

Brain Building in Education Forum

TOWNSVILLE, TUESDAY 24 JUNE 2025



This event has been brought to you by the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation in conjunction with Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership and supported by The University of Queensland's Thriving Kids Brain Builders Initiative at the Queensland Brain Institute.

The Queensland Brain Institute (QBI) at The University of Queensland is a leading neuroscience research institute with collaborators across more than 48 countries focusing on brain development and plasticity, mental health, cognition and behaviour, brain injury, ageing and dementia. 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 the Thriving Kids Brain Builders Initiative (TKBBI) which is led by the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP) and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY).

It 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.

The purpose of the TKBBI is to use neuroscience to:

- support the capabilities of workforces, communities and caregivers; and
- shift policy, investment, programs and practices.

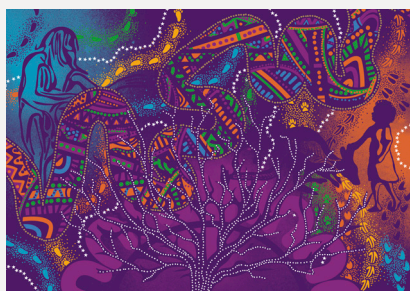
Thank you for joining us today in Townsville to explore Brain Building in Education in North and Far North Queensland.



Thanks to sponsors



And supporters



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

Agenda

- 8.30am** *Arrival and coffee*
- 9.00am** **Welcome**
Grant Webb, The University of Queensland
Welcome to Country
Aunty Jeanette Wyles
- 9.07am** **Director's Welcome**
Zoltan Sarnyai, James Cook University
- 9.10am** **Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership update**
Michael Hogan, Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership
- 9.15am** **Brain Builder's Initiative overview**
Sally Staton, The University of Queensland
- 9.22am** **Brain Health in QLD Schools Initiative re-launch**
Katie Norman, Tim Fairfax Family Foundation
Mental Health in Primary Schools in Queensland
Frank Oberklaid, Murdoch Children's Research Institute
Brain Healthy Schools Project
Sally Staton, The University of Queensland
- 10.00am** **Department of Education address**
Joseba Larrazabal, Department of Education, North Queensland Region
Catholic Education address
Jacqui Francis, Catholic Education Townsville Diocese
- 10.30am** *Morning Tea*
- 10.40am** **Panel: Translating Evidence from Neuroscience for Education**
Facilitator: A/Prof Alexandra Trollope, James Cook University
Panel members:
Zoltan Sarnyai, James Cook University
Ernest Hunter, Schools Up North Project
Donna Dowling, Townsville Hospital and Health Service
- 11.30am** **Brain Break:** Pre-service Healthy & Physical Education Teachers, James Cook University
- 11.25am** **Panel: Application of Neuroscience in Queensland Schools**
Facilitator: Dr Raoul Adam, James Cook University
Panel members:
Christopher Evers, Bwgcolman Community School
Mardi Gubba, Mary Help of Christians Catholic College
Simon Midson, The Cathedral School of St Anne & St James
Wendy Fox, Mission Beach State School
- 12.20pm** *Lunch*
- 1.00pm** **Workshop** Sally Staton, The University of Queensland
Next steps: Implementing Brain Building in Education in North QLD
Facilitators: Veronica Graham, Bec Crompton
- 2.30pm** **Closing Remarks and Next Steps**
Grant Webb, The University of Queensland
- 2.45pm** *Close*

Presenters

Dr Grant Webb

The University of Queensland

Dr Grant Webb has undertaken a number of teaching and leadership roles across a variety of educational contexts, both nationally and internationally over the past 40 years. He has had extensive experience working in both primary and secondary schools as well as in the tertiary sector. While working for the Department of Education in Queensland, Australia, he has been a classroom teacher, Learning Support Teacher, Educational Consultant, Director, Executive Director, Assistant Director-General and School Principal. Dr Webb is currently an independent Educational Consultant.

Michael Hogan

Executive Convenor, Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership, ARACY

Michael Hogan is the Executive Convenor of the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership, a joint initiative of ARACY and Qld leaders and organisations. Michael has over 40 years' experience in public purpose work in the government and non-government sectors, including as a Director-General. Michael is an Industry Fellow at the Queensland Brain Institute at UQ, an Adjunct Professor at QUT, on the Board of Directors of the Torres Health Indigenous Corporation, the Board of Directors of Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service, and Vice-President of the Council of the Queensland Library Foundation.

