

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE REVIEW – MAGISTRATES COURTS

IUIH Submission to the Department of Justice and Attorney
General

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Acknowledgement

We honour the many Goori Tribal Nations in whose territories we live and work. We honour the legacy and the vision of those who paved the way and those who continue to guide us. We honour our future generations by maintaining the vision with focused determination.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are respectfully submitted for the Committee's consideration to improve the responsiveness of the Magistrates Courts to the legal and justice needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in South East Queensland (SEQ).

IUIH recommends that the Committee considers:

- The Magistrates Courts have regard to its role in the increasing incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the barrier that poses to the overall reduction required to achieve Closing the Gap targets.
- Further research and expansion of mechanisms that indicate improved legal outcomes such as: Community Justice Groups and Community Legal Centres serving Indigenous families and communities. This process should include the opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide their views and consider such topics as:
 - Barriers to accessing justice for defendants and victims, and their families.
 - Culturally safe court processes.
 - Community education.

Introduction

This review of the *Justices Act 1886* (Qld) ('the Act') provides an opportunity to make a significant change to the lives of Indigenous peoples and communities across the state.

Established in 2021 with the aim of making a more contemporary and effective legislative framework for criminal procedure in Queensland Magistrates Courts, the Queensland Government has committed to introducing the New Magistrates Court criminal procedure legislation in its current term (October 2024).

Despite its age of 136 years, the Act has never been fully reviewed. This means that not only is it difficult to read and understand, but it reflects the needs, expectations, values and social requirements of colonial society. This is highlighted by the fact that although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over-represented in Queensland Magistrates Courts, they are not referenced in the Act.

The Consultation Paper recognised that communication barriers, alienation and disconnect from mainstream court processes contribute to the complexity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal needs and limit access to justice. The Consultation Paper also acknowledges the importance of culturally appropriate court processes. Despite this, there has been no attempt by the review to specifically engage with Indigenous communities.

Interactions with the criminal justice system frequently have negative impacts on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and the community. IUIH has firsthand experience with these effects through its broad range of services and programs (refer to **Appendix 1** for further information on IUIH's services and programs).

This submission provides an overview of Indigenous overrepresentation in the criminal justice system and the broader impacts this has on the health and wellbeing of individuals, their families and the community. Particular focus is given to the central role played by the Magistrates Courts criminal procedure in contributing to this staggering inequality. The submission provides recommendations for this review to conduct meaningful and separate engagement with Indigenous communities, to understand, explore and create community-led solutions to improve the Act.

Indigenous Overrepresentation in the Criminal Justice System

The overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system has been well documented.¹ This overrepresentation is as victims of crime and offenders, and includes an increasing proportion of women.² Indigenous people are more likely to be charged with a criminal offence, be arrested, and appear before the courts.³ Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 4.6% of the Queensland population,⁴ they reflect 32% of the prisoner population⁵ and 23% of people on community-based corrections.⁶

The *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (July 2020) commits all governments to address the entrenched inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through four priority reform areas and 17 targets. This includes a commitment to reducing the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and young people in the criminal justice system and reducing the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system.

There are three targets for these outcomes:

- Target 10: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15%.
- Target 11: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by at least 30%.
- Target 12: By 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by at least 45%.

Despite these targets, rates of incarceration are increasing.⁷ Nationally, the age-standardised rate of Indigenous imprisonment has increased from 2142.9 to 2222.7 per 100,000 adult population.⁸

The rates of Indigenous overrepresentation in Queensland Magistrates Courts are staggering. Indigenous defendants represent 19.25% of cases in Queensland Magistrates Courts,⁹ and are disproportionately sentenced to time in custody. The use of custodial penalties for Indigenous offenders has increased from 12% to 23% over the past 14 years.¹⁰ Despite the high rates of custodial sentences delivered, the most common offences among Indigenous peoples are more minor than those by the non-Indigenous population, with the most common offences sentenced being justice and government (41.2%) and public order offences (38.6%).¹¹ For example, Indigenous defendants represent 29.6% of all people charged with breach of bail (failure to appear) and 31.9% of all people

¹ Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (National Report, 1991) vol 1 [1.3] ('The Disproportionate Numbers of Aboriginal People in Custody').

