

EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

Re-engaging young Queenslanders in education



Example:

Jenny

\$10,000

How

$$I = 10$$



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INTRODUCTION

The agenda is set...

Queensland’s schooling and training system has focused on ensuring that young people complete Year 12 or equivalent, and this has worked – Queensland has above the national average Year 10 to 12 apparent retention rates. However, we still have more work to do. We want every student succeeding¹. Against that backdrop, too many of our young people disengage from education or training.

In late 2015 we drew a line in the sand. We built on our strong Year 12 apparent retention record, and made a deliberate step-up in our efforts to re-engage young people who had, or were at risk of disconnecting from education or training.

Our efforts have already yielded positive outcomes for many young people, and further efforts will deliver outcomes for many more young people.

This report highlights the contemporary evidence base and successful innovation happening in Queensland.

We know that we have the resources and the intellectual capacity to tackle the ongoing challenge of youth disengagement.

We have renewed our commitment to this important mission and you are part of it.

¹ Every student succeeding – State Schools Strategy 2017–2021

Director- General's

Insights

As Director-General of the Department of Education and Training, I have a strong commitment to delivering outcomes for all children and young people, including those who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging from education and training.

We are all driven towards this goal by the same moral imperative. Education is a human right, and all children and young people must have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Beyond this moral foundation, improving educational outcomes is a public good — vital to our social and economic prosperity. The opportunity for self-determination, to experience the fulfilment of work, and to follow a successful life pathway must be available to all young Queenslanders and their families.



In short, every child and young person deserves the chance to succeed.

Across Queensland, we have made a number of significant achievements toward this goal. These include an unprecedented increase in participation in kindergarten, an upward trajectory in National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) scores, and impressive outcomes for participation of 15 to 19 year olds in publicly funded vocational education and training programs, including 96% of Year 12 students attaining the Queensland Certificate of Education. We need to consolidate these achievements and continue the improvement.

One priority is ensuring that every student is engaged in education and training. Achieving this is complex and challenging, and there are no simple solutions.

Our first step has been establishing a uniform commitment, with deputy directors-general and regional directors providing significant leadership to maximise engagement and re-engagement of young people across the state. This is yielding many positive outcomes for Queensland's youth.

A recent analysis revealed that in less than one year, over 4000 young Queenslanders were re-engaged into education and training. Many of these young people were placed in innovative environments, such as the Queensland Pathways College, open learning hubs, pop-up classrooms for young people in the youth justice system and Get Set for Work. Other innovative approaches were also implemented across the state.

As a learning organisation, it is important for us to critically examine and sustain innovative practices that work.

To this end, we will embed an evaluative approach in all of our work, to build a strong evidence base upon which to move forward.

This report provides an overview of some of our innovative approaches, and examines key factors underpinning this success.

They include:

- ▶ Commitment to quality inclusive practices
- ▶ A shared vision and moral purpose
- ▶ Passing the baton - supported transitions
- ▶ Getting the real stories beneath the evidence
- ▶ High quality vocational education and training
- ▶ Multi-disciplinary case management
- ▶ Partnerships and collaboration.

It should be noted, not all of the innovative and inclusive work that is happening across Queensland has been captured in this document. This report aims to draw out key themes and support the momentum that is being built by strong leaders across Queensland.

This work is everybody's business.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Watterston'.

Dr Jim Watterston | Director-General

Department of Education and Training
Queensland Government

RE-ENGAGEMENT

7 Key themes for success



Commitment to quality inclusive practices

Our innovation is underpinned by what research tells us works — high expectations for students; continuous improvement; early, targeted and sustained intervention; high quality learning experiences; attention to wellbeing; whole-of-school approaches; holistic responses to student and community needs; individualised case management; strong focus on relationships; partnerships with industry and the community; strong pathways; flexible and differentiated approaches and strategies; support at every transition point in a student's pathway; and evidence-based decision-making.

A shared vision and moral purpose

Through leadership from the highest levels of the education system, and a strong moral purpose, we have mapped out our shared vision for all young Queenslanders: *all Queensland children and young people have a right to engage with education and be supported towards a job and a fulfilling life pathway.*

Passing the baton - supported transitions

Where children and young people have become disengaged, every effort is made to ensure that the student experiences seamless support while they receive intervention, or are transitioned to another setting.

That is, the school or educational setting that is currently working with the student ensures that they 'pass the baton'. This means they do not relinquish their responsibility for the student until the transition process into the new setting is complete.

Putting faces to data

Regional officers, principals, and teachers pay careful attention to the data, which includes ensuring that they put a 'face' to an individual student's data and understand their context. This helps them understand the student's barriers, strengths, wellbeing and aspirations, and the best plan of action.

