

# 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

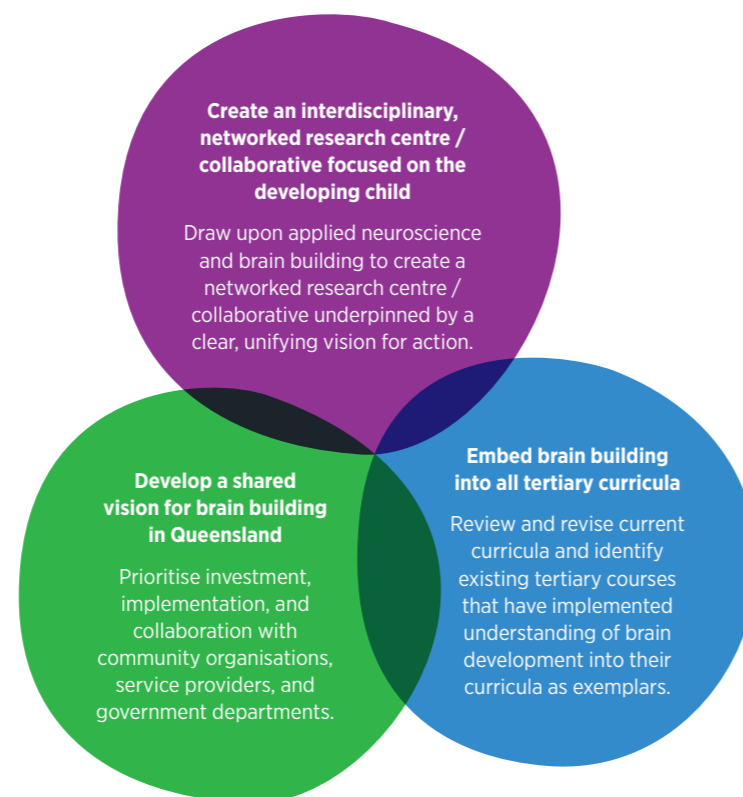
Queensland Children's Hospital

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:



### 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:

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**Enable and amplify champions and ambassadors** of brain building within and across systems, organisations and initiatives.
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**Embed brain building across systems frameworks and strategies**, including vision and mission statements, KPIs, accreditation, training, measures, funding, and procurement.
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**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.
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**Develop and disseminate resources and tools** to support embedding understanding of brain building within workforces, services, and communities.
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**Support information and practice sharing** through participation in communities of practice, learning circles, case studies, and peer-to-peer networking opportunities.
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**Make research and knowledge of brain building accessible** to all members of the community and across the life course.
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**Create time and space for professional and organisational development**, including opportunities to learn, try, and change.
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**Review and revise current tertiary curricula** – both through TAFE and universities – to embed key principles of brain building.
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**Create a shared narrative and common language** of brain building across the entire child, youth and family eco-system.