Statement of Action towards Closing the Gap in health outcomes

Preamble

The Statement of Action towards Closing the Gap in health outcomes (the Statement) aims to address systemic barriers in order to progress efforts to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing in Queensland. Despite recent improvements, the gap in health outcomes is not closing rapidly enough and therefore renewed effort is required to increase health standards of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The statement requires tangible commitment and leadership from all areas of Queensland Health through:

- strengthening the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in governance arrangements and health service planning
- improving workforce participation and local engagement
- increasing input in decision making from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and the community.

Queensland Health recognises that closing the gap in health outcomes is a long-term and challenging process. It involves addressing social, economic and political inequity and the inequality of health experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at multiple levels. A whole-of-government approach is essential to support Queensland Health efforts in addressing social determinants such as income, employment, education and cultural safety, all of which have substantial impacts on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Closing the gap in health outcomes involves collective effort from the health system, workforce, and primary health care sector. We acknowledge the diversity of each HHS and recognise that the strategic actions and commitments made will reflect the needs of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of which we serve.

The Queensland Health system, comprising the Department of Health, Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) and their Health Boards, and Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) committed to the following three actions in order to further improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Queensland.

Diagram 1 summarises the key policies, plans and levers which underpin Queensland Health’s agenda in relation to the Statement.
**Action 1:**
Promote opportunities to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in Queensland Health leadership, governance and workforce.

Delivering a system where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are valued, respected and encouraged to be involved in leading the design, development and delivery of health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in Queensland.

**Action 1 might include:**
I. Actively target suitably skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply for appointment to Hospital and Health Boards.
II. Take steps to maximise employment opportunities across all streams and classifications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including senior executive and/or senior management level positions in order to exceed the 3 per cent workforce target by 2022.
III. Increase the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in incentivised employment programs, e.g. cadetships, scholarships and traineeships in order to grow our future workforce.
IV. Mandate ongoing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability training for all Board members, Chief Executive Officers and senior and executive leadership staff. Consideration should also be given to mandating such training for all staff.

**Action 2:**
Improve local engagement and partnerships between Queensland Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations.

Health services that genuinely partner and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities will strengthen and support Queensland Health’s commitment to action by delivering culturally safe, responsive and capable health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**Action 2 might include:**
I. Increase formal partnerships and contractual arrangements between Queensland Health (the Department of Health, HHSs and QAS) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.
II. Formalised reconciliation action plans adopted in the Department of Health, each HHS and QAS.
III. Specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health operational and work plans adopted in the Department of Health, each HHS and QAS to guide and support annual workforce targets and organisational and business planning.
IV. Ongoing, proactive local engagement between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Hospital and Health Boards and senior and executive leaders to further coordinate Closing the Gap initiatives.

**Action 3:**
Improve transparency, reporting and accountability in Closing the Gap progress.

Embedding meaningful targets into Service Agreements will enhance visible and purposeful reporting of Closing the Gap targets to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**Action 3 might include:**
I. In conjunction with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, develop and implement specific and measurable Closing the Gap projects or initiatives relevant to local service needs and responsibilities of individual HHSs and their regional partners.
II. Performance agreements for senior and executive management to include key performance indicators relating to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.
III. Reporting on the implementation of the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards relating to improving care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
IV. Seeking opportunities to further reinforce these actions in HHS Service Agreements, annual reporting and other key governance obligations.
We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country and recognise their connection to land, wind, water and community. We pay our respect to them, their cultures, and to the Elders both past and present.

**Statement of Action towards Closing the Gap in health outcomes**

**Levers**
- Queensland Government Cultural Capability Framework
- Queensland Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework 2016–2026
- Closing the Gap Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Health Targets National Indigenous Reform Agenda
- National Safety and Quality Health Standards: Improving care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

**Opportunities to achieve vision and promote public visibility of progress and reconciliation**

**Promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in leadership, governance and workforce**

Potential actions:
- Encourage suitably skilled applicants to seek appointment onto hospital and HHSs boards and in executive management across Queensland Health.
- Grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce:
  - encourage careers in health, particularly clinical roles
  - provide ongoing support and career progression for existing staff.

**Improve local engagement and partnership**

Potential actions:
- Formal partnerships and contractual arrangements between HHSs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.
- Formalised reconciliation action plans in all areas of Queensland Health.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health specific work plans in all areas of Queensland Health.

**Promote transparency and accountability**

Potential actions:
- HHS Service Agreements to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, cultural capability, and KPI reporting as a priority.
- Queensland Health publications, annual reports, Closing the Gap reports to further promote closing the gap progress, initiatives, and expenditure.
- Performance agreements for senior management to include measures to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes.

**Output**

**Delivering a system where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are valued, respected and encouraged to be involved in leading the design, development and delivery of health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.**

**Health services that genuinely partner and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities will strengthen and support Queensland Health’s commitment to action by delivering culturally safe, responsive and capable health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.**

**Embedding meaningful targets into HHS Service Agreements enhance visible and purposeful reporting of Closing the Gap targets to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.**

**Outcome**

**Enhanced Queensland Health cultural capability will reduce discrimination based on race and increase access to culturally safe and responsive health care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.**

Queensland Health Statement of Action will operationalise the intent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework and local Reconciliation Action Plans with key priorities and actions.

Queensland Government Cultural Capability Framework

Closing the Gap Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Health Targets

National Safety and Quality Health Standards: Improving care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people