High quality vocational education and training

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development research shows that high quality vocational education and training (VET) is an important option for many young people who would otherwise disengage. We have provided publicly funded VET options that are strategically targeted at meeting the needs of disengaged 15 to 19 year olds. We are focused on ensuring that these programs are well targeted to support our young Queenslanders.

Multi-disciplinary case management

We recognise that many children and young people face multiple and complex barriers, which require intensive and focused case management. A wide range of professionals and agencies work together to support children and young people to succeed.

Partnerships and collaboration

Schools, registered training organisations, community organisations, government agencies and industry successfully work together to achieve better outcomes for children and young people. This includes wider learning opportunities, support to stay engaged, and stronger transitions.

01.

Commitment to quality inclusive practices

We are committed to providing the best support to children and young people who are disengaged, or at risk of disengagement. The approaches described throughout this document reflect national and international research into educational and training responses that work. The key themes include:

High expectations for every student

Inclusive learning environments make children and young people feel safe, appreciated, and valued. This, in turn, promotes a positive learning environment where attention is paid to children and young people's social, cognitive and behavioural development. Quality education settings display a strong culture of a shared commitment to every student. By promoting a 'climate of achievement' through effective leadership, a high level of teacher commitment, and high expectations of student achievement, student learning outcomes are improved. Further, by empowering young people with a sense of ownership, belonging, and self-fulfilment, schools can provide young people with the skills and knowledge that enable them to be active citizens and play a positive role in society.

Focus on continuous improvement

Effective schools have an explicit improvement agenda, with a clear focus on delivering outcomes for all students, including those who are at risk of disengaging. Continuous improvement is focused across academic, wellbeing and social domains, and is informed by rigorous and regular data.

Early, targeted and sustained intervention

Early identification of students who are at risk of disengagement allows for the implementation of early, targeted intervention strategies to keep students engaged in mainstream education. For intervention strategies to be effective, they must be sustained. Continued tracking and monitoring of systems data, including developmental and learning assessments, enables schools to evaluate outcomes and modify intervention strategies, as necessary.

High quality learning experiences

Learning programs need to be challenging, stimulating, involve opportunities for sharing learning tasks, and have clear and demonstrable benefits beyond school. There must also be a focus on building individual strengths and talents. Effective education settings provide broad and engaging curriculum choices (including hands-on learning, VET options) and employ effective teaching strategies.

Attention to wellbeing

Wellbeing is central to a student's engagement and success in learning. Effective educators recognise the need to foster wellbeing across the student population. Strong leadership is essential for the safety and wellbeing of all members of the school community. School leaders establish approaches and policies that foster a commitment to safe, supportive and respectful learning communities.

This includes:

- ▶ strong partnerships with key stakeholders (for example: families, relevant community organisations, child safety and justice system staff) to develop consistent and supportive approaches to safety and wellbeing.
- ▶ systems to identify students where their wellbeing is 'at risk', and development of strategies and processes to support these students and their families.
- ▶ a focus on supporting students to take control of their own wellbeing, to be connected, and to make a positive contribution to the wellbeing of all students.
- ▶ learning and teaching that supports safe and supportive schools, including student awareness of safety and wellbeing issues; fostering students' understanding and ability to build respectful, and positive relationships; and positive behaviour management of students inside and outside the classroom.
- ▶ clear policies and procedures that have been developed in consultation with students, parents and other stakeholders, and that foster a shared understanding and ownership of wellbeing.
- ▶ capacity building to equip teachers and other staff to support the safety and wellbeing of all members of the school community.¹

¹ These strategies are drawn from www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au

Whole-school approaches

Effective schools have a shared vision, where there is a whole-school commitment to students. Teaching teams and other staff members work together to support students' learning and wellbeing. Whole-school approaches, such as Trauma Informed Practice, and Positive Behaviour for Learning provide schools with a framework for responding systematically to the needs of students, including those who are most at risk of disengaging.

Holistic responses to student and community needs

Some students and families face complex circumstances that can negatively impact on their learning. These children and young people require tailored responses to assist them in overcoming barriers to their education. Holistic services are important for families and communities in which there are high levels of poverty, family breakdown, and unemployment. This may include homework centres, access to information and communication technologies, mentoring, individualised case management, provision of student housing and more.

Individualised case management

Individualised case management is an important strategy for children and young people who are not thriving in their educational setting or who are experiencing family or personal issues. This may manifest in academic decline, poor attendance, bullying, withdrawal, behaviour or mental health issues.

