IT TAKES A Village

Creating Child Safe Communities

Together, we grow strong, safe and connected.

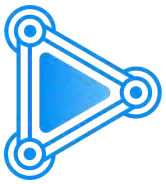
A COMMUNITY PLAN FOR CHILD SAFETY, BELONGING AND BRIGHTER FUTURES.



PLACES THAT CARE

PEOPLE WHO NOTICE

VOICES THAT MATTER



SOCIAL
SHIFT
INSTITUTE

This community plan was developed by the Fraser Coast Local Level Alliance with support from the Social Shift Institute.

Executive Summary

Early Exploration and Co-Design Summary

Creating Child Safe Communities is an emerging body of work exploring how communities can 'bring back the village' by designing everyday places, relationships, and shared practices that support children to feel safe, seen, and heard.

Rather than focusing solely on systems of response, this work is intentionally centred on prevention through community-led initiatives.

We recognise that child wellbeing is strengthened when communities are connected, welcoming, and attentive.
The exploration will draw on global research, local insight, and lived experience to test how place-based approaches can contribute to safer neighbourhoods for children and families.

The focus of this project is on under 18's in the Fraser Coast region and for the purpose of this paper they will be referred to as 'children'. It will be based on listening, prototyping, learning, and building shared understanding. We will test small ideas, gather feedback, and shape a collective vision before moving to scale.

What this work is exploring:

- Child-friendly public spaces and hubs.
- Designing everyday places - such as parks, beaches, libraries, and informal gathering spaces that are welcoming, visible, and supportive of children and families.
- Creative connection through art, play, and imagination.
- Using murals, play, storytelling, festivals, and imagination-led activities to foster connection, joy, and a shared sense of belonging across generations.
- Community-led approaches to prevention and care.
- Strengthening the role of neighbours, volunteers, trusted adults, and local organisations in creating environments where care, supervision, and early support are embedded into daily life.
- Children's voices shaping the places they grow up in.
- Actively involving children in co-design by listening to how they experience safety, belonging, and place.

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ACTION PLAN

Places that Care

Places that Care so we create the conditions for connection.

Child-friendly, welcoming environments.

This pillar focuses on where children spend time and how those places signal safety, belonging, and shared responsibility.

What it includes

- Neighbourhood hubs, lounges, parks, beaches, libraries, and informal gathering spaces
- Spaces designed for visibility, comfort, play, and connection
- Everyday public places that feel safe without feeling restrictive or institutional

Core belief

When places are designed with children in mind, communities naturally look out for one another.

Actions

Pillar 1: Places that Care

Create environments where children feel safe, welcomed and connected.

Community Spaces

- Expand the Maryborough Family Hub in partnership with Act for Kids.
- Establish a Maryborough Family Drop-In Space to support rural families.
- Develop outreach hubs across rural Fraser Coast communities.
- Create Neighbourhood Lounges in parks, libraries and community spaces.
- Advocate for child-friendly design principles in all new public developments.

Public Spaces

- Improve playgrounds and parks with shade, seating and natural play.
- Develop child-friendly wayfinding, art trails and storytelling spaces.
- Increase opportunities for free community play and imagination activities.
- Install "Welcome Families" features including water, baby change facilities and quiet spaces.
- Audit public spaces using a Child Safe Communities checklist.

Community Programs

- Expand imagination festivals, play days and family events.
- Establish regular neighbourhood play activations.
- Create pop-up libraries, toy libraries and Libraries of Things.
- Increase access to extracurricular activities through local funding partnerships.
- Encourage schools, libraries and neighbourhood centres to become community hubs outside traditional hours.

People that Notice

People who Notice so we can sustain care through presence and relationship.

Community-led care and prevention.

This pillar centres on who creates safety—not just professionals, but neighbours, volunteers, families, and trusted adults.

What it includes

- Community hosts, volunteers, elders, and local champions
- Informal supervision and “eyes on the street”
- Shared norms around care, respect, and early support
- Prevention through connection rather than reaction

Core belief
Child safety is strongest when many people notice, care, and act early.

Actions

Pillar 2: People who Notice

Build a community where everyone shares responsibility for children's wellbeing.

Community Capacity

- Deliver Child Safe Communities awareness workshops.
- Develop a "Village Champion" volunteer network.
- Recruit community hosts for neighbourhood spaces.
- Increase intergenerational volunteering opportunities.
- Create a local Child Safe Community Charter.

Community Awareness

- Promote "Notice. Connect. Support." awareness campaigns.
- Provide practical resources for neighbours, businesses and sporting clubs.
- Encourage local businesses to become Child Safe Community Partners.
- Recognise community members who demonstrate everyday care.
- Celebrate examples of positive community action.

Partnerships

- Strengthen collaboration across schools, council, neighbourhood centres, police and health.
- Build referral pathways between community organisations.
- Support shared training across agencies.
- Develop local place-based action groups.
- Share community data to inform prevention efforts.

Voices that Matter

Voices that Matter to ensure children are seen, heard, and valued.

Children shaping their own communities.

This pillar ensures children are not just protected in communities, but are active contributors
to them.

What it includes

- Child and youth voice in placemaking
- Co-design processes that listen to how children experience safety and belonging
- Creative expression through play, storytelling, and imagination
- Respecting children as citizens of their neighbourhoods

Core belief
Children feel safest in places where they are seen, heard, and valued.

Actions

Pillar 3: Voices that Matter

Ensure children help shape the communities in which they live.

Listening

- Establish Children's Advisory Groups.
- Conduct annual Child Safe Community surveys.
- Include children's voices in local planning and placemaking.
- Hold listening sessions with families and young people.
- Create ongoing opportunities for feedback.

Participation

- Co-design parks, community spaces and programs with children.
- Support youth-led community projects.
- Expand Social Spark Lab opportunities.
- Develop youth leadership pathways.
- Include children in community events and decision-making panels.

Creativity

- Support storytelling, murals and community art.
- Create imagination projects across neighbourhoods.
- Celebrate children's ideas through exhibitions and festivals.
- Develop youth media and digital storytelling projects.
- Showcase children's vision for the Fraser Coast through annual community reports.

Whole-of-Community Actions

These actions strengthen all three pillars.

- Develop a Child Safe Communities Framework for the Fraser Coast.
- Publish an annual State of Families Report and State of Youth Report to guide priorities.
- Pilot initiatives in selected neighbourhoods before scaling across the region.
- Develop an annual calendar of events and trainings for the secotr to collaborate.
- Measure progress using community wellbeing indicators, participation and belonging.
- Secure long-term partnerships and investment.
- Share learnings through the Social Shift Institute.
- Celebrate progress through an annual Child Safe Communities Summit.



Community Posters

Placed in key locations around town, including parents toilets to showcase encouragement and child safe communites.

I BELIEVE IN YOU

I'm proud of the person you are becoming.

You're doing a great job of expressing your feelings.

You are so brave and courageous.

Your effort matters more than the outcome.

You are loved **unconditionally.**

You are capable of finding solutions to problems.

You are enough, **just as you are.**

You're not alone, I'm here to support you.

You have a big heart and are always willing to help others.

You have a **kind heart.**

You're making progress, and that's what matters.

You are capable of anything you set your mind to.

You are growing stronger and smarter every day.

Your uniqueness makes you special.

I'm proud of you.

HBNC
Creating Connected Communities

01



Introduction

The exploration of creating 'Child Safe Communities' in the Fraser Coast is grounded in a simple but powerful observation: children thrive in communities where people know one another, places invite connection, and care is shared rather than outsourced.

Across cities, towns, and neighbourhoods - both in Australia and internationally there is growing recognition that formal systems alone cannot carry the full responsibility for child safety and wellbeing. While legislation, services, and professional responses remain essential, they are most effective when embedded within connected, attentive, and welcoming communities.

Placemaking offers a practical lens through which to explore this challenge. It focuses on how the design and activation of everyday places such as parks, streets, libraries, beaches, and informal gathering spaces can shape behaviour, relationships, and collective responsibility. When these places are intentionally designed with children in mind, they become powerful sites for prevention, belonging, and shared care.

This paper documents an early exploration into what it might look like to '*bring back the village*' - not as a nostalgic ideal, but as a contemporary, place-based approach to creating child safe communities.

1.1 Purpose of Exploration

The purpose of this exploration is to investigate how child wellbeing can be strengthened through community-led, place-based approaches that prioritise connection, creativity, and belonging.

Rather than proposing a fixed model or solution, this work seeks to:

- Explore how child-friendly public spaces can support informal supervision and shared care.
- Understand how creative activities such as play, art, and storytelling can build trust and connection.
- Examine the role of community members, neighbours, and trusted adults in everyday prevention.
- Centre children's lived experiences and voices in shaping the places they grow up in.

This exploration intentionally sits upstream, focusing on prevention rather than response, and on strengthening the social fabric that supports children long before formal intervention is required.

IT TAKES A Village



"Children are not a distraction from more important work. They are the most important work."



1.2 Why Child Safe Communities Matter

Improving child wellbeing does not occur in isolation, it is shaped by the quality of relationships, the accessibility of places, and the strength of community connection.

Research consistently shows that children are safer and more resilient in environments where:

- Adults are visible, attentive, and connected.
- Public spaces encourage regular, positive interaction.
- Children feel a sense of belonging and agency.
- Communities share responsibility for wellbeing rather than deferring solely to systems.

In contrast, social isolation, fragmented neighbourhoods, and under-utilised public spaces can unintentionally increase risk by reducing visibility, trust, and informal support.

Creating child safe communities is therefore not only a protective strategy, but a community wellbeing strategy.



1.3 Early Exploration & Co-Design

This work is currently in an early exploration and co-design phase.

At this stage, the focus is on:

- Listening to children, families, and community members.
- Testing small, low-risk prototypes in public spaces.
- Learning from local experience and global practice.
- Identifying patterns, principles, and possibilities.

This paper does not present a final framework or evaluation outcomes. Instead, it documents early thinking, emerging insights, and key questions intended to inform future design, partnerships, and investment.

> By holding this work lightly and collaboratively, the exploration aims to ensure that any future direction is community-led, child-informed, and grounded in lived experience.

Fraser Coast Local Level Alliance

The Local Level Alliance (LLA) on the Fraser Coast is a collaborative partnership made up of representatives from government and non-government agencies focused on improving outcomes for children, young people, and families within the local community. It operates as part of the broader Family and Child Connect model in Queensland, which supports coordinated early intervention and tailored support for families before issues escalate into crisis.

02



Bringing Back the Village

The idea of ‘bringing back the village’ is often referenced in conversations about child wellbeing, yet it is rarely articulated in practical or contemporary terms. In this exploration, the village is not understood as a nostalgic return to the past, but as a modern, place-based system of shared care, embedded in everyday community life.

A village, in this sense, is created when:

- Children are visible and welcomed in public spaces
- Adults feel both permission and responsibility to notice and care
- Places are designed to encourage connection rather than isolation
- Safety is woven into daily interactions, not confined to formal responses

Bringing back the village therefore requires a shift in how communities think about safety, responsibility, and the role of place in shaping behaviour and relationships for our local families.

The Hervey Bay area has an emerging opportunity with the opening of the new Community Hub and Library next to the Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre and Cultural Centre. This building creates a new city centre of possibilities for families to engage with
and participate in community.

2.1 From Protection to Prevention

Traditional approaches to child wellbeing have understandably focused on protection and responses such as policies, reporting mechanisms, compliance frameworks, and professional interventions designed to act when harm occurs or risk is identified.

While these systems are essential, they are inherently reactive. They intervene after harm has occurred or when vulnerability has escalated. What is often missing is a strong, intentional focus on prevention - the everyday conditions that reduce risk long before formal systems are needed.

A prevention-oriented approach asks different questions:

- What environments help children feel confident, connected, and supported?
- How can communities notice early signs of distress or exclusion?
- What social conditions reduce isolation for children and families?

Placemaking offers a tangible pathway into prevention. When public spaces are active, welcoming, and regularly used by families, there is greater visibility, informal supervision, and opportunity for early connection. In these environments, concerns are more likely to be noticed early, relationships are more likely to form, and support can be offered before issues escalate.

This exploration therefore shifts the focus from "How do we respond to risk?" to "How do we design communities that naturally reduce it?"





2.2 Belonging, Safety, and Shared Responsibility

Belonging and safety are deeply interconnected. Children are more likely to feel safe in places where they feel known, welcomed, and valued. Similarly, adults are more likely to act protectively when they feel connected to both place and people.

In strong communities, safety is not enforced - it is socially held.

This shared responsibility shows up in subtle but powerful ways:

- Adults greeting children by name.
- Neighbours noticing when routines change.
- Community members stepping in early with care or concern.
- Clear, shared norms about behaviour in public space.

Rather than placing the full burden of wellbeing on parents or professionals, village-style communities distribute care across many people. This does not dilute responsibility, it strengthens it by making safety collective and visible.

Creative and playful initiatives such as murals, imagination festivals, neighbourhood lounges, and shared storytelling play an important role in this process. They provide low-pressure opportunities for connection, helping children move from anonymity to familiarity, and from familiarity to care.

