

Cohesive communities: an action plan for Queensland 2016–18

Queensland is a dynamic state that is home to almost five million people and visited by many more. As large and vast as our state is geographically, so is our diversity. This diversity brings many benefits to our state, including to our economy and to our social fabric.

The Queensland Government is committed to a fair, prosperous and equitable society that supports safe, vibrant and inclusive communities. We promote a society where everyone is respected and fairly treated and can make a positive and valued contribution.

Violent and divisive events around the world and in Australia in recent years have highlighted how important it is to maintain and build connected and cohesive communities.

That is why the Queensland Government has committed \$5 million over three years to strengthen social cohesion in Queensland communities, led by the Queensland Social Cohesion Implementation Committee. Creating a sense of belonging for all and having welcoming and inclusive communities is our best defence in countering anti-social behaviours.

Building belonging and our resilience as a community takes effort—and a joint effort at that. Everyone has a part to play in creating and upholding the social conditions that enable us to get along and to prosper.

About this action plan

This action plan to build social cohesion contributes to the government's commitment to building safe, caring and connected communities, and has been developed with key consideration given to:

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

There is already a lot of work being done within Queensland to ensure it is a safe, inclusive and connected state. This action plan complements the range of activities that already contribute to community cohesion and promoting the benefits of diversity, including existing government strategies and initiatives.

This plan identifies four key areas to focus our efforts. These focus areas are interconnected and the actions listed under each area may contribute to more than one focus area. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is the lead agency for coordinating action across government and will work with the relevant departments and other stakeholders to implement this action plan.

The activities identified in this action plan are the first stage of work. In working to build social cohesion, partnerships between government and community are key. We will continue to engage with Queenslanders, and will collaborate with community and other sectors, on the identification of further activities under these focus areas.

How will we turn these words into action?

This action plan is for the 2016–18 period, although actions may be implemented over a longer period. The Queensland Social Cohesion Implementation Committee will work with the Queensland Government, the community and other sectors to implement and further develop this action plan. This will include further community consultation, in particular with marginalised people within communities and with the corporate sector. In taking this action plan forward, engaging young people in the development and participation of activities will be key.

How will we know we are making a difference?

It is important to know whether the actions under this plan make a difference to our social cohesion. Activities in this plan will be monitored and evaluated. Indicators will be used to measure the impact at the individual or community level.

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

The Queensland Social Cohesion Implementation Committee will monitor the overall implementation of this action plan and submit six-month progress reports on the action plan to the Queensland Government.





FOCUS AREA 1

Pathways for individuals

Sometimes people, especially young people, can feel isolated and disconnected from their community and society. This can make them more vulnerable to negative influences. Providing pathways for marginalised members of our community can help create a sense of purpose, identity and belonging.

ACTIONS

- **Deliver targeted, place-based initiatives** to support marginalised individuals into employment, volunteering, training and community activities.
- **Empower more active participation in civic society** of marginalised individuals through civic community involvement and leadership development activities.



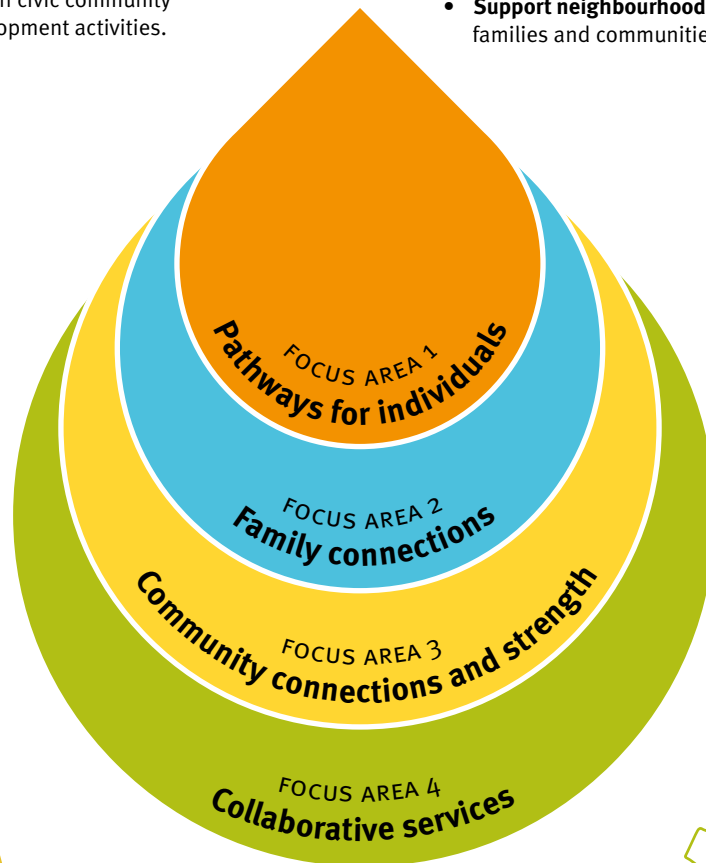
FOCUS AREA 2

Family connections

It is important for families to feel a sense of belonging to their community and to have the opportunity to play an active role in their community. Families also play a key role in identifying the early signs that an individual is vulnerable and may be in need of support. Families may be unsure about where to turn to for help or how to get involved in their community, so supporting families to connect with other families and their broader community is key.

ACTIONS

- **Provide opportunities to link families into community** through community groups and activities, including maternity and parent networks and early childhood services.
- **Support neighbourhood-based activities** that encourage individuals, families and communities to connect.



FOCUS AREA 3



Community connections and strength

Experiencing stigmatisation and discrimination can work to undermine the sense of belonging felt by individuals and communities. Bringing together communities and supporting dialogue between people across and within these communities can help promote understanding and increase community bonds and trust. Businesses and not-for-profit organisations can play a vital role in supporting communities to come together.

ACTIONS

- **Fund initiatives to connect communities** and build social cohesion.
- Work with communities and other sectors to **deliver a suite of engagement activities** to build understanding and awareness about diversity and promote meaningful and respectful community connections.
- Investigate community infrastructure venues for use as **harmony spaces within communities**.

FOCUS AREA 4



Collaborative services

Government and other service providers have a role in modelling behaviour that ensures an inclusive, equitable and consistent approach in its work and its services. Contact with government and community services is critical, as experiences can reduce the trust in these services and government and increase the risk of marginalisation from society. Improving knowledge about the benefits of social cohesion and inclusion and the sharing of this knowledge is a key step in addressing violent anti-social behaviours. Meaningful engagement is important, as is embedding social cohesion into Queensland Government programs.

ACTIONS

- **Develop a network with councils** across Queensland to share knowledge, ideas and lessons for building social cohesion.
- **Build the capability of front-line workers** in the area of social cohesion and understanding of global citizenship.
- **Embed social cohesion objectives** in Queensland Government grant and funding programs.