Queensland Platforms Project

Final report

The Centre for Community Child Health

Prepared for: Queensland Government - Department of Education and Training
Date: 21 March 2016

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The Queensland Platforms Project was undertaken by the Centre for Community Child Health on behalf of the Queensland Department of Education and Training.

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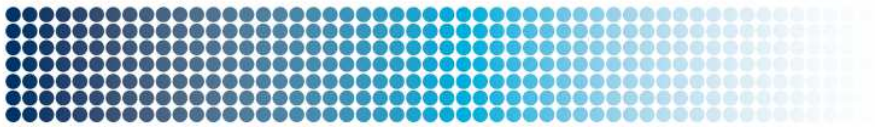

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Glossary

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
CCCH	Centre for Community Child Health
DET	Department of Education and Training
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECCE	Early Childhood and Community Engagement
EOI	Expression of Interest
MCRI	Murdoch Childrens Research Institute
NGO	Non-government organisation
QPP	Queensland Platforms Project
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the individuals and organisations that have contributed to the Queensland Platforms Project (QPP) throughout all its phases. This includes those involved in initial community scoping and consultations, development and delivery of the Platforms training workshops, participation in the Platforms site-level coaching and leadership groups, planning and participation in the reflective workshops, and all QPP evaluation activities. These contributions have been invaluable to inform, develop and evaluate the Queensland Platforms Pilot Project.

Executive summary

From July 2014 to December 2015, the Queensland DET's Office for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (now Early Childhood and Community engagement) (ECCE) engaged the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) at the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute to provide training and support to three Queensland communities to facilitate a collaborative community-based model of service integration.

Platforms was identified as an approach to support local capacity to improve integration of early childhood development services and programs. As such, the Queensland Platforms Project (QPP) was a key task within the DET ECCE Division Operational Plan 2014-15.

Eighteen months later, real progress has been made. Each of the three communities has established an active partnership group that meets regularly and continues to build new connections to respond to local needs and drive better outcomes for children and families.

This executive summary details the findings from the QPP's evaluation, highlighting its achievements, strengths, challenges and recommendations. The accompanying report provides the full detail of the project's implementation and stakeholder engagement.

Project overview

The CCCH used the Platforms service re-development framework to support progress towards the QPP's broad outcome: *the establishment of: common and collaborative partnerships that understand and address local needs and priorities; and a shared commitment to improve outcomes for local children and families*.

The three identified sites for the QPP were:

- Gold Coast (Burleigh Miami)
- Gympie
- Lockyer Valley (Laidley and Hatton Vale).

The QPP included a series of phases which were implemented across each site: initial site scoping and engagement; a Raising Awareness forum; Platforms training for approximately 20 local and regional service providers and community members; and coaching and support for a self-selected group of local leaders. A communication and stakeholder engagement strategy developed key messages for all QPP activities, and resulted in the broad dissemination of a range of communication materials.

The QPP's evaluation broadly sought to address three questions:

- Was the project delivered as intended?
- What was the impact of the project?
- How could the project be improved?

In addition, the evaluation used a mixed methodology to measure three short-term outcomes directly related to the following representative groups: professionals, community members and service managers.

Findings

The findings from the QPP evaluation are documented under key achievements, key enablers and key challenges.

Key achievements

The establishment of common and collaborative partnerships

The establishment of early years' partnerships, the development and strengthening of relationships within these, and the beginnings of local governance structures, including 'working together agreements', demonstrate positive progress towards the growth of collaborative cultures in each of the three sites. Professionals reported that the QPP had increased their understanding, knowledge, skills and confidence to work in collaboration. They also reported that they were supported to develop a shared language and consistent framework for collaborative work, and the QPP increased their commitment and intention to work collaboratively with other services and community members.

Diversity of engagement

The 107 participants in the QPP's activities represented a diverse range of services and professional disciplines across the three sites. Participants indicated that the QPP's initial engagement phase was key to engaging interest and establishing an enduring commitment. Each local collaborative continued to broaden its membership throughout the QPP coaching phase, inviting new members, establishing strategic links with other agencies and networks, and maintaining strong inter-sectoral and cross-disciplinary approaches.

Relationships

The QPP resulted in a significant increase in networking between early years' services in the three sites. During each phase of the QPP, the facilitators observed local practitioners establishing professional relationships with others who worked within close geographical proximity, but who had, prior to the QPP, been unfamiliar with each other and their role/service.

