



Thriving Cohesive Communities

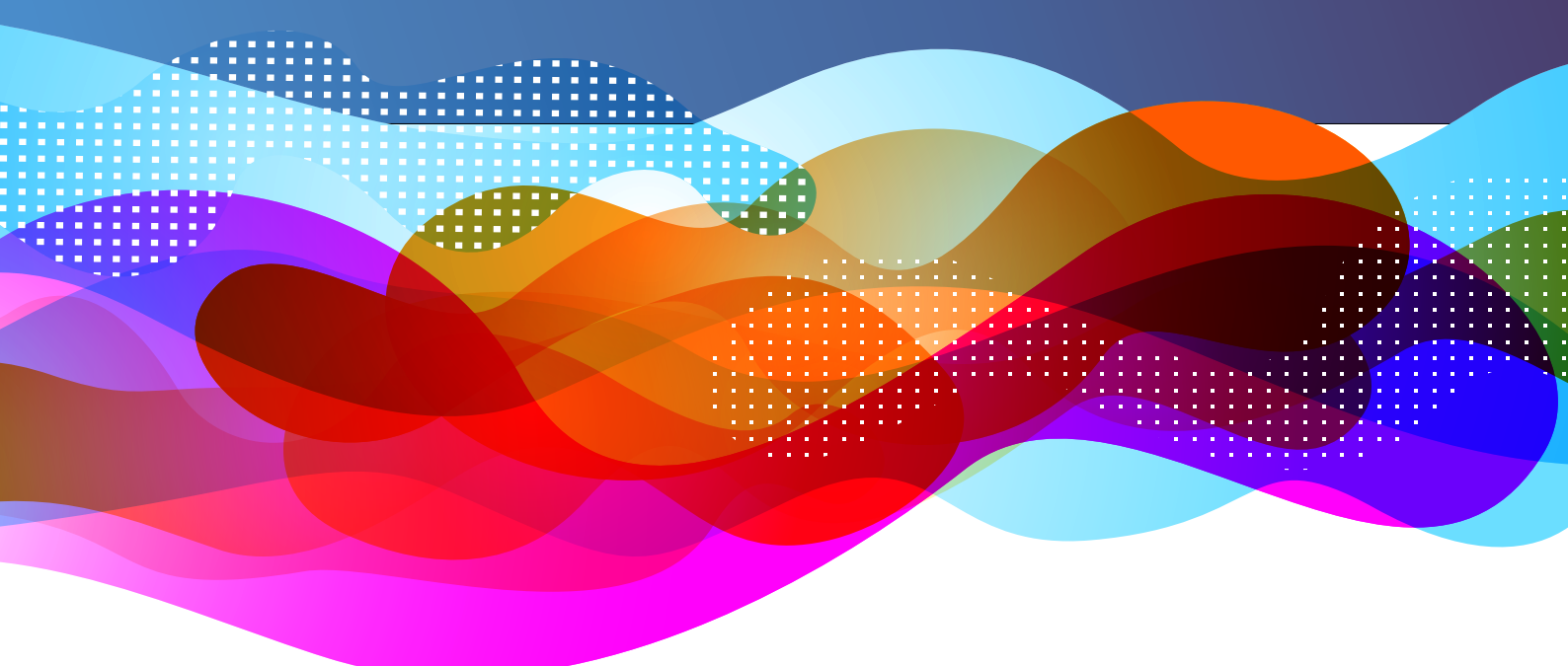
Action Plan for Queensland
2019–21 (Stage 2)



Queensland
Government

Thriving Cohesive Communities: Action Plan for Queensland 2019–21

Queensland is a dynamic state that is home to more than five million people and visited by many more. Queenslanders who call our cities, regional towns, islands or outback communities home come from many cultural backgrounds and contribute to Australia being a successful multicultural society. This diversity brings many benefits to our state, including to our economy and social fabric.



The Queensland Government is committed to a fair, prosperous and equitable society. Safe, vibrant, and inclusive communities that thrive underpin this society.

Violent and divisive events around the world and in Australia in recent years have highlighted how important it is to maintain and build communities that stick together in good and bad times, and where people connect, trust each other and share resources. This is our best defence to counter antisocial behaviour and narratives that promote fear and division. Queenslanders of all ages, backgrounds and abilities have the right to respect, fair treatment and opportunities to make a positive and valued contribution.

