



# The Queensland Brain Builders Summit

**30 August 2023**

Brought to you by The University of Queensland's Queensland Brain Institute and ARACY's Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership





# Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP)

TQKP is a Queensland-based intermediary and relationships broker focused on systems change for the benefit of children, young people and families.

Instigated and hosted by ARACY - Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, TQKP brings together a cross-sectoral coalition of Queensland leaders, organisations, practitioners, and collaborators working together with the shared purpose of catalysing systems to change the odds for Queensland children and young people to thrive.

## To achieve this, TQKP is:

- bringing people, organisations and sectors together
- using what we know and learn
- supporting leaders and catalysts, and
- facilitating collaborative action, innovation and development.

## In this way, we can build better connections, capabilities and capacities in the key areas of:

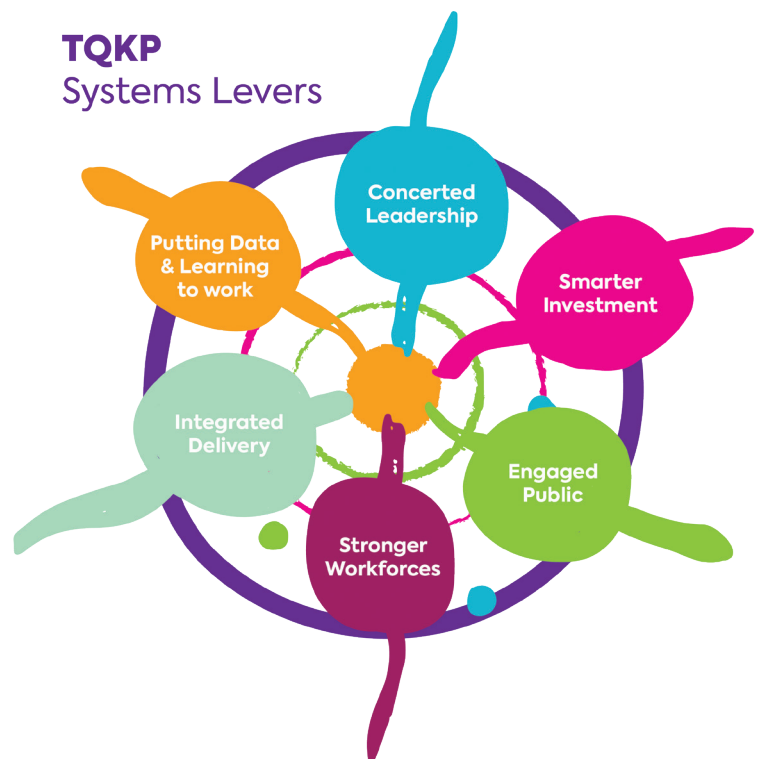
- concerted leadership
- smarter investment
- enabled caregivers and communities
- integrated delivery
- stronger workforces, and
- putting data, evidence and experience to work.

## This means a better equipped and stewarded ecosystem, working well together to:

- reduce the experience and consequences of inequity and adversity, and
- improve opportunities, capabilities and outcomes

*... so that all Queensland kids can have a great start and journey in life.*

## TQKP Systems Levers



# Agenda

## 10.30am Welcome and introduction

Norman Swan Board of Directors, ARACY

## Acknowledgment of Country

Sheryl Batchelor Director, Yiliyapinya Indigenous Corporation

## Summit opening

Ishika Digurmarti Youth Advocate

## Announcement

Norman Swan Board of Directors, ARACY

## 10.45am Supporting children and young people to thrive

Michael Hogan Convenor, TQKP

## 11.00am Keynote speeches: “What are the 3 most important discoveries from Neuroscience that we should all know about?”

Professor Jeanine Young (AM) Professor of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Sunshine Coast

Professor Karen Thorpe ARC Laureate Professor of Child Development, The University of Queensland

Professor Zoltan Sarnyai Professor of Neuroscience, James Cook University

## 12.05pm Panel discussion: “The implementation pathway, who does what and by when, and who needs to be at the table”.

Dr Dana Newcomb Medical Director Integrated Care, Children's Health Queensland

Jessica Rudd CEO, The Parenthood

Dr Kate Liley National Research Manager, Goodstart

Sheryl Batchelor Director, Yiliyapinya Indigenous Corporation

Oliver Dobrenov Youth Advocate

## 12.45pm Brain Builders overview

Michael Hogan Convenor, TQKP

## 12.55pm Closing remarks

Penny Dakin CEO, ARACY

## 1.00pm Light lunch



## Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Queensland (UQ) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which we meet. We pay respects to their Ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country. We recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society.