2.3 The Role of Community in Child Wellbeing

Child wellbeing is shaped not only by family and formal services, but by the broader social environment in which children grow up. Communities influence children's sense of identity, confidence, safety, and belonging through everyday interactions and experiences.

When communities are connected:

- Children have access to multiple trusted adults.
- Families are less isolated and more supported.
- Differences are more easily understood and accepted.
- Early signs of vulnerability are more likely to be noticed.

Community-led wellbeing does not replace professional services, it complements and strengthens them. Strong communities reduce pressure on formal systems by addressing issues earlier and creating supportive environments that promote resilience.

In this exploration, community is understood as both:

- A protective factor that reduces risk.
- A developmental asset that supports healthy childhoods.

By intentionally designing places, programs, and participation opportunities that invite shared care, communities can play an active role in raising children who feel safe, supported, and connected.



IT TAKES A Village

03



What We Are Exploring

This exploration is focused on understanding how everyday community environments can be intentionally shaped to support child safety, wellbeing, and belonging. Rather than isolating child wellbeing within formal systems or specialist settings, this work examines how place, participation, and people interact in daily life to create conditions that support prevention and care.

The Fraser Coast community must first develop a shared understanding of how our children and young people (under 18) are faring. Are they thriving? Where are the emerging challenges? And where are additional supports needed?

To support this understanding, the Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre (HBNC) has published a State of Youth Report, focusing on young people aged 12–18 years. This report draws on data from an annual survey conducted over six consecutive years, delivered in partnership with local schools, and provides valuable insight into the lived experiences, wellbeing, and concerns of local youth.

Building on this work, the Social Shift Institute will publish a State of Families Report in 2026. This report will bring together local data and community insights to provide an overview of children and families across the Fraser Coast, supporting evidence-informed planning and coordinated, place-based responses.

State of Youth Summary



SCAN ME

To view the full report scan the QR Code or visit www.hbnc.com.au

3.1 Child-Friendly Public Spaces and Neighbourhood Hubs

Public spaces play a critical role in shaping how children and families experience safety and connection. Parks, beaches, libraries, streets, and informal gathering places are often where children spend the most unstructured time and where community presence is most visible.

This exploration examines how child-friendly public spaces and neighbourhood hubs can:

- Encourage regular, positive use by children and families.
- Support visibility and informal supervision.
- Reduce social isolation through casual, everyday interaction.
- Signal welcome and belonging through design and activation.

Neighbourhood hubs such as lounges, pop-up libraries, or shared community spaces are of particular interest. These are not highly programmed or controlled environments, but soft, accessible spaces that invite people to linger, connect, and return regularly. When designed well, they create the conditions for trust, familiarity, and shared care to develop naturally.



Existing Hubs - Free Hardware

Hervey Bay

- Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre (child care room and fenced outdoor playground).
- Hervey Bay Library - toy library and indoor spaces.
- Neighbourhood Hive - indoor playground, bouldering wall and Bub Boutique.
- Galangoor - Family Centre in Hervey Bay.
- Outdoor parks with playgrounds.
- All abilities parks.
- Wet Side.
- Skate Parks and Pump Track.
- The Kids Child Protection Carnival.

Maryborough

- Outdoor parks with playgrounds.
- Maryborough Toy Library.
- Skate Park and Pump Track.
- Toy Library - now located within the Library.
- ANZAC Park
- Skate Park pump track
- Water park walking track around MB Golf Course
- Queens Park
- Tennis Courts

Future Hubs



Neighbourhood Lounges can exist anywhere people naturally meet: along a beachfront, in a park, beside a library, outside a neighbourhood centre, or within a town square. What defines the lounge is not the infrastructure alone, but the intentional invitation to gather.

Typical elements might include:

- Long shared tables that encourage people to eat together, talk with strangers, and share stories.
- Circles of seating - stones, logs, or benches designed for listening, reflection, reading, or storytelling.
- Small performance or amphitheatre spaces where music, poetry, and creative expression can be shared informally.



3.2 Creative Connection Through Art, Play, and Imagination

Creativity and play are powerful tools for connection. Art, imagination, and play-based activities create low-barrier entry points into community life, allowing people of different ages, cultures, and backgrounds to engage without formal roles or expectations.

This exploration looks at how creative approaches can:

- Foster intergenerational connection.
- Build shared ownership of public space.
- Encourage expression, storytelling, and identity.
- Create joyful, inclusive environments where children feel safe to participate.

Initiatives such as murals, chalk play, storytelling circles, imagination festivals, and pop-up play spaces are explored not as entertainment alone, but as social infrastructure - mechanisms that strengthen relationships and make care visible.

By embedding creativity into public space, communities can transform everyday places into environments that support connection, attentiveness, and belonging.

Existing Events - Hervey Bay

Spring in the Gardens

A family fun day to celebrate spring in the gardens and learn about nature.
Delivered by FCRC & HBNC.

Highlights include:
Face Painting
Reptile Display from 'Wildlife Instinct'
'Petting Zoo
Arts and Crafts Activities



Approximately 2000 visitors attend the Family Fun Day.

The Giant Easter Egg Hunt is a free, self-paced school holiday activity inviting families to explore the Botanic Gardens while searching for locally painted Easter eggs hidden throughout the grounds. The event launches with a dedicated opening day celebration, bringing together local services and family-friendly activities to mark the start of the hunt and create a welcoming community atmosphere. Delivered by HBNC.



Approximately 2000 visitors attend the opening Family Fun Day and a further 2000 complete the Giant Easter Egg Hunt.

Christmas Lights Wonderland is a free, community-wide event held over the festive season, transforming the Botanic Gardens into an illuminated space for families to explore and enjoy together. The self-paced experience invites visitors to wander through themed light displays, creating opportunities for shared moments, connection, and celebration. Delivered by HBNC.



Approximately 17,000 visitors attend the event over a 2 week period.

Global Beats & Eats

Get ready for an afternoon of flavours from every corner of the globe, music that moves you, and stories that connect us all. This free community festival is your passport to a world of celebration. Delivered by HBNC.

Approx. 3500 visitors attend the event.



Existing Events - Hervey Bay

Condy Park Preschool & Kindergarten proudly host the Teddy Bears Picnic at City Park in Pialba, Hervey Bay. Please join us for this exciting annual community family fun day boasting low to no-cost food, entertainment & rides and many fun, free children's activities.



The Hervey Bay Whale Parade is a vibrant event that celebrates the humpback whale migration and the community's connection to the ocean. The parade, known as the Downer Parade of Lights, is a community event that encourages participants to bring their lanterns and lantern-like creations to light the streets.



THE FRASER Coast's favourite twilight event, Food n Groove Fridays, returns this October as part of the Get Ready Queensland initiative.
Two nights are locked in — Hervey Bay's City Park on Friday, 17 October and Maryborough's Brolga Theatre Riverstage on Friday, 24 October — each running from 4pm to 9pm.



Hervey Bay Christmas Carols is a free, family-friendly community event that brings residents together to celebrate the festive season through music, shared traditions, and connection. The event features live carol performances, opportunities for community participation, and a welcoming atmosphere for people of all ages. Approx. 9,000 people attended 2025.



Maryborough Services





Act For Kids







Welcome to Ghundus Djinang-Djaa (Connected Beginnings), proudly rooted on Butchulla Country. We are passionate advocates for early childhood education, recognising it as a cornerstone for lifelong success. As stewards of this sacred land, we are dedicated to providing essential services that empower, uplift, and strengthen our community.



MCDATSIC

Visit Us

255 Kent St,
Maryborough 4650

4114 1908
admin@mcdatsic.com
https://www.mcdatsic.com

If you'd like to yarn with us or find out how Connected Beginnings can support your family, reach out anytime. Our doors are open weekdays 9AM - 5PM

GHUNDU'S DJINANG-DJAA

More about us

Ghundus Djinang-Djaa supports First Nations children and families from early childhood to school, helping every child grow strong, healthy, and ready to thrive. With support from the Australian Government, we build on years of voluntary work to close the gaps in maternal and child health, early learning, and family support.

Connected Beginnings is community-owned and led, ensuring programs are shaped by our mob and delivered on Country. Our Backbone teams work with Elders, ACCOs, schools, and services to create long-term, sustainable change.

Together, we're strengthening early education, improving health outcomes, and empowering families for a brighter future.

Supports we offer

- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with children aged 0-5
- Transport families to health and education appointments.
- Referrals to services for specific family needs.
- A centralized, family friendly drop-in service
- Enrolment and paperwork assistance for childcare, Kindy and Prep.
- Advocacy and Mediation during tough times.
- Navigating culturally diverse services
- Ghundu's Gatherings

Are you eligible to join the Connected Beginnings Program?

Your child must be aged 0-5 years of age (pre-school), and you live in the provider's catchment area. Contact the provider to see if your family is one which may receive priority access to the program.



Looking to join the Connected Beginnings team?

If you're interested in becoming a Cultural Support Worker for Connected Beginnings, Feel free to contact us with your resume and expression of interest!

Existing Activities





Mary Poppins Festival



Date: 5 July 2026
Time: 9am–3pm
Where: Queens Park & Portside
Cost: Free
Highlights: Parade
Nanny & chimney races
Kids activities
Markets + food
Dress-ups encouraged

Under 8's Week



Ongoing Engagement

These support ongoing family engagement in Maryborough:
Story Bank (Mary Poppins Museum)
Fraser Coast Wildlife Sanctuary
Queens Park playground & gardens
Anzac Park and Ululah Lagoon -Maryborough's premier outdoor recreation space.
~ Located on the corner of Alice and Cheapside Streets offering a wide range of facilities such as
Splash Side water play area
Skate Park
Pump track
Walking loop around a wildlife-filled lagoon
Mary Ann Steam Train rides in Queens Park & Thursday Maryborough CBD town Markets
Relish Food & Wine Festival While not "kids-only," these events are family-friendly day outings.
Council kids' programs
School / community events
School holiday workshops
St Helens State School Family Field Day (Aug 15, 2026)
Outlying Area's of Maryborough -Annual Family days
Toogoom Easter Festival (Good Friday)
Howard Coal Fest (July)
Burrum Fishing Competition and family fun day activities (Easter Weekend)
Poona Easter Carnival
Bauple Nut Bash- annual family festival celebrating the regions heritage as the ancestral home of the macadamia
Tee Bar Rodeo and Camp draft

The Fraser Coast Technology Challenge (2002-2019)
Ceased during COVID and never recommenced

Involved children & youth from all over QLD and Interstate (A week-end event that was held in the Maryborough State High School (MSHS) area)
Involved a 24 HPV (Human Powered Vehicle) race

- Robotics
- C02 Dragsters
- Solar Powered Boats
- Solar Powered Cars
- Smiley Push Carts
- Youth camped out in the grounds of MSHS



Fraser Coast Libraries

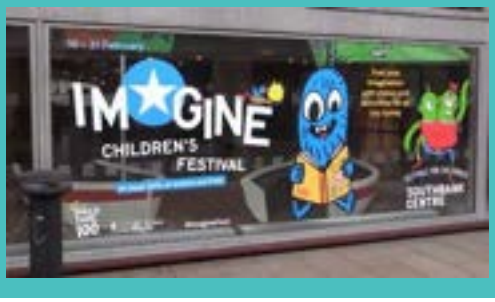




Universal program that encourage language an speech talking singing/ rhythm movements all benefits children needs. There may also be opportunities to further develop community-based activities such as beach events, literacy activities, and family play experiences that encourage children and parents to connect through books, language, play, and social interaction.

Future Event Ideas

The Imagine Children's Festival is a free, family-friendly event designed to celebrate creativity, play, and imagination in a safe and welcoming community setting based in London. The festival offers a range of interactive activities, performances, and creative experiences that encourage children to explore, express themselves, and engage with others. The festival creates opportunities for connection between children, families, and the wider community, while supporting wellbeing, belonging, and positive use of public space.



The Gold Coast's iconic Kidchella is returning to Surfers Paradise with a free line-up of glittering entertainment that will keep the kids moving and grooving over 2 days. The Coachella inspired event would be the perfect opportunity for the littlest festival goers to come together, have a dance and enjoy live entertainment.



The Picnic Crawl is a self-paced community experience along the Hervey Bay Esplanade, activating multiple locations to encourage walking in nature while discovering local talent. Participants are invited to move between picnic spots featuring creative, cultural, or performance elements, creating a relaxed and engaging way to explore the foreshore.
Developed by Grassroots Youth Gang (GYG) at HBNC.



Mud Play

Invites children to explore, create and discover through one of nature's simplest and richest play experiences. Digging, mixing, pouring, building and experimenting with mud.



3.3 Community-Led Approaches to Care and Prevention

Central to this exploration is the role of community in preventing harm before it occurs. While professional services are essential, many protective factors for children exist in everyday interactions between neighbours, volunteers, families, and trusted adults.

This work explores how community-led approaches can:

- Strengthen informal supervision and shared responsibility.
- Create cultures where noticing and caring are normalised.
- Support early identification of isolation or vulnerability.
- Reduce reliance on reactive interventions by building social connection.

