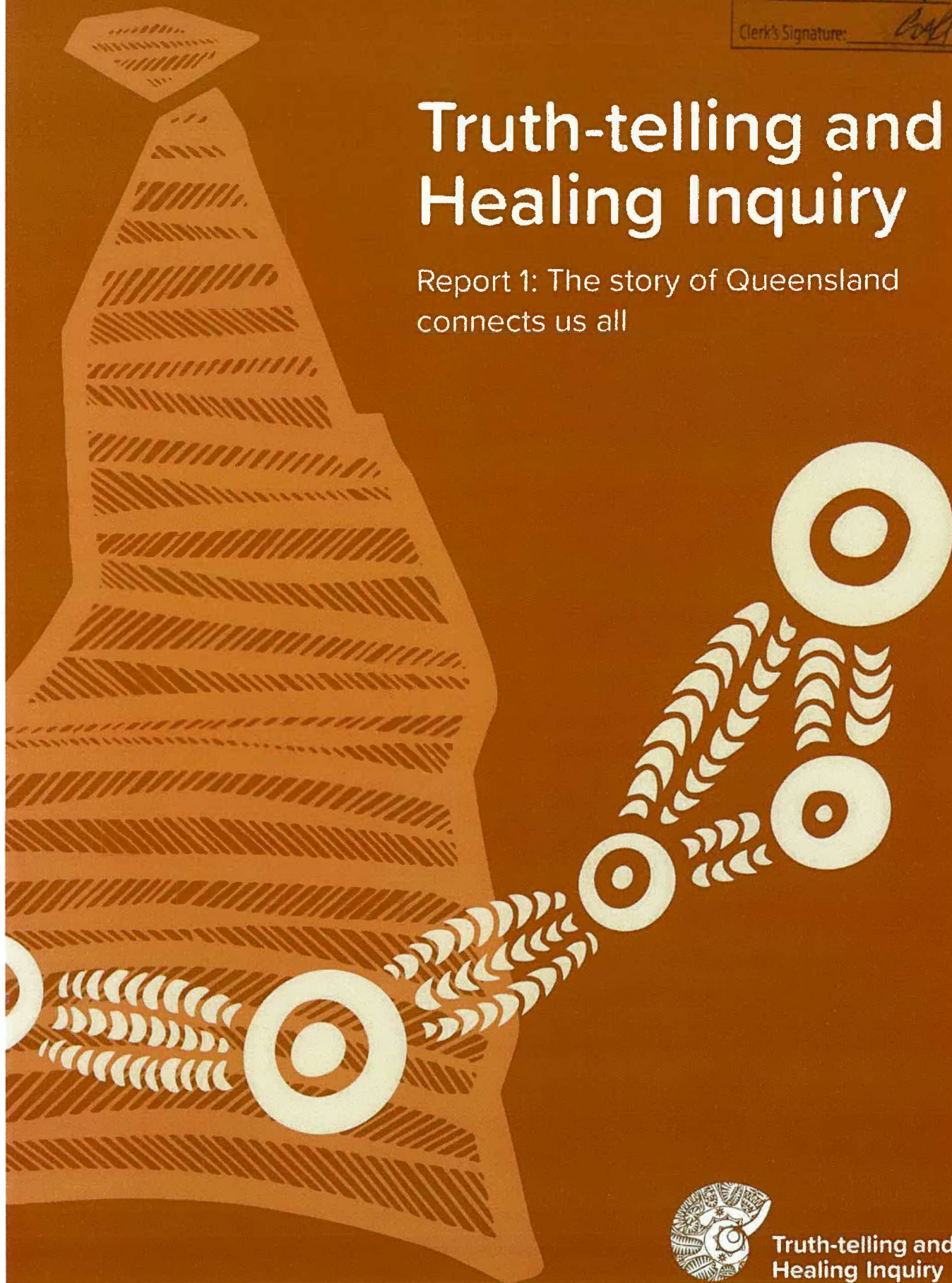


Queensland Legislative Assembly
Number: SB24T218
28 NOV 2024
MP: MS FARMER
Clerk's Signature: *[Signature]*

Tabled
By Leave

Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry

Report 1: The story of Queensland connects us all



Truth-telling and
Healing Inquiry

About this report

This report is the first report of the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry.

It outlines the purpose and establishment of the Inquiry, and the work undertaken from July 2024 to October 2024. This report also provides a brief overview of the next planned stages of the Inquiry's work.

Interpreter

The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If you have difficulty in understanding this document, you can contact the Queensland Government on 13 QGOV (13 74 68) and they will arrange an interpreter to communicate the report to you.

The Queensland Government website has more information: www.qld.gov.au/languages

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Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise the Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Queensland as the first custodians of this land. We acknowledge their ancestors, spirits, resilience and legacy.

We recognise the many distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Queensland – the freshwater peoples, saltwater peoples, desert peoples and rainforest peoples. Each have their own unique laws, traditions, languages, culture and traditional knowledge, and are the caretakers of their lands, seas, waters, air and resources.

The Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry will complete the picture of Queensland's history through truth-telling. The Inquiry acknowledges that the colonisation of Queensland and the dispossession of peoples, lands, seas, waters and air had devastating, and ongoing, impacts on Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Truth-telling uncovers experiences of endurance, resilience and strength of Queensland's first peoples and is a powerful way to begin the healing process. Healing will help Queensland move towards a more positive relationship with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our aim is to create a shared future that is inclusive of all and embraces our diversity. Our future is one of truth, reflection, healing and respect.

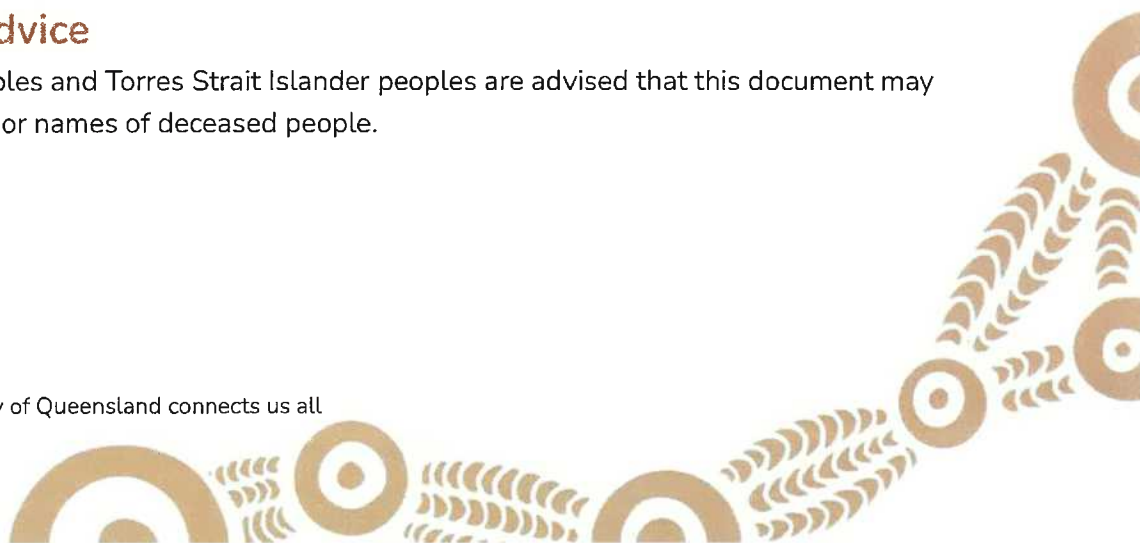


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Cultural advice

Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this document may contain images or names of deceased people.