Artwork: *A Guidance Through Time* by Quandamooka artists, Casey Coolwell and Kyra Mancktelow

# Presenters



**Professor Jeanine Young AM – Professor of Nursing  
University of the Sunshine Coast. School of Health**

Professor Jeanine Young is a registered nurse, midwife, and neonatal nurse. As a Professor of Nursing and a maternal child health researcher with a focus on primary prevention she has a special interest in the development and evaluation of community based, integrated care interventions designed to engage and partner with families to build their capacity in addressing vulnerabilities they may experience which impact the health of their children and family. She also has an interest in contributing to the evidence-base which underpins the actions of the health and support workforce who care for them. A specific foci of her research is the development of community-based, continuity-of-care interventions to address the multiple disadvantages experienced by families with social vulnerabilities who experience the greatest burden of infant mortality (IM) and morbidity. This work currently includes Pēpi-Pod® Program implementation and evaluation, a safe sleep enabler program which has demonstrated infant mortality reductions in Queensland's regional and remote regions in 2022, the Queensland Health safer infant sleep clinical guideline development (2022), and evaluations of novel health advisory roles designed to support families with social vulnerabilities to promote optimal health outcomes.



**Professor Karen Thorpe – Laureate Professor and Group Leader  
The University of Queensland. Queensland Brain Institute**

Professor Karen Thorpe is Australian Research Council Laureate Professor and Group Leader in Child Development at the Queensland Brain Institute, at The University of Queensland. Her research is grounded in the understanding that early learning experiences shape brain development and are critical in establishing trajectories of health, social inclusion and learning across the lifespan. Karen leads a multi-disciplinary team of developmental scientists undertaking large scale longitudinal studies with embedded studies to explicate mechanisms that enable or limit children's life chances. A particular focus of her work is early care and education environments. Her current research, as a chief investigator on the ARC Centre of Excellence for Children and Families across the life course, and through an ARC Laureate fellowship, is to examine barriers to providing high quality early learning services in developmentally vulnerable communities. In 2013 and again in 2019 Karen was named by the Australian Financial Review as among Australia's 100 Women of Influence for the impacts of her research on educational and family policy. She chairs the Australian Evidence for Learning Early Years Reference Council, is board member of Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth and serves on the National Advisory Council for Beyond Blue - Be You. Karen's works in the 'natural laboratory' of childcare to identify childhood predictors of life-course health, learning and wellbeing (addressing SDGs – 1,3,4,8,10). Her >300 research outputs include high-impact articles spanning Developmental Neuroscience, Paediatrics and Psychology.



**Professor Zoltan Sarnyai – Head of Laboratory of Psychiatric Neuroscience  
James Cook University, Australian Institute of Tropical Health & Medicine**

Professor Sarnyai is a medically trained neuroscientist with an internationally recognised expertise in the neurobiology of stress and mental health disorders. Before moving to James Cook University where he is Professor of Neuroscience, he was University Lecturer in the Department of Pharmacology, University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Pembroke College, where he was Director of Studies for Medicine. He trained at McLean Hospital at Harvard Medical School and at The Rockefeller University, supported by the DuPont-Warren Award and a NARSAD Young Investigator Award, respectively. His group described the role of stress neuropeptides oxytocin and corticotropin-releasing factor in addiction, for which he was awarded the Richter Prize by the International Society of Psychoneuroendocrinology and the efficacy of ketogenic diet in preclinical models of schizophrenia. Zoltán was appointed Lady Davis Visiting Professor at Technion-Israel Institute of Technology to study the neuro-metabolic aspects of schizophrenia. He currently serves as Chief Scientific Advisor for the Tropical Brain and Mind Foundations and is on the Executive Committee for the International Society for Nutritional Psychiatry Research. He is Associate Editor for Nutritional Neuroscience and Frontiers in Neuroscience, and editorial board member of Stress.