² Australian Bureau of Statistics ('ABS'), Corrective Services, Australia, March Quarter 2021 (Catalogue No 4512.0, 3 June 2021); [Helen Milroy et al Australian Bar Review 2021 'First Nations people and the law' 2021](#), 150.

³ [Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council 'Connecting the dots: the sentencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland' March 2021](#), 1.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, as at 30 June 2016 – 221,276 persons in Queensland identified as Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander. www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/estimatesaboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians/jun-2016.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019, Corrective services, Australia, March quarter 2019 (4512.0), Canberra.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ [Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council 'Connecting the dots: the sentencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland' March 2021](#), 1.

⁸ [Australian Government Productivity Commission. \(2021\). Closing the Gap Information Repository.](#)

⁹ [Queensland Courts, 'Magistrates Court of Queensland Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2025'](#), 7.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

charged with public nuisance.¹² This reveals that Indigenous people are most commonly charged for minor offences, yet these ‘gateway offences’ lead to imprisonment.¹³

Rates of Indigenous young people in the criminal justice system continue to be unacceptably high. On an average day in Australia in 2019–20:

- 2,493 Indigenous young people were under youth justice supervision. This included 2,017 Indigenous young people aged 10–17 or 1.4% of the Indigenous population in this age group.¹⁴
- 47% of all young people under youth justice supervision were Indigenous.¹⁵
- 6.5% of Indigenous young people under youth justice supervision were aged 10–13, compared with 2.7% of non-Indigenous young people.¹⁶
- Indigenous young people were 16 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be under supervision on any average day in 2019–20 (140 compared with 8.5 per 10,000 population aged 10–17).¹⁷
- Most (98%) young people aged 10 and over in unsentenced detention were on remand, awaiting the outcome of their court matters. Just over half (52%) of young people in unsentenced detention aged 10 and over on an average day were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.¹⁸

In Brisbane alone, as of 10 May 2019, there were 89 children in the Brisbane City Watch House, a facility designed to hold adults. At least half of these children are Indigenous, at least three were just ten years of age, one boy had been there for 43 days, and four young girls were being held in isolation to protect them from other predatory inmates.¹⁹

Of the 3,654 Indigenous young people under youth justice supervision in 2018–19, 61% (2,222) had also received child protection services in the previous 5-year period between July 2014 and June 2019. This was higher than the proportion among non-Indigenous young people under youth justice supervision (48%, or 2,021).²⁰

This demonstrates that achieving the Closing the Gap law and justice targets in Queensland is increasingly out of reach. In addition to the trends noted above, we are also not on track to achieving the headline target of the National Agreement – to ‘close the gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031’.²¹

IUIH understands that health and justice inequality are intimately linked. Therefore, to achieve real progress on Closing the Gap targets, there must be radical change at every level of the criminal justice system, and a dedicated focus on supporting community-led solutions, which is a central tenet of the current National Agreement.

¹² [Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council ‘Connecting the dots: the sentencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland’ March 2021](#), 22.

¹³ [Walsh. \(2005\). Offensive language, offensive behaviour and public nuisance : empirical and theoretical analyses. University of Queensland Law Journal, 24\(1\), 123–145. https://doi.org/10.3316/agispt.20054216](#)

¹⁴ [AIHW. \(2021\). Youth justice in Australia. \(ed. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare\). Canberra.](#)

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ [Amnesty International. \(2019\). Human Rights Abuses Against Kids in the Brisbane City Police Watch House.](#)

²⁰ [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. Young people in child protection and under youth justice supervision: 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2018. Data linkage series no. 25. Cat. no. CSI 27. Canberra: AIHW.](#)

²¹ [Australian Government Productivity Commission. \(2021\). Closing the Gap Information Repository.](#)

This Criminal Procedure Review must question how the Magistrates Court is supporting closing the gap targets, and what additional effort is required to create meaningful change in the operation of Magistrates Courts to improve outcomes for Indigenous peoples, families, and communities across Queensland.

The Role of the Magistrates Courts

The busiest of all jurisdictions,²² Magistrates Courts deal with the overwhelming majority of Queensland's criminal matters.²³ Hearing 96% of cases involving Indigenous defendants, Magistrates Courts are the main point of contact between the Indigenous community and court system.

