The project aims to:

• improve access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to a range of culturally appropriate programs and services, with an emphasis on the right service at the right time

• reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system, especially out-of-home care.

The project will focus on discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland.

The learnings from the project will be shared with other reform activities so that improvements and opportunities benefit all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, irrespective of where they live.
Why is the project needed?
The Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry found that the current child protection system was not ensuring the safety, wellbeing and best interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented in the child protection system, and they are:
- five times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be notified to Child Safety
- six times more likely to suffer harm
- nine times more likely to be in out-of-home care.

The project is designed to reduce this over-representation, especially for out-of-home care.

It will achieve this through a new emphasis on prevention and early intervention, ensuring families get the services they need, when they need them.

What is the project going to do?
The project will find better ways of working with, and meeting the needs of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. It will do this by:
- designing better services and care that are culturally responsive and Indigenous-specific
- improving access to services and ensuring that families feel empowered and supported to make positive changes
- building more effective partnerships between families, communities, regional service networks and non-government and government agencies.

How will the project benefit children, families and communities?
The project will work with individual communities so that each community is involved in developing the best combination of services to meet their own needs.

Discrete communities will be key partners in the project and be supported to play a central role in protecting children. Communities without a child protection group will be provided support and assistance to start one. Existing child protection groups in communities will be strengthened.

Community-based referrals, services and care will focus on prevention, early intervention, family assessment and support, and family violence responses. This approach will provide an opportunity to divert families, where appropriate, from the statutory child protection system so that they can receive the support they need to keep children safe at home in their own communities.

Case management for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with high needs will be improved through better collaboration between service providers and the community.

The project will review safe houses and provide advice to the government about whether they:
- are working as intended to enable children to remain in their communities while in supervised short-term residential care
- are suitable as a long-term placement option for keeping children connected to their communities.

Through listening to communities and understanding their needs and aspirations we can work together to ensure that the right services are delivered at the right time for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Further information
Further information and resources can be found at www.qld.gov.au/supportingfamilies