to Country

We would like to acknowledge the diverse Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land throughout Queensland. We recognise their unique connection to culture, land, sea, air, water and community.

We pay our respects to them, their cultures and to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

We also pay our respects to all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, community members and young people who are from other parts of Australia who contributed to the development of the Youth Justice Framework for Practice (the Framework).



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Thank you to all the staff, community members and young people who contributed to the consultation of this project.

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Introduction

The work of Youth Justice is important, purposeful and complex. We have an essential role in working with some of the most disengaged and disadvantaged young people in the state.

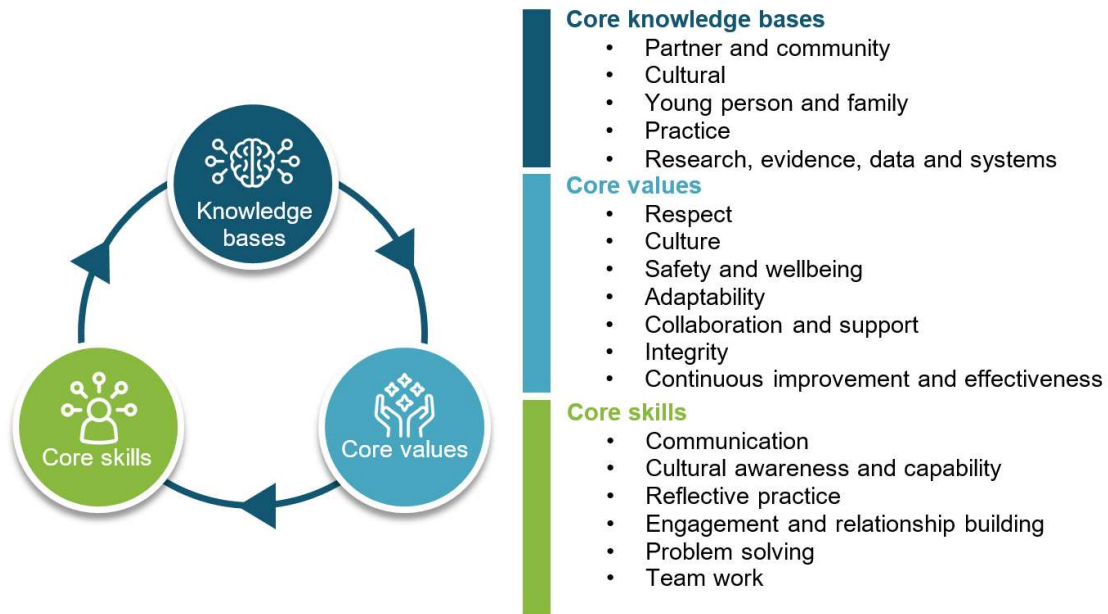
We understand that when we work effectively with young people in the youth justice system, it has a long-term impact on community safety for all Queenslanders. Therefore, our work requires specialised skills, knowledge and approaches to achieve best outcomes for all stakeholders.

This document provides greater context to the application of the Framework to our work. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying summary below.



Purpose of the framework

The Youth Justice Framework for Practice outlines our common understanding and set of values, knowledge bases and skills that guide and inform how we do our work.



The Framework supports us to strengthen the quality and consistency of our practice and guide how we work with:

- each other
- young people
- families
- community members
- victims
- partners
- internal and external stakeholders.

This document is for all Youth Justice employees, whether they work in central office, the community or a detention centre setting.