Community-led care does not rely on surveillance or enforcement. Instead, it is built through presence, familiarity, and trust. Visible community hosts, regular activities, and shared norms all contribute to environments where care is both offered and received naturally.

IT TAKES A Village



Tiny Beginnings, Strong Futures ~ Welcome to Baby Festival (seeking funding & donations)

This is a Family and child Connect ('Act for Kids') intuitive as a way of bringing families together with resources and support during early parenthood
Focused on families with children and babies aged 0-5years old
Family and Child Connect would like is to make this an annual free event for families to attend and seek support and education about the community and services in the area.
To be held in Hervey Bay for all Fraser Coast residents/families
The event aims to boost community engagement, give back to the community and ensure families and children can have a completely free and happy day in a safe environment.

WELCOME TO BABY FESTIVAL

Tiny Beginnings Strong Futures

TUESDAY, 4TH AUGUST 2026 • 9:30AM – 1PM

BOTANICAL GARDENS, URANGAN

Let's celebrate and welcome babies born in 2025 with love and laughter, hosting an under 5's free community event brought to you by:

Act for kids CQLD

supported by FCRC, BNTAC, ATSI and family services

SAVE THE DATE!

PERSONALISED CERTIFICATE PRESENTED BY FRASER COAST COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

FREE ACTIVITIES:

PETTING ZOO

SOFT PLAY

FACE PAINTING

JUMPING CASTLE

CHILDREN'S GAMES

LUCKY DOOR PRIZES

SAUSAGE SIZZLE

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

QLD HEALTH

QLD EDUCATION

Community-Led Initiatives

Hope in a Suitcase is a community-led initiative that provides children entering foster care with a suitcase filled with essential items, comfort objects, and personal belongings. The program recognises the emotional impact of entering care and seeks to replace plastic bags with something that offers dignity and care. Delivered by Kathryn Rodder.





The Hervey Bay Read Bears (HBNC) Program is a community literacy initiative that encourages young children to develop a love of reading through play and connection. Children receive a Read Bear (knitted by local arts groups) and are invited to take it home, read together with their family. They are delivered through the primary schools to all year one students. The program has expanded to 32 schools across Queensland.

Rotary Youth Drivers Awareness (RYDA) is a partnership which supports teachers on the journey as they provide their students with the tools and understanding they need to see themselves as active, responsible road citizens. Taking, largely, a student inquiry learning approach, RYDA becomes part of the school culture from the first to last day of a young person's high school life.



Community-Led Initiatives



The "50 Ways to Praise a Child" poster is a simple, practical resource designed to encourage positive communication with children. Presented in a bright, child-friendly design with blue edging, the poster offers a wide range of everyday phrases that adults can use to recognise effort, build confidence, and reinforce positive behaviour.

Kindness Crew – Kindness Doors is a community-led project delivered by the HBNC that empowers children and young people to spread kindness through creative action. As part of the project, the Kindness Crew designed and created Kindness Doors, transforming everyday doors into colourful messages of encouragement, inclusion, and care.





The Meet the Neighbours Trailer is a mobile community activation delivered by the HBNC, bringing large outdoor games and shared activities to local parks and neighbourhood spaces. By transforming familiar public areas into places of play and connection, the trailer encourages residents of all ages to come together, interact, and build relationships close to home.

3.4 Children's Voices in Shaping Place

Children are experts in their own experience of place. How they move through neighbourhoods, where they feel safe, and what helps them feel welcome provides critical insight into how communities function from a child's perspective.

This exploration places strong emphasis on children's voices in shaping the environments they grow up in, including:

- Involving children in co-design of public spaces and activities.
- Using creative methods to capture children's experiences of safety and belonging.
- Valuing children's perspectives as legitimate and informative.
- Reflecting children's contributions visibly in community spaces.

By engaging children as contributors rather than passive recipients, communities not only create safer environments, but also foster agency, confidence, and civic participation from an early age.

IT TAKES A Village



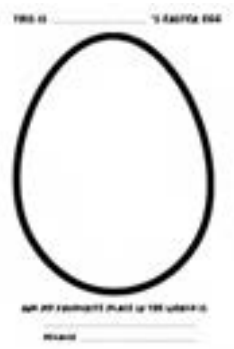
Children's Voices

The Art Story Wall is a community public art project that explores what it means to belong in the Fraser Coast community. Featuring works by local artists including children, the wall brings together visual art and personal stories (via video) that reflect their favourite spaces. Each art work has a video story of the artist sharing why they created their work.



The Easter Colouring Quest wil be delivered in March 2026 by HBNC and is a creative activity inviting children to share their favourite places in the world through colouring and drawing an Easter Egg. Children are encouraged to express where they feel happy, inspired, or connected, using art as a way to communicate their experiences and the Eggs will be displayed in the HBNC atrium for Easter holidays.





The Fraser Coast Youth Survey is an annual survey designed to capture the lived experiences, wellbeing, and perspectives of young people aged 12–18 years across the Fraser Coast. Delivered by HBNC in partnership with local schools, the findings from the survey inform the State of Youth Report and support evidence-informed decision-making across services, schools, and community organisations.



Community Innovators training was delivered by HBNC at the TEDx St Mary's College Youth event! Year 10 & Year 6 students teamed up to identify challenges in the Fraser Coast & brainstorm creative solutions. From sketching out ideas to pitching their visions for inclusive youth spaces, these young problem-solvers proved that fresh perspectives can shape a better tomorrow.



IT TAKES A Village

Easter Colouring Quest





Children's Voices



Annual Youth Survey completed in partnership with local high schools and HBNC.

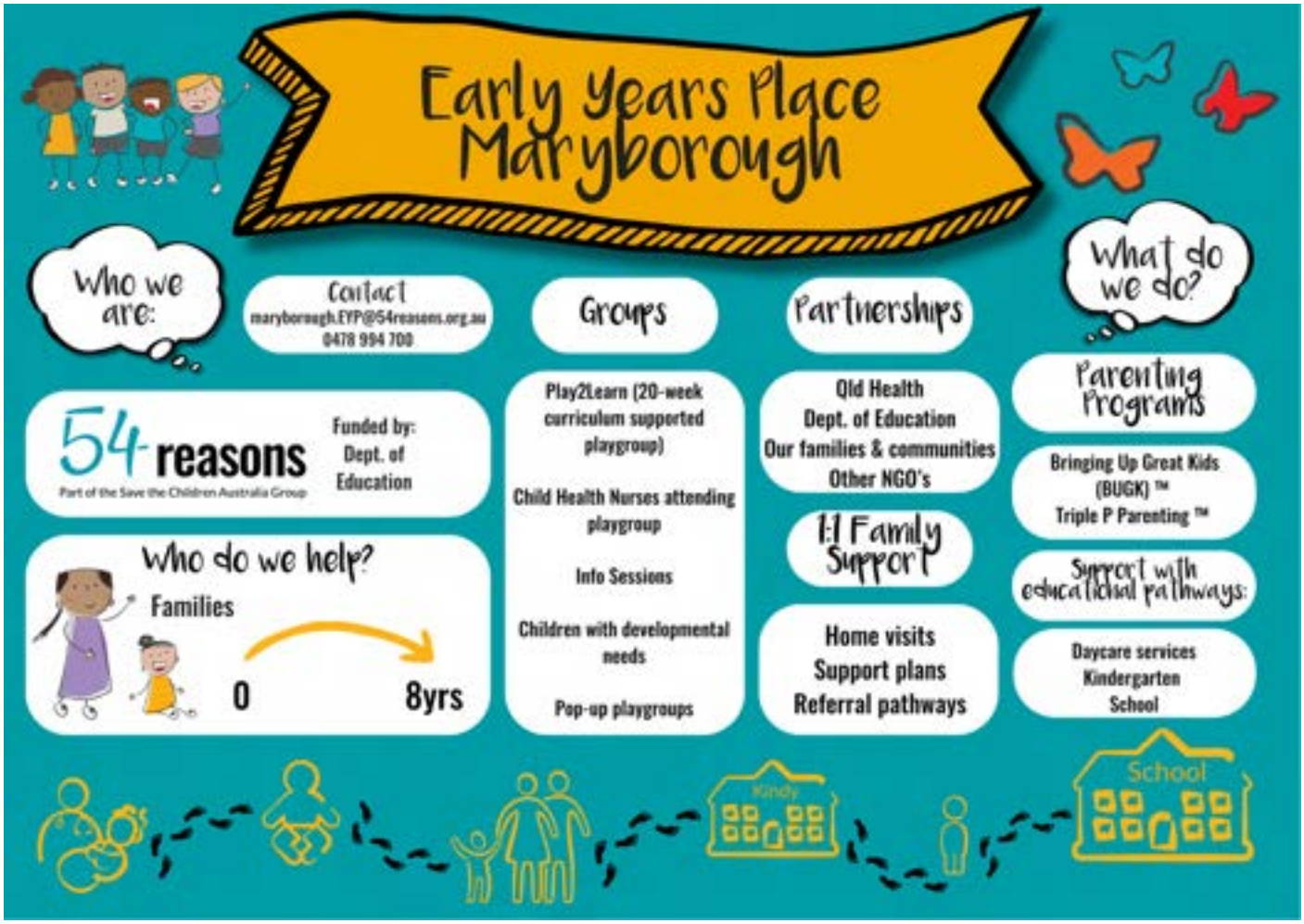
A summary of the outcomes has been included further below.

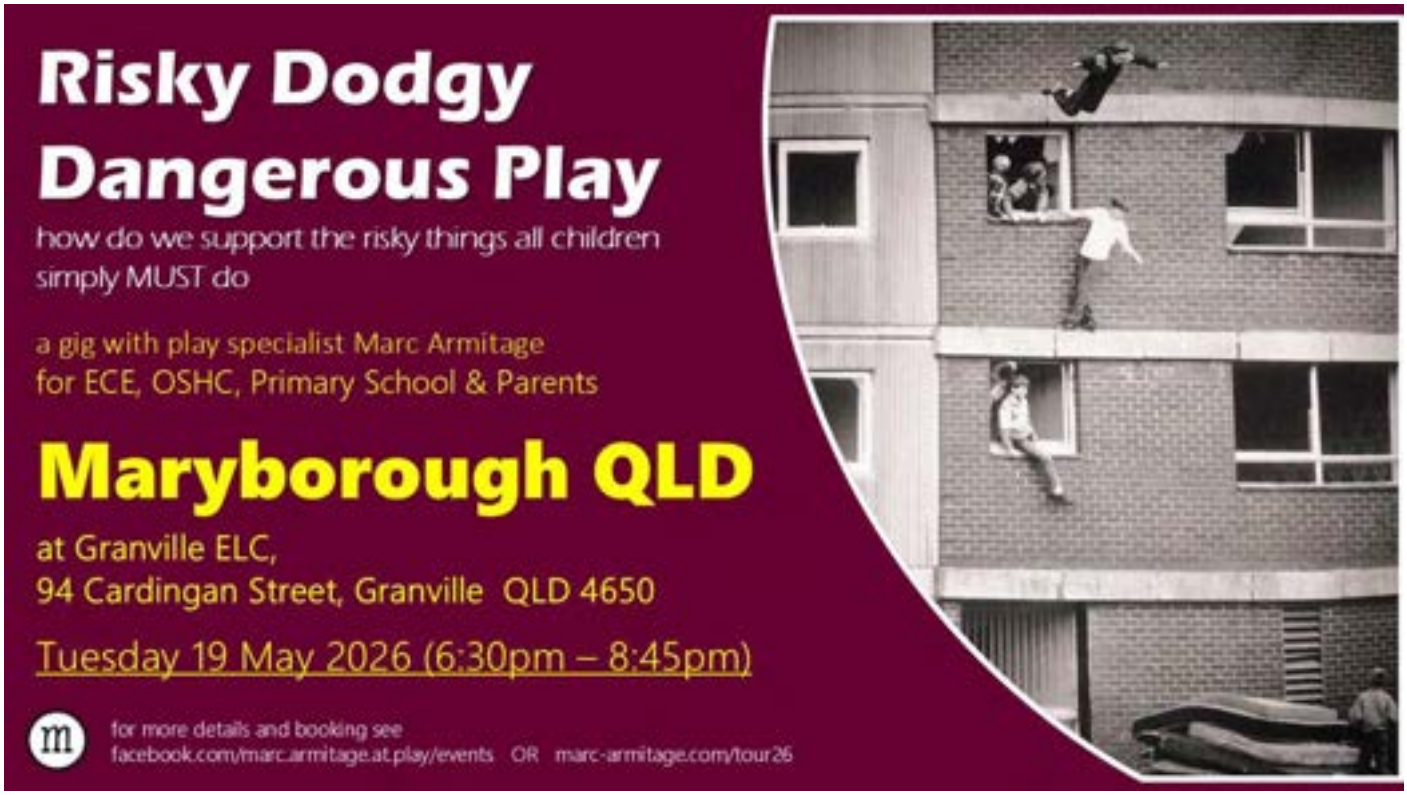






Playgroups


Early Years Place Maryborough
Who we are:
Contact
maryborough.EYP@54reasons.org.au
0478 994 700
Groups
Partnerships
What do we do?
54 reasons
Part of the Save the Children Australia Group
Funded by: Dept. of Education
Play2Learn (20-week curriculum supported playgroup)
Child Health Nurses attending playgroup
Info Sessions
Children with developmental needs
Pop-up playgroups
Qld Health
Dept. of Education
Our families & communities
Other NGO's
1:1 Family Support
Home visits
Support plans
Referral pathways
Parenting Programs
Bringing Up Great Kids (BUGK) ™
Triple P Parenting ™
Support with educational pathways:
Daycare services
Kindergarten
School
Who do we help?
Families
0
8yrs
Kindy
School


Risky Dodgy Dangerous Play
how do we support the risky things all children simply MUST do
a gig with play specialist Marc Armitage
for ECE, OSHC, Primary School & Parents
Maryborough QLD
at Granville ELC,
94 Cardingan Street, Granville QLD 4650
Tuesday 19 May 2026 (6:30pm – 8:45pm)
for more details and booking see
facebook.com/marc.armitage.at.play/events OR marc-armitage.com/tour26

04



The Three Pillars of Creating Child Safe Communities

Through this exploration, three interconnected pillars have emerged as foundational to ‘creating child safe communities’. Together, they describe how place, people, and participation interact to support safety, belonging, and wellbeing.

