

Mental Health Promotion Priorities for Queensland

A Summary Report

June 2026

Background

In 2025, the Queensland Mental Health Commission (the Commission) engaged [Prevention United](#) as an external subject matter expert to provide targeted, evidence-informed guidance on designing and implementing a strategic mental health and wellbeing investment approach in Queensland, which focuses on primary prevention of mental health conditions and promotion of mental wellbeing, i.e. mental health promotion.

Why mental health promotion matters now

Mental health is fundamental to people's ability to live fulfilling lives, build relationships, participate in education and work, and contribute to their communities. Supporting good mental health across the population is therefore an important priority for Queensland's social and economic wellbeing.

While many Queenslanders experience positive mental health, population data show that a significant proportion report psychological distress, lower life satisfaction or mental health conditions at some point in their lives. Experiences also vary across the state, with some communities facing greater challenges requiring an equity focus in relation to future investment. Young people, in particular, are experiencing increasing pressures, highlighting the importance of strengthening supports that promote mental wellbeing early in life.

Mental health promotion plays an important role in this effort. It focuses on promoting and protecting mental health across the community and strengthening the conditions that support wellbeing. Mental health promotion complements mental healthcare. Treatment and support services remain essential for people experiencing mental illness, while mental health promotion focuses on the broader factors that influence people's mental health, including early childhood development, education, employment, housing, social relationships and community environments. As a result, promoting good mental health requires coordinated action across multiple areas of public policy and community life.

Many of these actions also contribute to broader policy priorities such as suicide prevention, reducing harmful alcohol and other drug use, strengthening communities and preventing youth crime. This creates opportunities to build on existing efforts across government and the community sector to further support the mental wellbeing of Queenslanders.

Queensland's existing strengths to build on

Queensland already has a strong foundation for promoting good mental health. Across government and the community sector, a range of strategies, programs and investments address key risk and protective factors influencing mental health.

A rapid review of Queensland Government strategies conducted in October 2025 identified a wide range of initiatives that support mental wellbeing and help prevent mental health conditions. Many focus on strengthening protective factors such as social connection, inclusion and participation, as well as addressing broader determinants including housing, education and employment.

There is also a strong focus on responding to the diverse needs of Queenslanders, including children and young people, First Nations peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTQIA+ communities, and women and girls. These efforts recognise that mental health outcomes are shaped by social and cultural experiences and that some communities require tailored responses.

Several targeted strategies support mental health promotion across the life course, including:

- *Shifting minds: The Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs, and Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan 2023–2028 (Shifting minds)*
- *Thriving Lives, Connected Communities – Queensland’s Commitment to Mental Health and Wellbeing (Thriving Lives, Connected Communities)*
- *Young Queenslanders Strategy*
- *Communities 2032 Strategy and Action Plan.*

Together, these strategies address a wide range of factors that influence mental wellbeing and highlight the importance of cross-sector collaboration.

In addition to policy frameworks, Queensland has several strong platforms that support mental health promotion in communities. Two examples are highlighted below.

Child and Family Hubs across the state provide integrated, family-centred support by bringing together health, education and social services in accessible community locations. They help families access support while also providing opportunities for parents and carers to build skills, strengthen relationships and connect with other families.

Mapping undertaken by Queensland Kids Partnership in 2024 identified approximately 308 child and family hub sites across Queensland, including early years centres, neighbourhood and community hubs, school-based hubs and other coordinated local services.

First 5 Forever is an early-years literacy program delivered through public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres across Queensland in partnership with local governments and coordinated by the State Library of Queensland.

The program supports families with children aged 0–5 years to build early language and literacy skills through everyday activities such as talking, reading, singing and playing. Since launching in 2015, the program has been delivered through more than 320 libraries and knowledge centres and has reached millions of families, with evaluations highlighting its effectiveness in strengthening early literacy, encouraging family engagement in learning, and fostering community connection.

Together, these types of investments demonstrate that Queensland already has important foundations in place for strengthening mental health promotion. Building on these existing platforms and connecting initiatives more effectively provides an opportunity to better support the mental wellbeing of individuals, families and communities across the state.