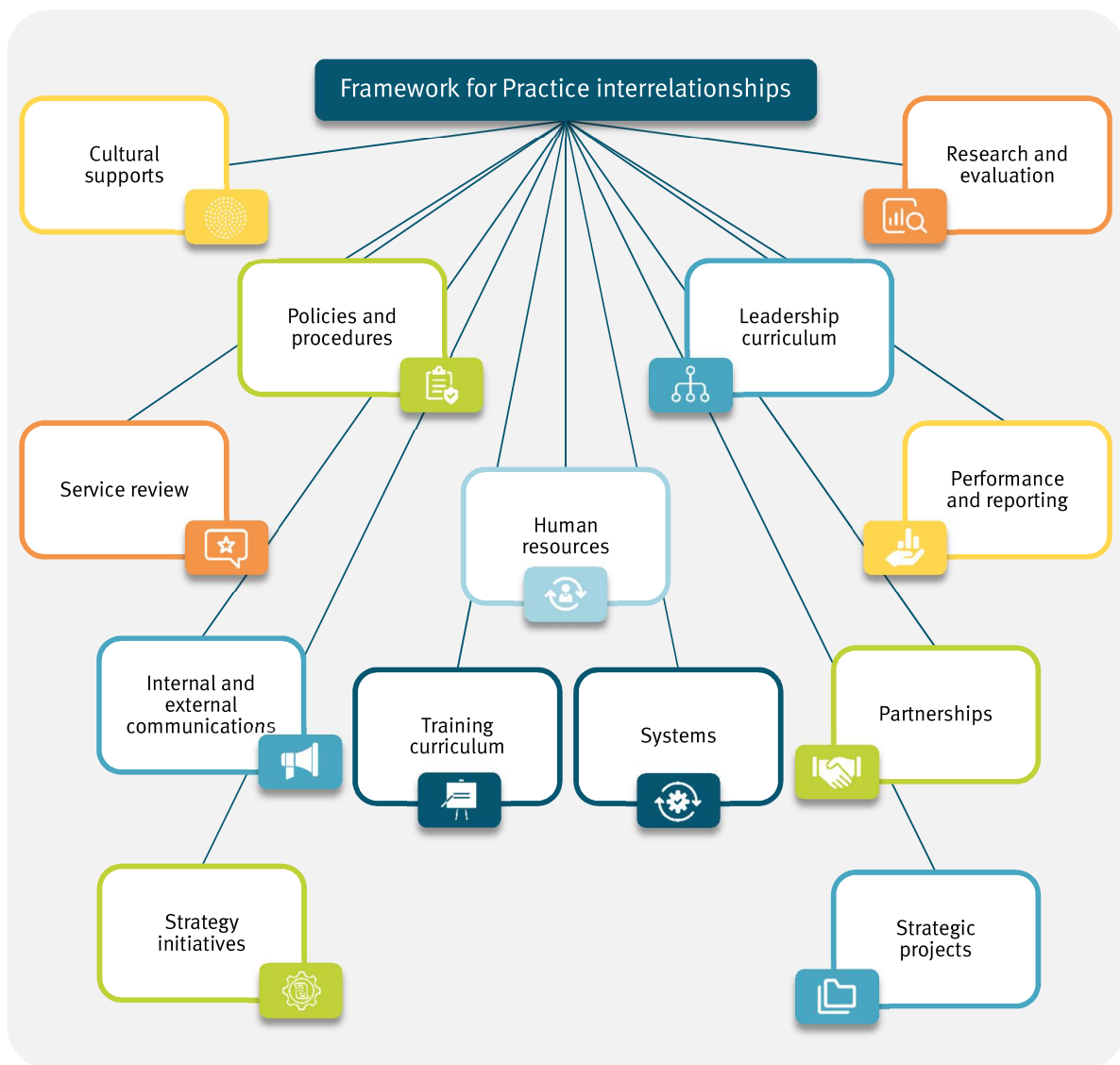
The Framework applies to all levels of the organisation, including management and the executive leadership team. It promotes the essential elements to develop good practice and establish a consistent approach towards decision-making. It provides sufficient flexibility to suit the setting (detention, rural, remote and urban areas). It helps us ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is central to all Youth Justice decision-making.

Critically, the Framework helps staff, stakeholders and those in contact with the youth justice system to better understand the nature of our work, how it connects to a bigger picture, and how the department can be best placed to achieve significant outcomes through consistent and collaborative practice.

The Youth Justice Framework for Practice will be reflected in all activities, tools and resources, including:

- recruitment and induction
- professional development
- training
- service delivery
- partnerships
- service reviews
- policies and procedures
- systems
- projects
- strategic planning.

The diagram below demonstrates the interrelationship between the Youth Justice Framework for Practice and organisational activities.



Our purpose

The role of Youth Justice in Queensland is to keep the community safe by:

- supporting the courts and community in holding young people accountable. We do this by ensuring the young people understand and fulfil the legislative requirements and engage in intervention that addresses their offending behaviours and criminogenic needs.
- supporting positive behaviour change in young people by:
 - developing skills
 - restoring family, community, employment, educational and cultural connections that drive reduced reoffending.

Our scope

The scope of our work includes working with:

- young people at risk of offending
- young people engaged in the youth justice system
- their families
- their communities
- their victims.

