

# Safe children and strong communities



A strategy and action plan for Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander peoples and organisations accessing  
the blue card system 2021-2025





## Minister's foreword

Our First Nations peoples have a rich cultural history. This history is evident in our Queensland communities and through the continued collective community approach to raising children. Our key focus is to ensure our Aboriginal and Torres Strait families and children can live safely in our communities, whether they live in our cities or remote and regional areas across the State. And by doing so, we are committed to making sure our systems protect First Nations children and keep them safe.

We know that First Nations Queenslanders have experienced barriers while engaging with the blue card system. The Queensland Government is committed to making sure our blue card process and resources are culturally appropriate and more accessible for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

In September 2017, the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) handed down the *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe: Review of the blue card system* report. As a result of the invaluable contributions of more than 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations, the Queensland Government have been able to develop this strategy and action plan to achieve better outcomes for our First Nations communities.

This strategy and action plan is about empowering our First Nations communities and organisations by providing a more supportive system through each step of the blue card process. This will improve their employment opportunities and make kinship care more accessible.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the Blue Card Strategy and Action Plan Co-Design Reference Group for their invaluable work, and I would like to personally thank the co-chairs of the group—Jennifer Lang, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and Phillip Brooks, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Youth Justice—for their leadership.

On behalf of the Queensland Government, I am proud to present the inaugural strategy and action plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations accessing the blue card system. Together, we can create safe children and strong communities.

### **The Hon. Shannon Fentiman, MP**

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence  
Queensland Government

## Co-chairs' foreword

As the co-chairs of Blue Card Strategy and Action Plan Co-Design Reference Group, we have been proud to lead and be involved in such an important piece of work. As the responsible Deputy Directors-General of departments that engage with Queensland's youth, we have a clear mandate to act in the best of interests of Queensland's children and young people. It is our duty as senior public servants to ensure the government develops laws and policies to meet those objectives and, where necessary, review and further strengthen these systems.

The reference group was made up of senior representatives from relevant government agencies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies. This group oversaw the application of a comprehensive co-design approach to ensure the intent, design, and outcomes of this strategy and action plan were suitable. This strategy and action plan builds on the foundation established by the extensive consultation undertaken by the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and service providers during its review of the blue card system.

Central to this co-design approach was an extensive validation process that was undertaken with stakeholders from Brisbane to Bamaga and beyond. This included circling back to people and organisations who had previously provided information to the QFCC to show the outcomes of that initial consultation and how their feedback has informed the development of this plan. Validation sessions were held in a variety of locations including Brisbane, Weipa, Aurukun, Mossman, Thursday Island, Bamaga, Palm Island, Mapoon, Injinoo, Logan, Bundaberg, Cherbourg, Rockhampton, Townsville, Mount Isa, Seisia and Umagico.

This plan represents best practice co-design principles and has been developed through a robust process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at the centre. Importantly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been listened to and understood, and all key actions and strategies have been validated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations before being incorporated.

While responsibility for operating the blue card system sits with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the implementation of this plan will require partnership and coordination with a broad range of government agencies, non-government organisations, communities and individuals. This plan sets out focus areas and innovative strategies for achieving effective engagement between a culturally appropriate blue card system and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It aims to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in their engagement with the system. While there are actions and strategies within this document which may require longer term implementation periods, the plan also identifies key steps that can be taken in the short-term and prioritised using existing resources.

The safety and wellbeing of children is the primary consideration in every aspect of the blue card system. This plan represents a commitment to improving Blue Card Services' engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in order to provide culturally appropriate services in the best interests of Queensland's children. On behalf of the Blue Card Strategy and Action Plan Co-Design Reference Group we are proud to present you with this document.

### Phillip Brooks

Deputy Director-General  
Department of Youth Justice

### Jennifer Lang

Deputy Director-General  
Department of Justice and Attorney-General





## Acknowledgements

The Queensland Government respectfully acknowledges the First Nations people in the State of Queensland.

We acknowledge the cultural and spiritual connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and sea.

We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as two unique and diverse peoples with their own rich and distinct cultures.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present as well as the existing and emerging leaders who walk together in partnership on this journey.

We acknowledge and recognise the families, kinship carers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations who are the first protectors of keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children safe and thriving.

We sincerely thank the representatives from government and key peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies who selflessly contributed their time and energies to co-design this strategy and action plan.

This strategy and action plan has also been informed by the voices of more than 110 people and 50 organisations, from across Queensland. The majority of these participants identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations, and we thank you for your time, energy and valuable insights which informed this strategy and action plan.

We acknowledge the contributions of Cultural Edge Designs for the original artwork designs that are seen throughout this document and the leadership of PriceWaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting in developing this strategy and action plan.