Associate Professor Sally Staton

The University of Queensland

Associate Professor Sally Staton is program lead for the TQKP Brain Builders Initiative at Queensland Brain Institute, The University of Queensland. As a developmental scientist, Sally has a strong commitment to research that can inform and ensure positive early life experience for all children. Her research focuses on the role of education settings in supporting children's immediate and ongoing development. Sally has published over 170 outputs, and her research spans a range of study designs and methodologies, including evaluation studies in educational and community settings. She has a strong track record in research translation and community engagement, delivering reports for government and non-government organisations and producing professional development resources, presentations, workshops, videos, and articles for regulatory officers, parents, and communities. Sally has a strong commitment to research translation aimed at achieving positive impact. Her contribution to science translation and engagement has been recognised by several prestigious awards, including a Queensland Young Tall Poppy Scientist and Research Partnerships Excellence Award.

Professor Zoltán Sarnyai

James Cook University

Professor Zoltan Sarnyai is a medically trained PhD neuroscientist with an active research program in the neurobiological mechanisms of stress and psychiatric disorders, including schizophrenia and depression. After postdoctoral training at Harvard Medical School, he held an independent research position at the Rockefeller University, supported by two prestigious fellowships. Zoltan later served as a University Lecturer in Pharmacology and Fellow of Pembroke College at the University of Cambridge. In 2012, Zoltan established the Psychiatric Neuroscience Laboratory at JCU. Zoltan has extensive experience in preclinical and clinical stress research as well as in behavioural neuroscience and animal modelling of complex human neuropsychiatric disorders. He now leads several research projects in nutrition psychiatry, exploring the link between dietary factors and mental health. Zoltan is also the Director of the Margaret Roderick Centre for Mental Health Research, at JCU. The Centre aims to address the mental health needs of northern Queensland, as well as in regional and rural communities worldwide.

Katie Norman

Tim Fairfax Family Foundation

Katie Norman brings her education and health sector experience to the TFFF team as the Senior Program Manager. Previously the CEO and Co-Founder of the Sustainable Schools Network (SSN), Katie curated the Educating for Sustainability in Queensland: Discussion Paper 2019-2020 to enable the environmental education sector to advocate for enhanced support. The SSN was recognised in 2020 as a Banksia Awards finalist and delivered nineteen journal articles and numerous professional development events to educate and connect regional and rural Australian schools. Prior to her engagement with the education sector, Katie spent her early professional years as a therapeutic program facilitator and drug and alcohol counsellor in community and custodial corrections. Often this work was conducted in rural and remote communities in the Northern Territory and Queensland. Katie is passionate about ensuring locally relevant early intervention and understands education is a critical pathway to the healthy and vibrant futures of young people. Katie has a Bachelor of Science (Psychology) with Honours from The University of Newcastle.

Professor Frank Oberklaid AM

Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Professor Frank Oberklaid AM was the Foundation Director of the Centre for Community Child Health at The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne. He is currently Co-Group Leader of Child Health Policy, Equity and Translation at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. He has written 2 books and over 150 papers in scientific journals. Frank has long-standing clinical, research and policy interests in children's health, development and wellbeing, and has chaired or been a member of numerous expert-working groups at a state, national and international level, as well as being a consultant for the World Health Organisation and UNICEF. He was co-chair of the National Child Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy which outlines a detailed policy and service framework for child mental health in Australia. Frank's work has been recognised by a number of prestigious awards, and he has been the recipient of invited lectureships and visiting professor appointments in over 20 countries. He is the head of the team that developed the Mental Health in Primary Schools (MHIPS) project.

Joseba Larrazabal

Department of Education, North Queensland Region

Joseba Larrazabal started his teaching career at Thuringowa SHS after graduating from JCU in 1991. In 1999 he took his first leadership position as Head of Department (HOD), English/ Humanities and the Arts at Kalkadoon SHS in Mount Isa which merged to Spinifex State College. Joseba became full-time Deputy Principal (DP) in 2003 and remained in the community until the end of 2005. After Mount Isa he served as DP at Pioneer SHS, Mackay, where he had the opportunity to act as Principal at Moranbah SHS in 2006, eventually winning this position. He then had the absolute privilege of opening a brand-new state high school in Springfield as the inaugural Principal, until moving to Kedron SHS in 2014. During 7 years at Kedron, he also worked at Ferny Grove SHS as Principal, and as Assistant Regional Director (ARD). In 2021 Joseba eventually moved into ARD permanently, while also having the opportunity to act as an Executive Director of Capability in Central Office for 6 months. Appointed to the role of Regional Director for the North Queensland Region in 2023, Joseba feels he has come home.