The factors behind the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system are complex, influenced by socio-economic and cultural factors such as health and disability, employment, education, housing, mental health and intergenerational trauma.²⁴ Primary health issues such as mental health conditions, alcohol, substance abuse and cognitive disabilities, have been recognised as key drivers of incarceration rates.²⁵ In addition, experience with the criminal justice system has adverse health impacts on offenders, victims and their families.

In our view, the current court system compounds these issues and penalises the most vulnerable in our society, as evidenced by increasing disproportionate rates of incarceration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The high rates of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system represents a systemic failure of the entire legal system to identify its detrimental effect on our people and communities, and fails to identify and support interventions that break these cycles of trauma. As an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service, IUIH has firsthand experience with the effects of the Magistrates Courts and the broader Justice System through support provided to clients, particularly through IUIH's Inner-City Referral Service, Prison Transition Service, Legal Service, Social Health Program, and Family Wellbeing Service. These effects not only impact the individual but also the individual's family and broader community.

At the individual level, Indigenous people in custody experience severed emotional attachments to loved ones and connections to their sense of place.²⁶ Once released from custody, many face loss of accommodation and homelessness. These new problems lead to an increased likelihood of reoffending. For family members, incarceration can lead to a breakdown of the family unit, potentially resulting in the relocation of children or involvement of Child Safety.²⁷ These children are more likely to experience trauma and mental health concerns and are significantly less likely to complete secondary school and are more likely to become homeless, unemployed and come in contact with the criminal justice system, leading to a cycle of criminalisation.²⁸

²² [Queensland Courts 'Magistrates Court of Queensland Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2025'](#) 7

²³ In 2020-21, 94% of all Qld Criminal matters were dealt with in Magistrates Courts: [Queensland Courts 'Magistrates Courts of Queensland Annual Report 2020-2021'](#), 23.

²⁴ [Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council, 'Connecting the dots: the sentencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland' March 2021](#), 4.

²⁵ Australian Medical Association, 2015 AMA Report Card on Indigenous Health (2015) https://ama.com.au/sites/default/files/documents/2015%20Report%20Card%20on%20Indigenous%20Health_0.pdf

²⁶ Glen Dawes, Keeping on Country: Doomadgee and Mornington Island Recidivism Research Report (2016) 41.

²⁷ [ALRC Pathways to Justice - Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples \(ALRC 133\)](#) 127.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

At a community level, imprisonment contributes to social and economic dysfunction, especially when significant numbers of a community are imprisoned. It leads to the normalisation of interactions with the criminal justice system, with a perverse ‘us and them’ mentality that plays out, particularly within younger cohorts. In some instances incarceration is seen as an opportunity to catch up with friends and relatives, have stable accommodation, and have access to education, training, and work.²⁹ This undermines the strength of our communities, which is fundamental to supporting mental health, education levels and levels of safety.³⁰

Criminal procedure in the Magistrates Courts is failing Indigenous people and communities. Rather than supporting Indigenous defendants to access justice on an equal footing, the Magistrates Courts have become an integral part of the overcriminalisation of the most vulnerable members of the Queensland community. As a result, criminal procedure in the Magistrates Courts is a key driver of the poor life expectancy and broader health, social economic, and political inequality faced by Indigenous people. The failure of this Magistrates Courts – Criminal Procedure Review to specifically consider the views of Indigenous peoples and focus on the issues of our people in the criminal justice system, is compounding the problem. The assumption of impartiality of the law is doing a great injustice to our people.

Access to Justice, the Court Experience, and Sentencing

As noted above, while socio-economic factors are one part of the story, judicial decision-making has an undeniable role in the over-criminalisation of Indigenous peoples.³¹ It is critical that changes to the *Justices Act 1886* (Qld) are made collaboratively with Indigenous people and communities, and focus on improving the cultural safety and capability of Magistrates Courts criminal procedure. It should be recognised that the Magistrates Courts have introduced initiatives to aid and decrease the number of Indigenous people coming into contact with the criminal justice system, such as Community Justice Group Programs, Remote Justice of the Peace Program, Murri Court and Aurukun Restorative Justice Program (Thaa’ Pent Services). It is vital that the successes of these initiatives be evaluated and incorporated within the broader Magistrates Courts criminal procedure across Queensland.