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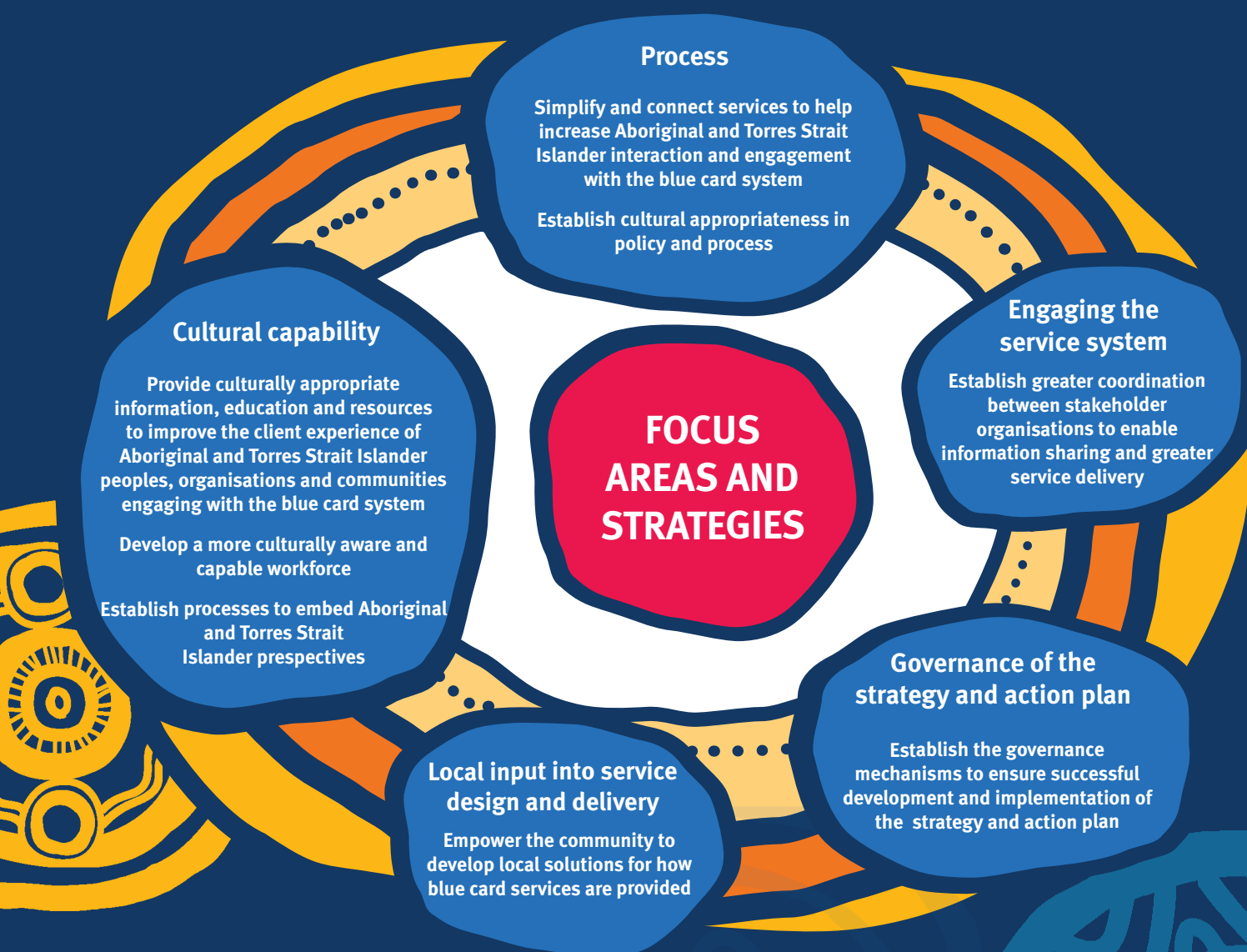
## Strategy on a page

### Objectives

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in discrete communities, regional areas and urban localities receive support through each stage of the blue card system.
- Blue Card Services develops as a culturally capable organisation.

### Principles

- Community and government co-design and validation
- Community engagement and partnerships
- Culturally capable services and delivery
- Free, prior and informed consent





## Introduction

Blue Card Services was established in 2001 and has been part of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General since 2016. Blue Card Services administers the blue card system—Queensland’s working with children check—and regulates activities essential to the development and wellbeing of children in Queensland. Blue Card Services supports the right of all children in Queensland to be safe and protected from harm.

The blue card system is part of a much broader framework for keeping children safe in our communities. Other systems such as the criminal justice system, child protection services, industry regulation and other laws and strategies are also in place and work to protect children.

The blue card system consists of three important parts: screening, ongoing monitoring and risk management.

The screening part of the blue card system is the working with children check, where checks and assessments are conducted on individuals to determine if they are eligible to work with children based on their known police or disciplinary information.

Ongoing daily monitoring of all applicants’ and cardholders’ Queensland criminal history is in place through an electronic exchange with the Queensland Police Service. The Queensland Police Service notify Blue Card Services if a cardholder or applicant has a change in their police information and this allows Blue Card Services to take immediate steps, including cancelling or suspending high-risk individuals’ cards, to mitigate the risk of harm to children. Blue Card Services also monitors organisations and business operators to ensure they are complying with their obligations under the blue card system.