# Expert panel



## **Dr Dana Newcomb** – Medical Director Integrated Care, Children’s Health Queensland

Dr Dana Newcomb is the Medical Director of Integrated Care at Children’s Health Queensland (CHQ), a general practitioner, and a non-executive director of Brisbane South PHN. Within CHQ, Dana leads the implementation of the organisation’s Integrated Care Strategy, contributing to the development of new models of care, and driving more effective collaboration across agencies which support children and young people. Her team also works to improve access to care for children living in disadvantaged or underserved regions through Project ECHO. ECHO is a model of education and mentoring delivered through virtual communities of practice, which strongly encourages interprofessional practice. Clinically Dana works as a GP at Young Mothers for Young Women, an integrated hub dedicated to caring for young Mums and their babies.



## **Jessica Rudd** – CEO, The Parenthood

Jessica Rudd has worked in business, politics, communications, and media, and is an accomplished public speaker and media performer who has contributed to newspapers, magazines, television and radio programs and has written novels for publication. Jessica now lives in Brisbane with her two children and works as the interim CEO of the Parenthood, along with being the non-executive director for the Australian Agricultural Company, and the Pro Chancellor at Griffith University. She is also the co-chair of the National Apology Foundation.



## **Dr Kate Liley** – National Research Manager, Goodstart

Dr Kate Liley is Goodstart Early Learning’s National Research Manager. Kate has over 15 years’ experience in the government and not-for-profit sectors in research portfolio leadership, specialising in establishing successful collaborative research partnerships and programs that deliver evidence to ensure all children have the learning, development, and well-being outcomes they need for school and life. Kate’s research interests are grounded in childhood sociology and focus on the equity of access to early childhood education and care (ECEC), supporting a thriving ECEC workforce and embedding high-quality ECEC early programs that deliver positive outcomes for children, their families and broader society into the future. Kate holds a PhD from Griffith University, is a Chief Executive Women (CEW) Scholar and an Adjunct Industry Fellow with the Queensland Brain Institute.



## **Sheryl Batchelor** – Director, Yiliyapinya Indigenous Corporation

Sheryl Batchelor is an Aboriginal woman with ancestral ties to Kunja. She has over 30 years of teaching, training, and leadership experience in various educational, community and health settings. She has been involved in projects that have measurably improved the cognitive, social, and emotional skills of the most vulnerable children, youth and adults with severe learning and behavioural challenges arising from adverse life experiences. In 2019, Sheryl established Yiliyapinya Indigenous Corporation. Yiliyapinya is a not-for-profit registered charity addressing the decrease in brain health of vulnerable people in a culturally appropriate manner.

## **Ishika Digurmarti** – Youth Advocate

Ishika is a year 10 student at a Brisbane public high school where she studies psychology, literature and legal studies. With her deep passion for community and justice, her interest in the refugee movement was sparked when she underwent treatment for benign epilepsy at the same hospital as baby Asha. She loves fashion, travel and spending time with her friends and her aspirations include becoming a human rights lawyer or politician. At present, she is interested in breaking down the stigma surrounding mental health support for children from multicultural backgrounds, a cause that resonates closely with her own experiences.

## **Oliver Dobrenov** – Youth Advocate

Oliver is a year 10 student at a Brisbane public high school. He is studying film and television and is interested in musical theatre and performance. He has performed in several musicals in school, community, and commercial theatres around Brisbane, and has ambitions to continue to hone his singing, dancing, and performing skills. Oliver has a passion for social justice and believes all young people – no matter their gender, culture, or identity – should have opportunities to be cared for and educated by compassionate adults.

# Thriving Kids Brain Builders Initiative

Thriving Kids Brain Builders Initiative (TKBBI) is an initiative led by TQKP and ARACY, in conjunction with The University of Queensland's Queensland Brain Institute and other research, government, NGO and social enterprise partners across Queensland.

TKBBI is designed to generate, translate, and apply knowledge from neurosciences and related child and adolescent sciences for the benefit of Queensland children, young people and their families and communities.