Individualised case management can include: assessing individual student needs, identifying what targeted intervention is required, and monitoring progress. Case management can be led by a range of qualified staff, including guidance officers, psychologists, transition officers, teachers, success coaches, heads of department, deputy principals, or principals. In some circumstances, a multi-disciplinary team should be assigned to case manage students' learning and wellbeing needs.





Strong focus on relationships

The most effective strategies to keep students engaged in schooling are the ones that involve the entire school and family. Parents, caregivers, and kin should be encouraged and enabled to actively participate in their child's learning. This requires strong communication between schools and families. Regular, quality exchanges between the school and family are a powerful factor in lifting student outcomes. This includes feedback on a student's wellbeing and academic progress, and clear reporting pathways that allow families to receive information, share information and express their concerns.

Productive and trusting relationships between teachers and students also have an important and positive impact on students' academic and social development. Students learn more effectively, and are more engaged when they trust their teacher to be fair, respectful and supportive.

Strong relationships and shared responsibility between teachers across the school are powerful. This can include passing-on previous experiences and important insights, sharing data, and joint planning to support a student's academic progress or wellbeing.

Partnerships with community and industry

Partnerships with communities and industry provide important opportunities for students. In addition to the power of goodwill that can be generated through partnerships, tangible support may be available through financial contribution, volunteering, work experience, industry expertise and advice, and support with student transition planning.

Pathways planning

Young people's pathways through education and into further education, training or employment can be complex. External factors, such as rapidly changing workplaces and high levels of youth unemployment, mean that young people require expert support to plan their next steps. Strategies such as senior education and training planning, career information, workplace experience, mentoring and case management, can support young people to make informed pathway choices. It is also important to equip young people with the skills, knowledge and resilience to remain flexible and focused when they experience hurdles to their learning or employment pathway.

Flexible and differentiated approaches and strategies

Effective schools recognise the barriers that some students face in learning, and provide a wide range of flexible approaches and strategies. Schools may adjust settings and programs to meet the needs of students through options such as smaller and customised classrooms or mini-schools within schools, flexible timetabling, flexible uniform policy, success coaches, mentors, additional tuition, provision of reasonable adjustment, pop-up classes and use of eLearning.

Transition support

There are many transition points at which children and young people experience challenges. These include transitions from kindergarten to Prep, from Prep to Year 1, from Year 6 to Year 7, from Year 10 to Year 11, from school to further education, training or employment, and from one school to another. It is important that children and young people are supported in their transitions. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to supporting students to make a strong transition, but approaches can include:

- ▶ *awareness* — equipping school staff with information and understanding, to best cater for all children and young people.
- ▶ *parent engagement* — to ensure parents/guardians have the information and understanding required to support transitions, and to ensure educators have the appropriate knowledge and understanding about the needs of the child or young person.
- ▶ *information* — to equip the child, young person, parents/guardians, and their future educators with the information they require to support a smooth transition.
- ▶ *preparation* — providing experiences that will prepare the child, young person and their parents/guardians for a smooth transition.
- ▶ *pre-transition visits* — to orient the child, young person and their parents/guardians to new settings and expectations, among other things.
- ▶ *mentoring or coaching* — can support children and young people when they are experiencing difficulty in making a transition.
- ▶ *case management* — in some cases, individualised case management is required to support children and young people who are experiencing difficulty making a transition.

Evidence-based decision-making

All effective educator practices are underpinned by evidence. This includes individual, classroom and school data across a broad range of learning, behavioural and wellbeing indicators. Effective educational practices monitor and evaluate the outcomes of their practices, and remain informed of research findings on what works for children and young people.

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02.

A shared vision and moral purpose

The engagement of all students within the education and training system is a key priority for the department. This has been achieved through the strong direction provided by the Director-General, deputy directors-general and regional directors. We have a shared vision: *all Queensland children and young people have a right to engage with education and be supported towards a job and fulfilling life pathway.*

This vision has been established through a range of strategic conversations, consistently raised by our educational leaders, through: principals' forums, regional visits, and the Strategic Leaders' Implementation Committee.

Actions to embed this vision state-wide include:

- ▶ the Director-General sponsored a Youth Engagement project to identify strategic actions to maximise engagement and re-engagement across Queensland.
- ▶ a Youth Engagement Plan has been released as a supporting plan for the Advancing Education Action Plan. The Youth Engagement Plan has identified strategic actions to maximise engagement from early childhood through to post-Year 12. Strategies include sharing responsibility through system-wide collaboration; connecting students, parents and schools with information and resources to support engagement; responding to early warning signs; and strengthening transitions through each stage of schooling and through to further education and training.
- ▶ a Youth Engagement Alliance has been established, consisting of leaders from state schools, non-government schools, TAFE Queensland and nine key government agencies. The Youth Engagement Alliance will strengthen collaboration meeting the needs of at-risk and disengaged students.

