



# Environmental Health in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Communities

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**Queensland Government**  
Queensland Health

# Overview

- Introduction
- Strategic Directions
- EHW Program
- Animal Management Program
- Community Benefits





# Introduction

## What is Environmental Health?

- The cornerstone of public health practice and is about creating and maintaining environments that promote good public health
- Concerned with the study of all physical, biological and social factors which have an effect on human health
- Targeted towards preventing disease, promoting and creating healthy, supportive living environments
- Incorporates assessment, intervention, control and prevention of environmental health factors that have the potential to adversely effect human health
- Relates to the factors that need to be addressed to advance the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities



**“Substantial inequalities exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians, particularly in relation to chronic and communicable diseases, infant health, mental health and life expectation.”<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Social Determinants of Health

# Our Vision

What are we trying to achieve?

*A standard of environmental health  
that supports the achievement of quality health  
outcomes for Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander people  
in Queensland*





# Why?

## Environmental Health Factors



- Safe and adequate water and food supplies
- Housing and shelter
- Control of environmental pollutants and waste management
- Animal and pest (and vector) management
- Infrastructure - electricity and roads

## Links with Disease

- ▶ Pneumonia
- ▶ upper respiratory tract infections
- ▶ Scabies
- ▶ Skin infections
- ▶ Hepatitis
- ▶ Trachoma
- ▶ Gastrointestinal disease
- ▶ Mosquito borne diseases



# What are the Strategic Directions for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander EH?

- Improvement of environmental health in communities through the development, implementation and support of culturally appropriate strategies and programs at both a strategic and local community level
- Implementation of the QHATSI EH Plan 2008-2012 which identifies key strategic directions and actions that must be addressed to improve environmental health conditions





# QHATSIEH Plan 2008-2012

## Strategic initiatives of the 2008-2012 Plan

- develop, implement and build on successful and sustainable community based environmental health programs in both discrete and non-discrete Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities
- make Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander environmental health a priority for community health and other services in the government and non-government sectors
- promote, develop and support a sustainable environmental health workforce





## Strategic initiatives of the 2008-2012 Plan

- strengthen partnerships across government and non-government organisations to support investment in and effective delivery of environmental health services
- effectively communicate information on programs and achievements in environmental health to promote environmental health practice
- develop and maintain reliable reporting systems that will assist in monitoring and evaluating environmental health programs



# Groups & Stakeholders

- The HI T team! Indigenous Environmental Health Implementation Team (IEHIT)
- The NIEHRF - Northern Indigenous Environmental Health Regional Forum
- The SIEHCG - Strategic Indigenous Environmental Health Coordinating Group
- The GAG - Indigenous Environmental Health Government Agencies Group (IEHGAG)
- The WGATSI EH - Working Group on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health





# Our EH Program Officers

- conduit between QH and communities
- provide a voice through the I EHI T & the SI EHCG
- resources & support



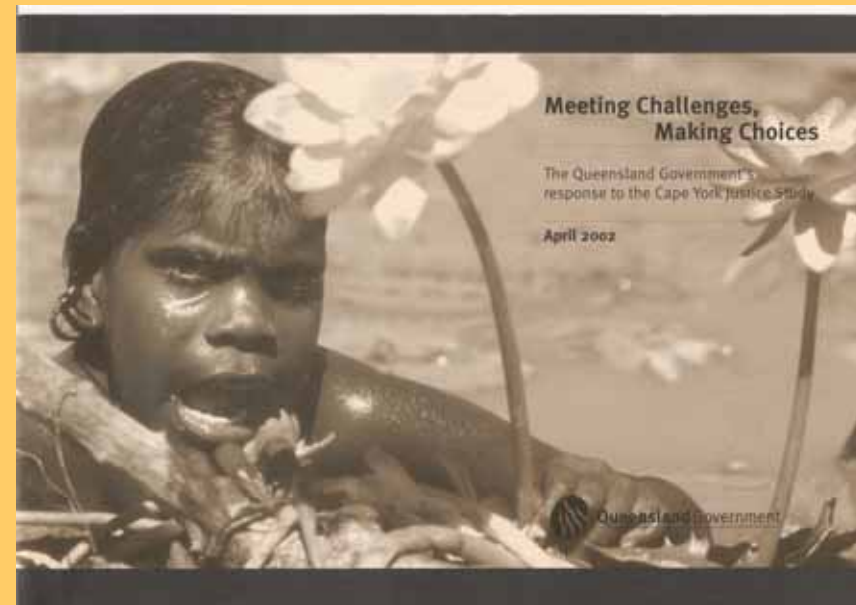


# 6th National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Conference



# EHW Pilot

- In April 2002 the State Government released the Meeting Challenges, Making Choices (MCMC) response to the Cape York Justice Study
- MCMC identified a range of reforms and initiatives in several key areas. One such initiative to help meet the health needs of people of Cape York was a focus on **Environmental Health**
- The Environmental Health Worker Pilot Project was implemented in 2002 to enable Aboriginal Community Councils located in Cape York region to employ a full-time EHW



# EHW Expansion Project



- In 2005, QH received funding to expand the EHW Program to include all 34 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Councils
- We provide support through:
  - Training on the job
  - Provision of resources
  - Reports & recommendations to Council
- EHWs need training and professional mentors
- We've come a long way and continue to work towards even better EH outcomes



- The growing EH workforce is helping to increase community awareness of EH & relationship to promotion & prevention of disease
- Much greater understanding now of links between hygiene & health



# Animal Management Program

- This project is the first to be undertaken on this level in Australia
- Widespread animal ownership
- Perception and reports of problematic animal numbers
- Some reports of animal neglect
- Some reports of animal attack
- Little or no resources & capacity in communities
- Local Government responsibilities:
  - Public Health Risks [Public Health Act 2005]
  - Pest Management Plans [PMP's] [Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002]
  - Animal Welfare [Animal Care and Protection Act 2001]





# Successful DOG programs...







# The Action Plan

- Qld Government Action Plan for Supporting Animal Management by Indigenous Local Governments
  - To coordinate animal management programs;
  - To improve health and welfare of animals;
  - Increase council capacity for animal management;
  - Facilitate a whole of government approach;
  - Assist councils to be accountable.





# Current status of AMP

- 19 Service Agreements totalling \$774,385 in employment and operational and \$779,000 in infrastructure
- 22 employees within communities throughout the state working on Animal Management
- All employees enrolled in Cert II Rural Operations (Animal Care and Management)
- All soon to complete Cert II
- AMPA employed by QH:
  - Coordinate project activities according to the Action Plan
  - Internal and external relationships state-wide
  - Provide strategic and operational advice
  - Collect data on existing animal management
  - Assist with on-ground activities
  - Assist communities to maintain/develop sustainable programs



# Future Challenges

- Ensure funds enhance existing programs
- Facilitate the development of new programs
- Development of sustainable community based programs - build on positives
- Develop locally relevant action plans
- Ensure funds lead to achievement of the Action Plan objectives including increase council capacity for environmental health management





# Where to from here?

- Keep building and extending on:
  - Training
  - Interagency collaboration & coordination
  - Career paths
  - Employment of EHWs in places outside Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Communities
- Needs to be done in consultation with stakeholders
- Needs to be aligned with national strategies & the direction of the enHealth Working Group on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health



# Community Benefits







# Grease traps

Before...

After!



# Housing - Out with the old...





# In with the New...!





# STREETS

Before...

After -  
Streets paved!





# Tidy Town!!!



# Picnic Areas with Secure Bin!





# Rubbish Tip















**Too Deadly !!!**



**Any Questions?**

**THANK YOU**

