

## Implementing the recommendations and findings from the investigation into Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service (Part B)

18 September 2025

All Queenslanders deserve access to high-quality healthcare – no matter where they live in this state. In a state as vast and diverse as ours, this means ensuring the care provided is not just clinically safe, but also culturally appropriate.

Delivering on this commitment was a key reason for the two-stage independent health service investigation into Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service (HHS) launched in 2023.

Part A of the investigation was completed in August 2024 and assessed Torres and Cape HHS's delivery of health services.

Queensland Health accepted the recommendations and key findings from Part A with Torres and Cape HHS progressing work to enhance the level of care provided and engage with and improve the health outcomes of the local communities.

Part B has now been completed, concluding the investigation.

I thank the Investigators for producing a comprehensive Part B report.

I also acknowledge the contributions from consumers, community leaders and staff during the investigation. Their assistance also ensured the Investigators were aware of the reforms already underway locally.

Their valued input will help improve the quality of healthcare delivered in the Torres and Cape region. Part B of the investigation considered the cultural safety of health services provided by the TCHHS for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and consumers.

It found:

- there was no evidence of TCHHS systems and processes being culturally unsafe for staff or community members
- trust and relationships had been impacted during the investigation period, highlighting the importance of continued efforts to rebuild confidence and strengthen engagement, building on the progress already made since Part A of the Investigation was completed
- significant cultural differences exist across the Torres and Cape HHS region and any plans and processes to improve cultural safety must acknowledge the challenges of delivering services within such a vast, diverse and low-socio economic region
- cultural safety should be viewed as a whole-of-system responsibility and there is greater scope for leadership and co-ordination by Queensland Health in relation to building cultural capability across all HHSs, and
- senior management in the TCHHS has led a process of renewed engagement with local communities across the Cape and Torres regions since the release of the Part A report.

While the Part B report found no evidence of culturally unsafe systems and processes at TCHHS, both reports provide an important opportunity to improve public health care delivery for First Nations people, not just by TCHHS, but by all HHSs across Queensland.

Key to achieving this is our work to upgrade our Cultural Capability Framework to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples receive culturally appropriate health services.

As the findings and recommendations have broader relevance across Queensland Health, I have separately requested that all HHSs and Hospital and Health Boards carefully consider the report to ensure that the learnings in relation to facilitating and embedding cultural capability are consistently applied across all Queensland HHSs.

We are committed to implementing all 26 recommendations from Part B. Many actions are already underway, with several substantially progressed or nearing completion.

Dr David Rosengren

Director-General  
Queensland Health

# Health Service Investigation into Torres and Cape HHS

Response to recommendations from the Health Service Investigation Report

No.	Recommendation	Queensland Health (QH) Response
1	The 2017 Report should be referenced as a historical document and should not continue to be used as a basis to draw conclusions about institutional racism across TCHHS, particularly given the limitations which have been identified.	Queensland Health (QH) recognises the historic value of the 2017 Report and acknowledges the limitations of relying on this document to draw conclusions about institutional racism across the Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service.
2	The TCHHS should adopt and implement the Health Equity Plan as its prevailing document and approach within the region. This document should guide the TCHHS and its staff, along with the communities across the region to identify and address issues of institutional racism at a local level.	<p>The Board will formally adopt the Health Equity Strategy (HES) 2025-2028 as the HHS's overarching cultural strategy noting the HES 2022-2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has informally operated as the HHS's overarching cultural strategy</li> <li>• has strengthened governance and accountability through clearer oversight and structured reporting, ensuring sustained focus on delivery</li> <li>• implementation has demonstrated measurable outcomes in improving access to care and addressing broader determinants of health.</li> </ul> <p>Positive steps to eliminate institutional racism are also in progress, including cultural capability initiatives and racial equity training for staff.</p> <p>HES 2025-2028 is in the final stages of development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has been co-designed with over 600 community members, across 39 communities</li> <li>• provides the foundation for culturally safe care, governance accountability and local leadership.</li> </ul>