The third part of the system is risk management, where all child-related organisations and people who run child-related businesses need to develop and implement risk management strategies, addressing eight minimum requirements, to ensure their organisation is a safe place for children and young people.

The blue card system has a unique reach in the community. As at 31 December 2020, the continued eligibility of over 810,000 blue card holders and applicants was being monitored on a daily basis.

Blue Card Services faces challenges in assessing complex histories for people who are seeking to engage in child-related employment. This has far-reaching impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, where contact with the criminal justice system is at much higher rates than non-Indigenous people.

Blue Card Services is a critical component of the broader Queensland Government service delivery system. The impacts that the blue card system has on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reaches across education, employment, health, housing, justice, identification and access to services.

Therefore, it is imperative to understand that while this plan specifically highlights strategies and actions to implement within the blue card system, it sits contextually within broader whole-of-government work to remedy the adverse and wide-ranging social and health challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in Queensland.

This strategy and action plan is a vehicle for real change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland accessing the blue card system. It is about empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities by taking an innovative approach to providing greater support through each part of the blue card system. It also aims to enable those working in the blue card system to embed real, sustainable change through enhanced decision-making and processes, and by developing and fostering cultural capability within the system itself.

Implementation of the strategies and actions in this document will be monitored and evaluated by a newly established *Safe children and strong communities* Implementation Reference Group.



## Case for change

The socio-economic challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote and discrete communities and across Queensland are not new. The Queensland Government is taking these challenges seriously, and this strategy and action plan is part of government's commitment to positive change for the children and families living in Queensland.

On 21 September 2016, the Principal Commissioner, Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC), was asked by the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, on behalf of the Premier, to 'undertake a whole of system review of the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* and its operation'. The review provided an opportunity to challenge the current system and consider the value it adds to keeping children safe, and whether there are better ways to achieve this goal.

The QFCC completed 2,267 consultation activities, 124 forums with 640 participants, and 108 meetings, which included a range of discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and regions. Throughout the review process, stakeholders highlighted the need to reform the blue card system to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, both to improve participation in employment, and make kinship care accessible. In September 2017, the Queensland Government released the QFCC's *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe: Review of the blue card system* report.

The QFCC identified in its report that Blue Card Services had commenced progressing a number of initiatives to improve engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It was acknowledged that these initiatives were showing initial positive results however, the QFCC identified that there was a need to expand on these initiatives.

The QFCC handed down a suite of 81 recommendations including a recommendation targeted at providing enhanced support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations engaging with the blue card system.



## Recommendation 73

It is recommended that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General develops and implements a specific strategy and action plan to provide more support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and build cultural capability in the blue card system, including:

- identifying ways to partner with other agencies for consistency with other Queensland Government initiatives designed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- establishing a reference group made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to co-design the strategy and action plan
- developing a specific community engagement plan to address common misconceptions about the blue card system, build understanding and improve participation in the process
- developing a suite of culturally appropriate information and resources
- funding and providing community-based support to assist with all stages of the WWCC [working with children check] process in all discrete communities
- funding and establishing identified positions in Blue Card Services to provide greater support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and provide regular cultural capability training for all Blue Card Services staff
- developing guidelines to embed an appropriate consideration of culture in WWCC decisions
- considering ways to empower communities to be involved in decisions about their community
- establishing appropriate governance structures—led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders—to implement the strategy and action plan
- developing an evaluation strategy to measure the effectiveness of the strategy and action plan.

## Existing Blue Card Services initiatives

The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who apply for a blue card are ultimately issued with a blue card. However, to reduce the high rates of disengagement and withdrawal from the system, Blue Card Services has implemented a number of strategies (many implemented in response to the issues identified by the QFCC) to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Many of these strategies are starting to show positive results and demonstrate that targeted support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will provide better outcomes for the individuals, organisations and communities.

Blue Card Services will continue to progress these initiatives as part of the implementation of this strategy and action plan. The current strategies include:

- implementing targeted initiatives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders through the implementation of the No Card, No Start policy including establishing a community network, developing fact sheets and community-specific posters, posting recorded information sessions on the Blue Card Services website and disseminating key messages through emails, newsletters and social media
- alternative identification processes for people who cannot meet standard identification requirements, which are part of the application process
- establishing a dedicated assessment team (including two identified roles - male and female) that provides targeted assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote discrete communities who have assessable police or disciplinary information
- targeted travel to remote communities to provide one-on-one support for individuals and general information about the blue card system and assistance on how to apply
- annual cultural capability training provided for Blue Card Services staff, with specific and targeted training provided to staff who engage directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- specific information resources developed by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creative agency which promote key messages in a culturally sensitive way and that debunk myths about applying for a blue card, and
- regular attendance at community events and the provision of tailored workshops (free-of-charge) delivered in person or online.

