

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE:
SHIFTING THE NEEDLE AT THE POPULATION LEVEL**

A Submission to the Consultation Committee for the
PUTTING QUEENSLAND KIDS FIRST: GIVING OUR KIDS
THE OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME

Prepared by

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Professor Matthew Sanders, AO, PhD is the Foundation Professor of Parenting Studies and Family Psychology and Professor of Clinical Psychology. He is widely acknowledged to be Australia's leading, internationally best-known parenting intervention researcher. As founder of the PFSC's flagship program the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program, Professor Sanders was Foundation Director of the PFSC and served in that role for 27 years. In addition to his professorial responsibilities, he is a strategic advisor to the Director and remains actively involved in program development, evaluation and dissemination of Triple P. He is a prolific researcher with over 500 publications and an h Index of 103.

Associate Professor Alina Morawska is Director of the Parenting and Family Support Centre, The University of Queensland. She is passionate about creating a world where children develop the skills, competencies and confidence to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world. Her research focuses on the central role of parents in influencing all aspects of children's development, and parenting interventions as a way of understanding healthy development, a means for promoting positive family relationships, and a tool for the prevention and early intervention in lifelong health and wellbeing. She has published extensively in the field of parenting and family intervention, with an h index of 44 and has received numerous grants to support her research. She has been recognised as Australia's top scholar in family studies.

Associate Professor Karen Turner, PhD is the Deputy Director of PFSC and a Senior Research Fellow. Karen has played a leading role in the development of many Triple P programs including Group Triple P, Triple P Online, and the Positive Early Childhood Education Program (PECE) to name a few. Her work has involved consultancy projects for state and federal government, and private sector initiatives. She has clinical and research experience relating to parent wellbeing, child development, and the prevention and treatment of a variety of childhood behavioural and emotional problems. A primary focus is reducing barriers to accessing evidence-based parenting and family support across the community. She has led the Centre's research on cultural adaptation to make parenting support more accessible for Indigenous and First Nations families, and in disadvantaged and developing communities. Her h Index is 29.

ABOUT THE PARENTING AND FAMILY SUPPORT CENTRE

The Parenting and Family Support Centre (PFSC) was established in 1996 as a specialist parenting and family intervention research and training facility within the School of Psychology at The University of Queensland. The primary aims of the PFSC are program development, research, and knowledge transfer to promote the best social, emotional, behavioural and developmental outcomes in children by addressing family and community risk factors known to contribute to adverse child outcomes. The Centre's mission is to create a better world where parents, families and communities are empowered to create safe, caring, nurturing environments throughout the lifespan. We do this through creating, sharing and using scientific knowledge gained from research on families and parenting. Our goals are to: improve the lives of families and children; create healthy, non-violent, family-friendly communities; make high-quality, culturally informed, evidence-based parenting programs accessible for all families; and translate important research findings into policy and practice.

PFSC ACCOMPLISHMENTS AT A GLANCE

Research innovation

- Development, evaluation, and global dissemination of the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program.
- First evidence-based parenting program to be scaled globally with an industry partner (Triple P International).
- First large-scale quasi-experimental population trial (*Every Family*) showing impacts of universal parenting programs on the social and emotional wellbeing of children and child maltreatment rates in Australia.
- First place-based randomised experiment demonstrating the impact of the Triple P System on rates of hospitalisation and injury, out-of-home placements, and substantiated cases of child maltreatment.
- First RCT evaluating a TV series on parenting.
- First RCT demonstrating the effects of an online parenting program: Triple P Online.
- First RCT evaluating a parenting intervention with Indigenous Australian families.
- First RCT evaluating effects of a brief low-intensity parenting program with indigenous Maori whanau in New Zealand.
- First systematic evaluation of an innovative online sports parenting program targeting parents of junior rugby league players.
- First RCT evaluating a parenting program for parents of children who are chronically bullied (Resilience Triple P).
- First evaluation of a population rollout of a public health model of parenting for parents of children with a disability.

Policy impact

- Lead role in the establishment of the Parenting and Family Research Alliance (PAFRA) a national charity devoted to increasing access for families to high-quality, evidence-based, culturally informed parenting support.
- Lead role in the planning and organisation of the 2023 Inaugural International Congress on Evidence-based Parenting Support, which attracted almost 800 delegates from 62 countries.

Social benefit

- Developers of the highly respected Triple P professional training program which has now trained over 100,000 practitioners from 72 countries reaching millions of families worldwide each year.
- Over 600,000 Queensland families have benefited from participating in a Triple P intervention since 2015 as part of the Queensland government's universal parenting strategy.

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Consultation question 1

What are the core principles you think should inform our approach to supporting children, young people, and families?