Our knowledge bases

Through our work we acknowledge that there are a range of evidence bases to draw from in order to determine the best next steps. We recognise the importance of using all of these to ensure that our decisions:

- are well informed and balanced
- consider the learnings and opportunities of similar work
- can be adopted
- can be better positioned in order to be successful.



Partner and community experiences and perspectives

Youth Justice has a breadth of partnerships which includes, but is not limited to:

- funded providers
- other government agencies
- community groups
- local level alliances.

Integrating partner experiences and perspectives means that we acknowledge that each agency has its own independent systems, obligations and expectations.

We recognise and take into consideration that communities have differing experiences and perspectives.

We also recognise that access to resources and support options varies for young people across Queensland, particularly if they live in rural and remote communities.

Whenever possible, we hear and respond to partner and community needs by adjusting our processes, practice and programs to suit their environments, without compromising the integrity or fairness of the approaches.

Cultural intelligence, experiences and perspectives

We appreciate cultural diversity and cultural inclusiveness are critical to our work. Cultural inclusiveness enables us to recognise and support the needs of people from all cultures and value their unique contributions.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold distinct cultural rights as Australia's first people and recognise the impact of past government policies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. With this understanding, we commit to promoting and actively demonstrating equity and fairness to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We acknowledge and respect the experiences, insights and wisdom Traditional Owners, Elders and Respected Persons share with us to develop opportunities that encourage self-determination.

Young person and family experiences and perspectives

We actively seek input from young people and their families to ensure their voices are heard in the development and implementation of strategies, programs and practice.

We respect that young people, families and kinship systems are unique and must be managed sensitively through all stages of a planning process. We do this as individuals and as an organisation.

Practice insight

When we integrate practice insight, we recognise the importance of knowledge that is developed through our experience of working with young people, families and communities. We acknowledge that professional judgement, based on working knowledge and experience, is an important information base to inform the design and delivery of youth justice services and initiatives.

We understand that we create a strong, robust knowledge base from which to inform decision-making by bringing practice insights together with other types of evidence such as:

- data
- high quality research and evaluation evidence
- perspectives from families and communities.

We recognise that practice insight and knowledge can shift and develop over time, through experiential learning as well as learning that comes from high quality research and evaluation.

We also recognise that practice insights can inform research by providing hypotheses to test and by sharing experiences and perspectives that help explain and contextualise findings.

Research, data, evidence and systems

We respect and understand the responsibility we have to ensure our approaches are supported by:

- data
- robust research evidence
- high quality evaluations.

We apply, monitor and review current research about:

- adolescent development
- drivers of offending
- the effectiveness of youth justice practice, programs and other interventions
- other relevant topics.

We aim to ensure that wherever possible, this evidence is reviewed and translated into products that meet the needs of Queenslanders.

We are committed to effective and efficient data collection within our work, including feedback from young people, families and stakeholders. We use this to support data-driven and evidence-informed decision-making to improve service delivery, and ensure we understand and can demonstrate what is working to improve life outcomes that contribute to reduced reoffending for young people in Queensland.

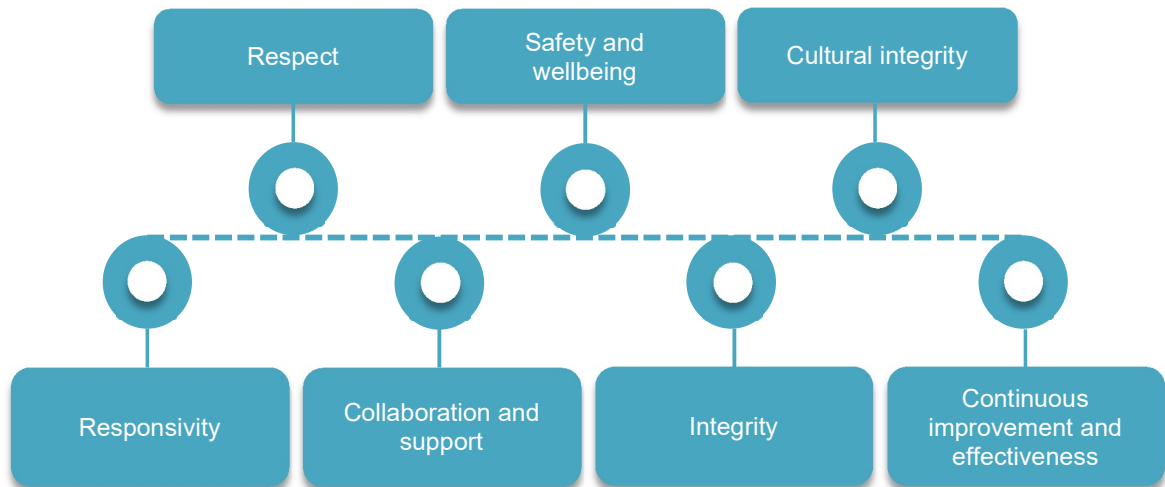
We recognise that we have a responsibility to support local research involving the youth justice system, enabling us to gain insight and knowledge that contributes to the wellbeing of our clients and their families, particularly those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

The development of a research base for young people, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, is critical to our work.