Re-engagement hubs

A commitment to re-engaging children and young people who have disconnected

Re-engagement hubs have been established in every Department of Education and Training (DET) region. Led by the regional director, the hubs work across a wide range of partners and contexts to support children and young people who have become disconnected, assisting them to re-engage in education, training or employment. This includes:

- ▶ partnerships with a wide range of government agencies, schools, registered training organisations, community-based organisations and other stakeholders, to customise a pathway for every disconnected student.
- ▶ providing case management for those children and young people who require it, including: individualised coaching, interim literacy and numeracy programs, behaviour management programs, counselling, or connecting students with other government services.

Local initiatives include:

Open Learning Centre — Far North Queensland Region

Education as the protective factor

The Open Learning Centre is physically and virtually integrated with the Cairns School of Distance Education. It provides a safe and supportive environment where young people can successfully achieve outcomes through blended learning delivery, as well as having their wellbeing needs met through a wide range of support services. The centre uses authentic strength-based relationships developed through a collaborative engagement framework (a Collaborative Recovery Model). Partnerships are an essential component of the model, with students having access to the Australian curriculum, vocational training, pathway supports, and extra curricula activities.

Queensland Pathways College — Metropolitan Region

Focusing on dual goals of making gains in wellbeing AND supporting academic achievement

The Queensland Pathways College is making a difference for young people who cannot succeed in mainstream settings. The program exhibits all the hallmarks of best practice: data walls; intensive case management; differentiated, evidence-based instruction; and partnerships with other agencies. With the college now operating on five TAFE campuses, this successful model will be expanded to other sites.

03.

Passing the baton - supported transitions

‘Passing the baton’ is an expression that is used in schools and regional centres throughout Queensland. It describes the way in which state school teachers, specialist support staff, principals and regional officers provide strong support to every student – not letting go of the baton until the transition to the next education or training setting is complete.

As a system we are building expectations at every level to ensure young people are supported through transitions and enhancing our reporting capability to better monitor and celebrate successful supported transitions.

Stay and Succeed project – Metropolitan Region

Every child and young person in our region is our responsibility

Six transition officers are working within every state high school in Metropolitan region. The key tenet is ‘Stay and Succeed’. The transition officers support students to stay at school.

Where it is clear that a student would be better placed in an alternative learning context, the transition officers work with training providers, employers, special assistance schools and other stakeholders to support the young person to make a positive transition.

This approach is underpinned by a strong focus on passing the baton. That is, where children and young people are disengaged, every effort is made to ensure that the student experiences seamless support as they are successfully transitioned to the next setting.



04.

Putting faces to data

GETTING THE REAL STORIES BENEATH THE EVIDENCE

Evidence-based decision-making is not new to schools. Over the last decade, there has been increasing emphasis on using evidence to inform decision-making to improve the overall performance of schools. There is now a rich amount of data available to schools. It is important to locate the correct data, analyse it in a way that we can learn from it, and use our learnings to improve outcomes for our students.

Our experience in Queensland shows that data analysis is most effective when there is close analysis of individual student data, as well as at a class, school, regional, and school-system level.

Our data needs to provide information about what students know and are ready to learn, as well as other important information, such as levels of student resilience, wellbeing, and social and emotional development¹.

Our recent progress in closing the gap on Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) achievement for Indigenous students, re-engaging over 4000 disconnected students in less than one year, and our record improvements in NAPLAN, have shown that when a teacher, principal or other professional puts faces to the data, they understand the student's barriers, strengths, wellbeing and aspirations, and they make good decisions for that student.

¹ See, for example, Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL]), and National School Improvement Tool (Australian Council for Educational Research [ACER])

Using data to close the gap for Indigenous students

Whatever it takes

Metropolitan Regional Office undertakes a careful analysis of attendance, wellbeing and academic data for every Indigenous student in Years 11 and 12. Each student's journey is individually tracked by the regional team, with collaborative discussions occurring with principals, teachers, guidance officers, other professionals and families. Student progress is monitored and intervention occurs at the earliest warning signs.

This approach led to 100 per cent of Indigenous students attaining a QCE in this region.

Success coaches

Early identification and intervention

Success coaches have been placed in 20 targeted schools and assigned to support students who are most at risk of disengaging, based on analysis of student attendance, behaviour, participation, and attainment data.