Message from Inquiry Chairperson

Every one of us is a part of Queensland's story.

Evidence of the history of Queensland and the impacts of colonisation is being uncovered by the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry.

While the Inquiry is new – it started on 1 July 2024 – the evidence the Inquiry will uncover pre-dates Queensland being established as a state in 1859.

It's important that all Queenslanders learn more about Queensland's history, and Queensland's legacy, through the critical work of the Inquiry.

The Inquiry has a role to strengthen the relationship between non-Indigenous people and Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to foster reconciliation and a deeper respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and experiences that transcend generations.

The Inquiry is about unity and contributing to a reconciled Queensland, based upon a shared understanding of a full and complete history of Queensland.

It is critical that the Inquiry hears evidence of lived experience under government restrictions. The initial priority is hearing from Elders and their experiences living under restrictions on missions and reserves. The Inquiry has already received evidence from participants in the first Meanjin (Brisbane) Hearing in September. The evidence of Elders will be lost to the sands of time if we don't take the opportunity now to capture their experiences and have them on official record.

The Inquiry has recently launched its online portal, inviting Queenslanders to make a submission. We remain focused on gathering evidence from those with lived experience, with the Inquiry team preparing for truth-telling sessions and hearings across the state. This report details when and where the Inquiry will be over the next 3 years. In addition, we will continue to hear evidence about the role of government and other organisations in relation to both historical and current issues. The Inquiry has scheduled two more truth-telling sessions to occur in December in relation to issues of youth justice and education.

I look forward to many Queenslanders joining us on this journey to discover the history behind the state we all call home, and to build our reconciled future, together.

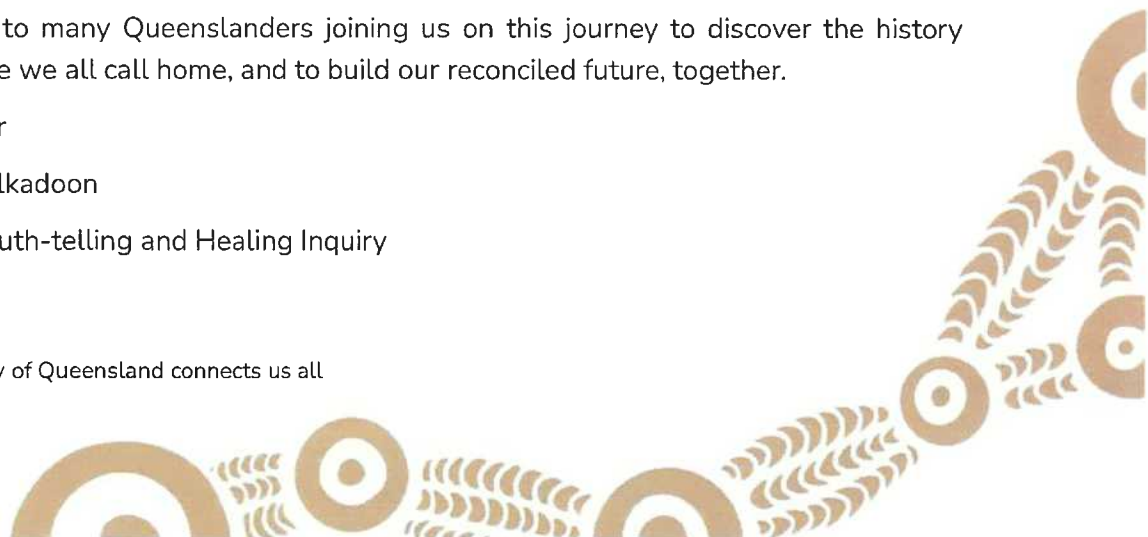
Joshua Creamer

Waanyi and Kalkadoon

Chairperson, Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry



Image: Joshua Creamer, Inquiry Chairperson



Executive summary

Overview

The Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry commenced on 1 July 2024. It will examine the effects of colonisation in Queensland and produce an authoritative public record of Queensland's history. As part of its final report, the Inquiry will record the evidence it has received and may make findings and recommendations to inform future policy making.

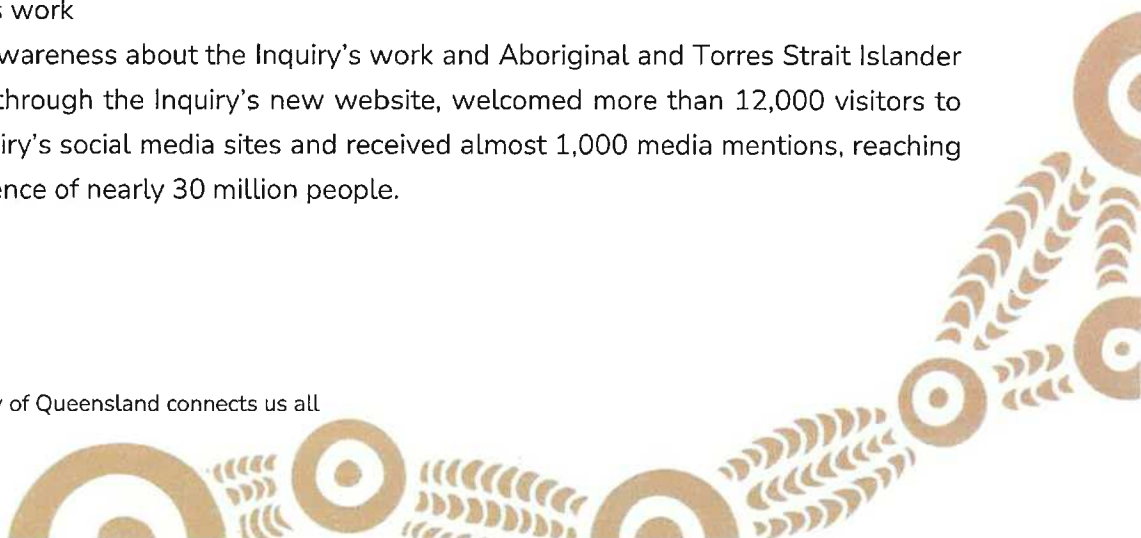
About the Inquiry

Chairperson Joshua Creamer, and Members Cheryl Buchanan, Ivan Ingram, Vonda Malone and the Honourable Roslyn Atkinson AO were appointed to lead the Inquiry. They are supported by a team of staff that includes community participation and support, legal, policy and research officers, strategic communications, engagement and corporate.