These initiatives correspond with a reduction in the numbers of applicants in remote discrete communities withdrawing from the blue card assessment process prior to a blue card decision being made. There has also been an increase in the issue of blue cards in circumstances where a negative notice may otherwise have been issued.

It is clear that these initiatives are achieving positive results; however, to fulfil the need for systematic improvement as identified by the QFCC, more work is needed. This is why this strategy and action plan is important, because it builds on the established foundation to provide even greater support to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations throughout Queensland that enter the blue card system.

## Intergenerational trauma

Experiences with government organisations, processes and systems can have wide-ranging impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. Intergenerational trauma can be exacerbated through these experiences, and the disparity in life outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians can become entrenched. This trauma continues to be passed from generation to generation and can lead to devastating outcomes. In Australia, intergenerational trauma predominantly affects the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations.<sup>1</sup>

The consequences of intergenerational trauma can affect parenting practices and contribute to family violence, harmful substance misuse, greater contact with the criminal justice system, socio-economic and emotional wellbeing issues such as mental illness and unemployment, and the devastating cycle of children and young people being placed in out-of-home care.

## Out-of-home care

The vast majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children live safely at home with their parents and in their communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples maintain strong cultural practices such as utilising community links to contribute to the rearing and nurturing of their children. These continued practices help to ensure children are confident in their identity and continue to hold intrinsic links to their communities and culture.

However, despite the best of efforts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and communities, some children continue to experience disadvantage. When impacted by unsafe living conditions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are being removed from their families, communities and culture. Data from the *Family Matters Report 2017* indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 9.8 times more likely to be living in out-of-home care compared to non-Indigenous children in Australia.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Healing Foundation, Intergenerational Trauma, accessed 8 July 2020, <https://healingfoundation.org.au/intergenerational-trauma/>.

<sup>2</sup> Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2017, *The Family Matters Report 2017: Measuring trends to turn the tide on the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in Australia*.



## Culturally informed policies and procedures

The blue card system has a broad reach in Queensland's diverse communities, and it works alongside other legislation and processes to underpin the security and safety of Queensland's children and young people.

The QFCC reported that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples believed those who held discretionary or decision-making roles in Blue Card Services possessed little to no understanding of the realities of life in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities throughout Queensland. Coupled with an absence of culturally informed policies and procedures to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives can inform the system, this could be a major contributor to the high rates of withdrawals of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from the blue card system.

Feedback given to the QFCC demonstrated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are enthusiastic about the opportunity to facilitate new working relationships with Queensland Government agencies. These relationships aim to provide communities with the opportunity to provide input into service delivery and programs that directly affect them. More inclusive and sincere efforts to work with each community will lead to more culturally informed policies and services.

## Application outcomes

People who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander account for 5 per cent of total blue card applicants. Yet from 2017-2020, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples accounted for 22 per cent of negative notices.

Best outcomes are achieved when Blue Card Services is provided with all relevant information that is requested. Reduced engagement with the blue card application process may lead to adverse outcomes for the applicant.

Blue Card Services has implemented a number of strategies in recent years aimed at increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicant engagement with the blue card application process. These efforts have resulted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants going from being 8.5 times less likely than non-Indigenous applicants to provide responses to requests to provide submissions relating to police and/or disciplinary information (2016-2019) to becoming more likely to provide a submission than non-Indigenous applicants (2017-2020). Additionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants are now responding to general requests for further information at approximately the same rate as non-Indigenous applicants.

Whilst some of these figures are encouraging, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples remain disproportionately unlikely to be successful in their application for a blue card, compared to non-Indigenous applicants.



# Strategy and action plan

## Key focus areas

The co-design process produced five key focus areas:

1. Cultural capability
2. Local input into service design and delivery
3. Process
4. Engaging the service system
5. Governance of the strategy and action plan

## Cultural capability

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and perspectives are often not understood by the people and organisations working with, and delivering services to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities. Cultural capability means an organisation and its people having a working understanding and empathy for the unique characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures including history, language, lore, custom, family and community. Cultural capability is built in a workplace through information, training and experiences. These aim to empower people to better understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to communicate effectively, engage respectfully and inform decision-making for improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Local input into service design and delivery

Local input into service design and delivery aims to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a genuine voice in decisions that affect them, their families and their community. Local input into service design and delivery should be structured through a local body that provides the mechanism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to exercise their right to self-determination, participate in decision-making, and genuinely inform and shape the design, development and delivery of the blue card system. Local input through a local service provider places Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the community at the centre of decisions that affect them.

## Process

Efficient and effective process can deliver a range of benefits to the organisation providing the service and to people and organisations receiving the service. Customer satisfaction, cost efficiencies, business agility and clear customer pathway/journey mapping provide opportunities to strengthen customer focus and enhance the customer experience. In the context of Blue Card Services, engaging with a consistent and easy-to-understand process that has a strong cultural orientation will provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the opportunity to participate and engage with clarity and confidence.