Commitment

Each of the Platforms leadership groups are committed to building local capacity, and acknowledging community strengths and barriers. Each site has acknowledged the lack of community participation and is planning engagement strategies to support and encourage community members' involvement. This commitment reflects the QPP's intended outcomes of developing an enhanced culture of collaboration among service providers and community members.

Shared understandings

The QPP's activities helped establish shared understandings and agreement between participants about ways to move forward together. While many participants were involved in collaborative work previously, the Platforms approach (a step-by-step guide fortified with relevant resources and materials for each stage) supported their collaborative practice and increased their confidence in working with others in their community.

Key enablers

Investment in site engagement

The investment in initial site engagement and in bringing people together to raise awareness proved invaluable in establishing support and a shared understanding of the QPP across services. This resulted in the active participation by diverse stakeholders in project activities at each site.

The Queensland Platforms Project processes
Participants saw value in the implementation of a phased approach to Platforms within their communities. Those involved in QPP generally expressed a high level of satisfaction with their experience. Participants also placed a high value on the accompanying resources, including the Platforms roadmap that supported the quality of their ongoing work within their respective communities.

The role of CCCH
The qualities and skills demonstrated by the CCCH project coordinator and other team members were identified as a strength, particularly in the site engagement phase of the QPP. The ongoing availability of the QPP coordinator to attend face-to-face meetings across the three sites was an important factor in establishing and maintaining momentum.

Local participation
Despite small numbers of community members participating, a strong level of enthusiasm and participation by key service providers acted as a catalyst for involving others and inspiring people to work together towards a common goal. A strength of the local groups was their willingness to discuss the Platforms approach, reach out to their clients and colleagues, and welcome broad participation.

Regional DET commitment and leadership
DET regional officers were instrumental in forging relationships during the initial engagement phase and throughout the QPP. Their involvement emerged as an important influence in the progress of each local partnership group.

Key challenges

Engagement of local community members
The engagement of local community members was very limited across all three sites. As a result, limited progress was made towards community members feeling empowered and confident to work in partnership with professionals to address their community needs and priorities. The community members who did participate were generally already active members of the community, and therefore, could be considered to be 'less at risk' than those that the QPP needed to engage.
From their participation in the QPP, professionals reported a greater appreciation of the importance of community representation and participation. Factors that contributed to the lack of community representation were: limited time and resources; the lack of a designated local 'connector' with the appropriate local knowledge, skills and qualities to engage community members; delivery of QPP activities during working hours; and an over-emphasis on the engagement of professionals and services. Each site will continue to negotiate effective ways to meaningfully engage with their communities.

Lack of a local community liaison resource
Although the QPP effectively engaged with a diverse range of stakeholders in each site, the absence of a local community liaison resource had implications for the project. The lack of this resource as a constant presence 'on the ground' made ongoing communication, the coordination of activities and the broader engagement of community members, difficult throughout the QPP.

Local leadership and an authorising environment
Local leadership varied across the three sites. Where leadership was present, it helped to establish an authorising environment in which to work. For example, the presence of both DET regional staff and

school principals in the training workshops brought a level of commitment that resulted in a strong momentum for the QPP within a particular site.

Although service managers reported an increased understanding and commitment to the principles of collaboration and reported evidence of increased collaboration between services, they saw their role as limited to authorising and supporting staff to participate. The professionals participating in the QPP saw a need for service managers to fully appreciate the necessary and ongoing processes of effective collaboration, in order to better support new ways of working within their local community. It was also acknowledged that a lack of engagement with and support from upper-level management, hindered engagement with some key groups, such as health sector workers.

Duration of the QPP and continued direction and support
The relatively short duration of the QPP has led to some uncertainty about the future for the community partnership groups. Experience tells us that where processes are reliant on relational change within a local geographic area (central to the Platforms approach), sufficient time is essential to achieve desired outcomes.

The participants also noted that they would have like to have heard stories from other communities that had used the Platforms framework to develop collaborations. They saw this as having the potential to assist them in establishing realistic expectations for the QPP. They also saw benefit in incorporating short-term goals to acknowledge progress and to recognise their achievements. There remains some uncertainty about how the work will progress without any further dedicated support.

Sustainability
The sustainability of the local partnerships was a concern reported by participants in all three sites. They noted that the establishment of a governance structure would build a stronger authorising environment to provide the partnerships with endorsement, support and legitimacy. They also indicated that the employment of community liaison worker would support sustainability into the future.