No.	Recommendation	Queensland Health (QH) Response
3	<p>A system-led (Queensland Health) guide to measuring institutional racism should be considered, which would support the TCHHS and other HHSs in tailoring an approach to address these issues at a systems level.</p>	<p>QH will identify and determine an appropriate mechanism to support TCHHS and other HHSs address institutional racism.</p> <p>QH will develop an approach to build consistency across the HHSs to respond to institutional racism.</p>
4	<p>In order to address the deficit narrative which has emerged in the region, the TCHHS should take a strengths-based approach which celebrates the good work being done in the region in terms of the progress which has been made to address the different cultural needs across the TCHHS. A renewed focus on building cultural safety which eliminates racial discrimination, will help to improve support for these initiatives in the region.</p>	<p>TCHHS has shifted to a strengths-based approach including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enhanced promotion of achievements</li> <li>• meaningful engagement with staff, community, and stakeholders to foster partnerships built on trust, respect, and accountability.</li> </ul> <p>TCHHS will continue to embed cultural safety across all aspects of care, with a deliberate focus on eliminating racial discrimination, so that every interaction within the Health Service is safe, respectful, and inclusive.</p>
5	<p>That the recommendations of Queensland Audit Office Performance Audit Report on Health Outcomes for First Nations People 2022-23 (<b>QAO Report</b>) be addressed, particularly to inform a consistent approach to measuring how to deliver culturally safe and effective health care.</p>	<p>QH have completed recommendations 1 and 2 of the QAO report and are actively progressing recommendations 3, 4, 5 and 6.</p>
6	<p>Given the prominent role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework in guiding the resourcing and implementation of Making Tracks in Health Equity programs, the Investigators recommend that the Cultural Capability Framework is updated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Reflect the current structures and accountabilities that sit within the Queensland Health System, including the Office of First Nations Health and HHSs; and</li> <li>(ii) Deal with visiting staff and other contractors, which are relied upon by TCHHS as a remote area HHS. It is noted that contractors are</li> </ul>	<p>QH will undertake a review and redesign of the 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework' in line with the recommendations.</p>

No.	Recommendation	Queensland Health (QH) Response
	<p>identified as a target group within the suite of proposed programs under the Framework.</p> <p>Recognise that regional/remote health services rely heavily upon tertiary and larger hospitals outside of their HHS catchment area for patient transfer and care. In the case of TCHHS, considerable care is provided to its community by Cairns and Hinterland and Townsville HHSs, yet TCHHS only has control over cultural safety training that is provided to staff employed within their service. This is despite many community members having to travel to receive care and reinforces the need for a system led approach.</p>	
7	<p>While TCHHS has strategies in place for staff development and learning, the Investigators consider that there is scope for greater leadership and co-ordination by Queensland Health in relation to building cultural capability. This is particularly relevant given Queensland Health has invested in other resources which were not mentioned by witnesses, suggesting a lack of awareness at the regional and local levels.</p>	<p>QH will explore options to strengthen communication to raise awareness of resources available.</p>
8	<p>That TCHHS review its orientation/induction approach, having regard to a process of ongoing relationship building in communities and cultural development.</p>	<p>TCHHS has reviewed its orientation/induction approach and is implementing a layered cultural capability strategy to develop capability through ongoing, practical and context-specific learning. Key initiatives that are in progress include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Guides Project - 35 comprehensive, place-based resources to orient staff to the unique cultural, social and operational context of each community.</li> <li>• Integrated Orientation and Recruitment Induction - combining organisational orientation, recruitment induction and cultural capability workshops into a single monthly face-to-face session for all new staff.</li> <li>• Local Cultural Induction - community-based sessions covering local language, history, Traditional Owner engagement and Primary Health Care Centre orientation, delivered within the first week of arrival.</li> </ul>