Our values

Our values outline what is important to us as an organisation. Our values inform our decision-making and actions, and guide our behaviour in all our interactions, including with:

- each other
- young people and their families
- community members
- victims
- our partners.



Respect

We work respectfully with each other. We acknowledge effort and all attempts to do our best. We communicate with others in a way that is professional, curious and supportive. We recognise the unique value that each individual brings to the table. We actively work to try and better understand the perspectives and experiences of others we work with. We recognise that by acting respectfully with each other at all times, we support and enable each other to achieve better outcomes for all.

Our respectful approach extends to interactions between:

- each other
- young people
- families
- victims
- communities
- partners and other stakeholders
- those with backgrounds which are different to our own.

We acknowledge and respect the dignity, worth and human rights of everyone in Queensland, regardless of:

- background
- what they look like
- what they think
- what they believe
- any other status or characteristic.

We approach all interactions in a way that is procedurally fair and embodies unconditional positive regard that enables the best possible outcomes.

Culture

We acknowledge the inherent wisdom and resilience instilled in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We encourage families, kinship systems and the broader community being empowered to guide the development of programs and services for those in contact with the youth justice system.

In Youth Justice, having cultural integrity means:

- staff willingly demonstrate a foundation level of cultural competency
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are part of decision-making at all stages of our work
- culturally-appropriate solutions are adopted.

All staff are responsible for their cultural learning, including awareness of local cultural protocols and interactions with stakeholders, in the areas they work. Improving our cultural understanding and capability helps us to build respectful and effective relationships with those we work with, including:

- young people
- families
- communities
- stakeholders
- victims
- partners.

We respect, value and support the history, experiences, values and beliefs of all cultures, and are inclusive of these as we go about our work.

Safety and wellbeing

We prioritise safety and wellbeing for everyone we work with, including:

- young people
- families
- victims
- communities
- partners and stakeholders
- staff.

We do this by adhering to legislation, and providing a mentally and physically safe environment. We are trained to do our job well and empowered to use a range of techniques to ensure we can maintain safety at all times. Our actions are consistent and communicated in a way that is understood and fair. Our focus remains on de-escalation. We understand that safety is increased through improved relationships, increased skill and support of our workers.

We ensure our actions are tailored to the needs of the cohort and effective evidence-based principles, and our decisions recognise inherent human rights.

We work in a way that is culturally-responsive by respectfully working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. We recognise and work in ways that are consistent with the cultural expertise that is shared with us. We demonstrate cultural responsiveness by seeking advice and guidance from community leaders and agencies to ensure we follow cultural protocols within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

All staff across the organisation are encouraged to take responsibility to access regular supervision for the purpose of supporting safety and wellbeing on an individual level, as well as a commitment to developing staff development plans to ensure they have the skills and capability to promote safety and wellbeing for themselves and those we work with.

We ensure that all staff are aware of the employee support options available to them.

Adaptability

We recognise that being adaptable and flexible is key to our success and we actively work to adjust and tailor our approaches when working with our young people. We are responsive to a range of factors including, but not limited to:

- culture
- gender
- developmental stage
- capacity
- abilities
- motivation.

We respectfully work within the boundaries of our statutory obligations while making genuine effort to meet young people where they are at. When working with young people we recognise the importance of our role in engagement to support positive behaviour change. We understand that working in this way helps us achieve better outcomes than when we don't. We recognise that young people have different capacities and needs to adults and that applying creativity and innovation can help us find solutions to problems.

We are adaptable and creative in the way we deliver our statutory responsibilities and how we work across our organisation and with our partners.