Final recommendations

Recommendations to build on the work of the three existing local partnership groups and to maximise sustainability

Recommendation 1
Investment in a local community liaison role is considered at each site to: facilitate ongoing communication; support the coordination and workings of the local partnership group; and to continue to build meaningful community engagement.

Recommendation 2
Regional DET staff maintain their level of involvement, in particular working toward vertical engagement and partnership development with service management and executive within participating and non-participating organisations

Recommendations to support future early years' service integration endeavours

Recommendation 3
Future projects involving cross sectoral and community involvement in service re-design and development embed a practice framework, such as Platforms, to guide all processes of collaboration.

Recommendation 4
The timeframe, rationale and intention of future projects are articulated to communities in ways that enable them to establish realistic expectations.

Recommendation 5
Future projects allow a minimum of three to five years investment in coordination and engagement support and include an exit strategy that explicitly addresses risks to sustainability and ensures that communities are adequately resourced.

Recommendation 6
Realistic timeframes are set to achieve appropriate levels of community involvement; adequate and ongoing resourcing; and provide appropriate structures and supports to build sufficient capacity within each site to achieve sustained change.

Recommendation 7
Future projects prioritise effective community engagement through specific agreement on minimum acceptable levels of community participation.

Recommendation 8
Future projects facilitate community engagement by providing resources to support sites to engage communities including: a local community liaison role; learning and development strategies to support the shift in culture from service-driven to community-driven; and the necessary funded timeframe for these processes to occur in a reflective manner.

Recommendation 9
In future projects of this type, DET consider taking a lead role in establishing cross-sectorial relationships with other government departments, such as Health and Social Services, and with other key strategic stakeholder groups. This ‘strategic liaison role’ would be most beneficial in the early stages of a project to provide an authorising environment when key relationships and governance arrangements are being established.

1. Introduction

This final progress report of the Queensland Platforms Project (QPP) marks the end of an 18-month period of project implementation. The QPP was conducted for the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) by the Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute. This report provides:

- relevant project background information;
- a summary of the QPP methodology and processes; and
- a detailed summary of the findings of the QPP's evaluation.

This report also includes recommendations to the Department of Education and Training (DET) pertaining to the sustainability of the work occurring within the QPP sites, and future early years' service integration endeavours.

2. Project background

This final progress report of the Queensland Platforms Project (QPP) marks the end of an 18-month period of project implementation. The QPP was conducted for the Queensland Department of

In 2014, the then Queensland DET's Office for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (now Early Childhood and Community Engagement) (ECCE) engaged CCCH to provide training and support for Integrated Service Development across three Queensland communities, using a service re-development approach titled Platforms. The Queensland Platforms Project (QPP) was a key deliverable within the ECCE Operational Plan 2014-15 and aimed to support local capacity to improve integration of early childhood development services and programs.
The QPP sought to support the early childhood education and care sector, services and local communities to:

- establish or build on a common and collaborative culture
- increase understanding of local needs and priorities and
- strengthen their shared commitment to improve outcomes for children and families.

With this aim, the QPP provided training within three Queensland communities to establish collaborative partnerships to address local needs and priorities. The three identified sites for the QPP were:

- Gold Coast (Burleigh and Miami)[1]
- Gympie; and
- Lockyer Valley (Laidley and Hatton Vale).

The QPP began on 1 July 2014 and concluded on 31 December 2015. It involved seven distinct phases, as outlined in Table 1. This report marks the seventh and final stage of the QPP.

[1] Vincent, Townsville was originally engaged in 2014 as one of the three project sites. A site visit in December 2014 highlighted that a number of community capacity initiatives were already being delivered in Vincent and a decision was made between MCRI and DET that the Platforms Project in its current form would not be delivered in Vincent. A three day Platforms workshop was alternatively delivered in Vincent by MCRI in August 2015. Burleigh and Miami on the Burleigh Miami were engaged as an alternative site for the QPP in February 2015.