First steps

Since 1 July 2024, the Inquiry has:

- commenced consultations in preparation for the first community truth-telling sessions and hearings
- met with Queensland State Archives and identified over 200,000 items and 4,000 physical artefacts held by archives relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference
- held a ceremonial hearing, attended by over 2,000 people in person and online
- held its first truth-telling hearing in Meanjin (Brisbane) where it heard evidence from 7 participants who shared evidence of their lived-experience, experience of their families and their research work
- held a truth-telling session with government representatives with submissions received from 14 government entities, and oral testimony from 6 Directors-General and the Queensland Police Commissioner
- invited over 430 community organisations to provide submissions, in preparation for planned truth-telling sessions over the coming months
- held community events, met with Elders, community leaders, business and community groups, and government representatives to raise awareness about the Inquiry's work
- raised awareness about the Inquiry's work and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through the Inquiry's new website, welcomed more than 12,000 visitors to the Inquiry's social media sites and received almost 1,000 media mentions, reaching an audience of nearly 30 million people.



Next steps

Over the next 3 years, the Inquiry will engage with people across the state – Aboriginal peoples, Torres Strait Islander peoples, and non-Indigenous people – to help complete the story of Queensland that connects us all.

Final report

By June 2027, the Inquiry will deliver a final report to the Minister in response to its Terms of Reference regarding the effects of colonisation in Queensland, including the impacts of our history and current barriers faced by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Inquiry's findings and recommendations will offer an opportunity for the Queensland Government to deliver practical outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland.

Get involved

All Queenslanders are invited to share evidence, stories, histories, and experiences to complete the picture of our state's history. You can make a submission to the Inquiry at www.truth-telling-qld.com.au.



Background

The Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry was established under the *Path to Treaty Act 2023* (Qld) (the **Act**), following a co-design process with communities across Queensland.

It has been established with a Chairperson and 4 Members. According to the Act, Inquiry Members must act independently and in the public interest, with particular regard to the interests of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Inquiry is a process to seek evidence, facts and information about the effects of colonisation in Queensland. It will provide Queenslanders with a more complete understanding of the past, and of the barriers that exist in the present, including the ongoing effects of Queensland's history that exists today.

"It's vitally important for all Queenslanders to firstly engage with the Inquiry but also to understand the history of our state. Information, records, history and experiences define us all as Queenslanders. Truth-telling is an opportunity to move forward and heal."

Joshua Creamer, Inquiry Chairperson

The Act required that a Terms of Reference be provided to guide the Inquiry's focus. The Terms of Reference was published by the Queensland Government in May 2024. A copy is available at www.truth-telling-qld.com.au. The Terms of Reference guide the objectives, scope and outcomes of the Inquiry.

The **Terms of Reference** task the Inquiry with:

- examining the effects of colonisation in Queensland, including:
 - the effects on and experiences of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples of colonisation
 - the role of government, faith-based organisations and other entities in the colonisation of Queensland
 - the ongoing systemic impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland
- conducting research into, educating and promoting awareness about the impacts of colonisation and the history of Queensland
- making findings, recommendations and providing advice to the Queensland Government.



The Inquiry will deliver a final report to the Queensland Government within its 3-year term. The Inquiry's final report will include findings about the evidence it has received and recommendations to inform future policy making.

The Inquiry has features of a commission of inquiry, that has been tailored to ensure truth-telling sessions and hearings are accessible, non-adversarial and can be conducted in culturally appropriate, trauma-informed ways. This ensures that the Inquiry can facilitate and support Queenslanders to share their story safely.

The Inquiry is one of two bodies able to be established under the *Path to Treaty Act (Qld) 2023*.

The First Nations Treaty Institute (Institute) is separate from the Inquiry. The Institute is a statutory body, independent of Government. Its purpose is to facilitate and enable the advancement of work to co-develop a treaty making framework. It is overseen by the First Nations Treaty Institute Council, which is currently working to establish the Institute.



About the Inquiry

Inquiry Members

The Inquiry has a Chairperson and 4 Members. The Members act independently of government. They are a diverse group of people who strongly represent their culture and bring a broad range of skills and experience.

All Members are passionate about listening, searching for and sharing truth, and supporting healing. They aim to foster inclusiveness and mutual respect while also building awareness and understanding of Queensland's history following colonisation.

They invite all Queenslanders to walk with them as they work right across the state during this Inquiry.



Pictured L-R: Ivan Ingram, Vonda Malone, Joshua Creamer, Cheryl Buchanan, the Hon Roslyn Atkinson AO

Chairperson Joshua Creamer

Chairperson Joshua Creamer is a proud Waanyi and Kalkadoon man with connections to Northwest Queensland. He is a barrister and a former Commissioner for the Queensland Law Reform Commission, Chair of the Bar Association of Queensland, Indigenous Affairs Committee, Chair of the Griffith University Elders and First Peoples Knowledge Holders Advisory Board and member of the Griffith University Council.

Member Cheryl Buchanan

Member Cheryl Buchanan is a proud Guwamu woman and lifetime campaigner for Aboriginal rights, social and environmental justice. Member Buchanan is a renowned publisher, playwright, author, speaker, director, teacher, lecturer, and traditional dancer.

Member Ivan Ingram

Member Ivan Ingram is a Wiradjuri and Filipino man from Parkes, New South Wales, and was the first Indigenous appointment as Judicial Registrar to the Federal Court of Australia, where he specialised in the native title practice area, and has had a career in native title, human



rights and First Nations Governance. Member Ingram has held several governance roles with Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations both domestically and internationally.

Member Vonda Malone

Member Vonda Malone is a Torres Strait Islander woman with connections to Erub (Darnley Island) and Cape York. Member Malone has extensive professional experience working to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for her region, along with encouraging women and people in regional and remote communities to pursue leadership opportunities.

Member the Honourable Roslyn Atkinson AO

Member Roslyn Atkinson is a former judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland, during which time she served as Chair of the Queensland Indigenous Justice Committee and was a member of the national Indigenous Justice Committee of the National Judicial College of Australia.

Inquiry staff

Inquiry staff are led by a Senior Executive Director, with a total establishment of 49 positions, including Members. The Inquiry is hosted by the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts. Support staff assisting the Inquiry are employed by the Department but report to the Senior Executive Director and Chairperson.