These pillars are not standalone initiatives. They work together to create environments where care is visible, responsibility is shared, and children are recognised as active members of their communities.

Individually, each pillar contributes to child wellbeing.
Together, they form a cohesive framework:

- Places that Care create the conditions for connection.
- People who Notice sustain care through presence and relationship.
- Voices that Matter ensure children are seen, heard, and valued.

This integrated approach reflects the core principle of bringing back the village: child safety is strongest when place, people, and participation work in harmony.



The Three Pillars of Creating Child Safe Communities

Places that Care

Places that Care so we create the conditions for connection.

Child-friendly, welcoming environments.

This pillar focuses on where children spend time and how those places signal safety, belonging, and shared responsibility.

What it includes

- Neighbourhood hubs, lounges, parks, beaches, libraries, and informal gathering spaces
- Spaces designed for visibility, comfort, play, and connection
- Everyday public places that feel safe without feeling restrictive or institutional

Core belief
When places are designed with children in mind, communities naturally look out for one another.

People that Notice

People who Notice so we can sustain care through presence and relationship.

Community-led care and prevention.

This pillar centres on who creates safety—not just professionals, but neighbours, volunteers, families, and trusted adults.

What it includes

- Community hosts, volunteers, elders, and local champions
- Informal supervision and “eyes on the street”
- Shared norms around care, respect, and early support
- Prevention through connection rather than reaction

Core belief
Child safety is strongest when many people notice, care, and act early.

Voices that Matter

Voices that Matter to ensure children are seen, heard, and valued.

Children shaping their own communities.

This pillar ensures children are not just protected in communities, but are active contributors to them.

What it includes

- Child and youth voice in placemaking
- Co-design processes that listen to how children experience safety and belonging
- Creative expression through play, storytelling, and imagination
- Respecting children as citizens of their neighbourhoods

Core belief
Children feel safest in places where they are seen, heard, and valued.

4.1 Places that Care

Places that Care are environments intentionally designed to welcome children, families, and community life.

This pillar recognises that physical spaces influence behaviour, relationships, and perceptions of safety. When places are inviting, visible, and well-used, they naturally support informal supervision, connection, and shared responsibility.

Places that Care are characterised by:

- Design that prioritises comfort, visibility, and accessibility.
- Spaces that encourage lingering rather than movement through.
- Environments that feel safe without being restrictive or over-controlled.
- Public places where children are expected, welcomed, and valued.

Examples include child-friendly parks, beaches with shared amenities, outdoor nooks, and community hubs. These spaces function as everyday gathering points, where familiarity builds over time and care becomes embedded in daily life.

In this exploration, Places that Care are understood as a form of social infrastructure - physical environments that support social connection and collective wellbeing.

"Community Child Health services are designed specifically for children and families. Our role is to monitor growth and development, provide developmental surveillance, offer health education, and facilitate referrals to specialised services when required. We value working collaboratively with other agencies and services, with parental consent, to support positive outcomes for children and families. Our facilities are welcoming and child-focused. We have meeting spaces available and could accommodate small community groups of approximately 15 people where appropriate".





4.2 People who Notice

People who Notice refers to the human presence that brings places to life and transforms space into community.

Child wellbeing is strengthened when many people, not only parents or professionals, feel a sense of responsibility for noticing, caring, and responding appropriately. This pillar centres the role of neighbours, volunteers, elders, community hosts, and trusted adults in everyday prevention.

People who Notice are those who:

- Are regularly present and visible in community spaces.
- Build familiarity through simple, consistent interactions.
- Notice changes in behaviour, routines, or participation.
- Know when and how to offer support or escalate concerns.

Importantly, this pillar is not about surveillance or enforcement. It is about relational awareness—the quiet, collective attentiveness that emerges when people feel connected to both place and community.

By strengthening the role of People who Notice, communities move from isolated responsibility toward shared care, where safety is held collectively rather than individually.



4.3 Voices that Matter

Voices that Matter recognises children as active contributors to community life, not passive recipients of protection.

This pillar emphasises the importance of listening to children's experiences, perspectives, and ideas - particularly in relation to how they experience safety, belonging, and place.

Voices that Matter are supported when:

- Children are invited into age-appropriate co-design processes.
- Creative methods are used to capture children's perspectives.
- Children's contributions are visibly reflected in public spaces.
- Children experience being heard as meaningful and impactful.

When children see their ideas expressed through murals, signage, play spaces, or community activities, they develop a sense of agency and ownership. This, in turn, strengthens their connection to place and community.

In this exploration, centring children's voices is understood as both a child safety practice and a civic practice, one that builds confidence, belonging, and long-term wellbeing.



Community Child Health aims to connect with families early, often commencing contact shortly after birth. We typically contact families during the second week after birth and encourage participation in appointments, drop-in clinics, and community-based services. Our goal is to walk alongside families during the early years and support them to access services that promote children's healthy growth and development. This may include referrals and connections to:

- *Queensland Health services*
- *Mental health supports*
- *Child development services*
- *Paediatric services*
- *Parenting supports*
- *Community programs and family services*

We recognise that every family has unique strengths and challenges, and our role is to support them in navigating services and accessing the assistance they need.

05



What Child Safe Communities Look Like in Practice

Child safe communities are not defined solely by policies, signage, or formal programs. They are recognised in the everyday experiences of children and families - in how spaces feel, how people interact, and how care is expressed in ordinary moments. In practice, child wellbeing emerges when connection is normalised, visibility is designed in, and trust is built over time. The following sections describe how these principles show up in lived community environments.

Across all three areas, child safe communities are defined by how safety feels, not just how it is documented. They are places where children are visible, relationships are valued, and care is expressed through everyday actions.

In practice, child safety is strongest when:

- Safety is part of daily life, not an exception.
- Spaces invite connection rather than control.
- Communities feel confident in their role as carers and protectors.

This exploration continues to test and refine how these principles can be translated into practical, scalable approaches within real community settings.

5.1 Everyday Safety Beyond Formal Services

Formal child protection systems, education settings, and professional services play a critical role in safeguarding children. However, they represent only one part of a much broader safety ecosystem.

In child safe communities, safety is also embedded in everyday life:

- Children are known by name in local spaces.
- Adults recognise and greet one another.
- Changes in behaviour or routine are noticed early.
- Support is offered informally before crisis point.

This form of everyday safety does not rely on specialist intervention. Instead, it is created through familiarity, presence, and care. When children and families are regularly seen and engaged in public spaces, isolation is reduced and concerns are more likely to surface early.

In practice, this means designing communities where people are encouraged to show up often, stay longer, and interact naturally - allowing safety to be woven into daily routines rather than activated only when something goes wrong.

"A child-safe community is built through relationships, trust, and connection.

In practice, this means:

- *Meeting families where they are.*
- *Building trust over time.*
- *Supporting parents to identify their own goals and priorities.*
- *Respecting families as experts in their children's lives.*
- *Assisting families to navigate complex service systems.*
- *Encouraging participation in community activities.*

This includes supporting families to connect with:

- *First 5 Forever*
- *Playgroups*
- *Schools and early education settings*
- *Sporting activities*
- *Libraries*
- *Reading and literacy programs*
- *Social and community events*

Community Child Health provides trusted locations where families can access evidence-based information, support, and referrals. Consistency, persistence, and relationship-building are key elements of effective engagement."





5.2 Designing for Visibility, Connection, and Trust

The design of public space has a significant influence on how people behave and relate to one another. Spaces that are open, welcoming, and well-used naturally support visibility and connection - two key ingredients of child safety.

In practice, this includes:

- Clear sightlines and shared focal points.
- Seating positioned to encourage conversation and observation.
- Spaces that invite lingering rather than rapid movement.
- Lighting, shade, and amenities that support extended use.

When people can see and be seen, trust develops more easily. Children feel safer in spaces where adults are present and engaged, and adults are more likely to notice when something feels out of place.

Designing for visibility is not about surveillance - it is about creating environments where care is visible and accessible. Over time, these design choices support familiarity, reduce anonymity, and strengthen social trust.

"We aim to:

- *Be visible within the community.*
- *Participate in local events.*
- *Deliver services in family-friendly locations.*
- *Provide timely referrals and follow-up.*
- *Offer consistent information and support.*
- *Build trusted relationships with families.*
- *Using technology Connecting 2 U text messaging way to provide small health messages to families Queensland Health*

Trust develops when services are accessible, responsive, and present within the community."



5.3 Creating Welcoming, Low-Barrier Spaces

Child safe communities are inclusive by design. They remove unnecessary barriers to participation and create environments where families feel welcome regardless of background, income, or circumstance.



In practice, welcoming, low-barrier spaces:

- Are free or low-cost to access.
- Do not require formal registration or referral.
- Offer flexible, informal ways to participate.
- Are culturally welcoming and accessible to diverse communities.

These spaces are often characterised by simple but thoughtful features such as comfortable seating, shared resources, creative activities, and clear signals that children belong. Importantly, they are not over-programmed or heavily regulated, allowing families to engage at their own pace.

Low-barrier spaces support child safety by reducing isolation, encouraging regular participation, and creating multiple opportunities for connection with others. They help ensure that no child or family is excluded from community life due to complexity, cost, or formality.

What Do Child-Friendly Neighbourhoods Look and Feel Like

A neighbourhood that is genuinely child-friendly goes beyond isolated playgrounds and instead considers the whole public realm as a place for children to live, play, and move freely. Traditional play spaces alone do not meet children's needs; rather, neighbourhoods should be structured so that children can play, explore, and interact across streets, parks, squares, schoolyards, and everyday walkways—not just within fenced playgrounds. Safe, walkable networks and multifunctional public spaces woven throughout residential areas help children move independently and engage with their surroundings. Equally important are features such as greenery, varied places to meet and play, and environments that feel welcoming and inclusive for all ages, which support children's sense of belonging and wellbeing. Designing neighbourhoods through a children's lens—where their mobility, access to diverse spaces, and everyday experiences are prioritised—creates healthier, more vibrant, and truly liveable communities for everyone.

Cities4Children website:
https://cities4children.org/blog/what-do-child-friendly-neighbourhoods-look-and-feel-like/

Ten strategic indicators for a child-friendly neighbourhood

1. I walk to school/local shops without an adult (from age 8).
2. I cycle to school/local shops without an adult (from age 8).
3. I go outside and play within sight of my home (up to age 11).
4. I feel welcome and safe outside, during the day and after dark.
5. I have access to natural green space in my neighbourhood.
6. I have access to an outdoor place in my neighbourhood that is peaceful and quiet.
7. My neighbourhood has lots of trees.
8. I have access to a choice of outdoor places in my neighbourhood where I can meet and spend time with friends and there are fun things for us to do, including places where I can test myself and take some risks.
9. I have access to an outdoor place in my neighbourhood where my extended family and friends can have a picnic.
10. I travel from my own neighbourhood to downtown areas on foot, by bike or by public transport (from age 11).

Welcoming Spaces

A Tiny Library is a small, community-based book exchange that encourages reading, sharing, and connection in everyday public spaces. Designed to be freely accessible, Tiny Libraries invite children and families to take a book, leave a book, and enjoy reading together.





A Tiny Art Gallery is a small, publicly accessible exhibition space that showcases local artwork in everyday neighbourhood settings. Designed to be open, welcoming, and free to view, it invites community members—especially children and young people—to engage with creativity, storytelling, and self-expression.

Parklets are small, repurposed public spaces, often created from parking bays or under-used areas that provide seating, greenery, and places to pause and connect. Designed at a human scale, parklets transform everyday streets into welcoming places for people to gather, rest, and interact.





The Fraser Coast is home to an outstanding network of playgrounds and water play spaces that support active play, creativity, and family connection. These well-designed environments provide children with opportunities to explore, move, and play safely while encouraging families to spend time together outdoors.