Another potential process improvement is the sharing of information across agencies, and between communities. This will facilitate a more complete and consolidated set of information for assessment, which in turn can lead to more timely and accurate decision-making. Establishing effective process requires the proactive engagement and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the processes that affect them.

## Engaging the service system

Blue Card Services is one element of a broader service system that reaches into communities through education, health, housing, police, justice, child safety and a range of social services and supports including employment. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples bring with them unique cultural differences embedded in language, custom and traditions. Unfortunately, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples also experience over-representation in out-of-home care, child safety services and the criminal justice system. The way in which this system coordinates across services to provide access, share information, connect through referrals and deliver service responses for individuals and families is essential to achieving outcomes that meet identified needs.

## Governance of the strategy and action plan

Throughout the development of this strategy and action plan there has been a strong emphasis on co-design and governance. A co-design reference group made up of senior state government representatives from relevant government agencies and peak bodies was established. The group oversaw a comprehensive co-design approach through all elements of the engagement process to ensure that the intent, design and outcomes of this strategy and action plan are suited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Moving to implementation, the governance mechanisms should recognise the importance of self-determination and local decision-making along with the decision-making processes across government. With this in mind, the implementation of the strategies and actions in this plan will be monitored and evaluated by a newly established reference group.



## Expected outcomes for the strategy and action plan

It is anticipated that the successful implementation of the five key focus areas of the strategy and action plan will realise the following:

- An increase in the proportion of blue cards issued to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.
- A reduction in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples withdrawing from the blue card application process; to be at parity with the average withdrawal rate for all Queensland applicants.
- An increase in client satisfaction with the blue card process among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, including cultural safety and the opportunity to engage throughout the process.
- A reduction in average processing time, compared to baseline average, from application lodgement to final outcome for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.
- An increase in the number of people accessing culturally appropriate blue card resources.



## Focus area:

## Cultural capability

### Strategy 1.1

Provide culturally appropriate information, education and resources to improve the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations, and communities engaging with the blue card system

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	1.1.1 Conduct a community engagement process to understand how communities are accessing information about Blue Card Services, and what information community members most need to know.
<b>Rationale</b>	To involve communities, where possible, in the design and delivery of appropriate and tailored information. To ensure resources are developed to meet community needs and are fit for purpose.
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced in 2021.
<b>Benefits</b>	Accessible and effective services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families engaging with Blue Card Services. Resources that are likely to be effective.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Community engagement process completed. Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the design and development of resources and materials.



<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	1.1.2 Review and build upon existing resources and learnings (e.g. videos for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples previously produced by Blue Card Services) to continue to develop culturally appropriate, community-specific resources to help people and communities understand the blue card system. These resources should meet the needs identified through the community engagement process.
<b>Rationale</b>	To involve communities, where possible, in the design and delivery of appropriate and tailored information. To ensure resources are developed to meet community needs and are fit for purpose.
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced in 2021.
<b>Benefits</b>	Accessible and effective services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families engaging with Blue Card Services. Resources that are likely to be effective.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Indigenous creative agency engaged. Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the design and development of resources and materials. Resources developed.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	1.1.3 Engage interpreter services from local communities where possible to assist communities where standard Australian English is not the primary language.
<b>Rationale</b>	There is a current lack of information in appropriate and accessible formats, including language, and a reduced ability for those in linguistically diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to speak with Blue Card Services staff. This is a barrier to accessing and understanding the blue card system.
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced in 2021 and continue ongoing.
<b>Benefits</b>	Greater ability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to engage with the blue card system. Increased employment opportunities for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Service arrangements with interpreters established. Awareness of interpreter services. Uptake of interpreter services.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	1.1.4 Work with government champions to promote improvements to the cultural capability of Blue Card Services in their respective communities.
<b>Rationale</b>	Government champions have developed good rapport and trust with their communities. The involvement of government champions will elevate the profile of Blue Card Services in communities.
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced in 2021 and continue ongoing.
<b>Benefits</b>	Greater willingness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to engage with the blue card system.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Relevant information and resources provided to government champions.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	1.1.5 Consider previous Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) outcomes to inform the blue card decision-making process.
<b>Rationale</b>	Fair, consistent, timely and culturally appropriate decisions are more likely achieved when based on learnings from previous outcomes and when the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are heard and considered.
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced in 2021 and continue ongoing.
<b>Benefits</b>	Timely processing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander complex applications.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Regular review of QCAT decisions and assessment of relevant factors to be considered in decision-making. Blue Card Services staff are confident in undertaking culturally-appropriate decision-making.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	1.1.6 Establish a complex case review committee to review complex cases and make recommendations through a fully informed, culturally appropriate and robust risk-assessment approach. <sup>3</sup>
<b>Rationale</b>	Fair, consistent, timely and culturally appropriate decisions are more likely achieved when based on learnings from previous outcomes and when the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are heard and considered.
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced in 2022.
<b>Benefits</b>	Supports consistency of decision-making and procedural fairness. Allows a continuous improvement approach to service delivery.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Establishment of a complex case review committee.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	1.1.7 Implement a culturally safe service complaints process.
<b>Rationale</b>	An effective complaints process supports procedural fairness and is a valuable source of information that assists service providers to adopt a continuous improvement approach to service delivery.
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced in 2021.
<b>Benefits</b>	Supports consistency of decision-making and procedural fairness. Allows a continuous improvement approach to service delivery.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Culturally appropriate and safe complaints processes implemented. Timely resolution of complaints.