Community Participation and Support team

This team supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants to engage with the Inquiry and share evidence. The team is made up of staff who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. The team includes social and emotional wellbeing officers who work with counsellors to support participants to share their story safely.

Legal, Policy and Research team

The team works closely with the Community Participation and Support team to support participants to share their evidence safely, provides advice to the Chairperson and Members, ensures the Inquiry's legal framework is consistent with the Act and supports the Inquiry's development of policy and research. The Inquiry's Legal team is supported by barristers who have been engaged as Counsel Assisting the Inquiry.

Strategic Communication, Engagement and Corporate team

The Strategic Communication, Engagement and Corporate team facilitates the Inquiry's strategic communication and engagement, public awareness and education functions and provides executive, operational and business support to the Inquiry.



Values-based approach

The Inquiry has established core values, based on the Terms of Reference, which underpin how the Inquiry will undertake its work. The core values distinguish the Inquiry from other legal processes.

- Cultural integrity and responsiveness
- Trauma-aware and healing-informed practice
- Free, prior and informed consent for participants
- Respecting Indigenous data sovereignty

These values underpin the Inquiry's policies, practices and procedures.

Financial information

The Inquiry's 3 year budget and structure was co-designed by the Interim Truth and Treaty Body (ITTb) and the Queensland Government, as approved in November 2023. The co-design and approval occurred prior to the Act's proclamation on 24 April 2024. The establishment of the Inquiry concluded the ITTB's work.

Inquiry expenditure to the period ending 30 September 2024 is outlined below:

| Expenses | \$M |
|---|-------|
| Employee expenses | 1.40 |
| Supplies and services | 1.27 |
| Total spend to date | 2.67 |
| Approved funding | 56.05 |
| Remaining funding | 53.38 |
| Percentage of approved funding utilised | 5% |

Expenditure includes set up costs incurred prior to the formal commencement of the Inquiry on 1 July 2024.

Practice Guidelines

The Inquiry has prepared Practice Guidelines for the conduct of truth-telling sessions and hearings.

Truth-telling hearings are a formal process for receiving evidence. Truth-telling hearings will generally be open to the public but can also be held in private.

A truth-telling hearing will usually be recorded and published on the Inquiry's website at www.truth-telling-qld.com.au.

Truth-telling sessions are a more informal way for the Inquiry to receive evidence. A truth-telling session can be convened by just one Member of the Inquiry. Truth-telling sessions will also generally be open to the public but can also be held in private.

Truth-telling hearings and sessions may be held in regional locations and held in different ways. They might be private and confidential sessions, group sessions, yarning circles, round tables or site visits.

The Practice Guidelines include standard procedures for conducting truth-telling sessions and hearings, for example:

- general protocols for how the Inquiry will convene truth-telling sessions and hearings
- how the Inquiry will provide procedural fairness to other parties who may wish to seek leave to appear at truth-telling sessions and hearings, tender materials into evidence, and be legally represented
- how the Inquiry will receive evidence, including documents provided to the Inquiry at truth-telling sessions and hearings.

“The Inquiry conducts truth-telling hearings and truth-telling sessions and invites submissions to obtain evidence of the matters within its Terms of Reference. As outlined by the *Path to Treaty Act 2023*, the Inquiry conducts its hearings and sessions in a culturally appropriate manner having regard to Aboriginal law and Aboriginal tradition, and Torres Strait Islander law and Ailan Kastom.”

The Honourable Roslyn Atkinson AO, Inquiry Member

Those practices and procedures generally reflect procedures of other commissions of inquiry and royal commissions. The Inquiry's Practice Guidelines are different from other commissions of inquiry as they include protocols which have been designed specifically for this Inquiry. These include:

- how the Inquiry will embed cultural protocols into sessions and hearings, using a place-centered approach



- language and communication protocols, which set out how the Inquiry will ensure all Queenslanders are able to meaningfully participate in truth-telling, regardless of the language they speak or their hearing or speech ability
- culturally responsive, trauma-aware and healing-informed practices, including how the Inquiry will make truth-telling safe and accessible for participants – before, during and after truth-telling sessions and hearings.



Image on left: Torres Strait Islander performers. Image on right: Aboriginal dancer.

“The Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry acknowledges and pays respect to Traditional Owners across Queensland. The Inquiry is Indigenous-led and supports First Nations self-determination. Its unique model places cultural protocols at the centre of truth-telling sessions so that Elders and peoples are heard, supported, and have a more culturally safe experience when presenting as applicants to the Inquiry.”

Vonda Malone, Inquiry Member

The procedures set out in the Practice Guideline apply not only to the Inquiry and its staff, but also to other parties who may seek leave to appear at truth-telling sessions and hearings. Through its Practice Guidelines, the Inquiry can ensure that truth-telling sessions and hearings are conducted in ways that:

- embed cultural integrity and responsiveness in sessions and hearings
- are trauma-aware and healing-informed
- ensure participants can provide their free, prior and informed consent at every stage of the process
- respect the rights of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to control how their information is shared with the Inquiry.

The Practice Guidelines were developed on advice from, and in consultation with, Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples with expertise in trauma-aware and healing-informed practices.

A copy of the Practice Guidelines is available at www.truth-telling-qld.com.au.



Community preparation

The Community Participation and Support team leads preparation for hearings and sessions. How the Inquiry engages in preparation for community truth-telling sessions and hearings may be different. It is informed by how communities wish to engage with the Inquiry and share their evidence. Inquiry protocols generally follow 6 key stages.

| | |
|--|--|
| 1 Engage | Inquiry Members engage with key Elders and stakeholders in community. This could include Elders groups, traditional owners and native title holders, and local government. |
| 2 Invite submissions | The Inquiry invites submissions from local community and business organisations. This assists in informing the Inquiry about issues affecting each community before holding truth-telling sessions and hearings. |
| 3 Local evidence gathering | The Inquiry may hold initial truth-telling sessions in the form of site visits or roundtable meetings with key community organisations, Elders and other knowledge holders, before inviting individuals to participate in community truth-telling sessions. These initial truth-telling sessions assist in providing Inquiry Members with evidence about each community and its history. |
| 4 Prepare participants | Members of the Community Participation and Support team and the Legal team work together with participants who wish to give evidence at a truth-telling session or hearing. They ensure participants are able to share their evidence safely and provide their free, prior and informed consent. This process involves teams travelling to community to provide information to potential participants, and work with them to prepare for a truth-telling session or hearing. |
| 5 Community sessions/ hearings | The Inquiry holds truth-telling sessions and hearings across Queensland. Community sessions or hearings may be held over a number of days or weeks and can include opportunities for members of the community who have worked with the teams to give evidence in public sessions, individual sessions (public or private), group or family sessions, or site visits. |
| 6 Participation | Following community truth-telling sessions or hearings, the Inquiry may facilitate opportunities for members of community who were not able to give evidence at a community truth-telling sessions to make a written, video or audio submission or give evidence at a private truth-telling session. |



Trauma-aware and healing-informed practices

For truth-telling to be a way of healing, it must be safe and accessible.