Welcoming Spaces

Kindness Rocks is a simple, creative initiative that encourages people, especially children and families to paint positive messages on rocks and place them in public spaces for others to find. The aim is to spread small moments of joy, encouragement, and connection through unexpected acts of kindness.





Play Streets / "Play Out" street closures
Resident-led or council-supported temporary street closures so kids can play safely outside their homes—often with simple play equipment and community hosting. This has become an international movement with many local variants.

Urban95 (designing cities for the under-5s)
A global approach that asks city leaders to design from 95cm height (the perspective of a young child), influencing public space, early years policy, and local investment priorities—often including playful public realm, caregiver supports, and early-years-friendly hubs.





Tidy Towns in Scotland refers to a long-standing community-led approach focused on improving the appearance, liveability, and pride of local places through collective action. It encourages residents, community groups, schools, and local authorities to work together to care for shared spaces. Activities commonly include environmental improvements, beautification projects, litter reduction, planting, public art, and the maintenance of local amenities.

Welcoming Spaces *Coming in 2026*

Digital Gardens in the Botanic Gardens

Is an immersive, place-based initiative that blends storytelling, technology, and nature. Through digital prompts, audio stories, and reflective content accessed on-site, visitors are invited to slow down, listen, and engage more deeply with the natural environment. The experience encourages nature bathing, mindfulness, and personal reflection while sharing local stories that connect people to place, community, and wellbeing. By integrating gentle digital elements into a natural setting, Digital Gardens supports mental health, connection, and inclusive
engagement for people of all ages.



Read Bear Park

A Read Bear Park in the Botanic Gardens is a playful, literacy-focused space designed to encourage reading, imagination, and connection in nature. Featuring a giant bear statue, the park invites children and families to pause, read together, and enjoy quiet moments outdoors.

The second phase of the Belonging – Art Story Wall

This builds on the success of the initial installation by deepening community participation and expanding the range of stories shared in public space. This phase will invite new voices, including children, young people, families, and under-represented community members, to contribute artworks and personal reflections on what belonging means to them.

Phase Two will further explore themes of safety, connection, identity, and place, using creative expression to foster conversation and understanding across the community. The community will again be invited to share their stories on video.

06



Early Ideas and Prototype Concepts

As part of this early exploration, a number of prototype concepts have emerged as practical ways to test how child safety, belonging, and community connection can be strengthened in everyday settings. These ideas are intentionally small-scale, adaptable, and low-risk, allowing for learning, feedback, and refinement over time.

Rather than being viewed as standalone initiatives, these concepts are understood as vehicles for learning—ways to observe how people use space, how relationships form, and how care shows up in practice.

11 Before 11

The 11 Before 11 initiative, developed by the REAch2 Academy Trust, is a child-centred program designed to ensure that every child experiences 11 meaningful, character-building experiences before the age of 11. The program focuses on providing memorable, hands-on activities that support the development of essential life skills as children prepare for the transition to secondary school.

These experiences are embedded across a child's primary education and include activities such as growing food, creating wildlife habitats, exploring creativity, and engaging with the wider world. By guaranteeing access to these formative moments, the initiative helps build confidence, curiosity, resilience, and a sense of achievement, regardless of a child's background.

11 Before 11 - REAch2 Academy Trust visti the website:
https://www.reach2.org/11-before-11/



Walking Soccer (or Walking Football) is a modified version of traditional soccer designed to be inclusive, low-impact, and accessible to people of all ages and abilities. The game removes running and physical contact, focusing instead on gentle movement, teamwork, and enjoyment.



6.1 Neighbourhood Lounges and Third Spaces

Neighbourhood lounges and third spaces are informal, welcoming environments designed to support connection outside the home and formal institutions such as schools or workplaces.

These spaces might include shaded seating, shared resources, creative prompts, and simple amenities that encourage people to pause, linger, and interact. They are not highly programmed or service-driven, but instead rely on gentle activation and consistent presence.

Early exploration suggests neighbourhood lounges can:

- Increase everyday visibility of children and families
- Encourage casual, intergenerational interaction
- Reduce social isolation through repeated, low-pressure contact
- Support informal supervision and shared care

By creating familiar gathering points within neighbourhoods, these spaces help build the relational fabric that underpins child safety.



6.2 Libraries of Things

Beach libraries, toy libraries, tiny book libraries, sports libraries and art pods offer a quiet, accessible way to combine community presence in places where families already gather.



Typically designed as weatherproof exchanges, these spaces encourage children and adults to share, slow down, and spend time together. Their simplicity is a key strength—requiring minimal infrastructure while offering high relational value.

In practice, these prototypes explore how:

- Shared spaces can foster connection across generations.
- Calm, low-stimulation environments support emotional safety.
- Informal gathering points increase adult presence and attentiveness.
- Public spaces can support learning without formal programming.



These initiatives provide a gentle entry point into community participation, particularly for families who may be less inclined toward structured activities.

IT TAKES A Village

6.3 Art, Murals, and Storytelling in Public Space

Public art and storytelling offer powerful ways to reflect community identity, values, and shared responsibility for children.

Murals, story walls, chalk installations, and creative signage created with children and families allow public space to communicate messages of welcome, belonging, and care. When children see their stories and ideas reflected visibly, it reinforces their sense of being valued members of the community.



Early prototypes in this area explore how:

- Creative co-design builds ownership and pride in place
- Storytelling strengthens empathy and understanding
- Art can signal community norms around kindness and inclusion
- Public spaces become more inviting and relational

Art-based approaches also create opportunities for conversation, reflection, and intergenerational exchange—key ingredients in building safer communities.

6.4 Play-Based and Imagination-Led Initiatives

Play is central to children's wellbeing and development, and it also plays an important role in community connection. Play-based and imagination-led initiatives create shared experiences that bring children and adults together in joyful, low-pressure ways.

These initiatives may include pop-up play spaces, loose-parts play, imagination festivals, chalk play, or creative prompts embedded in public areas. Importantly, they prioritise unstructured play, allowing children to lead and adults to participate or observe.

Through early exploration, play-based initiatives are being tested as ways to:

- Increase positive use of public space by children
- Encourage intergenerational interaction
- Support informal supervision through shared activity
- Build trust and familiarity within neighbourhoods

By legitimising play in public space, communities send a clear signal that children belong—and that their presence is valued and protected.



6.5 Local Fund for Extracurricular Activities

Access to extracurricular activities—such as sport, performing arts, music, and creative programs—plays a significant role in children's wellbeing, confidence, and sense of belonging. Participation in these activities supports physical health, social connection, skill development, and positive identity formation.

However, access is not evenly distributed. Financial barriers, transport challenges, and family circumstances can prevent children and young people from participating in activities that are otherwise available within their community. This can contribute to isolation and missed opportunities for connection during critical developmental years.

As part of this exploration, a Local Fund for Extracurricular Activities is being considered as a practical, community-led mechanism to reduce these barriers and support equitable access.
The proposed fund would:

- Provide means-tested financial support for children and young people to participate in after-school and extracurricular activities
- Support a broad range of activities, including sport, performing arts, music, cultural programs, and creative pursuits
- Prioritise inclusion, wellbeing, and positive developmental outcomes rather than performance or competition

Importantly, the fund is intended to operate as a community-supported initiative, reinforcing the idea that child wellbeing is a shared responsibility. It is proposed that the fund would be supported through community fundraising efforts, including contributions generated via the Mayor's Ball, alongside donations from individuals, businesses, and philanthropic partners.

From a child safety and prevention perspective, this initiative explores how:
Participation in structured, interest-based activities can strengthen protective factors.

Connection to coaches, mentors, and peers increases access to trusted adults
Belonging to teams or creative groups reduces social isolation
Communities can actively invest in children's development, not just crisis response.

The Local Fund for Extracurricular Activities is currently at an early concept stage. Further work will explore governance, eligibility criteria, referral pathways, and partnerships with local clubs and providers to ensure the fund is accessible, transparent, and aligned with child-safe principles.

As with other prototypes in this exploration, the fund is viewed not only as a financial mechanism, but as a symbol of the village in action—a tangible expression of community care, generosity, and shared commitment to ensuring all children have the opportunity to participate, belong, and thrive.

07



Listening and Co-Design

Listening and co-design sit at the heart of this exploration. Creating child safe communities is not something that can be designed for communities—it must be shaped with them. This work recognises that children, families, and community members hold essential knowledge about how safety, belonging, and care are experienced in everyday life.

Rather than beginning with predetermined solutions, this exploration prioritises curiosity, listening, and shared sense-making. Co-design is approached not as a single activity, but as an ongoing practice that informs how ideas are tested, refined, and understood over time.

7.1 Listening to Children and Young People



Children and young people are central to this work. Their lived experience of neighbourhoods, public spaces, and community life provides insight that cannot be gained through adult perspectives alone.

Listening to children in this exploration includes:

- Inviting children to share where they feel safe, welcome, or excluded.
- Using creative and age-appropriate methods such as drawing, play, mapping, and storytelling.
- Valuing children's perspectives as legitimate and informative.
- Ensuring children see how their input influences decisions and design.

By listening to children, communities gain a clearer understanding of how public spaces are experienced at a human scale and how safety is felt, not just defined.



Sensory backpacks and fidget backpacks have become more commonplace in museums and are a very useful resource for families and schools on a self-led visit. They usually differ from the typical "explorer" backpacks found in museums, but with a few tweaks, there's no reason why those can't become SEND friendly too.

State of Youth 2025



1

WHAT DO YOUTH THINK?

- The majority of local youth are most worried about safety & crime in our community
- School is the biggest personal challenge for 46% of youth
- Youth want to see more supports, safe spaces & activities & more kindness in our communities



2

WHO ARE LOCAL YOUTH?

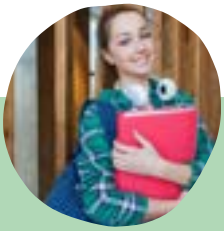
- 1 in 8 Fraser Coast & Bundaberg residents are youth 12-24 years old
- 1 in 10 local youth are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 1 in 20 local youth are culturally diverse with the majority from Philippines, India, Thailand and South Korea.



3

WHERE ARE YOUTH LIVING?

- 92% of youth 12-18 years old report living at home with a parent/guardian
- 2.4% of youth report living with their grandparents
- 15% of youth report they have experienced homelessness at some point in their life
- 10% of youth report they have felt unsafe at home



4

WHAT ARE YOUTH DOING?

- High School youth have an 85% attendance rate in Fraser Coast & Bundaberg state schools
- Youth graduating Year 12 are mostly going on to work and study
- Youth unemployment has dropped to 8% and is now lower than QLD & Australia (9.2%).
- Youth are volunteering at higher rates (68.5%) than general population (64%).
- Most youth (47%) are using personal actions such as social media to effect social change in community
- 1 in 7 youth are disengaged and not participating in study, work or looking for work
- Youth crime is down overall, but the number of serious repeat offenders has risen significantly



5

HOW ARE YOUTH DOING?

- 1 in 3 youth have a chronic health condition
- 1 in 7 youth have a chronic mental health condition
- 1 in 16 youth live with a disability
- 1 in 5 youth feel lonely
- 1 in 14 youth have used illicit drugs
- 1 in 14 youth have accessed food bank assistance

SOCIAL SHIFT INSTITUTE

HBNC
Creating Connected Communities

Youth Snapshot

Fraser Coast & Bundaberg 2025



Executive Summary - State of Youth

Welcome to the State of Youth 2025, an updated snapshot of youth in Fraser Coast and Hinkler. This report brings a message of hope and highlights the resilience and strength of young people in our community, even in the face of ongoing challenges like the cost of living crisis and its wide-reaching effects.

HBNC's Social Shift Institute has collated this report through various sources of data to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and aspirations of our youth, including:

- The Fraser Coast Youth Survey annual results
- Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data
- Queensland and National data for comparison

While there are challenges in gathering youth data, particularly in the Bundaberg region, this also underscores the need for more initiatives that actively engage youth voices. Creating opportunities for young people to be heard is essential to their empowerment and future.

What stands out most from the voices of local youth is their desire for a community that truly supports them. Safety and crime was highlighted as the biggest current key community concern for one in four young people, while the biggest personal challenge for youth aged 12-18 remains the stress and pressures of school (46%). Above all, young people expressed the need to feel safe, supported, and understood, with a particular call for more youth services, activities, and a focus on mental health and addiction. They also long for safe spaces and more kindness in community.

The escalating housing crisis over the past two years has left 1 in 7 young people (15%) reporting they have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. Additionally, 1 in 10 (10%) have felt unsafe at home, and 1 in 14 (7%) have accessed food bank services.

Yet, despite these challenges, the strength of our youth shines through. Most young people go on to work or study after Year 12, with youth unemployment dropping to 8%. They're also actively volunteering at a higher rate than the general population (68.5% vs 64%), and 47% are taking social action, using platforms like social media to advocate for change on the issues that matter to them.