Table 1 QPP phases

Project phase	Key aims	Status
1. Preparation	To develop a QPP project scoping brief for submission to the DET project team	Complete
2. Project planning	To develop and finalise a detailed project and evaluation plan	Complete
3. Site (service and community) engagement	To undergo a site scoping analysis To develop site-specific communication and stakeholder engagement strategies and plans To inform, engage with and build rapport with key site services, community members and other stakeholders	Complete
4. Capacity building design and implementation	To undertake site-level Training Needs Analyses (TNA) To design and implement site-level training workshops and programs for delivery within each site, including: • raising awareness workshops • phased delivery of tailored Platforms training program	Complete
5. Ongoing support and mentoring	To implement and deliver a mentoring and support program with key site stakeholders and participants	Complete
6. Evaluation	To design all appropriate evaluation tools and resources To implement the finalised project evaluation plan, collect and analyse data across all three project sites	Complete
7. Reporting and translation	To develop and disseminate project reports. To prepare and implement other translation resources[2]:	**In progress**

2.1 Project management and governance

A QPP project governance structure was established to ensure the partnership between MCRI and DET was effective in supporting the implementation and management of the QPP.

illustrates the agreed project governance arrangement. Terms of reference and membership for each of the governance groups can be found in Appendix 1.

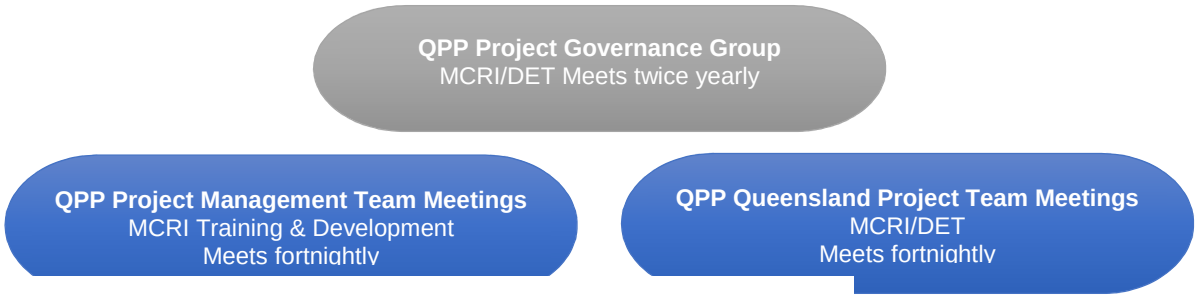

Figure 1 QPP Project Governance structure

[2] Translation materials have been negotiated with DET to be developed after completion of the project.

The QPP Project Governance Group met three times over the course of the project. Group composition is detailed in Table 2.

Table 2 QPP Governance Group representatives

DET-ECEC	MCRI- CCCH
• Director, Penny Creamer • Manager, Eduard De Hue • Senior Program Officer, Eden Davis • Principal Community Engagement Officer, Dianne Bickhoff	• Associate Director, Sue West • Managers, Training and Development, Leonie Symes and Paul Prichard • Coordinator, Queensland Platforms Project Afrouz Shoghi/Kylie Johnstone

Since the inception of the project in July 2014, the QPP Project Operations and Advisory Group has met three times in Melbourne. The group consisted of the following CCCH members:

- Sue West, Associate Director, CCCH; Research Group Leader, Policy, Equity and Translation
- Sharon Goldfeld, Research Group Leader, Policy Equity and Translation
- Paul Prichard & Leonie Symes, Managers, Training and Development
- Afrouz Shoghi, Coordinator, Platforms Project, (replaced by Kylie Johnstone mid- September 2015)
- Tim Moore, Senior Research Fellow
- Rebecca Fry, Manager, Service Systems and Innovation
- Jenny Riley, Coordinator, Service Systems and Innovation (Evaluation); and
- Vikki Leone & Megan Keyes, Managers, Translation and Knowledge Exchange

In addition to these meetings, the QPP Coordinator met with the DET Manager and Senior Program Officer as required.

To facilitate effective communication and operational decision making throughout the project, a Working Together Agreement was developed between the CCCH and DET. The agreement summarised the key roles and responsibilities. See Appendix 2.

2.2 The Approach: Platforms Service Redevelopment Framework

The **Platforms framework** is based on a theory of change which asserts that to improve child outcomes we need to build the capacity of families, services and communities to work together to provide children with the care and experiences that they need to flourish.

The Centre for Community Child Health developed the Platforms framework and the framework's suite of supports and resources based on experience gained working with communities across Australia. The Platforms Guide and associated resources are designed to help local communities integrate services for children and families and strengthen community capacity to promote positive outcomes for children and their families.