Participants giving evidence at a truth-telling session or hearing are supported by members of the Community Participation and Support team, the Inquiry's social and emotional wellbeing officers, independent counsellors and social support, interpreters, and independent legal advisors, where needed.

In addition to the Practice Guidelines, independent counselling and legal advice, and Community Participation and Support staff, the Inquiry also provides:

- media guidelines to ensure culturally sensitive reporting practices and respect of the wishes of participants and their right to free, prior and informed consent for media interviews, photographs or recording
- social and emotional wellbeing support for Inquiry Members and staff
- culturally responsive, trauma-aware and healing-informed training for Inquiry Members, staff and Counsel Assisting.

“Being culturally responsive, trauma-aware, and healing-informed is a fundamental part of our way of doing and being in the Inquiry. The nature of the work and the stories we want to gather means we must carry participants as safely as possible through this journey. The way we are doing this is by ensuring participants have control of their journey and engagement with the Inquiry, and access to social and emotional wellbeing officers, independent legal advice, and independent counsellors.”

Ivan Ingram, Inquiry Member



Informing and engaging Queenslanders

Consultations and community awareness

A key focus of the Inquiry's early work was to engage with communities to raise awareness about the Inquiry and undertake consultations in preparation for holding truth-telling sessions and hearings.

In its first 100 days the Inquiry held over 60 community engagements, across the state. The Inquiry spent 35 days travelling around Queensland to raise awareness about the Inquiry's work.



Image: Cheryl Buchanan, Inquiry Member at community event

“There is a difference between community awareness and community engagement. Community awareness is about meeting people where they’re at – it could be the first time they’re hearing about us. Through sharing information about the Inquiry we hope people will walk away feeling empowered and included. Community engagement is about relationship building. The onus is on us to share and listen and work with Community on a way forward. Those relationships must be built on trust, honesty and transparency. Only once we have that foundation can we achieve genuine and honest truth-telling.”

Cheryl Buchanan, Inquiry Member



The Inquiry held community events in Meanjin (Brisbane) on 23 July 2024 and Waiben (Thursday Island) on 2 September 2024. These events were an opportunity for Inquiry Members to meet with key Elders and representatives from those communities, introduce themselves, share information about the purpose of the Inquiry, and how the Inquiry will approach its work over the next 3 years.

Following on from these community events, Inquiry Members engaged in consultations with Elders, community members and organisations in preparation for truth-telling hearings sessions being held across the state.



Communities visited include:

- Zenadth Kes (Torres Strait)
- Gimuy (Cairns)
- Cherbourg
- Sunshine Coast
- Meanjin (Brisbane)
- Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island)
- Inala
- Gold Coast.

These engagements deliver on a requirement of the Terms of Reference, for the Inquiry to consult with Aboriginal peoples, Torres Strait Islander peoples, persons of relevant skill and expertise and other stakeholders prior to holding truth-telling sessions and hearings.

Through its early engagement, Elders and community members have informed the Inquiry's development of its practices and procedures. They have guided the Inquiry's workplan for truth-telling sessions and hearings and what evidence must be prioritised and preserved. Consultation also

guided the themes and issues to focus the Inquiry's future research, and what current barriers and obstacles exist to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples full participation in the public, economic and social life and public affairs of Queensland.



Hearings and sessions

Ceremonial hearing

The Inquiry held a ceremonial hearing at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre on 16 September 2024, attended by over 2,000 people in person and online.

The hearing introduced the Inquiry and its Members, shared information about the Act and Terms of Reference and explained how the Inquiry will do its work over the next 3 years.

It included Welcome to Country ceremonies and cultural performers.

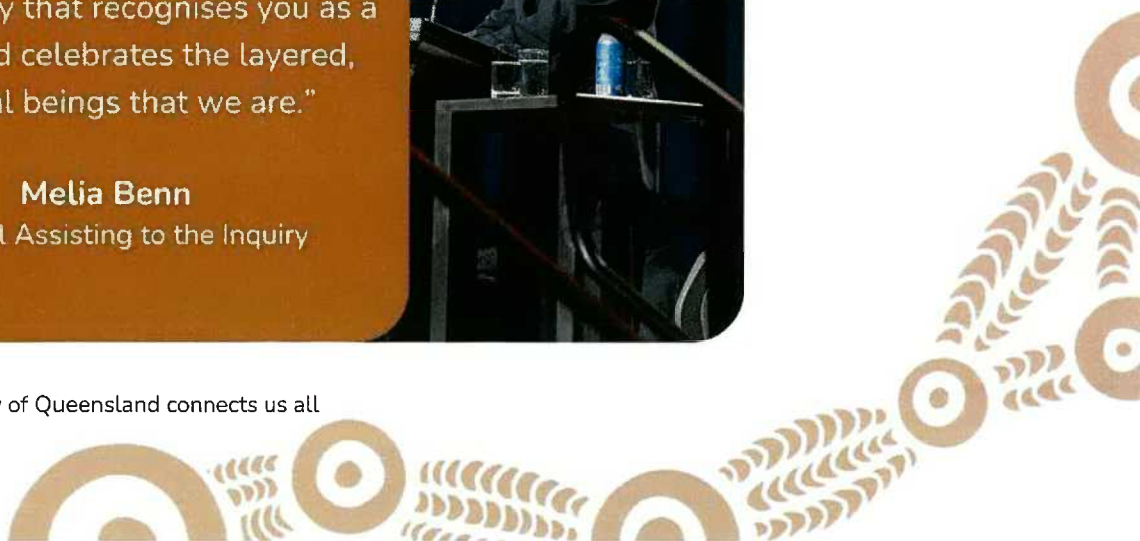
Chairperson Joshua Creamer spoke about the colonial history of Queensland, key points in the history of Queensland's legal relationship with its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and stories of resistance, allyship and unity. Counsel Assisting, Angus Scott KC and Melia Benn spoke about the Inquiry's legal framework established under the Act and how all Queenslanders can contribute to the Inquiry's work. A video recording of the ceremonial hearing and transcript are available at www.truth-telling-qld.com.au.



Image: Torres Strait Islander dancers on stage

“Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been studied for almost 250 years. Unfortunately, though, these studies have often been conducted through one-way glass with no sound. This is different, this is a time for you to give your story, your way - a way that recognises you as a whole and celebrates the layered, spiritual beings that we are.”