While youth crime has decreased overall, there has been a rise in serious repeat offenders, showing us that there is a need for intervention and support for those most at risk. Additionally, the region's youth are experiencing higher rates of chronic physical and mental illness compared to the rest of Queensland and Australia, along with a higher rate of young people living with a disability.

These findings highlight that while there are challenges, the path forward is filled with hope. We know that young people thrive when given the opportunity to lead and engage in solutions. Peer-led and youth-led approaches have proven to be highly effective in addressing their needs as showcased through this report. This is a call for our community to collaborate with young people to create innovative solutions together.

The Social Shift Institute's community-led support fund is now inviting project applications to tackle local social challenges. Hinkler is one of just four regions in Australia selected to receive this funding, acting as Brokerage Organisation for the Department of Social Services, and providing an incredible opportunity for us to come together and make a lasting difference. This fund is accessible to community organisations, service providers, local governments, businesses, and even sole traders with an ABN.

As a community, we have a responsibility to offer hope and a brighter future to our young people, ensuring that we help create a better world. What steps can we take, together, to build stronger, more supportive communities for the young people of Fraser Coast and Hinkler? Let's create the future they deserve.





7.2 Listening to Families and Caregivers

Families and caregivers play a critical role in shaping children's experiences of community. Their insights help identify practical barriers to participation, safety concerns, and opportunities for support.

This exploration listens to families through:

- Informal conversations in public spaces and community settings.
- Feedback gathered during pilot activities and prototypes.
- Engagement with families experiencing different social, cultural, and economic circumstances.

Listening to families helps ensure that emerging ideas are grounded in real life and responsive to the diversity of community needs.

HBNC Neighbourhood Night Studio is an accessible learning and engagement initiative designed in response to feedback from parents who identified that many education and information sessions occur during work hours and are difficult to attend. The program offers evening learning events supported by onsite childcare, removing a key barrier to participation.

NEIGHBOURHOOD NIGHT Studio

Turn Evenings into Creative Learning.

7.3 Engaging with Community and Local Stakeholders



Creating child safe communities requires collaboration across sectors. Community organisations, schools, local government, cultural groups, service providers, volunteers, and businesses all contribute unique perspectives.

Engagement with community stakeholders focuses on:

- Understanding existing strengths, initiatives, and gaps.
- Identifying opportunities for alignment and shared effort.
- Avoiding duplication and supporting collective impact.
- Building trust and shared ownership of the work.

This collaborative approach supports a culture where child safety is seen as a shared community responsibility, rather than the domain of any single organisation or sector.

Listening as a Foundation for the Next Phase
The insights gathered through listening and co-design will guide the next phase of this work informing priorities, partnerships, and potential investment. Importantly, this process ensures that any future framework or strategy is grounded in community experience, shaped by children's voices, and responsive to local context.

7.4 Co-Design as an Ongoing Practice

In this exploration, co-design is understood as a continuous process of learning and adaptation, rather than a one-off consultation exercise.

Co-design in practice involves:

- Testing ideas through small prototypes.
- Observing how people interact with spaces and initiatives.
- Gathering feedback through conversation and reflection.
- Adjusting approaches in response to what is learned.

This iterative approach allows the work to remain flexible, inclusive, and responsive—ensuring that future directions are informed by lived experience rather than assumption.

Trust is built when people can see how their contributions matter. This exploration is committed to:

- Communicating openly about the purpose and limits of the work.
- Sharing what is being learned along the way.
- Acknowledging uncertainty and inviting collaboration.
- Providing feedback loops so participants understand the impact of their input.

By embedding transparency and reflection, the co-design process itself becomes a practice of safety, respect, and shared care.

Social Spark Lab

Social Spark Lab (HBNC) is a youth-focused social innovation training program developed by the Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre in partnership with Volunteering Queensland and the Bendigo Community Bank. It is aimed at young people aged 13–17 years and designed to equip them with the mindset, skills, and tools to identify community challenges and develop real-world solutions.



Delivered through two interactive workshop sessions, the program covers problem-solving, systems thinking, and project implementation while encouraging participants to apply these skills to live community projects. As part of the experience, participants will have the opportunity to present their ideas at a Youth Social Innovators Pitch event, where they can seek funding and support to bring their projects to life.

Youth Social Innovators Pitch

The Fraser Coast Community Innovators Pitch Night, delivered by HBNC, is a dynamic event that brings together local changemakers, community leaders, and creative thinkers to showcase innovative ideas with the potential to deliver real community impact. Participants have the opportunity to secure up to $10,000 in funding to help bring their ideas to life. This is supported through local donations from Fraser Coast Mates, Red Bike Adventures, and Bendigo Community Bank.

The event also connects participants with influential community members, decision-makers, and mentors who provide constructive feedback, guidance, and support to help refine and strengthen each idea. Those not yet ready to pitch are encouraged to attend as spectators, offering a chance to discover emerging local ideas, build connections, and engage with others committed to positive change across the Fraser Coast.

The next Pitch Night will focus on youth and is scheduled for the end of April 2026.

08



Partnerships and Shared Responsibility

Creating child safe communities is not the responsibility of any single organisation, sector, or system. It requires shared ownership, coordinated effort, and a commitment to working together across community, government, and service boundaries.

This exploration recognises that while formal structures and policies play an important role, it is the quality of relationships between partners that ultimately determines impact. Partnerships are therefore approached not as transactional arrangements, but as long-term collaborations grounded in trust, clarity, and shared purpose.



8.1 Community, Council, Schools, and Services

Child safety and wellbeing sit at the intersection of multiple systems. Communities, local government, schools, health services, and community organisations each hold different responsibilities, insights, and resources.

This exploration seeks to strengthen alignment between these partners by:

- Building on existing initiatives rather than duplicating effort.
- Creating shared language and understanding around prevention and place-based safety.
- Identifying complementary roles that reinforce rather than replace one another.
- Encouraging information-sharing and collaboration within appropriate boundaries.

Local councils play a key role in shaping public space and enabling community activity. Schools provide daily connection with children and families. Community organisations offer relational support and local knowledge. Services bring professional expertise and safeguarding frameworks.

When these partners work in isolation, gaps can emerge. When they work together, communities are better positioned to create environments that support children across settings and life stages.





Child Safe Communities Fraser Coast Forum 2026 - Summary

The Child Safe Communities Forum hosted by HBNC brought together community members, service providers, families, and stakeholders to share their perspectives on what makes a community safe, supportive, and welcoming for children and young people.

Through conversations, storytelling, and collaborative activities, participants explored the strengths of our region, identified challenges, and imagined new possibilities for the future.

The following themes represent the collective insights and aspirations that emerged throughout the forum.



Community Vision:

"A connected, inclusive and child-safe community where children and young people feel valued, supported, empowered, and part of a village that helps them thrive."

Child Safe Communities Fraser Coast Forum 2026 - Continued

Connection & Belonging

Participants consistently spoke about the importance of rebuilding a sense of community and creating a modern-day "village" where children, young people, and families feel connected and supported.

Key themes included:

- Stronger neighbourhood connections
- Intergenerational relationships
- Opportunities for community gatherings and events
- Reducing social isolation for children, young people, families, and older adults
- Creating welcoming places where people feel they belong

Safety & Wellbeing

Participants recognised that child safety extends beyond physical safety to include emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing.

Key themes included:

- Safe and inclusive community spaces
- Access to trusted adults and mentors
- Mental health and wellbeing supports
- Safe transport and active travel options
- Child-friendly environments that promote confidence and resilience

Accessible pathways to seek help when needed

Youth Voice & Participation

Young people were seen as valuable contributors to community life and should be involved in shaping the spaces, services, and activities designed for them.

Key themes included:

- Listening to young people's perspectives
- Youth-led activities and initiatives
- Opportunities for leadership and volunteering
- Co-design of community spaces and programs
- Creating environments where young people feel heard and valued



Child Safe Communities Fraser Coast Forum 2026 - Continued

Inclusive Places & Spaces

Participants envisioned community spaces that are welcoming, accessible, and engaging for people of all ages, abilities, cultures, and family structures.

Key themes included:

- Parks and playgrounds that encourage connection and play
- Libraries, community hubs, and sporting precincts as gathering places
- Accessible and inclusive design
- Culturally safe and welcoming environments
- Opportunities for creativity, recreation, and learning
- Spaces that support families to spend time together



Access to Information, Support & Opportunity

Participants highlighted the importance of making information, services, and opportunities easier to access and navigate.

Key themes included:

- Visible and accessible support services
- Digital tools and QR-code-based information
- Mentoring and connection opportunities
- Online safety and digital literacy education
- Community resource sharing initiatives
- Clear pathways to help, programs, and activities

What Success Looks Like

Participants shared a vision of a Fraser Coast where:

- Children and young people feel safe, heard, and supported
- Families feel connected and less isolated
- Community spaces encourage belonging and participation
- Young people have a voice in shaping their future
- Support is easy to find and access
- Neighbours know and help one another
- Every child has the opportunity to thrive





8.2 The Role of Volunteers and Trusted Adults

Volunteers and trusted adults are central to bringing the village to life. Their presence, consistency, and care help transform spaces into places where children feel safe and known.

Within this exploration, volunteers and trusted adults may include:

- Community hosts in neighbourhood spaces.
- Elders and intergenerational mentors.
- Coaches, artists, and activity leaders.
- Parents, carers, and community members with regular presence.

Their role is not to replace professionals, but to provide relational continuity—being familiar faces who notice, connect, and care. This requires clear role definitions, appropriate training, and strong support structures to ensure safety, confidence, and sustainability.

By valuing and supporting volunteers, communities reinforce the idea that child safety is held collectively and enacted through everyday relationships.

8.3 Creating a Collective Culture of Care

Beyond formal partnerships and roles, child safe communities rely on culture—shared beliefs, norms, and behaviours that shape how people relate to one another.

A collective culture of care is created when:

- Children are visibly welcomed in public spaces.
- Adults feel empowered to notice and respond with care.
- Kindness, inclusion, and respect are reinforced through design and practice.
- Responsibility for safety is shared rather than deferred.

This exploration seeks to contribute to a cultural shift where child safety is understood as an everyday practice, not an exceptional response. Through visible initiatives, creative expression, and consistent presence, communities can model what care looks like in action.

Over time, this collective culture becomes self-reinforcing, strengthening trust, increasing participation, and creating environments where children can grow up feeling safe, supported, and connected.



09



9. What This Is — and What It Is Not

As this work gains interest, it is important to clearly articulate the scope, intent, and boundaries of the exploration. This section is designed to ensure shared understanding and to avoid misinterpretation of the purpose or stage of the work.

Holding the Work Carefully
This exploration recognises that child safety is a sensitive and complex domain. Moving slowly, listening deeply, and remaining open to learning are essential to ensuring that any future direction is appropriate, effective, and genuinely community-led.

Clarity at this stage protects both the integrity of the work and the trust of the community.

9.1 Scope and Intent of the Exploration

This work is an early exploration and co-design initiative focused on understanding how child safety and wellbeing can be strengthened through place-based, community-led approaches.



The intent of the exploration is to:

- Learn from community experience and lived knowledge.
- Test small-scale, low-risk prototypes in public spaces.
- Identify patterns, principles, and enabling conditions.
- Build shared language and understanding around prevention and care.
- Inform future design, partnerships, and potential investment.

This exploration is deliberately open-ended. It does not seek to present a finished model, policy framework, or set of mandated actions. Instead, it creates space for learning, reflection, and collaborative sense-making.

At this stage, success is measured not by scale or certainty, but by the quality of insight, participation, and learning generated.

9.2 What We Are Deliberately Not Doing (Yet)



Equally important is clarity around what this work is not attempting to do at this time.

This exploration is not:

- A replacement for formal child protection systems or statutory responsibilities.
- A comprehensive child safety policy or compliance framework.
- A fully funded or scaled program of delivery.
- A diagnostic assessment of individual families or children.
- A one-size-fits-all solution applicable to all communities.

The decision not to move immediately into large-scale implementation is intentional. It reflects a commitment to:

- Avoid premature solutions.
- Respect the complexity of child safety.
- Ensure future approaches are informed by evidence and lived experience.
- Build trust through transparency rather than over-promising.

By naming what is deliberately not being done yet, this work creates the conditions for thoughtful, ethical, and community-informed next steps.

10



Next Steps

The next phase of this work builds on the insights, relationships, and early prototypes developed through exploration and co-design. The focus is not on rapid expansion, but on deepening understanding, strengthening partnerships, and shaping a shared direction that is informed by lived experience and evidence.

At its core, this next phase invites the community to work together in multiple, complementary ways to create environments where children are safe, supported, and connected. This includes the design of welcoming public spaces, the strengthening of everyday relationships, the amplification of children's voices, and the alignment of community effort across sectors.

While this work is not positioned as a solution to complex social issues on its own, there is a strong belief that connected, attentive, and caring communities create the conditions that reduce risk and increase resilience over time. When children grow up surrounded by trusted adults, positive role models, and inclusive spaces, the foundations are laid for improved wellbeing across the lifespan.