Section 28 of the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld) (Human Rights Act) recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold distinct cultural rights, which must not be denied or forcibly assimilated, or destroyed. These include the rights to:

- Enjoy, maintain, control, protect and develop:
 - Their identity, and cultural heritage, including traditional knowledge, distinctive spiritual practices, observances, beliefs, and teachings;
 - Use of language and traditional cultural expressions;
 - Kinship ties.
- Maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual, material, and economic relationship with the land, territories, waters, coastal seas, and other resources with which they have a connection under tradition or custom.

²⁹ Glen Dawes, *Keeping on Country: Doomadgee and Mornington Island Recidivism Research Report* (2016) 63.

³⁰ [ALRC, Pathways to Justice - Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples \(ALRC 133\)](#), 128.

³¹ [Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council ‘Connecting the dots: the sentencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland’ March 2021](#), 8.

- Conserve and protect the environment and productive capacity of land, territories, waters, coastal seas, and other resources.

These rights are fundamental and must be considered when making laws, policies, acts, or decisions, that limit the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to maintain a connection to their community. Therefore, they should be considered with amendments to the *Justices Act 1886* (Qld). At present, general legal processes in the Magistrates Courts fail to adequately take into account for a person's cultural rights, background and needs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must be supported to lead the development and delivery of strategies and programs within their community aimed at improving outcomes, diverting people away from the criminal justice system, and reducing incarceration rates. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must be supposed to lead the development and delivery of strategies and programs within their community aimed at improving outcomes, diverting people away from the criminal justice system, and reducing incarceration rates.

Addressing the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system needs a multifaceted and holistic approach addressing the social determinants of health and drivers of poverty and intergenerational trauma. It includes ensuring people have their basic health needs met, and are linked in with appropriate mental health, alcohol and other drug (AOD) and disability supports. Not only is this the most appropriate way to address presenting risk factors, it also strengthens protective factors associated with involvement in crime at the individual, family, social, and community levels. More needs to be done to work with Indigenous communities to create a culturally safe criminal procedure in the Magistrates Courts.

It should be noted that there are some specific examples of more culturally appropriate legal processes within the Magistrates Courts. For example, in Murri Courts, Elders or Respected Persons are included in court processes to help the Magistrate understand the lives and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. Participants meet with Elders to address their offending through referral to treatment and support services and participation in cultural activities such as Men's and Women's Groups.³² Currently, Murri Courts operate only in Cairns, Cherbourg, Caboolture, Townsville, Mount Isa, Mackay, Maroochydore, Rockhampton, Brisbane, Wynnum, Cleveland, Richlands, Toowoomba, St George and Ipswich.³³ There is merit in applying and embedding the successful elements of the Murri Courts into the Magistrates Courts.

Other positive examples of community-led solutions involved with the Magistrates Courts include the Community Justice Group Program, and Restorative Justice Programs.³⁴ It is vital that the success of these programs continue to be evaluated, with successful components supported and expanded across Queensland.

Meaningful Engagement with Indigenous Communities

As discussed above, Indigenous people are disproportionately affected by the Magistrates Court criminal procedure. However, nowhere in the *Justices Act 1886* (Qld) is there mention of Aboriginal or

³² [Queensland Courts, 'Magistrates Court of Queensland Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2025'](#), 10.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Torres Strait Islander peoples, or provisions to support the cultural capability of the court. The failure to specifically acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Act undermines efforts to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous people at all stages of the criminal justice system.

This failure is similarly reflected in the generalist approach of this criminal procedure review. No specific attempts have been made by the Queensland Government to consult the Indigenous peoples and organisations directly engaged with the Magistrates Court. Yet these are the voices that will provide the best insights into their experiences with the *Justices Act 1886* (Qld), the challenges, and recommendations for change to improve outcomes for Indigenous peoples, families, and the broader community.