The Platforms resources include:

- The **Platforms guide**: a handbook to help communities navigate the complexity of a place-based initiative. The Platforms guide follows a series of steps outlined in the **Platforms roadmap** and is consistent with collective impact and results-based accountability.
- **Platforms guiding principles**: a set of principles, based on evidence and community experience, to support collective decision making and inform professional practice.

- **Platforms online resources**: tip sheets, fact sheets, templates, evidence papers and case studies to support communities to raise awareness and deliver the core components and practical changes of an effective place-based initiative.

The Platforms Service Redevelopment Framework comprises two parts consisting of three phases, as illustrated in Figure 2. Each phase of the Platforms Service Redevelopment Framework has particular objectives and is underpinned by a strong commitment to the principles of partnership.

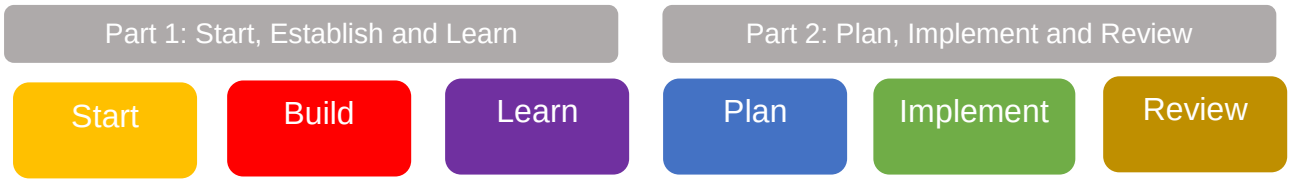

Figure 2 Platforms Service Redevelopment Framework key phases

3. QPP methodology and process

3.1 Project site selection

The QPP's project sites were selected by the DET ECCE team, based on their analysis of Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data. The sites were the Gold Coast (Burleigh and Miami), Gympie, and the Lockyer Valley (Laidley and Hatton Vale).

3.2 Communication and stakeholder engagement strategy

Based on information from the site engagement phase of the project, DET and CCCH developed a project communication and stakeholder engagement strategy to ensure all key internal and external stakeholders were informed and engaged in all relevant project deliverables, and motivated to participate in and contribute to the project. The objectives of the communication and stakeholder strategy are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3 Objectives of the QPP communication and stakeholder engagement strategy

Objectives	
Objective one	build awareness of the impacts, benefits, outcomes and services of the QPP with stakeholders
Objective two	use feedback from stakeholders to modify QPP communication activities where appropriate to ensure communication needs are met
Objective three	develop and distribute information and resources about optimising learning, well-being and development outcomes for young children
Objective four	use formal and informal communication networks and mechanisms at multiple levels to maximise the dissemination of information in identified communities
Objective five	engage relevant media agencies to promote the activities of the QPP.

This engagement strategy also provided an overarching list of key stakeholders and existing networks and communication channels. A copy of agreed key messages for all project communications and stakeholder engagement strategies is provided at Appendix 3. A range of communication materials was developed and supplied to all engaged stakeholders for broader community dissemination. These included:

- Platforms Project website: http://deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/service/platforms-project.html
- Platforms Project e-newsletters: http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/az/Queensland-platforms-project-newsletter/
- Platforms Project Generic Fact Sheet: Introducing the Platforms Project
- Platforms Project Training Fact Sheet: Platforms Project – Training, Coaching and Support
- Platforms Project Raising Awareness Invitation Flyer: Burleigh and Miami.

3.3 Project phases

Phase one: Site engagement

Site scoping

Prior to site engagement and visits, CCCH and DET conducted a desktop analysis of current services and data relevant to each site. The QPP Coordinator conducted informal phone calls to key local stakeholders to plan a prospective site visit.

Site engagement and visits

The Platforms Project team visited each site and engaged local stakeholders in conversations about the needs and priorities of local children and families. Details about these site visits are in Appendix 4.

Phase two: Raising awareness workshops

The Raising Awareness Workshops were an important first step in the process of building partnerships between services and local communities. The Raising Awareness Workshops aimed to increase participants':

- understanding of the importance of the early years (0-8 years), the rationale for service collaboration and the importance of genuine engagement with the community
- understanding of the needs and priorities of local children and families in the community
- knowledge and understanding of the Platforms Service Redevelopment approach; and
- understanding of and commitment to the Queensland Platforms Project.

Representatives from a range of services came to the Raising Awareness Workshops and a list of participants is provided in Appendix 5. Most training participants and coaching group members had attended their communities' Raising Awareness Workshops.