Over time, these collective efforts have the potential to contribute to broader community outcomes, including:

- Reduced social isolation for children and families.
- Earlier identification of stress, vulnerability, or harm.
- Stronger informal support networks that complement formal services.
- Increased community capacity to respond with care rather than crisis.

By continuing to learn together, test ideas, and share responsibility, the community can move toward a future where child safety is not the responsibility of a few, but a shared and visible commitment held by many.

10.1 Testing, Refining, and Scaling Ideas



As understanding deepens, selected ideas and prototypes may move into more structured testing. We do not need to re-create, we have the options to morph and expand on existing project.

This will involve:

- Refining concepts based on community feedback and observation.
- Strengthening design elements that support safety, inclusion, and belonging.
- Exploring feasibility, resourcing, and sustainability.
- Identifying which ideas are ready for expansion and which require further development.

Any scaling will be intentional and phased, ensuring that growth does not compromise the relational and place-based qualities that underpin child safety. Scaling is understood not only as doing more, but as doing well in different contexts.

Importantly, the framework will be shaped collaboratively, ensuring it reflects both evidence and lived experience. It is intended to support future planning, partnership, and investment, while remaining grounded in local context.

Over time, the learnings from this exploration will inform the development of a shared framework for creating child safe communities.

Creating Child Safe Communities

Community Charter

Our Purpose

Creating Child Safe Communities is a community-led commitment to ensuring that children and young people feel safe, seen, supported, and valued in the places where they live, play, learn, and belong.

This initiative recognises that child safety and wellbeing is not only the responsibility of professionals or systems, it is created every day through relationships, environments, and shared responsibility across the whole community.

What We Mean by a Child Safe Community

A child safe community is one where:

- Children are welcome and included in everyday community life
- Adults are aware, present, and responsive
- Public spaces are designed with care, visibility, and belonging in mind
- Children know where to go, who to trust, and how to be heard
- Safety is built through connection, not fear
- Child safety extends beyond formal policies—it lives in how we greet children, how we listen, how we design spaces, and how we show up for one another.

Our Principles

We commit to:

- Listening to children and young people and taking their experiences seriously
- Shared responsibility, where everyone has a role to play
- Prevention and early support, not just response to harm
- Inclusion and equity, recognising diverse cultures, abilities, and family structures
- Community-led action, shaped by local knowledge and strengths

Creating Child Safe Communities

Community Charter

How You Can Be Involved

There is no single way to participate. People can engage in ways that suit their role, capacity, and interest.

You might:

- Create or host safe, welcoming spaces for children and families
- Volunteer or mentor as a trusted adult presence
- Support child-friendly design in public places, events, or services
- Listen, notice, and respond when children need support
- Partner or collaborate across schools, services, businesses, and community groups
- Share ideas, stories, or resources that strengthen safety and belonging
- Small actions matter. Child safe communities are built through many people doing what they can, where they are.

Our Commitment

By joining Creating Child Safe Communities, we commit to:

- Acting with care, curiosity, and accountability
- Continuing to learn and reflect together
- Holding children's wellbeing at the centre of community life

We invite individuals, families, organisations, and community leaders to walk alongside us in this work.

Vision Boards

PIXAR PITCHES

Pixar Pitch – Accessible Mentorship for Young People

Once upon a time…
Children didn't know where to go when they had a problem or needed guidance.
Every day…
They searched for answers on their own, often feeling unsure, unsupported, and overwhelmed.
Until one day…
A mentorship platform was created—similar to a "mentor matching" system—where children could browse a list of trusted mentors, read their profiles, and choose someone they felt they could relate to. With a simple scan or online booking, they could safely reach out.
Because of that…
Children were able to connect with a mentor and begin conversations online in a safe and supported way.
Because of that…
These connections could grow into guided, in-person meetings in appropriate, regulated settings—focused on helping the child navigate their challenges and build confidence.
Until finally…
Children developed stronger life skills, felt supported in their growth, and were empowered to pursue their goals and future pathways.

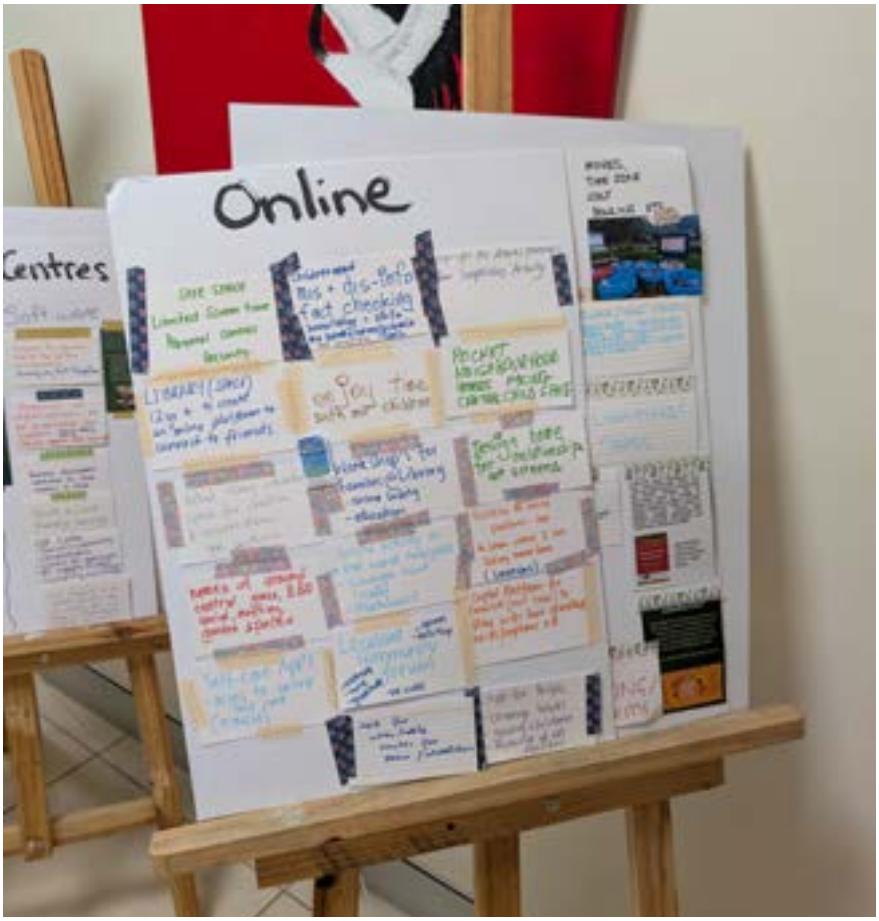
HBNC Youth Mentoring Program



Youth Mentoring: Guiding lives, building futures

Pixar Pitch – A Village of Support

Once upon a time...
There were single mums and dads raising young children who were growing into teenagers, needing guidance, safe spaces, and support around identity, gender, culture, and connection.
Every day...
These parents did their best to meet all of their children's needs, often feeling overwhelmed and alone, without access to the targeted and inclusive support their families required.
Until one day...
A group of dedicated volunteers—men and women from diverse backgrounds—came together to offer their time, guidance, and presence. They created a safe, welcoming network to support both parents and children.
Because of that...
Parents, including dads, felt supported and less isolated, and children gained access to a broader, more balanced support network.
Because of that...
Young people had trusted, safe adults outside the home to talk to, share experiences with, and seek guidance from as they grew.
Until finally...
Single-parent families were no longer alone. A strong, connected village formed—where everyone felt supported, included, and valued.



Pixar Pitch – Adopt a Grandparent

Once upon a time…
There were children, grandparents, and elderly people who were living without regular connection to grandchildren or family-like relationships. Because of this, many older people felt a lack of connection and meaningful relationships in their lives.
Every day…
They heard stories of others spending joyful time with grandparents, which made their own sense of loneliness feel even stronger.
Until one day…
Some older people who were missing connection in their lives decided to volunteer and offer their time, creating opportunities to "adopt a grandchild."
Because of that…
Families also chose to "adopt a grandparent," forming new intergenerational relationships.
Because of that…
Children gained richer life experiences, older people experienced less loneliness, and parents felt supported as the gaps in "the village" began to close.
Until finally…
The community became more connected, and the village felt whole.

Fraser Coast Playgroups - Hervey Bay Playgroups, Maryborough Playgroups

wide bay kids

big ideas and family fun in the Wide Bay

Pixar Pitch – Be Heard Hour

Once upon a time…
Young people felt unseen, unheard, and misunderstood within their community.
Every day…
They continued on without a safe space or trusted person to talk to, often navigating challenges alone.
Until one day…
Be Heard Hour was created—a safe, accessible space where community organisations came together with one purpose: to listen.
Because of that…
Young people began to feel heard, valued, and understood.
Because of that…
They were able to connect with meaningful pathways of support, guidance, and opportunity.
Until finally…
Young people felt safe, heard, and genuinely supported—held by a community that listened and cared.

Connecting Fraser Coast School leaders with Council

The Fraser Coast School Captains network is a program delivered as an information sharing platform encouraging networking, leadership development, and engagement with Council programs and projects.
Held in morning breakfast sessions once a term and hosted by participating schools on a rotational basis.
The program delivers a collaborative learning network that connects Fraser Coast school leaders with Council, the school community, and other youth-based groups. The school captain's network develops positive relationships and strong partnerships between, students, staff, community and other schools.



Pixar Pitch – Beach Toy Libraries

Once upon a time…
Families visited Hervey Bay with their young children, excited to spend time at the beach.
Every day…
Some children wished they had beach toys to play with, watching others build sandcastles and play games while they had nothing of their own.
Until one day…
They arrived at the beach and discovered a “Beach Library”—a simple box filled with shared toys: buckets, spades, balls, toy trucks, and even a cricket set.
Because of that…
Parents were able to relax and enjoy their time, while children played longer, built sandcastles, and engaged more fully in the beach experience.
Because of that…
Both local and visiting families could borrow toys from any beach, guided by a simple message: “Please borrow, play, and return.” This encouraged sharing, respect, and community connection.
Until finally…
Children spent more time outdoors—imagining, playing together, and connecting—while families enjoyed the beauty of the Fraser Coast in a more inclusive and welcoming way.



Pixar Pitch – Building a Village

Once upon a time…
There were many streets across the Fraser Coast where people lived close together, yet felt isolated and lonely. Neighbours didn't wave, stop to chat, or even know one another.
Every day…
People would walk or drive past each other, heading to work or their separate lives, without connection or interaction.
Until one day…
We heard about a village called Aldershot, where children played in the streets, and there was a strong sense of community spirit and belonging.
Because of that…
People gathered every Friday night at the local hall to share meals, have conversations, laugh together, and enjoy live music.
Because of that…
They got to know each other, built trust, and began helping one another—sharing skills, knowledge, and support.
Until finally…
Children grew up feeling safe, connected, and proud to be part of their community—a true "village."
And ever since then…
As those children grew older, they wanted to create the same sense of village in their own neighbourhoods, so their children could grow up with that same connection, safety, and belonging.



Pixar Pitch – Connected Youth Support in Community Spaces

Once upon a time...
Young people in our community found it difficult to know where to go for help when they needed support.
Every day...
They would go to places like parks and skate parks feeling alone, lost, and disconnected.
Until one day...
A community initiative installed interactive information boards with QR codes linking to support services such as Kids Helpline, Headspace, homelessness support lines, and local community resources like the Little Library and other connection points.
Because of that...
Young people were able to safely find support, information, and connections when they needed them.
Because of that...
They no longer felt as lost or alone and were more appropriately supported in their everyday lives.
Until finally...
Young people in the community felt stronger, more connected, and better able to navigate everyday life with confidence and support.



Pixar Pitch – Finding Voice, Identity & Confidence

Once upon a time…
There were children and young people who depended heavily on what others thought of them to feel okay. They were told they needed to be a certain way to be accepted, and many had dreams that others didn't believe were possible.
Every day…
They measured their worth through likes and external approval, struggled to fit in, and often felt they had to change themselves to belong.
Until one day…
A group of people from different age groups came together to create a safe space where children and young people could gather, connect, and learn how life can be different when given new information and support.
Because of that…
Programs were developed that helped children and young people feel braver, believe in themselves, and explore new ideas about who they are and what they can do.
Because of that…
They began to shift their focus toward their own strengths, passions, and dreams, discovering possibilities within themselves they had not seen before.
Until finally…
They began to share their voices, showing that all children and young people have value, deserve to be heard, and can be exactly who they truly are.



Pixar Pitch – Play Spaces in Shopping Precincts

Once upon a time...
There were children full of energy with nowhere to release it, and parents trying to manage daily errands while needing a moment to recharge their own mental wellbeing.
Every day...
Simple tasks like shopping felt like a struggle—something families had to push through, rather than enjoy together.
Until one day...
Community and shopfronts introduced dedicated spaces within shopping precincts where children could play, engage, regulate, and create—spaces that were consistently accessible.
Because of that...
Both children and parents could release energy, recharge, and connect with others in a supportive environment.
Because of that...
Everyday tasks became easier, more enjoyable, and even something families began to look forward to.
Until finally...
Shopping precincts became places of play and community, increasing engagement, interaction, and connection—while reducing stress, behavioural challenges, and reliance on less healthy coping strategies for both children and parents.