As the Thriving Kids Brain Builders Initiative's key knowledge and implementation collaborator, QBI is supporting TQKP and ARACY to:

- 1 Build workforce, organisational, caregiver and public understanding of neuroscience for children and young people;
- 2 Build practice, community, and systems capabilities and collaboratives to embed neuroscience across places, spaces, and workforces;
- 3 Leverage the expertise and efforts of academics, leaders, practitioners, and organisations across Queensland to enable large scale and sustainable practice and systems change.



Figure: Key TKBBI Elements



**UQ's Queensland Brain Institute** is a leading Australian centre for brain research, devoted to a fundamental understanding of how the brain works from its smallest components through to the integrated networks that underpin human thought and behaviour. QBI's vision is to improve lives through a deeper understanding of the brain in health and disease.

Our investment in discovery and translation, and in nurturing tomorrow's research leaders, is directed at making these possibilities a reality. QBI recognises the early years of life as critical in brain development, and positive early experiences across childhood as setting the foundation for lifelong health, learning and wellbeing.

**QBI is supporting TQKP to deliver six research, development, and translation activities (elements):**



**Brain Builders Modules**

**Lead Dr Sally Staton**

In collaboration with Emerging Minds and other partners, we are delivering foundational eLearning modules and resources aimed at increasing the awareness, knowledge, and understanding of foundational concepts of neuroscience and child development. We are working with organisations across systems, programs, and communities to support children and families to thrive.



**Deadly Brains**

**Lead Dr Azhar Potia**

In collaboration with Yiliyapinya Indigenous Corporation, we are supporting the research and development of place-based neuroscience initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Working with Yiliyapinya, we are collecting and building knowledge about the evidence base, approach, value, and impact of the program's work.



**Brain Healthy Places and Spaces**

**Lead Dr Sandy Houen**

In collaboration with place-based initiatives in Queensland, we are investigating the driving forces, enablers, and barriers to implementing place-based, neuro-informed practices. We are developing resources, best practice frameworks, and examples to support set up and strengthening of practices in place.



**Brain Builders Community of Practice**

**Lead Ms Bonnie Searle**

In collaboration with Children's Health Queensland, and other partners, we are implementing Neuroscience Communities of Practice to establish shared knowledge, learning and supports. We are supporting and investigating the delivery of neuroscience focused communities of practice, across and within sectors in Queensland.



**Brains Trust Collaborative**

**Lead Ms Lucy Bryce**

In collaboration with diverse government, non-government, philanthropic and academic partners, we are convening events, establishing critical networks, and generating new collaborative opportunities. We are advancing the knowledge and implementation of neuroscience to support children and their families.



**Brain Building Workforces**

**Lead Dr Laetitia Coles**

In collaboration with government, non-government, and tertiary training organisations, we are supporting the development of neuroscience-informed training programs and implementation across sectors and workforces. We are sourcing, developing, and sharing key frameworks to guide curricula reviews and implementation into frontline practice.

# Emerging Minds.

National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health

## Understanding brain development online course

Brains aren't just born; they're built over time. Nurturing and responsive relationships and safe environments are key to developing thriving brains.

### About this course

This course was developed by Emerging Minds in partnership with the **Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)** and the **Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP)**, and in collaboration with **The University of Queensland's Queensland Brain Institute (QBI)**.

The experiences we have and the environments we live in directly shape our brains. Understanding how brains are built can help you to make a positive difference in the lives of children and families.

Just as a house needs a sturdy foundation, a brain needs a good base to support all future development. This course will introduce you to the interactions, relationships and environments that lay the foundation for healthy brain development. It will provide you with an increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of foundational concepts of neuroscience, including how positive development in the early years sets us up for a lifetime of learning, health and wellbeing.

This course explores neuroplasticity, the impacts of stress and trauma on brain development, and the important role of 'serve and return' interactions and executive functioning in supporting a child's wellbeing. It also includes information on strategic framing, best practice and 'what works examples' to improve children's mental health, development and wellbeing in your work context.

### Why was this course developed?

Children's brains are built through interactions with people, communities, systems and environments. And if thriving and healthy brains are built through relationships, then we all have a significant role to play in children's development.



Put simply, we are all brain builders, and we have a responsibility to ensure that children are provided with opportunities that allow their brains to develop and thrive.