Jacqui Francis

Catholic Education Townsville Diocese

Jacqui Francis has been the Executive Director of Townsville Catholic Education since 2018. She previously held the position of Director of Organisational Services and Capability, moving to Townsville in 2013 to take up this newly created role in the organisation. Jacqui grew up in regional Victoria and commenced her career as a primary school teacher in state schools. She has held middle and senior leadership roles in the Commonwealth and New South Wales public sectors, applying her skills across diverse industries including policing and public safety, rail transport, and road infrastructure and services. Jacqui's career has provided opportunities to work in international, national, state and regional settings on projects addressing human resource development, organisational capacity building, leadership development, governance, and improvement of organisational performance. She has a Master of Theological Studies, a Master of Business Administration (International Business), a Bachelor of Education (School Librarianship) and a Diploma of Teaching (Primary). Jacqui contributes to the broader education sector through her work with the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, the CEnet Board and the JCU College of Business, Law, and Governance Advisory Board.

Expert panel

Translating Evidence from Neuroscience for Education

Associate Professor Alexandra Trollope

James Cook University

Associate Professor Alexandra Trollope is an accomplished anatomist and educator, holding a PhD in Molecular Biology from the University of Portsmouth (UK). Her research is centred on early detection of stroke through the identification of novel biomarkers supporting rapid re-establishment of blood flow to the affected brain regions. A/Prof Trollope is recognised for her excellence in undergraduate education across the disciplines of Allied Health, Medicine, Pharmacy, and Biomedical Science. Her pedagogical approach, grounded in transitional education theory, supports student's successful adaptation to university learning. She has received multiple accolades for her contributions to teaching and inclusive practice, including a Teaching Citation and Inclusive Practice Awards. A/Prof Trollope is also committed to educational outreach, delivering anatomy workshops and science engagement activities within local schools and community settings. Her integration of innovative, technology-enhanced learning tools has been highlighted as best practice within her institution.

Prof Zoltán Sarnyai

James Cook University

Professor Zoltan Sarnyai is a medically trained PhD neuroscientist with an active research program in the neurobiological mechanisms of stress and psychiatric disorders, including schizophrenia and depression. After postdoctoral training at Harvard Medical School, he held an independent research position at the Rockefeller University, supported by two prestigious fellowships. Zoltan later served as a University Lecturer in Pharmacology and Fellow of Pembroke College at the University of Cambridge. In 2012, Zoltan established the Psychiatric Neuroscience Laboratory at JCU. Zoltan has extensive experience in preclinical and clinical stress research as well as in behavioural neuroscience and animal modelling of complex human neuropsychiatric disorders. He now leads several research projects in nutrition psychiatry, exploring the link between dietary factors and mental health. Zoltan is also the Director of the Margaret Roderick Centre for Mental Health Research, at JCU. The Centre aims to address the mental health needs of northern Queensland, as well as in regional and rural communities worldwide.

Professor Ernest Hunter

Schools Up North project

Professor Ernest Hunter is a psychiatrist and public health physician who worked as a clinician in remote Indigenous communities of Far North Queensland for 25 years before retiring from clinical practice in 2016. Prior to that he had worked at the Redfern AMS and undertaken research in the Kimberley which resulted in *Aboriginal Health and History: Power and Prejudice in Remote Australia* (Cambridge UP). That work began his enduring interest in the impact of history on the social contexts of Indigenous lives that inform – across generations – changing patterns of mortality and morbidity. He has published on a wide range of related issues including suicide, self-mutilation, alcohol use, violence, gambling, psychosis – and horticulture. Trained in child and cross-cultural psychiatry, and public health in the United States, the salience of understanding neurodevelopmental impacts and population-level analysis and planning have been constant preoccupations. Ernest remains involved in youth focused projects in Cape York and maintains a two-decade engagement with clinicians and mental health planners across Pacific Island Nations. On his retirement Ernest was awarded the Medal of Honour of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists.

Dr Donna Dowling

Townsville Hospital and Health Service

Dr Donna Dowling is a medical specialist with fellowships from the Royal Australian College of Physicians (Paediatrics and Child Health) and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (Child and Adolescent certificate). She contributes to medical leadership as the Clinical Director of the Child, Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health Services within Townsville Hospital and Health Service and has a master's in health leadership and management from the University of NSW. Dr Dowling has undergone further training in infant mental health and has presented on the benefits of child health nurse programs in preventing mental health problems in children. More recently, she has completed a research project looking at whether mental health service treatments improve the mental health of children with ASD. She has a keen interest in the social and emotional domains of children's development and the impact of relationships on their emotional intelligence development to prevent behavioural problems and mental illness.