Collaboration and support

We recognise the importance of genuine relationships, partnerships and collaboration as an integral part of our work. We seek collaboration in all aspects of our work by actively seeking out diverse perspectives and experiences of staff, young people and partners to ensure that we are seeing the fullest picture. This includes forming positive relationships with our partner agencies and

understanding the broader community services system available to our young people and their families, and supporting the development of such connections. We actively foster positive relationships with key partners and external agencies by:

- understanding their priorities and areas of focus
- collaboratively developing mutual solutions to shared challenges
- ensuring that strategy, policy and operational settings support common objectives.

We understand that together we can draw on collective learnings to achieve the best outcomes possible at a state and local level.

Within our department, we transparently share our plans and intentions whenever possible. We work together as a team. We take a positive, non-judgmental, curious and restorative approach to our work and recognise shared goals.

Where there is disagreement or disconnect, we aim and actively work to restore these relationships and build long-term connections.

We recognise that support is critical in the work that we do. We seek to support young people and their families in a way that achieves the best outcomes for the young person, family and the community.

We invite and empower others to participate in our case management, where appropriate. We recognise that fostering connections with a young person's community and networks ensures they are supported beyond their involvement with us. This is a priority.

All staff are supported by regular supervision and guidance around their role and have opportunities for development and upskilling. Staff are provided a safe learning environment and are enabled to deliver best practice approaches in a supported way. Leaders recognise the challenges of this work, and offer opportunities for debriefing.

We all model strengths and solution-focused enquiry. We celebrate successes and value opportunities for learning when things don't go to plan. When things don't work out as expected, we choose to learn from these experiences.

We understand the boundaries of our work and are supported to be innovative wherever possible.

Integrity

We understand the importance of working in a way that is legal, ethical and fair. We understand that we are expected to work with transparency, impartiality, and accountability to internal and external stakeholders, including young people.

We maintain comprehensive record-keeping and complaints management processes in a way that ensures accountability and transparency. We uphold our legislative responsibilities to keep information safe. We remain responsive to internal and external oversight mechanisms. We are honest with our challenges, as this helps us find more effective solutions.

We focus on understanding and applying best practice approaches in all of our work. We ensure our work and service delivery is of the highest quality and standard possible. We take individual responsibility for and actively seek out current best practice to ensure we understand how to be as

effective and efficient as possible in each of our roles. This includes recognising the importance and value of seeking out young person, family and community perspectives in our work.

We understand that we serve the public, the community and the government, and strive to deliver the best youth justice system and services possible on their behalf.

We take a fair and balanced approach when working with vulnerable young people, families and victims, and understand our role in upholding procedural fairness. We understand our responsibilities and obligations under legislation, including but not limited to:

- *Public Service Act 2008* (including the Public Service Code of Conduct)
- *Youth Justice Act 1992* (including the Youth Justice principles)
- Youth Justice Regulation 2016
- *Human Rights Act 2019*
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*
- *Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011*
- *Information Privacy Act 2009*
- *Community Services Act 2007*

We are also mindful of our obligations under the:

- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- United Nations Rules for the Protection of Young People Deprived of Their Liberty
- Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture.

Continuous improvement and effectiveness

We are committed to continuous improvement to ensure services evolve with contemporary best practice. We recognise the importance of focusing our efforts in line with our strategic objectives to ensure the best outcomes for young people, families, victims and communities.

We are curious about how to develop better responses and actively seek expertise from other areas to inform our approach to our work.

We are reflective and actively seek opportunities to strengthen our practice. Feedback from our young people, victims and stakeholders is emphasised through our continuous learning processes.

When we find opportunities, we plan and undertake improvement actions and recognise that learning is an ongoing process. We understand that meaningful and significant change can take time, so whenever possible we build on existing gains to achieve best value for money.

We make monitoring of progress and outcomes a priority. We ensure we are informed by internal and external data, research, evaluation and other evidence, and make appropriate changes as needed.

Our principles

Our principles are the way we put our values, knowledge and skills into action in our day-to-day work.

- We respect, value and support diverse cultures and experiences.
- We support, value and apply Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, beliefs and perspectives.
- We are informed by evidence in our service design and delivery.
- We connect young people with their communities and ensure that they receive a continuity of service.
- We value positive, fair and strong leadership that empowers staff.
- We actively recruit, support, develop and sustain the best possible people, ensuring a culturally-diverse workforce.
- We engage and collaborate with key people, working with each young person, in a coordinated way.
- We administer our services in a way that is procedurally fair and we keep the information we collect safe.
- We provide services within a safe environment and take action to prevent harm, including to young people and victims.