The success coach initiative is based on widely known factors of effective coaching. Effective coaches build trust, provide clear, accurate and timely feedback, and make regular welfare checks. Effective coaches understand that everyone has their individual strengths and weaknesses, and they need an individualised approach.

The 'coaching' role includes:

- ▶ mentoring the student and supporting them to understand and build on their strengths
- ▶ anticipating and removing potential barriers
- ▶ advocating for the student, working across the school to create a safe and supportive environment in which students can learn from their mistakes
- ▶ creating an individualised Student Success Plan, in collaboration with the student, their family and school staff.

Early results show that success coaches have increased attendance, reduced school disciplinary absences, and strengthened academic outcomes for the students in their program.

05.

High quality vocational education and training

TARGETED AT THE NEEDS
OF 15 TO 19 YEAR OLDS

Quality VET is a significant part of the engagement puzzle. At a personal level, it provides many Queenslanders with meaningful pathways, and strong employment outcomes. At an economic level, VET plays a vital role, equipping Queensland's workforce and driving (or strengthening) innovation and productivity.

For these reasons VET remains a powerful option for many young people who may be disengaged or at risk of disengaging.

VET for school students

Queensland has a strong track record in delivering VET in schools. In 2015, there were 94,200 school students undertaking VET. Currently, about one third (36.7%) of all school-based VET and more than half (55.4%) of all Australian school-based apprentices and trainees are in Queensland.

VET for school leavers

VET is an important option for many school leavers. Over one third (34%) of young people who leave school in Years 10, 11 or before completing Year 12 were undertaking VET in the 12 months after leaving¹; and over one fifth (20.9%) of Year 12 completers study VET after leaving school.²

VET for disengaged students

VET can also be a powerful tool in re-engaging young people. While VET is not the solution for every student, it can be very effective in getting young people back on track.

Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) has played an important role in supporting disengaged young people to make a transition. SQW consists of a range of programs that aim to support people who are under-utilised or under-employed in the labour market, including young people. Since its reintroduction, over 6000 disengaged young people have been assisted through SQW programs, which deliver nationally recognised qualifications. The department is continuing to work with industry and communities across Queensland to build on this achievement.

¹ Next Step 2015 Early School Leavers: A report on the destinations of young people who left Queensland schools in Years 10, 11 and prior to completing Year 12 in 2014.

² Next Step 2016: A report on the destinations of Year 12 completers from 2015 in Queensland.

Skilling Queenslanders for work (SQW)

Programs



The suite of programs available under SQW includes (but is not limited to):

Get Set for Work 2,652*

Get Set for Work provides intensive employment and training assistance over a 12-month period to young, disengaged Queenslanders aged 15–19 years.

Youth Skills 428*

Youth Skills provides nationally recognised training and employment support for 15 to 19 year olds who are engaged with Youth Justice Services or Queensland Corrective Services.

Community Work Skills 2,148*

Community Work Skills assists disadvantaged Queenslanders to gain nationally recognised skills and qualifications up to a certificate III level.

First Start 342*

First Start provides wage subsidies to local councils to employ additional trainees, offering opportunities to young people and disadvantaged job seekers to gain nationally recognised qualifications and 12-months employment by undertaking a traineeship.

Work Skills Traineeships 1,037*

Work Skills Traineeships funds work placements on community, public works and environmental projects for up to six months. Participants undertake a Work Skills Traineeship (Certificate I in Business, Construction, or Conservation and Land Management) that integrates vocational skills with on-the-job training.

* Number of participants aged 15–19 years, since commencement of the program (as at 30 June 2017).



6,607

TOTAL STUDENTS
SUPPORTED

(as at 30 June 2017)



I thought I blew all my chances of something good, some sort of career, when I dropped out of school.

I had been scared and felt like there was too much pressure on me at school, but this program helped me feel like I can do something and helped me learn at my own pace.

Now I have a qualification, a paying job and the opportunity to be able to complete a diploma — a better future. Working in child care is a dream come true. 'Dani' (now aged 18).

Get Set for Work — reconnecting disengaged young people

Funded under SQW, the Get Set for Work program provides intensive employment and training assistance over 12 months to disadvantaged young people aged 15 to 19 years, in an industry area where there are local employment opportunities.

For the likes of 'Dani', participating has paid tremendous dividends in the form of full-time employment as an outside school hours care educator.

'Dani' and her fellow participants were offered up to six months of case-managed support while undertaking a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care or a Certificate III in Education Support.



06.