Expert panel

Application of Neuroscience in Queensland Schools

Dr Raoul Adam

James Cook University

Dr Raoul Adam is a senior lecturer in educational psychology at James Cook University. He has extensive experience in educational leadership and design as former Director of Teaching and Learning at Southern Cross University and a Senior Academic Developer at James Cook University. He has led faculty transitions in curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy; and managed projects in Artificial Intelligence, HyFlex and Blended Learning, and critical and creative thinking. Raoul's research focuses on metacognition and epistemological development in contested cultural contexts. His framework for critical, creative and consilient thinking (i.e. Big Little Thinking) has been used in diverse secondary and tertiary contexts.

Mardi Gubba

Mary Help of Christians Catholic College

Mardi Grubba is foundation Principal of the newest Catholic college in the Townsville Diocese. Mary Help of Christians Catholic College is a secondary, co-educational college with 126 Year 7 students, from a range of backgrounds and needs. Mary Help of Christians are committed to creating an environment where students are known and loved, engaging and empowering their hearts and minds so they have the best chance to thrive. A strong focus is on the transition from Primary to Secondary, with belonging and connection at the core, underpinned by the belief that all students can learn and make progress, given the right instruction and right supports.

Simon Midson

The Cathedral School of St Anne & St James

Simon Midson commenced his teaching career in 1991 at Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School in Western Australia. By 1998, he was appointed as a Head of House with pastoral care and wellbeing responsibility for 150 students from Years 8-12. In 2005, Simon became the inaugural Head of Senior School at Great Southern Grammar in Albany, Western Australia. The school experienced a significant enrolment growth phase in the six years that followed, and it was the school of choice in the independent sector for the southern region of WA. In 2011, Simon was appointed as the Principal of St. Andrew's Grammar in Perth. St. Andrew's is a Greek Orthodox school owned by the Hellenic Community of Western Australia. During his seven-year tenure as Principal, St. Andrew's became a highly regarded academic school with a very multicultural student enrolment base. In terms of countries of origin, over 40 nationalities were represented in the student population. In 2018, Simon moved to Townsville with his family and was appointed as the Deputy Principal (Student Wellbeing) and Head of Senior School at The Cathedral School of St Anne & St James. He is delighted to be part of a highly successful school culture at The Cathedral School.

Wendy Fox

Mission Beach State School

Wendy Fox has been a guidance officer based at Mission Beach State School and services four other smaller schools in the area the past 2 and half years. With over 25 years' experience as a teacher for the Department of Education, Wendy is passionate about teaching children, especially in regard to social and emotional learning. As one of the inaugural Wellbeing Champions for the Department of Education in 2017 Wendy was given the opportunity to develop a program which taught primary school children about key parts of their brain and mindfulness. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in early childhood and primary education from James Cook University and a Master of Education Guidance and Counselling from University of Southern Queensland. Outside of work, Wendy enjoys long beach walks, photography and spending time with her family.

Christopher Evers

Bwgcolman Community School

Christopher has experience working at nearly every level within the Queensland Department of Education. His career in education began as a cleaner and teacher's aide on Palm Island. Recognising that he had found his calling, Christopher studied a Bachelor of Education (Primary) through QUT. Once graduated, he worked in schools on Palm Island and in Brisbane, as well as in Central Office, serving as a teacher, school leader and system leader. In 2023, Christopher returned to Palm Island and is currently working at Bwgcolman Community School.

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—Every Child Thriving, 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:

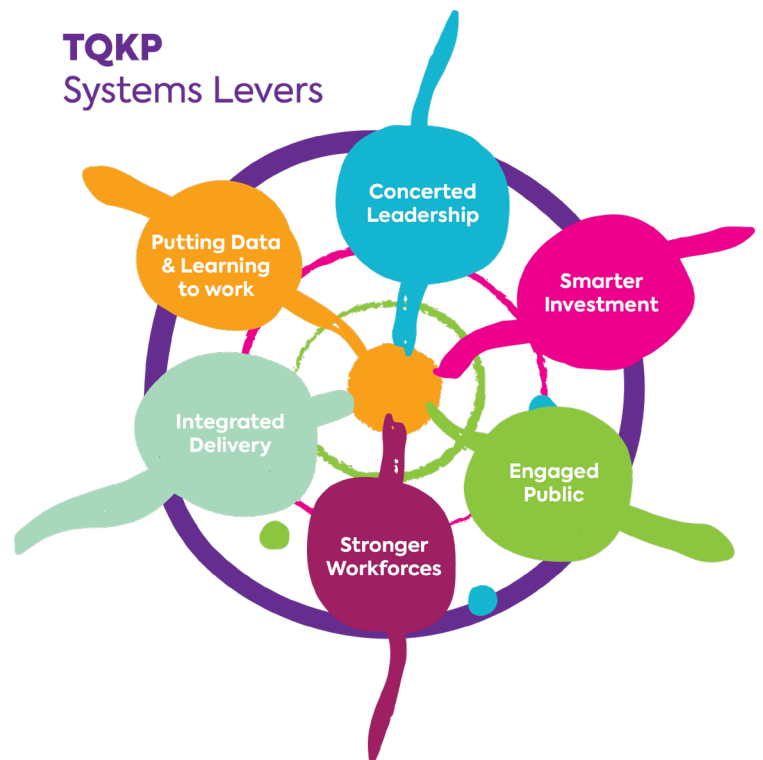
- concerted leadership
- smarter investment
- enabled caregivers and communities
- integrated service delivery
- stronger workforces, and
- putting data, evidence and experience to work.

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



Thriving Kids Brain Builders Initiative

Thriving Kids Brain Builders Initiative (TKBBI) is an initiative led by TQKP and ARACY, in conjunction with The Queensland Brain Institute at The University of Queensland 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

The Queensland Brain Institute at The University of Queensland 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.

TKBBI is delivering six research, development, and translation activities (elements):



Brain Builders Modules

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Brain Health in Queensland Schools Initiative

The Queensland Brain Institute (QBI) at The University of Queensland and Murdoch Children's Research Institute secured funding from the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation to extend the workforce enabling resources and approaches in Queensland schools.

The Brain Health in Queensland Schools (BHiQS) strategic initiative focuses on schools as critical sites to optimise brain development and promote good mental health among Queensland children. Recognising the developmental significance of the school years, the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation (TFFF) funded BHiQS for two years through their Futureproof stream.

Project components are led by **Queensland Brain Institute** (QBI) and a partnership between **Murdoch Children's Research Institute** (MCRI) and the **University of Melbourne** (UoM) and are supported by the intermediary expertise of **Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership** (TQKP).

The initiative will strategically promote enabling environments for healthy development through the school years. With a clear benefit for all young people in Queensland schools, BHiQS will prioritise regional and remote contexts through the following components:

- Adapt and pilot the Mental Health in Primary Schools initiative with the Department of Education Mount Isa Precinct (MCRI/UoM)
- Co-design a workforce Brain Healthy Schools development package for primary and secondary schools including, where appropriate/needed, complementary Brain Healthy Schools resources for students (QBI).



Together these elements aim to:

- promote, trial and evaluate whole school wellbeing approaches
- build the education workforce neuro-informed capability and common language to support healthy child development and future mental health
- collate, map and synthesise existing resources and neuro-informed practice
- create curriculum resources where stakeholders say they are needed, to support student learning about brain development.

This combination of processes, resources and knowledge will promote the healthy environments through:

- policy decisions
- resource selection and implementation
- day-to-day practice informed by current comprehensive understanding of brain development.



Brain Healthy Schools Project

A workforce capability development package for primary & secondary school staff

The Queensland Brain Institute (QBI) at The University of Queensland is a leading neuroscience research institute with collaborators across more than 48 countries focusing on brain development and plasticity, mental health, cognition and behaviour, brain injury, ageing and dementia. 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.

The Thriving Kids Brain Builders Initiative (TKBBI) is an initiative led by the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP) and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), in conjunction with QBI and other research, government, NGO and social enterprise partners across Queensland. The TKBBI generates, translates, and applies knowledge from neurosciences and related child and adolescent sciences for the benefit of Queensland children, young people and their families and communities.

Through the BHiQS initiative, the TKBBI secured funding from the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation to promote Brain Builders, common knowledge, language and purpose with schools. The Brain Healthy Schools Project (BHSP) responds to high interest from across the system to examine opportunities for embedding understanding of, and supports for, Brain Health within primary and secondary schools in Queensland.