Our skills

The Youth Justice Framework for Practice outlines key skills that need to be applied in all roles, at all levels and all settings to do our best work. We recognise that these skills and our associated tools help us put our values in action on a daily basis. The key skills are listed below.

Communication

Great organisations are founded on strong communication. All workplaces are improved by open communication, channels and processes. Communication is essential to our work with young people, families, and communities. It is also integral to the work that we do with each other.

Communication skills in this context means:

- active listening
- demonstrating curiosity
- delivering information in a way that:
 - considers how the message and the delivery style may impact others
 - is honest
 - can be easily understood.

It includes identifying who needs to know the information we have and recognising who might benefit from the information we hold.

Cultural awareness and capability

Cultural awareness and capability in our work is an ongoing learning process. We recognise that being open and increasing our ability to better understand the unique perspectives of others enables us to:

- build better relationships and partnerships
- deliver best possible outcomes.

We also consider the historic impacts to our communities and are responsive to the needs and experiences of others in our work.

Reflective practice

Reflective practice is critical to building effectiveness in our work. When we reflect on our actions, intentions and impacts we can build self-awareness and a greater understanding of others. From a place of greater self-awareness we are better able to understand our own behaviours and those of others to learn from and continue to improve upon.

Engagement and relationship building

Engagement and relationship building are key skills in all our work, whether working with young people, families and partners, or in our internal interactions.

We recognise that we need genuine engagement to achieve outcomes in our work. We understand that objectives cannot be met without the buy-in from those we interact with. To achieve this we:

- ensure the reasons for our engagement are clear
- commit to establishing common ground and shared goals early in the relationship.

We monitor our relationships, seek feedback and actively work to address differences when they arise. We communicate differing needs or expectations as soon as possible. We understand that it is equally important to be open to feedback. We take personal responsibility for applying this in our future interactions or continuing to have productive conversations until agreements are reached.

We are diligent and persistent in our relationship building especially where relationships are critical to our ability to be effective in our work and deliver the best outcomes for communities. The pace and approach we take in building these relationships considers the needs of those we are working with.

Problem solving

Collaborative problem-solving is crucial to ensuring our solutions are workable, well considered and realistic. It ensures that a range of viewpoints are factored into decision-making. We understand that much of our work is not clear cut and appropriate adaptations might be needed. We use a strengths-based and solution-focused mindset to address challenges and solve problems.

Teamwork

We understand that workplaces where people work together in positive ways are more productive and resilient. This also applies to the way we work with all our partners, internally and externally.

We value learning from others, seeing things from different perspectives and understanding that each team and agency has different areas of focus and priorities.

We understand that sharing our challenges openly, seeking support and genuinely offering help to others are key ways to combine efforts and produce even better outcomes than our individual contributions alone.

We celebrate each other's successes and take time to share good new stories. In all our interactions we represent each other internally and externally in a strengths-based way.

Featured artwork

This artwork was developed by an 18-year-old Aboriginal man from Cairns. The kangaroos in this piece symbolise a gathering where messages are exchanged. These messages then flow out to a broader audience and are reflected back. This is represented by the lines and the dots.



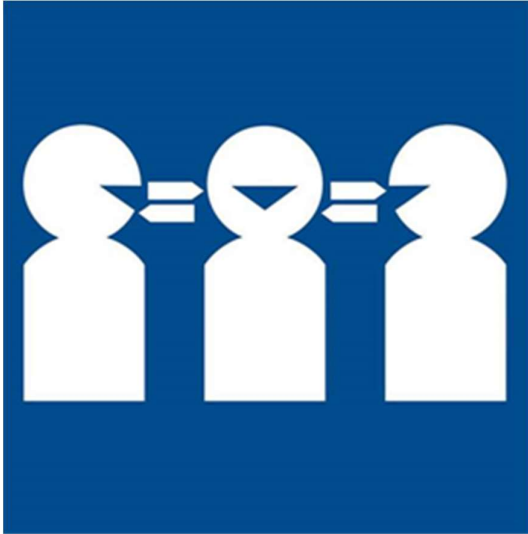
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This artwork was developed by an 18-year-old Torres Strait Islander man from Cairns. The conch shell is used to send messages and to call gatherings. It's a form of communication. The drum is also a symbol of communication. The stars and the spots represent connection and togetherness. The Dhari (headpiece) is symbolic of the Torres Strait Islander culture and is the distinctive traditional dance and ceremonial headdress. It is the central motif on the Torres Strait Islander flag and is a symbol of identity and the unity of Torres Strait Islander people.



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