Melia Benn
Counsel Assisting to the Inquiry



Meanjin (Brisbane) truth-telling hearing

The Inquiry held its first truth-telling hearing in Meanjin (Brisbane) on 18-20 September 2024. Over 150 members of the public attended the first day of the hearing at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, with hundreds of people also attending on days 2 and 3.

The Inquiry heard evidence from 7 participants who shared evidence of their lived experience, experience of their families, plus their research work.

Participants shared the experience of their families and the restrictions that were placed on them living on missions and reserves. They spoke of the control that was placed over their movements, languages and cultural practices, and wages.

That evidence included accounts of children being separated from their families to live in dormitories from a very young age, and women being sent out to work as domestics.

"I sat waiting in the foyer while Andrée went in and spoke to a white official from the Department about my agreement and my working conditions... Andrée was in the office a long time I was getting nervous. When Andrée came out... she said "Les, the Department wants me to deposit your pay into a bank account, which the government controls. It's ridiculous..." She had told the Department, and now me, that she would be paying me directly, all ten dollars a week. Andrée paid nothing to Cherbourg. That was in 1966."

Aunty Lesley Williams

Participant

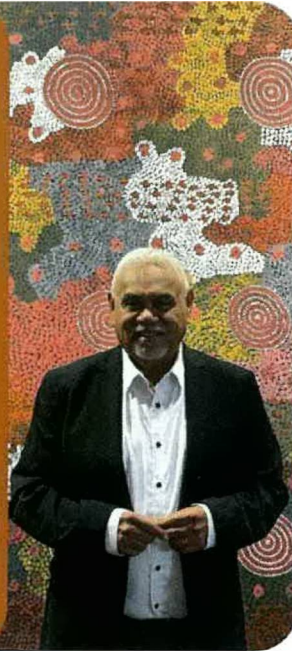
Submission of Aunty Lesley Williams dated 17 September 2024,
paragraph [154]



"We need to be mature enough to accept the things that happened all those years ago. We aren't accountable. You aren't accountable. I'm not accountable for it. But it's the history. It's what happened."

David Wragge
Participant

Submission of David Wragge dated 17 September 2024, paragraph [82]



The Inquiry heard evidence about the strength and resilience of those participants and their families, together with stories of unity and reconciliation and advocacy.

Participants also spoke about the importance of truth-telling, understanding Queensland's history, and encouraging others to come forward to share their evidence and contribute to the Inquiry's work.



"For those in the audience who are thinking about maybe I should or I shouldn't give evidence, this mob will look after you and you should give evidence, not for... yourself but for the generation who have not yet been born, but need to know who they are and where they came from."

Professor Tracey Bunda
Participant

Recordings, transcripts and written submissions are published on the Inquiry's website at www.truth-telling-qld.com.au.



Truth-telling session for government representatives

On 24 September 2024 the Inquiry held its first truth-telling session with government representatives in Meanjin (Brisbane). The truth-telling session was attended by almost 200 people at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

At the truth-telling session, Counsel Assisting tendered written submissions received from 14 government entities in response to the Inquiry's invitation for submissions. The written submissions related to:

- the historical and contemporaneous relevance of those government entities to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference
- an overview of any position, policy, strategy, plan or actions those government entities have in place relevant to the Terms of Reference
- categories of historical documents held by those government entities relevant to the Terms of Reference
- work, tasks, goals or actions allocated to those departments pursuant to findings or recommendations by previous inquiries since 2010, relevant to the Terms of Reference.

"Each department has committed both... in the submissions that we have received but also through the actions of their presence here today to a truth-telling process which can lead to better outcomes for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people."

Ben Dighton
Counsel Assisting to the Inquiry



"For 165 years the Department of Premier and Cabinet and its predecessors have been at the centre of government in Queensland. As a central agency and one of only 3 that date back right to the beginning in 1859 of Queensland's existence, [the Department of Premier and Cabinet] has had portfolio responsibility for many policies and practices. I acknowledge that many of those policies and practices have had grievous impacts on First Nations people and I apologise for that."

Mike Kaiser, Director-General, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Leaders of the following government entities appeared before Inquiry Chairperson Joshua Creamer:

- Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts
- Department of Resources
- Queensland Police Service
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Queensland Health
- Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services.

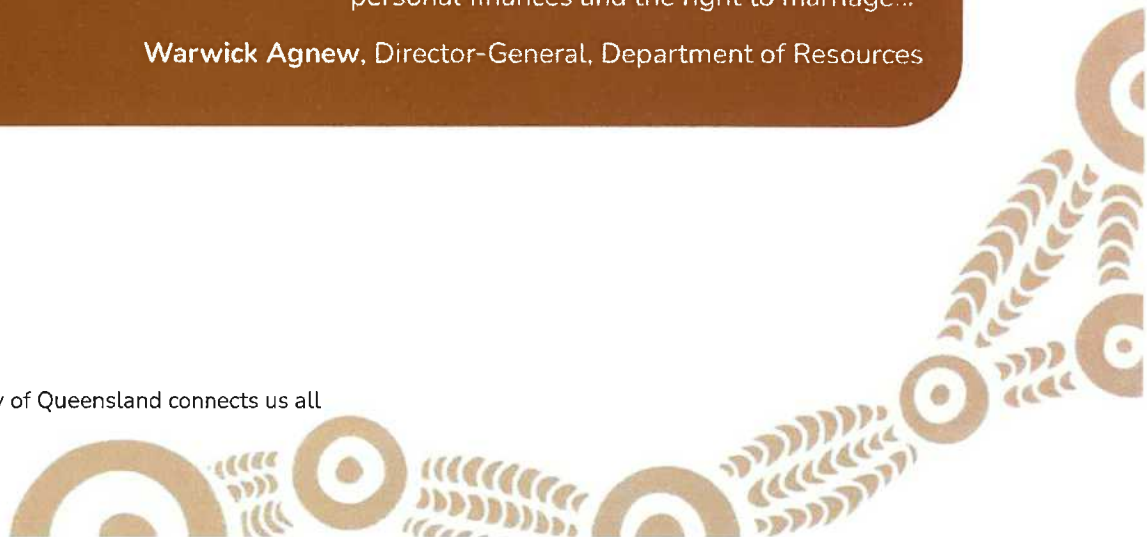
The Inquiry heard evidence from those senior representatives about historical government policies and practices in relation to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as the ongoing impacts of those policies.

“The Native Police, consisting of armed and mounted Aboriginal people commanded by European officers became the primary instrument of government control until the early 1900s. They were funded, armed and paid for by the government. They operated as a quasi-military organisation, clearing the way for non-Indigenous squatters and settlers by dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their traditional lands and dispersing them.”