No.	Recommendation	Queensland Health (QH) Response
9	That the recent investment by leadership in building relationships within communities continue and that partnering arrangements with local government and other health service providers continue to be explored.	<p>TCHHS leadership will continue to build relationships within communities and explore partnerships with local government and other health service providers.</p> <p>Recent impact of this investment include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TCHHS’s community engagement approach, particularly through yarning circles, co-design methodologies, and relationships with local Councils and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Organisations, have directly informed the refresh of the Health Equity Strategy</li> <li>• formal partnerships with health service providers.</li> </ul>
10	That the Board identify an appropriate reporting framework for its new cultural governance structures and support the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Strategy.	<p>TCHHS Board’s governance reform agenda has provided the foundations for ongoing improvement. Areas of reform include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• revised committee ToR</li> <li>• formal subcommittee structures</li> <li>• improved reporting pathways. These actions are proactive and provide a strong foundation for sustained improvement.</li> </ul> <p>TCHHS has embedded cultural governance in its work, with the formation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Governance Structure consisting of a Health Equity Committee and Cultural Council.</p> <p><b>Health Equity Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is responsible for monitoring and managing risk associated with the implementation of the Health Equity Strategy and programs of work</li> <li>• is a decision-making authority chaired by the Executive Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health</li> <li>• meets monthly, with the inaugural meeting in November 2024.</li> </ul> <p><b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Council</b></p>

No.	Recommendation	Queensland Health (QH) Response
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will provide cultural advice on key issues affecting health outcomes to support and embed cultural safety in practice.</li> <li>• will advise the Health Service Chief Executive</li> <li>• will consist of a membership representative of the diversity of culture, professional streams and geographic locations and include traditional owners and external health partners</li> <li>• EOI process to appoint Chair and members</li> <li>• inaugural meeting is scheduled for 30 October 2025 with the Council to meet twice yearly.</li> </ul>
11	That a regular progress report on implementation of the Health Equity plan be provided to the Board.	TCHHS Health Equity Strategy implementation is monitored through existing governance processes and performance reporting mechanisms, with progress updates provided to the Board via the Executive Committee on a half-yearly basis. Six monthly monitoring will continue of the HES 2025-2028.
12	That a Board-led approach to monitoring organisational culture be considered, noting that there are models used across other HHSs to engage in regular staff survey processes that inform appropriate management action and monitoring by management and the Board.	<p>TCHHS participates in the annual Working for Queensland survey and actively responds to feedback. Initiatives in response to the 2024 survey feedback include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly Leadership Briefings to strengthen frontline leadership</li> <li>• Torres and Cape Kudos and the CE Open Door for recognition and direct staff engagement</li> <li>• Psychosocial Risk Assessment and Action Plan to support team wellbeing</li> <li>• Rollout of new Occupational Violence Prevention training and duress systems to enhance staff safety.</li> <li>• Introduction of Empowering Respectful Workplaces workshops</li> <li>• Launch of the inaugural Torres and Cape Excellence Awards.</li> </ul>

No.	Recommendation	Queensland Health (QH) Response
		<p>The Board will strengthen its role by considering and endorsing a Board-led approach to monitoring organisational culture. Survey results and progress against actions will be reported through established governance and performance mechanisms, providing the Board with greater oversight of staff experience and culture while management continues to drive actions that respond to feedback and deliver meaningful change.</p>
13	<p>That a governance process for reporting on staff survey results be implemented to ensure ongoing monitoring of actions that respond to the outcomes of such staff surveys.</p>	<p>TCHHS will review its governance process for reporting on staff survey results to ensure ongoing monitoring of actions responding to the outcomes of the surveys.</p> <p>The governance processes and performance reporting mechanisms will be strengthened for the 2025 Working for Queensland Survey and will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff survey results to be considered by the ELT and Board</li> <li>• Individual divisions required to develop action plans in response to the survey outcomes.</li> <li>• Action plans and their progress reviewed by ELT and the Board at regular intervals</li> <li>• Updates provided to ensure accountability and follow-through.</li> </ul>
14	<p>That TCHHS continue to implement the Workforce Strategy and the recommendations of the 2023 Recruitment Review.</p>	<p>TCHHS is continuing to implement its Workforce Strategy and the recommendations of the 2023 Recruitment Review, with a particular focus on strengthening recruitment processes that recognise and promote the value of employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p>