3. Aligned to QFCC recommendation 43 of the *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe: Review of the blue card system* report.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	1.1.8 Implement a means of providing targeted support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access information about appealing negative notices (e.g. provision of referrals to agencies to assist during the appeals process). <sup>4</sup>
<b>Rationale</b>	It is essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples understand their rights to ensure the best outcomes.
<b>Timing</b>	Commence ensuring that information and referral pathways to existing targeted support is available by 2022. Commence evaluation of challenges and potential remedies by 2023.
<b>Benefits</b>	Supports consistency of decision-making and procedural fairness. Greater willingness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to engage with the blue card system, including appeals.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Increased client understanding about appealing negative notices and the available referral pathways.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	1.1.9 Work with Queensland Health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local councils and other peak bodies to identify and implement referral pathways to culturally appropriate social and emotional support services for recipients of negative notices or suspensions.
<b>Rationale</b>	There have been instances of self-harm resulting from the receipt of a negative notice. It is important to ensure that people can access support in case of distress caused by a negative notice or suspension.
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced by 2021.
<b>Benefits</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are adversely impacted by negative notices are provided with the right counselling to support them with the stress of the blue card application process.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Number of referrals made for blue card clients.

4. Aligned to QFCC recommendation 48 of the *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe: Review of the blue card system* report.

## Focus area:

## Cultural capability

### Strategy 1.2

## Develop a more culturally aware and capable workforce

<b>Actions for Blue Card Services</b>	<p>1.2.1 Conduct a training needs assessment.</p> <p>1.2.2 Plan for annual cultural awareness and capability training with components tailored to specific roles delivered by an appropriate service provider to all Blue Card Services staff.</p> <p>1.2.3 Provide additional training to staff prior to site visits.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>Staff must receive appropriate training to ensure that they are able to and have the confidence to provide a fair, culturally appropriate and sensitive service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations.</p>
<b>Timing</b>	<p>To be commenced in 2022.</p>
<b>Benefits</b>	<p>Increased staff understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities including the historical and contemporary issues that impact on their lives.</p> <p>Ensures that the blue card system is underpinned by a requirement to achieve cultural safety and cultural security, and to demonstrate cultural capability.</p> <p>Improved ability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access culturally appropriate support in a timely manner throughout the application process.</p> <p>Supports consistency of decision-making and procedural fairness.</p>
<b>Specific measures</b>	<p>Reduction in complaints received from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants about blue card-related processes and services.</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are confident in dealing with the blue card system.</p> <p>Blue Card Services staff are confident in promoting and delivering culturally appropriate services and resources to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.</p>



**Focus area:****Cultural capability****Strategy 1.3****Establish processes to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives**

<b>Actions for Blue Card Services</b>	<p>1.3.1 Establish a suitable number of identified positions within Blue Card Services (e.g. the Eligibility Assessment team). Consider using a similar approach to the Indigenous-specific call centre established by Services Australia.</p> <p>1.3.2 Consider establishing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officers as identified positions based in each community/region and/or consider possible partnerships with existing service providers to better deliver services to remote communities.</p> <p>1.3.3 Ensure position descriptions for newly established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officers (identified positions linked to services that assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prepare for the process) include providing community support through the application, assessment, appeals and complaints processes.</p>
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>Ensures there is capacity to appropriately serve and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, including handling enquiries.</p> <p>This action is linked to strategies and actions that aim to develop a culturally capable Blue Card Services workforce.</p>
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced in 2022.
<b>Benefits</b>	Improved ability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access culturally appropriate support in a timely manner throughout the application process.
<b>Specific measures</b>	<p>Number of identified positions established and filled in Blue Card Services.</p> <p>Reduction in incomplete applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.</p> <p>Positions descriptions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officers are amended.</p>

**Focus area:**

**Local input into service design  
and delivery**

**Strategy 2.1**

Empower the community to develop  
local solutions for how services related  
to the blue card system are provided

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	2.1.1 Partner with the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships on relevant components emerging from the <i>Local Thriving Communities</i> initiative of the Queensland Government.
<b>Rationale</b>	Blue Card Services will be more closely aligned to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community requirements and needs.
<b>Timing</b>	Ongoing.
<b>Benefits</b>	Increased engagement with the blue card system by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
<b>Specific measures</b>	<p>Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander discrete communities with co-design capabilities to provide community input.</p> <p>Community satisfaction with re-designed blue card processes and services.</p>

**Focus area:**

**Process**

**Strategy 3.1**

Simplify and connect services to help increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interaction and engagement with the blue card system