Multi- disciplinary case management

HOLISTIC APPROACHES

Some children and young people face complex issues and circumstances that can negatively impact on their learning, or place them at risk of disengagement. In some instances, a student's ability to attend mainstream schooling may be impaired. They may need adjustments and additional supports to remain in mainstream school, or they may need to be supported into alternative settings.

Effective case management involves discussions, shared planning and support across a range of professional fields. This can include health workers, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, learning support teachers, mentors and others. Adjustments can include: individualised learning plans, customised learning environments, flexible timetabling, and additional supports such as child care, transport, or housing assistance.

Multi-agency support for young offenders – Far North Queensland Region

Family support, using a collaborative empowerment framework

The Far North Queensland Regional Office provides targeted support for families of juvenile offenders. Analysis of regional data reveals that siblings of juvenile offenders are more likely to display a decline in education achievements and increases in negative behaviours at school, home and within their community.

Coordinated responses provide assistance in the areas of: housing, finance, health (physical and mental), transport, substance abuse, training access and education. Services are provided by government partners, and non-government and not-for-profit organisations.

Differentiated approaches for pregnant and parenting students on the North Coast

By educating a mother you educate a family

Burnside State High School's STEMM (Supporting teenagers with education, mothering and mentoring) program provides high quality learning opportunities for pregnant teenagers and young mothers. These young women are able to access child care for their infant from birth to four years in adjunct care rooms, which allows the young mothers to spend time with their child throughout the day. Each young woman has an individual support plan developed by qualified case managers, and is able to learn in a safe, non-judgmental and flexible environment.

In addition to a wide range of tertiary preparation programs, vocational education and training programs, and other educational programs, each young woman has the opportunity to develop life skills, parenting, self-worth, healthy relationships, pre- and post-birth plans, and physical and emotional wellbeing. All participants are individually matched with carefully selected and trained mentors.

Complex Care Panels – Darling Downs South West Region

Working together to provide wrap-around support

Complex care panels have been established in St George and Toogoolawah to support students and their families who are at high risk of disengagement from schooling. They coordinate across various government agencies and community organisations to provide the right kinds of support for at-risk students.

Complex care panels have in-confidence discussions about the individual circumstances of children and young people and their families, and collaborate to resolve issues being experienced.

Panel members can include a range of school staff (school principal, guidance officer, youth support coordinator, school chaplain, school nurse). The panel also includes representatives from a range of government agencies and community-based organisations, such as Queensland Police, Lifeline, Aboriginal housing organisations, Aboriginal medical services, child and youth mental health services, Regional Council, and Youth Justice.



'Tammy' is one example of a young mother who has been supported from Burnside State High's STEMM program.

As part of the 18-month program, 'Tammy' studied subjects from the University of the Sunshine Coast's (USC) Tertiary Preparation Pathway to prepare for university. She then enrolled in USC's Bachelor of Nursing, which she completed part-time while raising her daughter 'Jayde' (now six).

'Tammy' now works as a registered nurse at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.



STEMM didn't give up on me just because I was pregnant. The opposite. They gave me skills to be a good mother, gave me belief in myself as a learner, and gave me the support that I needed to get into uni. I don't know what would have happened to "Jayde" and me without STEMM.



07.

Partnerships and collaboration

Children and young people who are disengaged, or at risk of disengagement, often face multi-faceted and compounding disadvantage. Education and training is important – but education providers cannot lift student engagement alone. Collaboration across a range of stakeholders and settings is key to building and maximising the engagement and re-engagement of vulnerable children and young people.

In Queensland, collaboration has occurred with other government agencies, community-based organisations, industry organisations, registered training organisations and universities, and across networks of schools, with one shared purpose – to meet the needs of at-risk children and young people.

Pop-up classrooms – South East Region

Working together to ensure that children and young people in the youth justice system have support to reach their goals

This collaborative approach includes pop-up classrooms at each of the three Youth Justice regional service centres.

Convened once a week in each centre, a teacher supports the young people in the Youth Justice system in literacy and numeracy to transition them back into school, training or employment. The region is also working with young people making bail from the Youth Detention Centre to ensure a smooth transition back to school.

Alternative learning sites for children and young people in Youth Justice

Educational justice for young people in youth justice

The Toowoomba Alternative Learning Education Site is an important partnership between DET and the Department of Justice and Attorney General (DJAG). The program supports young people who are in the youth justice system and not able to return to a full-time school environment. A state school teacher runs an education program out of a DJAG building for 10 to 15 year olds who are on Youth Justice Orders. Youth justice workers are also on hand to support these young people. This includes, where appropriate, work experience and/or VET.