Phase three: Platforms training

The Platforms training workshops sought to engage approximately 12-15 local representatives at each site. Participation was invited from the early childhood sector (peak bodies, governing bodies, services); the government sectors involved in early childhood services (education, health, communities, local government); the non-government sector (eg Red Cross and OzCare); and the local community. Final representation in the Platforms training across all three sites is detailed in Appendix 5.

Phase four: Implementation, coaching and support

Following completion of the Platforms training, participants were asked to self-nominate to participate in a small group of training participants to lead the initial implementation of the Platforms process in their community. Having formed their local Platforms collaborative, these participants, were provided with coaching and support by the Platforms Project Coordinator to progress their local initiatives. Given the limited timeframe for this phase (September-November 2015), there was a strong focus on consolidating key concepts, developing local leadership and partnerships, and the ongoing sustainability of a collaborative approach in each site, post QPP.

Phase four also involved a QPP Reflective Workshop held in each site in November 2015, at which the local Platforms collaborative gave presentations detailing their progress. The Reflective Workshop aimed to support participants to:

- consolidate the Platforms training and learnings;
- re-connect with fellow trainees and consider the progress of the Platforms initiatives;
- collectively plan for the future of the Platforms collaboratives; and
- reflect on the QPP and participate in evaluating its processes and impact.

3.4 Evaluation methodology

A program logic (Appendix 6) underpinned the design, development and implementation of all QPP evaluation strategies, methodologies, materials and the project's outcomes-based evaluation framework (Appendix 7). In addition, an evaluation plan was developed that outlined the data sources, data collection methods and time points, as well as the person responsible for coordinating the collection of the evaluation data. See Appendix 8.

Given the 18-month life of this project, one medium term outcome reflected the expected changes for stakeholders, services and communities:
A common and collaborative culture that engenders an understanding of local needs and priorities and a shared commitment to improve outcomes for local children and families, exists between services and community members.

In the short term, the QPP sought to achieve three outcomes:

1. Professionals are skilled, confident and committed to working in collaboration with community members and other professionals in addressing community needs and priorities;
2. Community members are empowered and confident to work in partnership with professionals and services in addressing the community's needs and priorities; and
3. Services' management are committed to working in partnership with community members and other services to address community needs and priorities.

The evaluation of the QPP included both process and outcome/impact evaluation: a **process evaluation**: how a program outcome or impact was achieved; and an **outcome/impact evaluation**: the effectiveness of a program in producing change.

The process and impact evaluation of the QPP sought to answer three primary research evaluation questions[3]:

[3] The evaluation questions relate to both the project overall and to each 'site' participating in the QPP, i.e. Gympie, Lockyer Valley (Laidley and Hatton Vale), and the Gold Coast.

1. Was the QPP delivered as intended?
2. What was the impact of the QPP?
3. What worked well and how could the QPP be improved?

The evaluation used a **mixed methodology** approach that involved:

- a qualitative analysis of interview and focus group data; and
- a quantitative analysis to reveal measures in response to both process and impact indicators, using relevant data sources such as survey and attendance data.

Table 4 provides a summary of the evaluation tools developed and implemented to measure the intended short and medium term outcomes of the project:

Table 4 QPP Evaluation Tools

	Tool	Audience	Purpose
1.	Attendance/participant logs	All workshop attendees	To understand participant numbers and composition
2.	Workshop surveys (Raising Awareness and Platforms Training)	All workshop attendees	To assess satisfaction with workshop process and outcomes
3.	QPP Partnership Analysis Tool (Baseline and Follow Up)	Platforms trainees and Reflective Workshop attendees	To understand change in partnership status over the course of the QPP
4.	Reflective Workshop Focus Group	Reflective workshop attendees	To collect qualitative data relating to the three research questions
5.	Semi-structured interview questions	DET project staff; CCCH project staff; community members	To collect qualitative data relating to the three research questions
6.	Online survey	Service managers (training authorisers)	To understand whether the QPP brought about desirable changes

Evaluation limitations

Online survey (Service managers): The survey was distributed to managers who either had participated in the QPP themselves, or had authorised a staff member to participate. In total, six of the nine managers completed the online survey. This low number was attributed to a number of factors: attrition of service managers over the year; managers changing roles; and the time lapse between authorising staff training and completing the survey.