Clare O'Connor, Director-General, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts

“The Chief Protector was responsible for appointing local protectors within police districts. During this period Aboriginal people including their children were deemed to be assisted or wards of the State. The records indicate the Chief Protector had extensive powers, including being able to control Aboriginal peoples' access to health and education services, employment, housing, accommodation, pensions, personal finances and the right to marriage...”

Warwick Agnew, Director-General, Department of Resources



“One of the most tragic aspects of the Chief Protector’s role was the authority to remove Aboriginal children from their families... The [Industrial Reformatory Act] provided for the establishment of industrial and reformatory schools set up for the care and custody of neglected and convicted children... While the Act applied to any child under 15 years of age, it specifically stated that any child born of Aboriginal or half-caste was automatically deemed neglected and therefore could be removed...”

Warwick Agnew, Director-General, Department of Resources

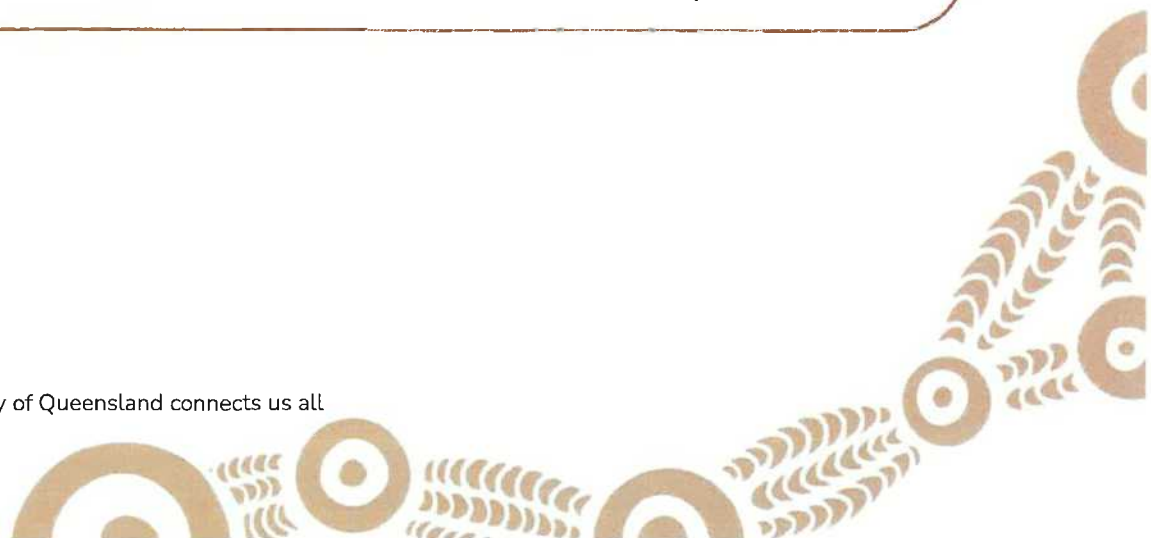
The session explored current policies and actions that address social and economic barriers for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples that exist today. The Directors-General and Police Commissioner also spoke about the importance of truth-telling and accountability of government.

“The truth-telling process is essential for [Queensland Police Service] to understand our history with the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people and communities and move forward with positive relationships. We are fully supportive of the Inquiry process and sessions to build awareness and understanding across the state... Whilst I don’t expect a first responding police officer to feel responsible for what’s happened in the past... they need to know that they’re responsible for what happens into the future.”

Commissioner Steve Gollschewski, Queensland Police Service

“...if our services don’t reflect the communities that they provide services to, then we’re failing those communities and we’re failing the people in those communities and we would want the workforce to be reflective of the community in which the service is operating... we fall short of that in nearly every location in Queensland but we’re not shying away from the fact that that’s our goal and that we’re happy to be measured and accountable...”

Michael Walsh, Director-General, Queensland Health



Invitations for submissions from government authorities

Invitations are issued to government entities to prepare a submission for the Inquiry ahead of a truth-telling hearing or session being held.

The Inquiry issued invitations to Queensland Government entities to make submissions and provide documents ahead of the government truth-telling session in September 2024.

Queensland Government entities provided over **168** documents and **2,492** pages of submissions and materials to the Inquiry.

Following the truth-telling session with government representatives, the Inquiry issued a further 8 notices to Queensland Government entities. These notices request further information regarding policies, plans and strategies relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and any internal audits, reviews or reports on the evaluation of those strategies.

Invitations to provide submissions have been issued to statutory bodies, including independent commissions, review boards and advisory boards.

Government research and taskforces

During the truth-telling session with government representatives, the Inquiry heard several Queensland Government entities are working to research historical policies, actions and records of those entities relevant to the Terms of Reference.

As part of the initial submissions provided to the Inquiry, the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts provided research undertaken by the Institute of Social Science Research at the University of Queensland.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has engaged Griffith University to produce a paper that examines what historical factors have shaped justice and regulatory institutions, policies and practices which have impacted Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland since 1859, which is due to be completed in May 2026.

The Department of Education has engaged Griffith University to research the impact of colonisation relevant to the Department's work, with a final report to be completed by March 2025.

The Queensland Corrective Services Commission has formed a partnership with Griffith University to conduct an archival research project to document the relationship of the Commission with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Queensland Police Service has established Taskforce Maiwar to investigate records, legislation, policies and practices of the Queensland Police Service to assist the Inquiry. The taskforce will examine records from within the service, memory institutions, historians and Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to record the history of the Queensland Police, both in a historical and contemporary context.



Invitations for submissions from community organisations

The Inquiry has started inviting submissions from community organisations including health services, historical societies and museums, housing providers, legal services, sporting clubs, media organisations, religious groups, native title corporations and other community support groups. This helps to prepare for holding truth-telling sessions across the state.

Invitations to provide submissions and documents to the Inquiry were sent to over 430 community organisations working in the regions surrounding Cherbourg, Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island), Townsville and Palm Island. The Inquiry plans to hold truth-telling sessions in these communities soon.



What's next?

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Community truth-telling sessions and hearings across Queensland commencing November 2024 and to continue over the next 2 years |
| 2 | Historical research and research on key current issues |
| 3 | Deliver public awareness activities to strengthen understanding in the Queensland community |
| 4 | Hold formal truth-telling hearings in 2026 |
| 5 | Prepare findings, recommendations and final report - 2027 |

Community truth-telling sessions and hearings

The Inquiry will travel regionally to hold truth-telling sessions and hearings in communities across Queensland over the next two years. Community truth-telling sessions will allow the Inquiry to hear evidence from many Queenslanders across the state.