No matter the kind of service you work in, the learnings in this course will help you to support infants, children, adolescents and families to build resources for lifelong wellbeing.

### How was this course developed?

This course draws on the latest research, clinical insights from academics and health and social service professionals, and the lived experience of child and family partners (parents).

### Who is this course for?

This course is for anyone who interacts with children and families during their day-to-day service delivery. It will benefit practitioners across multiple sectors and systems including health, social and community services, justice, housing, and education. It will also be useful for professionals involved in management and leadership, policy making, strategic planning, quality improvement, and systems change.

The course is suitable for people with no prior understanding of neuroscience, along with those looking to increase their knowledge of the research and best practice.

### What is included in the course?

This course features reading materials, reflective activities, and video interviews with researchers, practitioners and parents.

This resource was co-produced with:



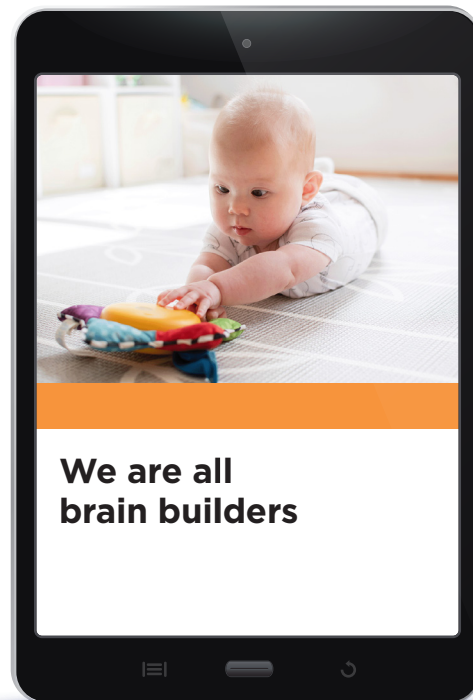
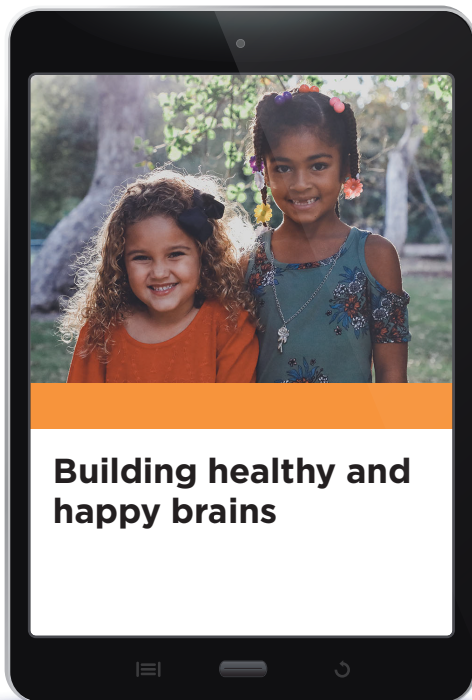
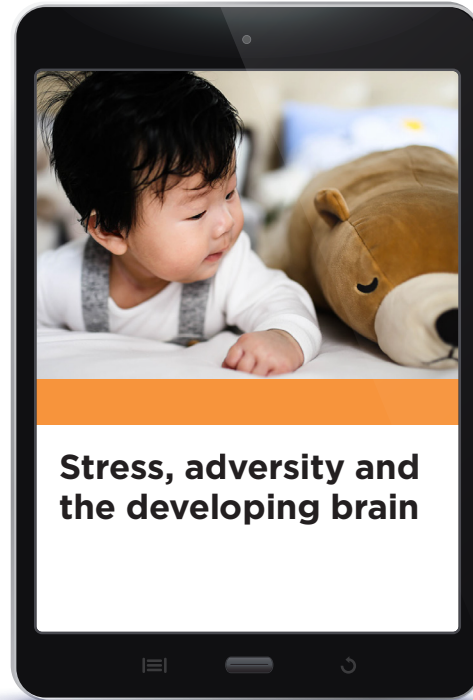
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minds.  
com.au**

The National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health (NWC) is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health under the National Support for Child and Youth Mental Health Program.



Thanks to our partners at Emerging Minds, the modules are now live and free for anyone who is interested in understanding brain development.