<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	3.1.1 Continue implementing technology-enabled process improvements to reduce complexity and processing time.
<b>Rationale</b>	Technology-enabled process improvements will increase the efficiency of the application process for all applicants, releasing capacity which will enable more intensive support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.
<b>Timing</b>	Ongoing.
<b>Benefits</b>	Increased engagement with the blue card system by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Improved ability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access culturally appropriate support in a timely manner throughout the application process.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Reduction in incomplete applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants. Decrease in time from application to outcome. Reduction in errors in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander blue card applications.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	3.1.2 Develop an information and communication technology strategy to identify the technical solutions needed to automate the blue card application process, including the identification of culturally specific requirements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As part of this work, investigate the feasibility of developing an app-based approach to applying for a blue card, including culturally appropriate information available for use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.
<b>Rationale</b>	Technology-enabled process improvements will increase the efficiency of the application process for all applicants, releasing capacity which will enable more intensive support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced by 2023.
<b>Benefits</b>	Increased engagement with the blue card system by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Improved ability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access culturally appropriate support in a timely manner throughout the application process.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Reduction in incomplete applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants. Increased proportion of applications coming from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**Focus area:**

**Process**

**Strategy 3.2**

Establish cultural appropriateness in  
policy and process



<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	3.2.1 Update blue card assessment processes to include consideration of cultural factors. Consider the engagement of a relevant service provider such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals/ academics to assist in this process.
<b>Rationale</b>	This will ensure processes are developed to meet community needs so staff are capable of responding sensitively, sympathetically and justly in a cultural context.
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced in 2022.
<b>Benefits</b>	Greater willingness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to engage with the blue card process.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Client satisfaction with the blue card application process.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	3.2.2 Continue the work to prioritise applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants who require a blue card to commence paid work.
<b>Rationale</b>	The implementation of the No Card, No Start policy means that people cannot commence work until they have a blue card. This action will help to mitigate potential adverse impacts of this policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.
<b>Timing</b>	Ongoing.
<b>Benefits</b>	Reduced likelihood of economic harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants as a result of the commencement of the No Card, No Start policy.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Reduction in complaints from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants. Reduction in timeframes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants who require a blue card to enable paid work.

**Focus area:**

**Engaging the service system**

**Strategy 4.1**

Establish greater coordination among stakeholder organisations to enable information-sharing and better service delivery



<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	4.1.1 Work with funders of services in discrete communities, including relevant local, state and federal government agencies, to ensure funding requirements are consistent with the requirements to hold a blue card.
<b>Rationale</b>	This will ensure greater alignment between federal and state government services that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Alignment with the requirement to hold a blue card will release capacity in the system through a reduction in unnecessary applications.
<b>Timing</b>	Ongoing.
<b>Benefits</b>	Increased efficiency and reduced costs in the blue card system through reducing the volume of applications.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Reduction in unnecessary blue card applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	4.1.2 Link with the Queensland Government's Cultural Agency Leaders Forum (CAL) and the Cultural Community of Practice working group (CoP) as a coordination hub to leverage existing systems and bodies such as government champions, ministerial champions and the interdepartmental committee to link services.
<b>Rationale</b>	A coordinated approach would increase the ability of people to engage with the blue card system; for example by reducing the need to share personal information multiple times and putting enablers in place that would improve the client experience.
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced by 2022.
<b>Benefits</b>	Blue Card Services will be more closely aligned to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander requirements and needs.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Community satisfaction with re-designed blue card system services. Improved awareness of Blue Card Services and system requirements. Reduction in incomplete applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	4.1.3 Educate staff of relevant organisations in the community (both government and non-government) to ensure they provide correct information to applicants.
<b>Rationale</b>	Provision of incorrect information can lead to delays in processing of applications, causing frustration for applicants and employers.
<b>Timing</b>	Ongoing.
<b>Benefits</b>	Improvements in client experience, enabled through increased process efficiency.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Reduction in unnecessary blue card applications. Reduction in incomplete applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants. Client and community satisfaction.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	4.1.4 Investigate improved ways to share information between agencies within the current legislative framework.
<b>Rationale</b>	Ensure there is greater expediency and transparency between agencies to share information impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.
<b>Timing</b>	Ongoing.
<b>Benefits</b>	A more efficient and culturally appropriate system with a reduction in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples having to tell their stories/histories multiple times. More informed decision-making.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Reduction in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples withdrawing from the blue card application process. Decrease in time from application to outcome. Increased community satisfaction with the blue card system.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	<p>4.1.5 Continue work to support stakeholders with respect to the No Card, No Start policy including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working with local communities and other service delivery providers to provide information on the application process and strategies for minimising the impact of the No Card No Start policy.</li> <li>• promoting information resources on the identification processes and how to apply.</li> <li>• providing targeted ongoing support to assist people to access the application process.</li> </ul>
<b>Rationale</b>	The No Card, No Start policy has the potential to form a barrier to employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Additionally, in the absence of organisational policies that align with the changes, the policy also risks causing further unnecessary applications.
<b>Timing</b>	Ongoing.
<b>Benefits</b>	<p>Increased efficiency and reduced costs in the blue card system through reducing the volume of applications.</p> <p>Improved compliance the blue card system requirements.</p>
<b>Specific measures</b>	Creation of culturally appropriate resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations.