The Inquiry will work with communities to prepare for truth-telling sessions and hearings. The Inquiry plans to hold truth-telling sessions in these locations and surrounding regions:



November 2024 to January 2025 – South-east region

February 2025 to April 2025 – North and central Queensland regions

May 2025 to August 2025 – Cairns, Cape York, Zenadth Kes (Torres Strait) regions

September 2025 to October 2025 – Gulf of Carpentaria region

July 2026 to October 2026 – South-west region

Image: Map design of Queensland



Research

The Inquiry will continue its work in inviting submissions and the production of materials from government and non-government entities, faith-based organisations, community organisations and individuals. The materials received in response to those invitations will help shape the Inquiry's work and will inform its areas of focus.



Image: Inquiry Members and staff review the Queensland State Archives

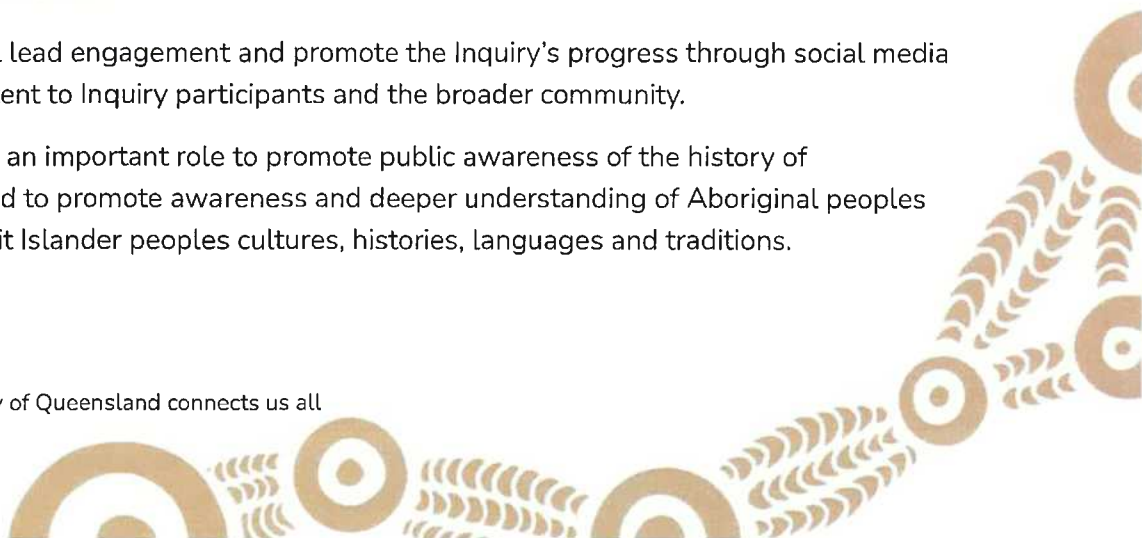
The Inquiry's early work indicates that the Queensland State Archives holds over 200,000 items (each item can range from one page to thousands of pages) and 4,000 physical artefacts that may be relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

This does not include records held in other Queensland Government entities, local governments, universities, historical societies, memory institutions, private collections or the personal records of Queenslanders held in homes across the state.

Public awareness

The Inquiry will lead engagement and promote the Inquiry's progress through social media and digital content to Inquiry participants and the broader community.

The Inquiry has an important role to promote public awareness of the history of colonisation, and to promote awareness and deeper understanding of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples cultures, histories, languages and traditions.



Formal hearings

The Inquiry will be informed by the evidence gathered through its research and community truth-telling sessions and hearings. All of this will ensure that the Inquiry identifies areas of focus which will then be examined at its formal truth-telling hearings.

The Inquiry plans to hold formal truth-telling hearings in 2026.

Reports, preserving records and educational outcomes

The Inquiry is required to produce a report regarding the efficacy of certain provisions of the Act by July 2025.

The Inquiry will produce a final report on its findings and recommendations to the Queensland Government by June 2027, unless its term is extended under the Act.

The Inquiry may release interim reports or issues papers before it delivers a final report.

The Inquiry is also working with memory institutions to explore ways in which the Inquiry's records may be preserved and maintained for Queenslanders in the future. This may include opportunities for the Inquiry to work with memory institutions, universities and other organisations to create educational platforms to ensure that all Queenslanders are able to access the Inquiry's work, in ways which uphold and respect the Indigenous data sovereignty rights.



How all Queenslanders can participate

The Inquiry encourages all Queenslanders to walk with us, be curious about our work, listen to the stories shared by Queenslanders and contribute to our work.

Learn about history, culture, languages and traditions

The Inquiry encourages Queenslanders to learn about the history of colonisation in Queensland and build an awareness of the cultures, histories, languages and traditions of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There are many ways to do this, including visiting museums or libraries or viewing educational tools and resources. Find out about some of these places and information sources at www.truth-telling-qld.com.au

Attend a session or hearing

Members of the public are welcome to attend public truth-telling sessions and hearings to listen to others sharing their stories.

Information about upcoming truth-telling sessions and hearings are published at www.truth-telling-qld.com.au. Recordings and transcripts of truth-telling sessions may be uploaded to the Inquiry's website, with the consent of participants.

Make a submission

The Inquiry has called for public submissions online. Submissions can be made to the Inquiry by visiting the website at www.truth-telling-qld.com.au.

The Inquiry may publish the submissions it receives on its website, with the consent of participants.

Participate and give evidence in a hearing or a session

The Inquiry will invite participants to appear at truth-telling sessions and hearings to share their evidence. People who may be invited to attend a truth-telling session or hearing can include:

- Aboriginal peoples, Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Queenslanders who wish to share their story, or stories about their families
- people who have knowledge or expertise relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference
- representatives of government entities, and other non-government entities, including charitable and faith-based organisations.

More information about participating in truth-telling sessions and hearings can be found on the Inquiry's website at www.truth-telling-qld.com.au.



For assistance to make a submission to the Inquiry, please email the Community Participation and Support team at CPS_tthi@dssatsip.qld.gov.au.

“The Inquiry will be holding truth-telling sessions and hearings all over Queensland over the next 3 years and we want to hear from you as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but also from non-Indigenous Queenslanders. We want to listen and we want to listen to your stories the way that you want to tell them.”

Melia Benn, Counsel Assisting the Inquiry

Connect with the Inquiry and learn more

Website

www.truth-telling-qld.com.au

Social media

[Linked In](#) @Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry QLD

[Facebook](#) @Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry QLD

[Instagram](#) @truthtellinghealinginquiryqld

Email

General enquiries: generalenquiries_tthi@dssatsip.qld.gov.au

Community Participation and Support team – for Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples who may wish to participate or make a submission:

cps_tthi@dssatsip.qld.gov.au

Legal: legal_tthi@dssatsip.qld.gov.au

Media: media_tthi@dssatsip.qld.gov.au