Strategies that have proven most effective in addressing Indigenous overrepresentation in the criminal justice system are those that are place-based and are led by the Aboriginal community. These approaches focus on early intervention, prevention, and rehabilitation.³⁵ This engagement fosters self-determination through the development of solutions by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that are targeted to their local community.³⁶ Evidence of the strength of solutions that have been developed locally by, or in conjunction with, local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are reflected in the success of the Murri Courts and Community Justice Groups, among others.³⁷

IUIH acknowledges the current Magistrates Court initiatives to aid and decrease the number of Indigenous people coming into contact with the criminal justice system, including the Community Justice Group Program, Remote Justice of the Peace Program, Murri Court, and Aurukun Restorative Justice Program (Thaa' Pant Services). However, the increasing disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous representation in Magistrates Court demonstrate more needs to be done. Reforming the legislative structures surrounding the Indigenous experience of Magistrates Courts is essential to establishing a supportive justice framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

To be truly comprehensive and create meaningful change to the role of the Magistrates Courts in the over-criminalisation of Indigenous peoples, IUIH recommends this review conduct genuine consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities, and organisations across Queensland. In particular, there should be a focus on groups that interact with the Magistrates Court such as Community Justice Groups and Community Legal Centres serving Indigenous clients.

Extensive community engagement is the ONLY way to ensure those who are most disadvantaged by the current system have a voice and a platform to share their experiences and recommendations for change.

³⁵ [ALRC, Pathways to Justice - Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples \(ALRC 133\)](#), 129; Limerick, Michael "Indigenous Community Justice Groups: the Queensland Experience" [2002] ALRCRefJl 4; (2002) 80 Australian Law Reform Commission Reform Journal 15.

³⁶ Limerick, Michael "Indigenous Community Justice Groups: the Queensland Experience" [2002] ALRCRefJl 4; (2002) 80 Australian Law Reform Commission Reform Journal 15; C Cunneen, *Conflict Politics and Crime: Aboriginal Communities and the Police* (2001) Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 193.

³⁷ [Queensland Courts 'Magistrates Court of Queensland Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2025'](#) 9.

Appendix 1 – About IUIH

The Institute for Urban Indigenous Health Ltd (IUIH) is a not-for-profit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service (CCHS) which leads the planning, development, and delivery of comprehensive primary health care and social support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the South East Queensland (SEQ) region. IUIH was established in 2009 by its four founding Member Organisations. Since then, IUIH has established the Moreton Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service and Goodna Clinic. Together these entities comprise the regional IUIH Network of SEQ. Each member CCHS retains its own governance, with IUIH acting as the regional lead or ‘backbone’ of the Network. Through regional planning, development, advocacy, and purchasing, alongside the implementation of a coordinated approach to service delivery known as the *IUIH System of Care* (ISoC), IUIH achieves transformational change in the delivery of health and social support services across the Network.

Comprehensive Primary Healthcare

The IUIH Network comprises 19 primary healthcare clinics across SEQ (the largest and fastest-growing Indigenous population in Australia) delivering care to over 34,000 Indigenous people. Through these clinics, Indigenous people access fully integrated medical, allied health, dental, social health, aged care and social support services through a no-wrong door approach to service provision. This means that a client entering the IUIH service system through any program or clinic can benefit from this range of services as their health needs are identified. Upon entry to IUIH, all clients receive an annual health assessment, following which care plans are developed, Team Care Arrangements established, and appropriate referrals made. Transport services provided by clinics also enable access for people who might otherwise struggle to attend appointments or participate in therapeutic programs.

Community Legal Service

The Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) recognised the important intersection between legal matters and health, and in July 2017, pioneered the ground-breaking and unique IUIH System of Care integrated Health and Justice Partnership (Partnership). The IUIH Partnership, is the first of its kind in Australia – whereby the provision of legal services is embedded within a fully integrated model of primary healthcare that values and affirms cultural identity. Recently recognised as a **Community Legal Service**, IUIH is the first Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) in Queensland to embed legal education and advocacy into its clinics. IUIH works with many individuals and families that have complex needs and high degrees of social risk and vulnerability. Access to timely advice and intervention can significantly impact the trajectory of the individual and family as a whole. However, early, intensive, and integrated legal education, prevention and support are not readily accessible to many Indigenous people, particularly to individuals and families experiencing social and financial hardship.