**Focus area:**

**Governance of the strategy  
and action plan benefits**

**Strategy 5.1**

Establish governance of *Safe children  
and strong communities*

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	5.1.1 Establish an interagency reference group whose role will be to oversee the implementation of the actions in <i>Safe children and strong communities</i> .
<b>Rationale</b>	Clear governance is required to gain multi-agency buy-in and ensure that the actions in this strategy and action plan are implemented in a timely and appropriate manner.
<b>Timing</b>	To be commenced in 2021.
<b>Benefits</b>	Efficient and coordinated implementation through a whole-of-government approach.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Regular meetings of the reference group. Establishment of and adherence to a project schedule and budget for the implementation of the strategy and action plan.

<b>Action for Blue Card Services</b>	5.1.2 Develop an evaluation plan and conduct an evaluation of <i>Safe children and strong communities</i> that is overseen by the reference group.
<b>Rationale</b>	Program evaluation is appropriate to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of government initiatives and is a key component of government accountability to Queenslanders.
<b>Timing</b>	Evaluation plan to be developed through the implementation period of the strategy and action plan.
<b>Benefits</b>	An evidence base on which to make further policy and program decisions and drive continuous improvement in service delivery.
<b>Specific measures</b>	Evaluation plan developed. Evaluation completed.



## Benefits

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities have the right to a healthy and prosperous life. This right includes an adequate standard of living, housing, the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, freedom and safety from violence, and full, free and effective participation in all aspects of life. The blue card system plays a central role in many of the activities that revolve around children and families and can, therefore, be an enabler or a barrier to the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Together with the benefits outlined in the action plan above, the benefits that stand to be realised through the successful implementation of this strategy and action plan are:

- An increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being safely cared for with kin.
- Safer communities, particularly in the remote and discrete communities of Queensland.
- Increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples securing employment and participation in child-related services.

The blue card system exists as part of a complex child safety and criminal justice framework that is overseen by several Queensland government agencies. The actions of Blue Card Services impact on the outcomes achieved within other parts of this framework, and likewise, the actions of various other agencies impact on the outcomes that can be achieved by Blue Card Services. At present, there is an opportunity to increase the coordination of services provided by the different parts of this framework.

In addition to the specific benefits outlined above, it is expected that the implementation of this strategy and action plan may also contribute to some additional, broader benefits; noting that the actions of other Queensland government agencies will likewise have a significant role to play:

- Reduced number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children coming into contact with Child Safety.
- Reduced number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being placed in out-of-home care.
- Reduced number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people coming into contact with the youth justice system.
- Reduced number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on a trajectory to the adult criminal justice system.

## Cultural capability benefits

- Improved engagement with Blue Card Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including information, access, application process, decisions and support throughout the process.
- Improvements to Blue Card Services' cultural capability, including cultural safety and cultural security, and an increased understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the historical and contemporary issues that impact on their lives.

## Local input into service design and delivery benefit

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a genuine voice in how important services are delivered in their communities.

## Process benefits

- Efficient and effective processes that deliver increased customer satisfaction, business agility and customer pathway/journey data, and that strengthen the customer focus and enhance the customer experience.
- Higher rate of engagement with Blue Card Services by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples due to a consistent and easy-to-understand processes with a strong cultural orientation that provides clarity and confidence.

## Engaging the service system benefits

- Improved information-sharing across agencies, and between communities, that builds a more complete picture, is more efficient and culturally appropriate, and reduces the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to tell their story/history multiple times.
- Mitigation of the possible unintended adverse outcomes for employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a result of the No Card, No Start policy.
- Improved coordination in the service system to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples greater access, shared information, connectivity through referrals, and delivery of more effective service responses to individuals and families that meet identified needs.

## Governance of the strategy and action plan benefit

- The importance of self-determination and local decision-making is embedded in the governance mechanisms through the local body that partners with the reference group on implementation.

## Reference

Safe children and strong communities: A strategy and action plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations accessing the blue card system 2021-2025

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## Safe children and strong communities

A strategy and action plan  
for Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander peoples and  
organisations accessing the  
blue cards system 2021-2025

**Title artwork: Building to connect**  
**Artwork created by: Elaine Chambers**

Elaine Chambers is an Aboriginal graphic designer and artist with cultural links to the Koa, Kuku Yalanji and Barada Barna people. In this work Elaine has mixed the old with the new to create a contemporary design. The main symbol shows children together as they are the main focus for Blue Card Services. The children are protected by waves of emotion connected them to mob, family and culture. The line art represents the emotions and the growth needed to strengthen the connections and trust of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