Log in now at:

[emergingminds.com.au/online-course/understanding-brain-development](https://emergingminds.com.au/online-course/understanding-brain-development)

# Embedding Brain Building in Queensland

## Outcomes and actions from the Brain Builders Academic Roundtable and Thriving Kids Brain Builders Implementation Workshop

The Brain Builders *Academic Roundtable* and *Thriving Kids Brain Builders Implementation Workshop* were held at The University of Queensland on Tuesday 25 July 2023.

These key TQKP events brought together research and system leaders from across Queensland to connect, catalyse and learn. The focus of the events was to advance research and embed knowledge of brain development across workforces, services, training, place-based and community organisations in Queensland.

### The Brain Builders Academic Roundtable

Thirty research leaders from Queensland universities and institutes attended the academic roundtable. The purpose of the roundtable was to identify and build research collaborations, with a view to building R&D focused on applied neuroscience and child development across Queensland. The session drew on participants' extensive expertise in applied neuroscience and related fields focused on supporting children and young people to thrive.

Attendees were representatives from:

**Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth**

**Central Queensland University**

**Griffith University**

**James Cook University**

**Queensland University of Technology**

**The Academy of Organisational Neuroscience Australia**

**The University of Queensland**

**University of Southern Queensland**

**University of the Sunshine Coast**

**Queensland Children's Hospital**

Working together, attendees identified, shared, and prioritised a series of actions to support R&D in Queensland, including those focused on collaborative research, community engagement and curricular review and development.

### Key priorities and actions identified by the academic roundtable

#### Priorities

Bringing together researchers, universities, government, community organisations, and service providers from across Queensland to:

**Create an interdisciplinary, networked research centre / collaborative focused on the developing child**

Draw upon applied neuroscience and brain building to create a networked research centre / collaborative underpinned by a clear, unifying vision for action.

**Develop a shared vision for brain building in Queensland**

Prioritise investment, implementation, and collaboration with community organisations, service providers, and government departments.

**Embed brain building into all tertiary curricula**

Review and revise current curricula and identify existing tertiary courses that have implemented understanding of brain development into their curricula as exemplars.



## Actions



**Develop trusting, collaborative relationships** between researchers, service providers, and government departments to define an integrated child development strategy that prioritises embedding brain building into policy and service provision.



**Support and advance research of cohort, place- and space-based initiatives** so that all children are supported to thrive irrespective of their location and circumstances.



**Use translatable research evidence to empower and support children and young people, their families, and communities**, to harness their own knowledge and experience to co-define problems and co-design solutions.



**Build an integrated database** to track health, educational, wellbeing, and social outcomes of children and families in Queensland, and **capabilities and infrastructure for data-matching**.



**Integrate cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral expertise** to embed brain building into systems, organisations, and service-provision.



**Create an inclusion agenda** integrating expertise from within and across workforces and sectors that takes into consideration all children and young people, including those represented in First Nations, disability, refugees, immigration, and regional and remote locations.

## Brain Builders Implementation Workshop

A total of 90 systems leaders from government, non-government, training, community, philanthropy, and advocacy organisations attended. The purpose of the workshop was to identify and share key strategies, opportunities, and actions for creating authorising environments for brain building within Queensland workforces, services, and communities.

This session drew on the collective expertise of leaders from health, education, social and justice sectors.

Attendees included representatives from:

Act for Kids	Health and Wellbeing Queensland	TAFE Queensland
Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)	James Cook University	The Academy of Organisational Neuroscience Australia
Campus Kindy	Kyabra Community Association	The Salvation Army Communities for Children
Catholic Early EdCare	Logan Together	Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership
Central Queensland University	Mercy Community	Tim Fairfax Family Foundation
Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service	Office for Youth	Tropical Brain and Mind Foundation
Department of Child Safety, Seniors, and Disability Services	Outback Futures	University of Southern Queensland
Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs	Pathways to Resilience	University of the Sunshine Coast
Department of Education, Early Childhood	PCYC Queensland	UQ's Child Health Research Centre
Department of Seniors and Disability Services	PeakCare Qld Inc.	UQ's Institute for Social Science Research
Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training	PeopleBench	UQ's Queensland Brain Institute
Dovetail	Queensland Mental Health Commission	UQ's School of Psychology
Emerging Minds	Queensland University of Technology	UQ's UQ Poche Centre for Indigenous Health
Goodstart Early Learning	REFOCUS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Services	UQ's School of Human Movement and Nutrition Sciences
Griffith University	Social Ventures Australia	Yiliyapinya Indigenous Corporation
Hand Heart Pocket	State Library of Queensland	yourtown

The workshop component of this event was facilitated by Helen Francis from Emerging Minds.