- A clear focus on building the developmental capacities of children and young people to make meaningful contributions to their community.
- Emphasis on the central importance of the quality of parenting, and the parent-child relationship throughout early childhood, and through each successive stage of development.¹
- Emphasis on the critical importance of parenting and parent-child relationships as a modifiable determinant of children's mental health, wellbeing and resilience.
- Clear recognition that parenting and family support is important in all phases of development not just the first 1000 days of life. Although the first 1000 days of life are important in laying the foundation for future development, every successive 1000 days is also important. In every stage of development, exposure to toxic, harmful, inadequate or coercive parenting practices and family relationships can impair children's mental health, physical health resilience, and overall wellbeing.
- Interventions to support children should be both child-centric and family-focused.²
- A public health approach to the delivery of evidence-based parenting support to ensure programs are inclusive of all families and embrace principles of equity, social justice and are based on principles of proportionate universalism.³
- Acknowledgement that parenting is a common pathway to achieve a diverse range of developmental outcomes related to children and young people (e.g., preventing child maltreatment, mental health concerns and youth offending).
- Explicit recognition and acknowledgement of what has already been accomplished in Queensland to support families through the state-wide implementation of the Triple P system.⁴

Consultation question 2

What are the key protective factors in keeping children and young people on positive trajectories, and how can we further boost these?

- Attend to children's basic needs for a safe, secure, loving, low-conflict family environment.
- Support or create environments that develop the kinds of capabilities that enable children and young people to grow and thrive physically, socially and emotionally.
- Help parents / carers develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to parent their children well.
- To support children's learning and success at school, target the transition to school period so that families experience healthy parent-child and parent-teacher relationships through each developmental phase.
- Assist children develop healthy peer and social relationships.
- Create safe, inclusive, family-friendly communities where the role of parenting is acknowledged, valued and properly supported.

Consultation question 3

Are there any other priorities you think that Putting Queensland Kids First should consider?

- Have a much stronger and more explicit focus on the critical importance of parenting support and family relationships in each phase of development.⁴
- Recognise the crucial importance of government investment in providing focused research funding to develop and test new and innovative ways of supporting children and their families.⁵
- Create a research funding scheme similar to the Horizon scheme in Queensland Education to specifically trial and evaluate innovations in the field of parenting and family support.⁶
- Adopt a public health approach to evidence-based parenting support that blends universal and targeted interventions such as that used in the *Every Family* population trial to prevent child maltreatment.³
- Adopt an intersectoral approach involving multiple government departments to fund the implementation of evidence-based parenting support.
- Establish a “Positive Parenting Awareness Week” similar to the statewide scheme in California.⁷
- Implement statewide the “*Every Family*” public health approach to evidence-based parenting support to reduce child maltreatment.³
- Adopt a lifespan perspective in supporting the parenting role that recognises the important role of grandparents and extended family in providing care to children.
- Develop, implement and evaluate a strategic initiative to build the capacity of a parenting practitioner workforce that can work across sectors in delivering a range of evidence-based parenting programs.
- Focus on strengthening the capacity of parents, schools and communities to work in partnership with each other to promote better learning outcomes for children.⁸
- Invest in initiatives that build the capabilities that children, parents, schools and communities to adopt lifestyles suitable for sustainable living.⁸
- Adopt a strengths-based approach to building parent, child and family wellbeing in Indigenous communities using collaborative partnerships with community-controlled organisations.
- Ensure that parenting programs are available in mental health, addiction, and juvenile justice sectors.
- Support the funding of a National Parenting and Family Wellbeing Survey every 3 years which provides the needed evidence about parent and family functioning to support evidence-based policy development.

Consultation question 4

How can we best support connection to culture and community for children, young people and families?

- Support strengths-based partnerships with community-controlled organisations that specifically seek to implement and evaluate whole of community approaches to promoting healthy and positive parent-child relationships. This approach aims to increase the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents and carers to create family environments that provide strong cultural connections and identities, and role models of accomplishment.⁹

- Develop and test parenting and family-based initiatives to help children address racism, prejudice and discrimination.
- Provide dedicated scholarships to Queensland Universities to develop the capacity of early career Indigenous researchers to become future leaders with advanced level training, knowledge, and skills in the field of prevention science with a specific focus on parenting studies and family psychology.

Consultation question 5

What would it look like for us to work together as partners, all committed to improving outcomes for children and young people?

- The Queensland Government should provide financial support for existing Queensland led, high-quality initiatives that have successfully established intersectoral collaboration between universities, researchers, policymakers, government services, and community organisations. Several noteworthy examples include the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership¹⁰, and the International Congress of Evidence-based Parenting Support (I-CEPS) hosted by the Parenting and Family Research Alliance¹¹ which is being run again in June 2025.

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