Pixar Pitch – Safe Community Spaces & Anti-Bullying Support

Once upon a time...
There were children in our community who were bullied, felt unsafe, and often did not feel protected in public spaces.
Every day...
They avoided community spaces, felt isolated, and experienced a decline in their confidence and self-worth.
Until one day...
They learned about a safety app that connected them to support services and allowed them to send a safe alert, sharing their location if they ever felt unsafe.
Because of that...
Children began to feel safer in community spaces, knowing they had access to support and could reach help quickly when needed.
Because of that...
They were more willing to participate in community life, reducing fear and increasing confidence in public spaces.
Until finally...
Bullying rates in the Fraser Coast decreased, and children felt safer, more supported, and more connected in their community environments.



Pixar Pitch – Reclaiming Neighbourhood Play & Connection

Once upon a time…
Children spent most of their time on screens while their parents were busy and exhausted. Many children felt lonely and unsure of themselves, surrounded by constant information from devices, peers, and the world around them.
Every day…
They absorbed mixed messages—sometimes misinformation—and lacked the guidance and skills to make sense of it all.
Until one day…
A group of local neighbours came together and approached council with an idea: to transform quiet cul-de-sacs into shared play, social, and meeting spaces. These spaces would also support parents to help children build skills in understanding information, including identifying misinformation and fact-checking.
Because of that…
Neighbourhoods became more connected. Parents felt confident allowing their children to walk home from school to shared spaces, where families gathered for afternoon tea and connection.
Because of that…
Children spent more time outdoors, playing, socialising, and forming relationships with people of all ages in their community—while also developing the skills to think critically about the information they encounter.
Until finally…
The idea spread, with more communities adopting shared social spaces. Children grew up more connected, confident, and informed—supported by a village that helped them navigate both the real world and the digital one.



Pixar Pitch – Safe Riding for Children & Young People

Once upon a time…
Children and young people discovered a new kind of “toy”—one that could go very fast. These were e-scooters and e-bikes, offering excitement, independence, and a new way to explore their world.
Every day…
They rode with freedom, the wind in their hair, but with little understanding of safety or road rules.
Until one day…
Injuries began to happen, and legislation changed—but children and young people still had little guidance on how to ride safely.
Because of that…
A connected communities group began to ask whether there might be a better way to support young riders.
Because of that…
They envisioned opportunities for children and young people to participate in school camps and holiday programs focused on road safety—delivered by community organisations.
Until finally…
With the support of volunteers and funding bodies, children and young people were given the opportunity to learn, understand road rules, and build safety awareness.
And ever since then…
They have been better equipped to manage risk and protect themselves, riding safely and confidently within their communities.



Pixar Pitch – Safer Shared Pathways

Once upon a time…
There was a beautiful seaside city with a well-loved bike and cycle path along the bay.
Every day…
As the area became busier, more people used scooters and bikes. The path grew crowded, conflicts increased, accidents happened, and some people were hurt. Over time, more vulnerable members of the community began to avoid the path altogether.
Until one day…
The council made a bold investment and created a second, dedicated pathway exclusively for pedestrians.
Because of that…
People could move safely and comfortably, whether walking, riding, or scooting. More residents and visitors began enjoying the paths and the natural beauty of Hervey Bay again.
Because of that…
Confidence returned. Families felt safer, participation increased, and the shared spaces became more inclusive for people of all ages and abilities.
Until finally…
The community thrived. Physical and mental wellbeing improved, families reconnected with outdoor spaces, and Hervey Bay strengthened its reputation as a safe, welcoming, and family-friendly place to live and visit.



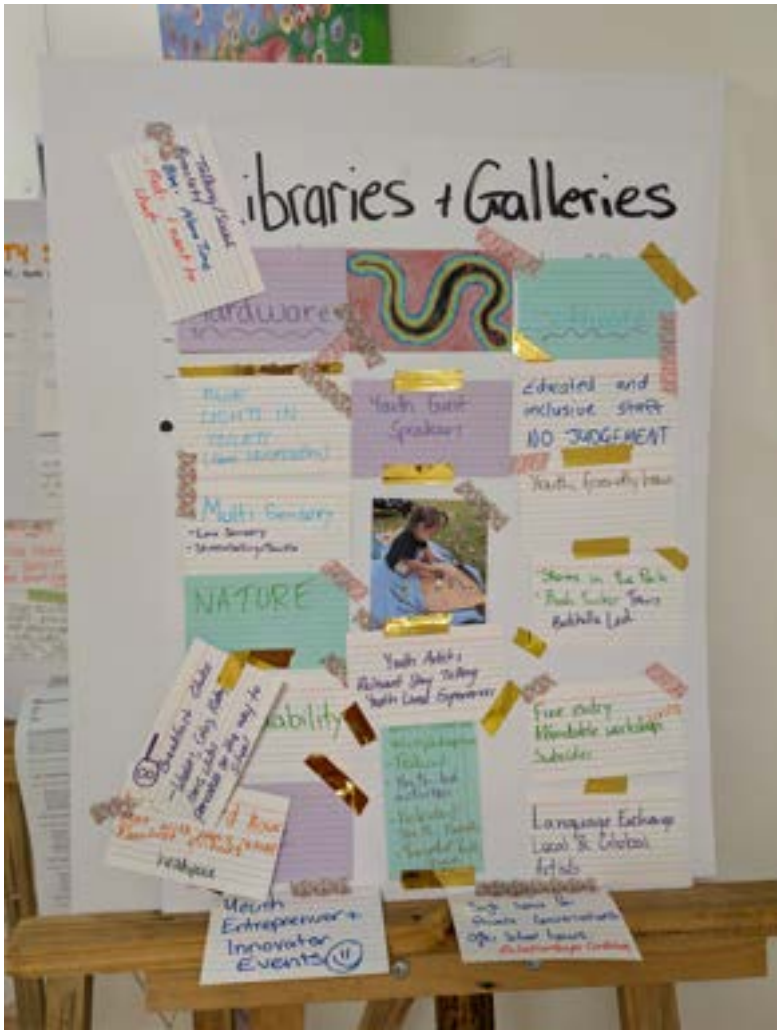
Pixar Pitch – Sports Precinct Adventure Path

Once upon a time…
My children felt bored at the sports precinct, often watching others participate but not having anything to engage them.
Every day…
They sat on the sidelines watching siblings play, feeling sunburnt, restless, and left out.
Until one day…
A colourful, shaded pathway was introduced—leading to interactive activities designed just for them. The path was filled with engaging equipment, playful signage, and other children laughing and exploring.
Because of that…
Children became excited to visit the sports precinct. It transformed into a space that was social, stimulating, and safe for everyone.
Because of that…
Families felt more supported and empowered to attend, knowing all children—not just the ones playing sport—were included and engaged.
Until finally…
The sports precinct became known not only as a place for sport, but as a place of adventure—accessible, inclusive, and enjoyable for all.



Pixar Pitch – Youth Space at Library & Gallery

Once upon a time…
A group of young people were looking for a place to relax, connect, and spend time together.
Every day…
They would walk past the library and gallery, but didn't feel it was a space for them.
Until one day…
They were invited into the venue and welcomed inside.
Because of that…
They began to feel safe and connected, building relationships with staff who were developing a new café space.
Because of that…
They regularly shared feedback on the café design, contributing ideas around themes, activation, and how the space could better support young people.
Until finally…
The venue became a regular meeting place for young people before and after school and work—amplifying youth voice and creating pathways for volunteering and ongoing engagement.



SOCIAL SHIFT INSTITUTE

HBNC
Creating Connected Communities

State of Families Report 2026

Hinkler

Welcome to The State of Families Report 2026: Hinkler. Prepared by the Social Shift Institute, this report provides a snapshot of families in the Fraser Coast and Bundaberg regions, highlighting key challenges and opportunities to support the region. Drawing on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and other key datasets, the report compares local conditions for families with broader benchmarks across Queensland and Australia.

Who are our local families?

Families across the Fraser Coast and Bundaberg regions have distinct demographic characteristics, largely influenced by ageing populations, retirement migration and comparatively fewer families with children. Only 29% of Fraser Coast families and 32.1% of Bundaberg families are couples with children, compared to 41.2% across Queensland. Conversely, couples without children represent 52.2% and 49% of families respectively, reflecting the regions' ageing populations. Median weekly family incomes are significantly lower at $1,062 in Fraser Coast and $1,427 in Bundaberg, compared to $2,024 across Queensland. First Nations families experience additional economic pressures, while cultural diversity remains comparatively low, with only 12.7% of Fraser Coast residents and 13% of Bundaberg residents born overseas, compared to 22.7% statewide.

What key issues are families facing?

Families across Hinkler are experiencing increasing social and economic pressures, particularly around cost of living, housing affordability, employment and family safety. Housing stress is a significant concern, with 40% of renting households in Fraser Coast and 38.5% in Bundaberg spending more than 30% of their income on rent (a common indicator of rental stress). Workforce participation is also lower, with 41.5% of couple families in Fraser Coast and 34.2% in Bundaberg having neither partner in paid employment, influenced partly again by the regions' ageing populations. Domestic and family violence remains a critical concern, with reported police incidents increasing by 161% in Fraser Coast and 114% in Bundaberg since 2015. Adolescent violence in the home is also an emerging issue, with national research indicating that approximately 20% of young people aged 16–20 report using violence within the family home. Adolescent violence offending is further strongly linked to childhood exposure to violence & trauma and can therefore be linked as a flow on presentation from rising DFV.

Supporting families

Local, Queensland and Australian Government strategies provide important frameworks for strengthening family wellbeing, improving child safety and addressing socioeconomic disadvantage with the aim of improving overall conditions for families and the communities. Key priorities include early childhood development, housing affordability, domestic and family violence prevention, disability inclusion and culturally responsive services. Initiatives such as Putting Queensland Kids First, Supporting Families Changing Futures and the national Early Years Strategy 2024–2034 emphasise prevention, early intervention and coordinated family support. Queensland's 10 Child Safe Standards also provide a framework for strengthening child safety within organisations and community services. With approximately 40% of local renting households experiencing rental stress and more than 11% of residents reporting mental health conditions, the importance of translating these strategies into accessible, place-based services is clear. Stronger collaboration, equitable regional investment and community-led approaches will be essential to achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes for families.

Future outlook - It Takes a Village

Looking towards the future, the report highlights the importance of shifting from reactive service delivery towards prevention, early intervention and community-led approaches that strengthen family wellbeing. The It Takes a Village – Creating Child Safe Communities initiative, developed by HBNC in collaboration with local family service providers, provides a framework for building safer, more inclusive and connected communities. With 12% of Fraser Coast young people reporting feeling unsafe at home, alongside increasing family violence and social isolation, the need for stronger community connections and shared responsibility for child safety is evident. Through its three pillars, Places that Care, People who Notice and Voices that Matter, the initiative seeks to create welcoming community spaces, strengthen supportive relationships and ensure children and young people actively participate in shaping their communities. Ultimately, the State of Families Report 2026 – Hinkler highlights that while families across Fraser Coast and Bundaberg face significant and interconnected challenges, there is also hope for a stronger future. Through collective action, shared responsibility and community-led solutions, we have the opportunity at a community level to build safer, healthier and more connected communities where every family feels supported, every child has the opportunity to thrive, and together, we create a brighter future.

How are families doing?

The report identifies significant health and wellbeing challenges across both regions, with rates of chronic illness, mental health conditions and disability consistently exceeding Queensland and national averages. Approximately 44.2% of Fraser Coast residents and 41.2% of Bundaberg residents report at least one long-term health condition, compared to 32.9% across Queensland. Mental health conditions affect 12.8% of Fraser Coast residents and 11.6% of Bundaberg residents, compared to 9.1% statewide, with particularly high rates among women and young people. Disability is also more prevalent, affecting 24.8% of Fraser Coast residents and 23.1% of Bundaberg residents. While antenatal care access is strong, with approximately 95% of mothers attending at least five appointments, opportunities remain to improve early engagement. Social isolation and loneliness further compound these challenges, particularly among young people and older residents. These findings reinforce the importance of integrated, accessible and family centred health and wellbeing services.

To view the full report visit:
www.socialshift.com.au



What if every neighbourhood was a place where children felt safe, families felt supported, and everyone had a role in creating a community of care?

It Takes a Village explores how we can bring back the village, not by returning to the past, but by reimagining the places, relationships and everyday experiences that help children thrive.

Grounded in the Fraser Coast, this community-led initiative challenges us to move beyond responding to harm and towards preventing it through connection, belonging and shared responsibility.

Built around three simple but powerful pillars:

- Places that Care: Creating welcoming spaces where children and families feel safe, included and connected.
- People who Notice: Empowering neighbours, volunteers and trusted adults to recognise, care and act early.
- Voices that Matter: Ensuring children are heard, valued and actively involved in shaping their communities.

Through research, local insights, creative ideas and practical actions, this publication invites community organisations, schools, businesses and local leaders to imagine what is possible when we work together. Because raising children has never been the responsibility of one person, one family or one service. It takes a village.