Working together, attendees identified barriers, shared opportunities, and identified actions for embedding brain building at system, organisation, supervisor, and practice levels.

## Barriers

Before identifying opportunities and actions, it was important to first acknowledge potential barriers to embedding brain building into service delivery and practice.

Across the levels of systems, organisations, supervisors, and practices, a range of barriers were identified:


Change resistance and fatigue	Short termism	Limited access to data
Competing ideologies	Financial constraints	Lack of flexibility
Internal 'politics'	Siloing	Restricted time and resource
Poor communication	Absence of shared vision	High staff/workforce turnover
Conflicting priorities	Lack of leadership support	Lack of organisational permission/prioritisation


## Opportunities and Actions


A large range of opportunities for embedding brain building within the system, organisations, supervisors, and practice were identified.


Importantly, the workshop addressed the need for a multi-faceted approach to creating the authorising and incentivising environment for innovation, development and scaffolded implementation, with explicit support, commitment and role modelling from key systems and organisational leaders.


These opportunities were synthesised and informed the development of 9 key actions to catalyse brain building in Queensland:


- 


**Enable and amplify champions and ambassadors** of brain building within and across systems, organisations and initiatives.
- 


**Embed brain building across systems frameworks and strategies**, including vision and mission statements, KPIs, accreditation, training, measures, funding, and procurement.
- 


**Acknowledge** the important role that we all play in building brains.
- 


**Highlight existing strengths and opportunities for growth**, including identifying and providing real-life examples of current practices that align with principles of brain building, including through case studies and stories.
- 

**Develop and disseminate resources and tools** to support embedding understanding of brain building within workforces, services, and communities.
- 

**Support information and practice sharing** through participation in communities of practice, learning circles, case studies, and peer-to-peer networking opportunities.
- 

**Make research and knowledge of brain building accessible** to all members of the community and across the life course.
- 

**Create time and space for professional and organisational development**, including opportunities to learn, try, and change.
- 

**Review and revise current tertiary curricula** - both through TAFE and universities - to embed key principles of brain building.
- 

**Create a shared narrative and common language** of brain building across the entire child, youth and family eco-system.



## Thank you for attending and supporting QBI and TQKP in our efforts to:

- 1 Build widespread neuroscience understanding for children and young people
- 2 Build capabilities to embed neuroscience across places, spaces, and workforces
- 3 Leverage expertise across Queensland to enable large scale and sustainable practice and systems change.

The early years of life are critical in brain development, and positive early experiences across childhood is setting the foundation for lifelong health, learning and wellbeing.





# How to get involved

We invite you and your organisation to stay in touch and engage in the Brain Builders Collaborative, be a Brain Builders Champion and/or share your Brain Building story.



**'Understanding Brain Development' learning modules**  
Complete the modules and share with your networks



Set up or join a **Community of Practice** through the Project ECHO platform



**Brain building in your organisation**  
How is your organisation embedding brain building within your workplaces, service delivery or practice?



Join the **Brain Builders event and mailing list**



**Thriving Kids Brain Builders Initiative website**  
[qbi.uq.edu.au/brain-builders](http://qbi.uq.edu.au/brain-builders)



Get engaged with **Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership**

## Contact us

### Queensland Brain Institute

[qbi.uq.edu.au/brain-builders](http://qbi.uq.edu.au/brain-builders)

E: [brainbuilders@uq.edu.au](mailto:brainbuilders@uq.edu.au)

### Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership

[aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/thriving-queensland-kids-partnership](http://aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/thriving-queensland-kids-partnership)

E: [TQKP@aracy.org.au](mailto:TQKP@aracy.org.au)

## We thank our supporters





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