What we heard and what the evidence tells us

To inform the approach to investing in mental health promotion and building on earlier stakeholder engagement that informed the development of *Shifting minds* and *Thriving Lives, Connected Communities*, Prevention United, in partnership with the Commission, engaged with stakeholders across government, peaks, community organisations, research institutions and service providers (see Figure 1). This engagement helped identify strengths, gaps and opportunities to strengthen mental health promotion across Queensland.

Figure 1. Stakeholder engagement overview

What?	Sector Roundtables	Sector Leader Interviews
Who?	Experts and practitioners from a range of sectors and community settings including arts, sports & recreation, diversity & inclusion, education, health, AOD, primary industries	Leaders from government agencies, community organisations, research centres and the health sector
How many?	3 Roundtables involving 33 participants	Interviews with 9 senior leaders
When?	November 2025	November-December 2025

The engagement process included workshops, interviews and discussions with stakeholders working across education, health, community services, research and local initiatives. Participants represented organisations working with children and young people, families, culturally diverse communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and regional and rural communities.

Three consistent themes emerged.

Strengthening system foundations

Stakeholders noted that many organisations already contribute to mental health promotion, but efforts are often fragmented and not always connected through shared frameworks,

coordination or evaluation approaches. Stronger system foundations could help align existing efforts, support collaboration across sectors and improve understanding of what works.

"I'd like to see some sort of planned approach where [this funding is] actually laying a foundation for the future." (Interviewed sector leader)

Evidence also shows that improving population mental health requires coordinated action across sectors including education, community services, employment and urban environments.

Amplifying existing initiatives

Participants emphasised that Queensland already has many valuable initiatives and community programs that support mental wellbeing. Rather than creating entirely new programs, there was strong support for building on and expanding existing efforts, particularly those already embedded in communities.

Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of better connecting initiatives so successful approaches can be shared, adapted and scaled where appropriate.

Balancing universal and targeted approaches

A consistent message was the importance of combining universal initiatives that support population wellbeing with targeted and local efforts for communities experiencing greater challenges. This reflects established mental health promotion approaches, where population-wide initiatives improve overall wellbeing while targeted supports help address inequities.

"Queensland... we're deeply local. We know our community. So how do you have something that leans into that local adaption, and then we could learn from it and share it?" (Interviewed sector leader)

Together, these insights highlight opportunities to strengthen Queensland's mental health promotion system by building stronger foundations, amplifying existing initiatives and ensuring a balance between universal and targeted investment.

A shared direction for future investment

Strengthening mental health promotion in Queensland requires building on existing initiatives, strengthening system foundations, and improving the underlying infrastructure of the mental health promotion system. This includes building shared understanding of mental health promotion, improving collaboration across sectors, strengthening workforce capability, and supporting better measurement and learning.

Children and young people represent an important focus within this broader approach. Early life experiences have a powerful influence on lifelong mental health, and strengthening protective environments for children and families is one of the most effective ways to promote wellbeing across the life course.

To guide investment decisions, a set of prioritisation principles has been developed based on stakeholder engagement. These principles ensure investments focus on initiatives most likely to improve outcomes and strengthen the system over time.

Key considerations include whether an initiative:

- Addresses a clearly identified mental health promotion need
- Builds on existing programs or infrastructure
- Improves equity and access for communities experiencing greater challenges
- Is informed by community and lived experience
- Is ready for implementation within the investment timeframe
- Includes appropriate evaluation and learning
- Strengthens collaboration across sectors
- Has potential for long-term sustainability

These criteria will help ensure investments are strategic, evidence-informed and focused on long-term impact. The investment approach could also provide opportunities to test and learn from different approaches, helping inform future investment decisions.

Looking ahead

The Commission plays an important role as a steward of the mental health system, bringing together partners across government, communities and services to strengthen mental health outcomes for Queenslanders.

In the context of mental health promotion, this includes supporting a shared understanding of what promotes good mental health, encouraging collaboration across sectors and ensuring investments are aligned with evidence and community needs.

Monitoring and evaluation play an important role in this process. Capturing insights from funded initiatives will help identify effective approaches and strengthen the evidence base for mental health promotion in Queensland.

Together, these actions will help ensure the investment approach not only supports immediate initiatives but also lays the groundwork for a more connected, capable and sustainable mental health promotion system across Queensland.