The Brain Healthy Schools Project aims to scope, co-design and deliver a Brain Health focused workforce development package for primary and secondary school staff tailored to their specific contexts. This workforce development package will build the education workforce's neuro-informed capability and build a common language to support policy and practice decisions. This work leverages from the significant momentum, learnings, partnerships, and opportunities emerging as part of the TKBBI in Queensland.

This project is committed to ensuring that genuine workforce development needs are met, and that, where available and appropriate, existing practice and resources are recognised, integrated, and amplified.

Project Design

Phase 1: Scope

Identify, collate and review existing and emerging opportunities for embedding Brain Health for workforces & students in primary and secondary schools.

Phase 2: Co-design and develop

Co-design capability packages with implementation partners to support translation of Brain Health science into everyday classroom practice.

Project co-design steps:



Frame & Engage



Explore & Connect



Imagine & Create



Make & Test

Phase 3: Trial and deliver

Trial and deliver the co-designed workforce development packages across schools within Queensland.

Phase 4: Evaluation

Evaluate the process of delivery and initial outcomes for capability development of primary and secondary teachers.

2025

2027

Deliverables

Learning episodes will:

- Be developed against best practice and **adult learning principles**
- Include **links to research** & multimedia examples of **best practice**
- Link to web-based resources (which meet **rigorous standards of evidence**)
- Include **reflection and assessment opportunities** to allow potential micro-credentialling (based on staff circumstances)

BHSP will identify opportunities for embedding brain health capability development in **initial teacher education programs** across Queensland's universities.

Project Guiding Principles



Genuine co-design – including listening to and enacting the perspectives of students, teachers and system leaders



Respectful partnerships – with schools, staff, service providers and government and non-government organisations



Non-replication – utilising and drawing from, where available, existing resources, tools, and opportunities



Application of the highest quality scientific knowledge and evidence – regarding brain health, education, learning, neuroscience & implementation science



Focusing on pragmatic solutions – recognising the real-world challenges faced across schools, communities, places, and systems within Queensland



Identifying opportunities for scaling and sustainability – to ensure the best chance of the greatest impact of this project within the short and long-term

Contact

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Mental Health in Primary Schools in Queensland

Murdoch Children's Research Institute

MHiPS: Building the capacity of primary schools to prevent, identify and respond to student mental health and wellbeing needs

Developed by paediatricians, educators, psychologists and researchers at Murdoch Children's Research Institute and the University of Melbourne, and codesigned with teachers and school leaders, MHiPS is a capacity-building initiative. Its aim is to increase mental health and wellbeing resourcing in schools (in the form of a dedicated Mental Health and Wellbeing Leader - MHWL), and enhance student mental health and wellbeing support, both within and outside the school gate.

Key areas of focus include:

- Increasing trained mental health and wellbeing staff to alleviate the burden on teachers.
- Providing staff with evidence-based professional development and support to help them identify and manage mental health issues in the classroom more effectively.
- Enhancing care pathways to mental health providers.
- Implementing systemic changes that prioritise mental health and wellbeing, enabling schools to identify and invest in evidence-based preventative mental health strategies and programs aligned with their school need.
- Embedding social-emotional learning across all school curricula.

An extensive evaluation of MHiPS shows it is having a significant impact at scale, with MHWLs and school staff observing:

- changes in school culture (more positive language around mental health and wellbeing and less stigma)
- greater confidence to identify and respond to student mental health and wellbeing needs
- increased school prioritisation of student mental health and wellbeing
- better access to services
- increased whole-school capacity to support student mental health and wellbeing
- improved student mental health and wellbeing.



The findings from the MHiPS evaluation resulted in a statewide implementation of MHiPS in Victoria, where it was initially piloted. While MHiPS has received overwhelming support and demonstrated significant impact on schools, teachers and students in Victoria, we understand that a one size-fits-all approach won't meet the unique challenges faced by different regions in Australia. Thanks to the generous support of the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation, we have the opportunity to scope and pilot what an adapted model of MHiPS might look like for regional and remote communities in Queensland. With MHiPS providing a robust evidence-based framework and strong foundation, we are excited to collaborate with Queensland schools and communities to tailor and pilot the MHiPS initiative in Queensland.

Contact us

For more information or to get involved, please contact:

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How to Get Involved

We invite you and your organisation to stay in touch and engage in the Brain Builders Collaborative



Thriving Kids Brain Builders Initiative
website qbi.uq.edu.au/brain-builders



Get engaged with **Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership**

Contact us

Queensland Brain Institute

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Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership

www.aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/thriving-queensland-kids-partnership-tqkp

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