No.	Recommendation	Queensland Health (QH) Response
15	<p>That TCHHS invest in workforce planning and staff development, which includes greater uptake of professional development opportunities for Indigenous staff and growing the partnerships that have recently been established with education and other providers to build aspiration and career opportunities, particularly for young Indigenous people</p>	<p>Queensland Health is currently developing a Health Workforce Action Plan which will set out a comprehensive vision and associated actions to grow our workforce, including First Nations specific roles and increase First Nations representation across other health professions.</p> <p>Locally, TCHHS is undertaking significant work to strengthen leadership pathways, expand professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and grow partnerships with education providers to build aspiration and career opportunities, particularly for young people.</p> <p>TCHHS is actively expanding career pathways into health for residents of Cape York, the Northern Peninsula, and the Torres Strait:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• three traineeship and scholarship programs were launched in 2024.</li> <li>• 20 First Nations students across Cape York, the Torres Strait, and the Northern Peninsula Area commenced traineeships combining Certificates II and III in Health Services Support with paid work experience at TCHHS hospitals.</li> </ul>
16	<p>That given the high proportion of the IHWs [Indigenous Health Workers] workforce in the over 50-year age bracket, with a significant number in the 60-69 and a smaller number in the over 70-year age categories, an urgent focus on succession and retirement (for those who are ready) planning is required.</p>	<p>Queensland Health is currently developing a Health Workforce Action Plan which will set out a comprehensive vision and associated actions to grow our workforce, including First Nations specific roles and increase First Nations representation across other health professions.</p> <p>TCHHS is also undertaking significant work to strengthen leadership, build capability, and support the long-term sustainability of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce.</p>

No.	Recommendation	Queensland Health (QH) Response
		<p>TCHHS has established the following positions to strengthen leadership, provide professional guidance, and support the sustainable growth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Professions role</li> <li>• two Manager Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce (Northern and Southern)</li> <li>• two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner Education (Northern and Southern) roles.</li> </ul>
17	<p>That a system level response is required to address the current barriers to retirement, which may include issues such as housing and accommodation needs.</p>	<p>QH will investigate the opportunities to increase flexibility in role design to support the transition out of the workforce and what opportunities there to better support post-retirement needs, such as accommodation.</p>
18	<p>The Board should consider its obligations in relation to psychosocial wellbeing and sexual harassment prevention, management and reporting to ensure that it is meeting its legislative obligations. Specifically, TCHHS should consider how it will embed these obligations into its broader governance structure that promotes cultural safety; noting that considerable progress has been made in this regard over the past year.</p>	<p>The Board will consider its obligations in relation to psychosocial wellbeing and sexual harassment prevention, management and reporting to identify any additional improvements required to strengthen how these are embedded into the Board's governance structures that align with and promote cultural safety.</p> <p>Recent improvements include the Board receiving structured workforce dashboards and integrated risk oversight (including psychosocial safety) reports.</p> <p>The Board continue to receive regular, structured reports on key risks and emerging issues affecting staff and community safety.</p>