That is why the Queensland Government has committed more than \$12.7 million to strengthening social cohesion in our communities and appointed a community committee — the Queensland Social Cohesion Implementation Committee (QSCIC) — to help shape initiatives. QSCIC has assisted the Queensland Government to develop this action plan and will guide its implementation.

Creating a society where everyone feels they belong takes effort — and a joint effort at that. Everyone has a part to play in creating and upholding the social conditions that enable us to get along and prosper.

QSCIC members have been appointed by the Premier and contribute independent advice and diverse life experiences to the committee's work. These include:

- growing up in a rural or regional community or settling in one as a recent migrant
- leading and working in human service organisations
- being active in a faith community
- being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- establishing and working in businesses
- working in the areas of research, youth support, education and advocacy.

About this action plan

Much work is already being done in Queensland to promote diversity and social cohesion. The Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors is the lead agency across the Queensland Government for social cohesion and will help to coordinate actions under this plan with existing initiatives across all levels of government.

Thriving Cohesive Communities: Action Plan for Queensland 2019–21 (Stage 2) focuses on:

- strengthening community cohesion and resilience
- reducing social marginalisation and economic exclusion
- addressing antisocial behaviour and behaviour that may lead to violence or physical harm to others.

This action plan builds on initiatives delivered under *Cohesive Communities: An Action Plan for Queensland 2016–18*. This first stage of work focused on increasing understanding and appreciation of the diversity of Queenslanders. More than 80 projects were funded in 2016–18 across the state to bring individuals, families and communities together.

Initiatives were independently evaluated and the findings have informed the design and priorities of stage 2, such as:

- greater emphasis on young people (12–25 years)
- targeting of investment to priority locations for more focused impact
- greater emphasis on addressing economic exclusion.

Bringing the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to a central position of influence and engaging young people in the development and implementation of activities will be a key part of taking this action plan forward.

How will we know we are making a difference?

It is important to know whether the actions under this plan make a difference to our social cohesion. There will be an independent evaluation of activities delivered under *Thriving Cohesive Communities: Action Plan for Queensland 2019–21 (Stage 2)*. Key aspects of social cohesion identified in the evaluation of the first stage of work will be used to monitor the impact at the individual and community levels.

At the state level, the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion and the Queensland Social Survey provide a baseline, as well as an ongoing measure, for any impacts to Queensland's overall social cohesion.

Social cohesion

- Enabling employment
- Building social capital
- Community involvement
- Positive civic engagement
- Strong and resilient families
- Welcoming and embracing diversity
 - Enabling economic mobility
- Building the capability of frontline workers to engage with and provide services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds



What is in this plan?

As in the action plan for the first stage of work, this plan identifies priorities for action under four focus areas:

1. Pathways for individuals
2. Family connections
3. Community connections and strength
4. Collaborative services

This plan is for the two-year period 2019–21, although actions may be implemented over a longer period.

Action 1 will be delivered in three priority areas — Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Townsville.

Other actions will be delivered statewide, including in these priority areas.



Focus area 1: Pathways for individuals

Thriving cohesive communities are places where all Queenslanders are culturally, socially and economically included. Providing pathways for people at risk of isolation or marginalisation will help create stronger, more cohesive communities where everyone has access to the same opportunities.

Action 1: Work with local partners to facilitate community-led social cohesion planning and activities in the priority locations of Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Townsville.

This action will:

- assist community members understand issues related to social cohesion, and design and lead activities that build social and economic inclusion
- embed the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members in planning and decision-making about social cohesion strategies
- enable young people to have a say in and influence decisions via face-to-face and online platforms
- utilise cross-sector engagement (for example, local businesses, local government, health and education agencies, youth and family support services) in community-led planning activities
- resource community-led activities that help achieve priorities identified in the planning phase.

What we will do

- Assist target communities to identify an organisation (or organisations) with a local presence and mandate to lead this action.
- Fund a consortium of local partners to deliver this action.

- Align investment through other action plan initiatives to support and sustain progress on community-identified plans.
- Promote the use of e-platforms and hubs to engage people of different ages, abilities and backgrounds.

Examples of community-led activities

- Community development work to build connections between community members and groups (for example, to share information, resources and opportunities)
- Employment forums to:
 - connect the available workforce to local employers
 - increase visibility of entry-level opportunities and understanding of local employer needs
- Anti-poverty initiatives to reduce barriers to social and economic participation
- Case-management support for young people in the critical 3- to 6-month period when they transition from school to employment, volunteering or further education
 - Outreach to connect residents at risk of social or economic isolation to existing opportunities and support

Action 2: Resource established social enterprises to engage vulnerable young people and family members in the economy.