Autism Hub

Making a difference

The Autism Hub was established by DET in 2016 as a dedicated statewide service to support students, their families and school communities to improve educational outcomes for students with autism. Working with eight autism coaches around the state, the service helps users to access and navigate the wide array of state and national programs and resources available to people with autism, and their families. Partnerships with students and their families, educators, and community organisations are core to the hub's success. This includes:

- ▶ collaboration with the Australian Men's Shed Association, to establish the South Brisbane Men's Shed, with a special interest group for dads, brothers, uncles and grandfathers of children with autism. This innovative idea recognises the important role that fathers and other male family members can play in providing support for a family member with autism.
- ▶ driven by the maxim 'nothing about us without us', the Autism Hub has forged a partnership with the I CAN Network. The network is a social enterprise established by young people with autism, focused on building student confidence and changing the perception of autism in schools, universities, training providers, communities, businesses and government. This exciting partnership will provide in-school mentoring programs and residential camps in several state school and non-state school clusters across Queensland.
- ▶ the Autism Hub works side-by-side with agencies such as Autism Queensland to expand services to meet the needs of young people with autism. The Teens' Tech Shed and Girls' Writing Group are just some of the ways in which students, parents and others work together to strengthen the confidence and skills of young Queenslanders with autism. All of the projects are co-designed with the users and have the capacity to be duplicated anywhere in Queensland.



We know that there is a place like this where we can come to seek counselling and help – it’s fantastic. People can share their common stories in a place that is safe.

A Men’s Shed participant



Reading Centre

Specialist advice to educators and parents on how to teach reading and support readers

Partnerships are recognised as an essential part of the Reading Centre, a statewide initiative catering for children of all ages. The centre is operated by DET in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including Speld Qld, state schools, non-state schools, students, parents and other members of the community. Reading experts operate from the Reading Centre providing advice, information and training. Activities include parent workshops, educator workshops, provision of resources and customised advice and support.

Centenary Heights State High School flexi school

Collaboration and partnerships

Toowoomba Flexi School is an annexe of Centenary Heights State High School. The school provides relevant educational opportunities to young people in order to break the cycle of disengagement. The flexible program is designed to increase the number of educationally at-risk students completing the senior phase of learning, with a clear and sustained transition pathway.

The school has developed strong connections with the local community. These partnerships are essential to building the kinds of practical support that can be provided to students but, in addition, the school has built strong connectedness with the community. This provides the school with an important sense of place, and sends messages to the students that they are valued and respected. Partnerships have included:

- ▶ volunteers from the Rotary Club provide breakfast and lunch, and serve as mentors to the students.
- ▶ strong relationships exist in the business community to build and provide work experience and pathways support.
- ▶ collaboration with the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE to provide high quality VET opportunities.
- ▶ collaboration with the University of Southern Queensland to support research and evaluation of the program, and to support those students who are seeking tertiary pathways.

Capricornia School of Distance Education — partnerships with community-based organisations

A holistic learning approach to the academic, and social and emotional needs of the student

The Capricornia School of Distance Education Alternative Learning Spaces support at-risk young people in Years 10 to 12 who are young mothers, victims of bullying, or have been diagnosed with medical conditions, such as anxiety or depression, as well as those students who have not been successful in a mainstream setting.

The school has partnership agreements with seven community-based organisations and local councils to provide community support to re-engage students who have withdrawn from educational services for a variety of reasons. Planning is underway to open more centres, in collaboration with communities in Central Queensland.

Alternative Learning Spaces operate in:

- ▶ Yeppoon with the Livingstone Shire Council
- ▶ Emu Park with the Lions Club
- ▶ Mt Morgan with Relationships Australia, Youth Information and Referral Service in Mackay
- ▶ PCYC, Youth Justice and Headspace in Rockhampton.

The game changer is community ownership of the issues associated with disengaged youth and the commitment to work together to own and respond to the social, emotional, education and training needs of these young people.

The program offers young people an opportunity to engage in mainstream education through the school of distance education — providing additional support for students through face-to-face tuition. Students are also supported through individualised case management and targeted, specialised care from relevant professionals, such as youth workers, guidance officers and youth justice workers.

Youth Engagement Alliance

Re-engagement is a shared responsibility

There are some areas where agencies can achieve more together, than separately. This includes lifting outcomes for Indigenous students, students in out-of-home care, students in the youth justice system, young people in disengagement 'hot spots' across Queensland, and students who are disengaged due to mental health issues, domestic violence and homelessness.

To harness this potential, a Youth Engagement Alliance has been established. The intent of the Alliance is to enhance cross-agency collaborative approaches that have a specific focus on improving the re-engagement of young Queenslanders in education, training or employment. Alliance members include representatives from nine key government agencies, as well as the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, Independent Schools Queensland, state schools and TAFE Queensland.