The IUIH Legal Service also target legal services to women, parents or guardians with children in their care, and Elders and assists with a variety of legal matters, including:

- Family Law
- Child Support

- Child Protection
- Domestic Violence
- Discrimination and Harassment
- Centrelink reviews
- SPER Actions and Debt Recovery
- Tenancy and Housing issues

Child Health Services

Services for IUIH's youngest clients start in pregnancy and continue through the early years and into the school-age population. Pregnant women are supported with community-based **antenatal care** with access to the full range of allied health services and social health programs available through IUIH's System of Care. The **Birthing in Our Community Program** delivers a unique model of Indigenous-led care that provides women who are pregnant with an Indigenous baby access to their own midwife, family support worker and multidisciplinary team for the duration of their pregnancy and birth. From an innovative pilot program self-funded by IUIH, BiOC is now running in two locations and has achieved national acknowledgement and acclaim. The five-year National Health and Medical Research Council study on BiOC's foundational Brisbane South program was recently published in The Lancet Global Health, confirming that preterm birth rates for Indigenous women have been halved through the program. IUIH provides **parenting support and education** through its **Mums and Bubs Program** and its **Family Wellbeing Service** (focussed on supporting vulnerable families in contact, with or at risk of coming in contact with, the child protection system). IUIH also provides a range of **specialist medical and allied health paediatric services** (speech pathology, occupational therapy, psychology, family well-being, audiology, and social support services) delivered in multiple locations, including clinics, BiOC, and early childhood education facilities across the region.

Early Childhood Education

IUIH recognises the importance of early childhood education as a determinant in the healthy development continuum of the child and is integrating a focussed approach to early childhood education into its health and related services. Examples include the Deadly Kindies program, targeting children who are eligible for kindy enrolment and involving the uptake of a comprehensive preventive health assessment, registering for Kindy, and receiving a pack of items a child would need to attend Kindy (hat, cot sheet, lunchbox, etc). The Deadly Kindies Extension provides for closer integration of health and education systems, with the delivery of health and developmental assessment and therapy services into the kindy environment. This program paves a pathway to stronger health and educational outcomes for young children as they make the transition into school.

Social Health Programs and Services

IUIH delivers a range of mental health and substance misuse services specifically tailored for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These include culturally and clinically capable individual and group therapy services, psychosocial support, suicide postvention services, transitional support services (i.e., prison transition), youth wellbeing services, support services for homeless people, and social support

services specifically targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in SEQ. At IUIH, we refer to this collection of mental health and substance misuse services as Social Health Services.

Recognising that Indigenous people often present with a complex mix of physical conditions, mental health problems, and challenging socio-economic circumstances, the IUIH Social Health Teams (SHTs) are fully embedded into IUIH's clinics. The SHTs comprise Social Health Care Coordinators; counsellors including specialised AOD providers; child, adult, and family specialised psychologists; Indigenous outreach workers; youth workers; and visiting Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine specialists. Typically, SHT clients are Indigenous people living with significant disadvantage, trauma, family disruption, and moderate to severe mental and/or substance use disorders. The teams focus on the individual within the context of their family, community, and the broader environment, ensuring that non-health-related issues that may impact the client's wellbeing (for example, housing, income security, contact with the justice and/or child safety systems) are addressed as part of the holistic approach to treatment and recovery.

Social Health Services play an integral role in driving the IUIH Child and Family-Centred Practice Framework (Framework) across the broader IUIH System of Care. The Framework adopts an integrated approach to family wellbeing. This ensures that the IUIH workforce understands and applies the same thinking and reasoning to wellbeing and family functioning that is contextualised to the unique population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in SEQ.

IUIH is funded by the Australian Government through the SEQ Primary Health Networks to deliver adult AOD services in clinics and through outreach programs such as the Inner-City Referral Service, which provides AOD and mental health support to approximately 150 (mainly homeless) Indigenous people. IUIH's Youth Drug and Alcohol Treatment Workers provide counselling, education, peer support, and mentoring for young women (through the **Deadly Sistās program**) and young men (through the **MomentIM Program**) up to 25 years of age.