This action will:

- grow the capability of established social enterprises to provide skills training, work experience and employment
- promote strengths-based engagement of young people and those excluded from the workforce
- build participants' understanding of workplace culture and expectations.

What we will do

- Fund existing social enterprises to create and/or scale up pathways to economic inclusion. These organisations will have proven ability to engage hard-to-reach groups.
- Work with the Queensland Social Enterprise Council to scaffold local enterprises with expert knowledge and best practice support.





Focus area 2: Family connections

It is important for families to feel a sense of belonging to their community and have opportunities to play an active role in their community. Families also play an important role in identifying early signs that an individual is vulnerable and may need support. In building social cohesion, it is vital that families know where to turn for support and how to connect with their community.

Action 3: Support young people to connect with their family or carers, contribute to their community and take up opportunities for leadership

This action will:

- establish relationships with young people at risk of exclusion and isolation
- strengthen the connection of young people to their family, culture, school, work or volunteering
- strengthen the skills of young people to engage productively with their peers
- build young people's civic and service system literacy so they can be better self-advocates and identify opportunities for positive civic engagement
- connect young people to opportunities for social and economic participation, including local programs, services, clubs and community support
- promote a 'relationship-first' approach to work with young people
- help to build young people's confidence and hope in their future.

What we will do

- Fund organisations to deliver this action. These organisations will have existing local identity and proven results in engaging and maintaining connections with young people and their families or carers.
- Promote the use of outreach approaches to better identify and engage young people at risk of exclusion and isolation.





Focus area 3: Community connections and strength

Having positive connections with others who will back us and acknowledge our contribution is important to feeling that we belong in the places and spaces where we live and work. Queenslanders of all ages, backgrounds and abilities have the right to respect, fair treatment and opportunities to contribute to their community. Bringing together communities and supporting dialogue between people across and within communities can help promote understanding and increase community bonds and trust.

Action 4: Locals speaking to locals. Initiate conversations to increase exposure and build awareness, knowledge and understanding of the diverse identity of Queenslanders.

This action will:

- build understanding between community members of all backgrounds, ages and abilities
- provide community members with strategies to address racism and discrimination (including bullying) that may lead to exclusion and isolation
- recruit, train and support local people who can speak about their experience of difference, including living with disability, being from a minority culture, or identifying with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) communities
- strengthen the ability of local businesses and organisations to embrace diversity in their workers and customers
- develop a network of locally based diversity hosts to build and maintain community capability for having conversations that value and support diversity.

What we will do

- Fund organisations and networks to deliver this action. These organisations/networks will have experience in combatting racism, discrimination, and behaviours that lead to exclusion (for example, groups working with people in the multicultural, settlement and disability sectors; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and LGBTIQ+ communities).





Focus area 4: Collaborative services

We can make Queensland communities welcoming for all by enhancing the ways people interact with and include individuals, families and groups in their local community. Government and other service providers have an important role in modelling behaviour that promotes an inclusive and equitable society and engenders trust in our leaders and civic institutions. Volunteer community workers drive many of the opportunities on offer for social participation. We can better equip our local frontline workers and influencers by providing them with the understanding and skills to promote social cohesion.

Action 5: Assist people in positions of influence with young people to positively engage with them on topics of diversity, inclusion and social cohesion (for example, educators, faith and cultural communities, sporting and interest clubs).

This action will:

- engage local groups with a focus on young people
- engage local school communities to host emerging networks and projects and aid sustainability in the face of frequent workforce turnover in regional, rural and remote locations
- support participants to identify areas of alignment between global citizenship approaches and their existing programs, codes of conduct and preferred group/club culture
- build the capacity of identified influencers to effectively lead conversations with young people about diversity, inclusion and social cohesion
- train educators to teach for social cohesion and global citizenship through online modules and face-to-face seminars
- target a wide range of educators, from early childhood education through to vocational education and training.

What we will do

- Fund the provision of global citizenship education.
- Prioritise funding to:
 - organisations and networks with a track record of successfully building the capability of people who work with young people
 - Townsville, Rockhampton and Toowoomba and regional communities who identify with one of these priority locations as their regional centre.
- Maximise the use of global citizenship teaching resources developed in the first stage of work (2016–18).