Maintaining the momentum

This publication has documented an unprecedented momentum to reconnect disengaged young Queenslanders with education, training or employment.

This includes:

- ▶ strong mainstream schools finding innovative ways to retain at-risk students
- ▶ alternative schooling approaches for some students who cannot thrive in mainstream schools
- ▶ *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* for disengaged young people who will not benefit from returning to school
- ▶ tracking and reconnecting disengaged young Queenslanders with education, training or employment
- ▶ better ways of working across government to support at-risk children and young people to remain engaged.

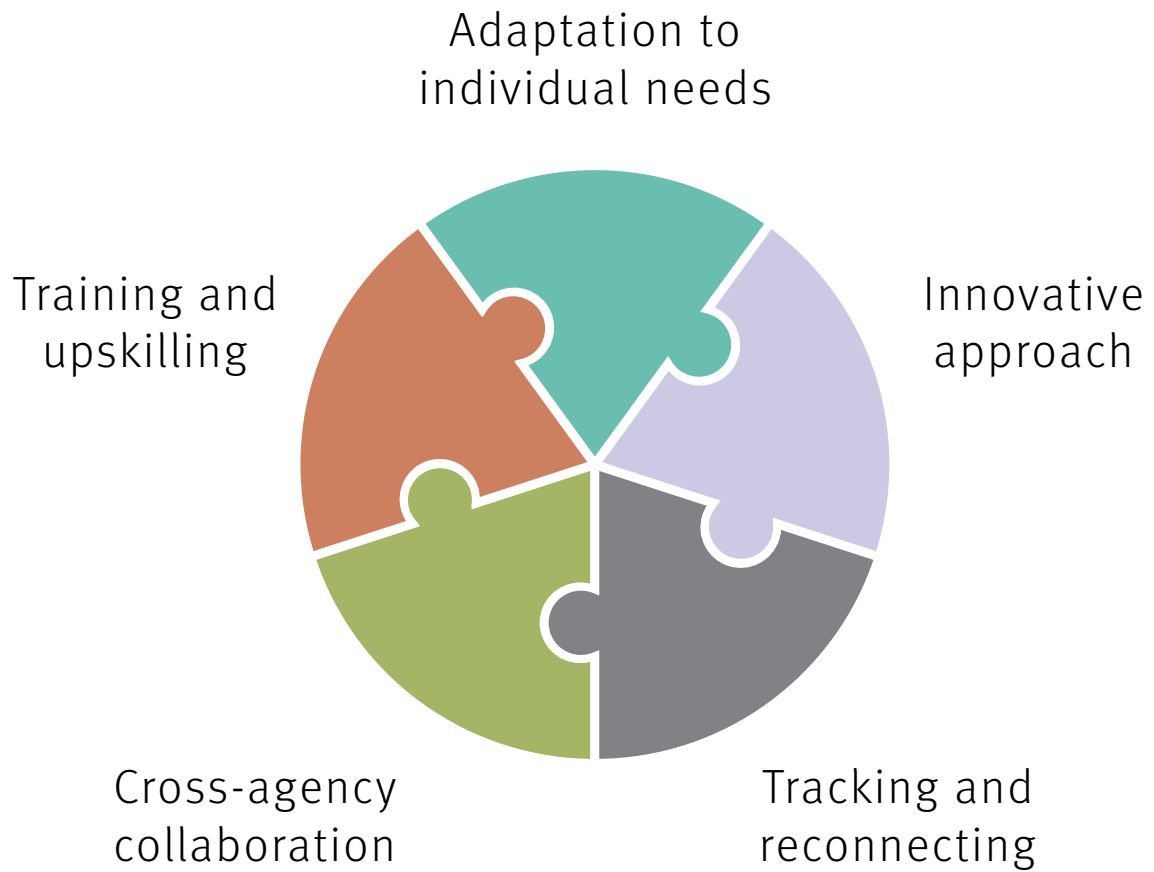
These approaches have been the result of remarkable leadership, commitment and courage to drive better responses to disengaged children and young people. These wins prove that we can meet the needs of all children and young people.

We are implementing a [Youth Engagement Plan](#), which lays out targeted actions to strengthen our approaches to at-risk students from early childhood, through school, to post-school.

But this is just the beginning. Principals, educational leaders and other government agencies need to continue to work together to build on this strong momentum. Together we can make a difference in the lives of Queensland's young people.

This is an important agenda – and it is everybody's business.

KEYS TO THE MOMENTUM





qld.gov.au/youthengagement