No.	Recommendation	Queensland Health (QH) Response
19	Going forward, the Board should consider responsibilities of each sub-committee to ensure that there is sufficient focus on workforce and monitoring of trends in this regard, particularly in relation to cultural safety of staff and psychosocial wellbeing.	This work is ongoing. The Board will continue to consider the responsibilities of relevant subcommittees to ensure sufficient focus on workforce matters, including monitoring trends in cultural safety and psychosocial wellbeing.
20	Management needs to be supported to ensure there is a culture of compliance within the organisation and the application of policies and procedures is consistently done across the whole of the HHS. Board leadership in this regard is critical.	The Board will continue to support management to ensure there is a culture of compliance within the organisation and a consistent application of policies and procedures across the TCHHS. The Board governance review process is supporting this by ensuring appropriate committee structures, terms of reference and reporting arrangements are in place.
21	The Investigators recommend that TCHHS further promotes fostering relationships with community members and the opportunity to grow those relationships through the application of policies and procedures	<p>TCHHS has revised its Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy 2025-2027 and will publish it in September 2025. The Strategy provides a framework to enhance consumer and community involvement in health service planning and delivery and emphasises roles, responsibilities, and accountability across three levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health Teams and Programs</li> <li>• Local Community Health</li> <li>• the Hospital and Health Service.</li> </ul> <p>The Implementation Roadmap further details recommended actions to elevate consumer and community feedback.</p>
22	The Investigators recommend that with the establishment of the new TCHHS First Nations governance structures, a renewed approach to community engagement in health service planning and delivery and to ensure alignment with a range of current policies and strategies is developed and implemented	TCHHS has adopted a renewed approach to community engagement that is embedded in the Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy 2025–2027. The governance framework ensures this strategy is implemented effectively, with clear accountability and culturally appropriate practices. Engagement occurs through formal and informal

No.	Recommendation	Queensland Health (QH) Response
		<p>mechanisms, including yarning circles, forums, and cultural events, so that lived experiences directly shape health service planning and delivery.</p> <p>Feedback, including compliments and complaints, is systematically captured, reported, and communicated back to communities to demonstrate transparency and accountability. This renewed approach is aligned with the current HES 2023–2025 and the proposed HES 2025-2028, Strategic Plan 2023–2027, and the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards, embedding cultural safety and equity at the centre of planning and governance.</p>
23	<p>That the recent release of the Employee Complaints Guideline be promoted among staff to continue to build trust in the complaints management processes.</p>	<p>TCHHS will continue to promote the recent Employee Complaints Guideline to staff through established communication channels and leadership forums. This will support awareness, accessibility, and trust in the complaints management process, reinforcing our commitment to procedural fairness and transparency.</p>
24	<p>The Investigators recommend that TCHHS continue to promote cultural safety and, as a result, assist in creating an environment where staff and consumers have confidence to raise complaints and evidence a transparent and fair process in instances where complaints are raised.</p>	<p>TCHHS is embedding cultural safety as a core organisational priority through the Health Equity Strategy 2025–2028 and strengthened governance frameworks. By doing so, TCHHS aims to foster an environment where staff and consumers feel safe to raise complaints, with confidence that these will be addressed transparently, fairly, and without discrimination.</p>
25	<p>That the process for reporting and monitoring clinical complaints through the Safety and Quality and clinical governance reporting framework continues and that the Board identify a process for embedding staff complaints within its workforce reporting requirements.</p>	<p>Clinical complaints will continue to be reported and monitored through the established Safety and Quality framework, with escalation to the Board through the Safety and Quality Committee.</p> <p>TCHHS will also embed staff complaint reporting within its workforce governance framework, ensuring the Board receives oversight of trends and actions alongside other workforce indicators. This will provide a comprehensive view of organisational culture and safety, strengthening accountability and transparency.</p>
26	<p>That TCHHS, supported by Queensland Health, consider an appropriate communication strategy for sharing the outcomes of this Investigation that gives assurances to the communities in moving forward, especially in relation to the systems and processes available to manage complaints.</p>	<p>TCHHS, supported by Queensland Health, will share the outcomes and responses to the Investigation with staff and communities with the clear message of open engagement, transparency, and partnership in moving forward.</p>

No.	Recommendation	Queensland Health (QH) Response
		<p>The Torres and Cape Implementation Advisory Group will continue to play a central role in guiding this process to ensure communications reflect community voices and priorities.</p> <p>TCHHS will continue to build community and staff trust through ongoing open communication and the clear systems and processes that exist to manage complaints in a responsive, fair and accountable way.</p>