Family Wellbeing Service

The **Family Wellbeing Service** provides intensive support to vulnerable families (including those in contact with the child protection system). Fully integrated within primary healthcare, this early intervention program aims to enhance the resilience, connectedness, and social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. The **IUIH Connect program** is specifically designed to coordinate healthcare and social support services for Indigenous Queenslanders, to prevent vulnerable families with chronic and/or complex health conditions and socio-economic circumstances from falling through the cracks of a fragmented system. Through this program, IUIH has established partnerships with 64 referring organisations (including all major hospitals in the region and the Queensland Police Service), and 76 organisations with which IUIH connects clients. These 'connecting organisations' cover the following sectors: primary healthcare, community, and specialist mental health, housing, family and parenting, broad-based community services, aged care, medical detox and AOD rehabilitation, and domestic and family violence.

IUIH Workforce Strategy

IUIH is founded on traditional ways of being, knowing, and understanding. With Aboriginal terms of reference enshrined in the Network-wide Cultural Integrity Investment Framework, and in particular, The Ways Statement, cultural integrity forms the foundation for all organisational, operation, and community interaction. Community controlled in the truest sense, IUIH's Workforce Strategy prioritises the provision of employment opportunities for Indigenous people across SEQ and a comprehensive workforce pipeline to develop large numbers of health professionals and workers capable of providing culturally safe care. This workforce strategy includes school-based, VET traineeships, university placements, and ready to work programs. IUIH's commitment to culture in all areas is reinforced by the Network's status as the largest employer of Indigenous people in SEQ, meaning IUIH is run by the community, for the community.

The Strategy encompasses two intertwined and complementing bodies of work:

- 1 The IUIH Workforce Development concentrates on developing a culturally responsive workforce comprising Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff for the delivery of health, aged care, disability, social health, and related programs in SEQ and broader, and
- 2 The IUIH Indigenous Employment Strategy recognises the critical role that education and employment play as a social determinant of health and aims to build a workforce for current and future workforce requirements by strengthening the recruitment, retention, support, and development of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people into health and aged care related employment opportunities.

Culturally safe, high-quality health care services are achieved when planned, delivered, and evaluated collaboratively with clients, their families, and the broader community. The Network's reciprocal relationship with the community is facilitated by bespoke evaluative frameworks and performance metrics that inform continuous improvement, rigorous benchmarking against best practice, and performance reporting to the community, above and beyond external funding reporting requirements.

Some of the key achievements in 2020/21 include:

- University Student Placements: Since 2010, annual student placements have grown from 30 students across three disciplines to 389 students across 26 disciplines in 2021.
- School-based Traineeships: In partnership with Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), IUIH enrolled 30 school-based Indigenous trainees across its clinics in SEQ. Trainees are provided with wrap-around support, a range of placement opportunities, and support for further employment and study upon completion. They are also supported to engage with local universities to explore pathways into university studies on completion of their traineeship.
- Training: IUIH has developed workforce pathways through partnerships with universities, RTOs, The Queensland Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) and The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). IUIH supported 62 Indigenous students in studying Certificate 3 or above in a range of health and aged care-related disciplines. Each year, at least 80% of Indigenous participants who complete their qualifications are supported into employment within the IUIH Network or other partners in SEQ.
- Medical Education: IUIH has a continued commitment to teaching and assessing students, GP registrars, and medical professionals at all stages of their careers. In 2020/21, 11 GP registrars

were provided with placements across the IUIH Network and three of the previous years' intake transitioned to permanent employment within the IUIH Network.

- Growing Our Own Workforce: IUIH delivers the IUIH Orientation and Propa Ways programs to all staff across IUIH Network – designed to equip and support new staff members in their first six months with the knowledge and skills to work in a team, connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and community and grow in their chosen role. IUIH has continued to roll out its own Clinical and Executive Development programs across the IUIH Network, with 43 participants from across the IUIH Network participating in 2020/21.
- Micro-credentialling: With the arrival of COVID-19, IUIH has implemented a range of micro-credentials to support staff with issues such as transitioning to working from home and upskilling for redeployment into other roles. Importantly, the micro-credentialling content developed aligns with the IUIH Cultural Integrity Investment Framework (The Ways). Staff members can access modules from online learning platforms and receive a certificate of completion or an achievement badge recorded in their profile. In 2020/21, these training packages have had enormous uptake, with over 2,354 enrolments across the IUIH Network.

Yours sincerely,



Adrian Carson

Chief Executive Officer, IUIH