Online survey (Raising Awareness participants): The online survey for Raising Awareness participants yielded a low response. In total 17 from a possible 106 respondents completed the survey. This low number of respondents was attributed to: the length of questionnaire and the time delay between participation in the Raising Awareness workshops and administering the survey.

Semi-structured interviews (Community members): Semi-structured interviews were conducted with only one from a possible three community members at the end of the project. Community member feedback was also collected after the training workshops and the reflective workshops. This feedback

was amalgamated with data from professionals due to low community member sample size and issues of confidentiality. One community member felt she had already provided feedback and opted not to participate in the semi-structured interviews because of this.

4. Evaluation findings

4.1 Summary of findings

The Based on data collected, analysed and themed, the QPP evaluation findings relating to both the process and impact of the QPP are firstly summarised in Table 5.

Table 5 Snapshot summary of QPP Evaluation Findings

	Focus	Finding
Impact	Service Managers	The QPP had a positive impact on service manager's knowledge and skills for collaboration. They reported increased understanding and commitment to the principles of collaboration. However, the role of service managers was generally limited to authorising other staff to participate, rather than participating themselves, or altering their own or their services practice. As a result, some professionals reported feeling isolated with their Platforms work, and believed there was a need for managers to more fully appreciate the necessary and ongoing processes for effective collaboration. It was reported that this would in turn result in better support for the adoption of new ways of working. This supports the similar data theme relating to the need for better cross-sectoral engagement and the establishment of strategic relationships to provide a stronger authorizing environment.
	Professionals	The QPP project and its various activities increased professionals *understanding, commitment and intention, knowledge skills and confidence* to work in collaboration as well as their ability to engage communities. The QPP project resulted in an *increased collaborative culture* in each site, as demonstrated by the establishment of early years partnerships and the development of working together agreements.
	Community Members	The *limited numbers of community members* and community respondents indicates that limited progress was made towards the meaningful engagement of community members in the co-production of locally responsive plans and service strategies – a key intended outcome of the QPP. However, since the collection of this evaluation data all three sites have commenced community engagement activities including but not limited to parent surveys and presentations at school events.
Process	Activities	*All scheduled project activities we undertaken as planned* across the three sites including: The Raising Awareness Workshops; the Training Workshops; the Coaching and Mentoring meetings; and the Reflective Workshops

	Focus	Finding
	Representation	The QPP attracted a diverse range of stakeholders within each site, however there was an underrepresentation of community members and health sector representatives.
	Participant Satisfaction	A high percentage of workshop attendees were either satisfied or very satisfied with the content and delivery of all QPP workshops, the resources, and the structure of the QPP as a whole. Some participants would have preferred to move toward action planning and implementation earlier. Participants were satisfied with the support and guidance provided to them by the QPP facilitators.

4.2 Was the QPP delivered as intended?

This evaluation sought to understand whether the QPP was delivered as planned and if it was delivered well. In this section, the project's activities, the number of participants, and range of representation are detailed. Qualitative data from participants describes satisfaction with project processes.

Delivery of project activities and participation

Table 6 and Table 7 provide an overview of all project activities, participation and representation across sectors.

Table 6 Summary of activity, location and date of activity

Type of activity	Gold Coast	Gympie	Laidley Hatton Vale	Total
Raising Awareness (April-March)	37	38	26	101
Platforms workshops (June – August)	15	16	16	47
Coaching sessions (August – November)	9	10	8	27
Reflective workshops (November)	7	12	11	30

Table 7 Participant numbers by representation

Participant group
• Early Childhood Education and Care (including schools) (38) • Non-government sector/organisation (17) • Welfare & family services (12) • Policy/Government (9) • Health (9) • Research (2) • Tertiary education (2) • Private sector (1)

Participant group
• Parent/carer of a child or children in the community (2) • Grandparent/relative of children in the community (1) • Local community member/volunteer (1)

A wide range of sector representatives were engaged in each site, however the number of community representatives was lower than anticipated and there was an underrepresentation of health services. This is addressed in the Discussion and Barriers section of this Report. A detailed account of participant numbers and representation across sectors for each project activity is detailed in Appendix 9.

Participant satisfaction

Participant satisfaction was measured at two key points: after the Raising Awareness and Training workshops and at the end of the project.

Participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the Raising Awareness and Training workshops' overall content and delivery; delivery method and pace; timing and duration; and venue, facilities, catering and supplies. Overall, participant satisfaction was very positive.

A high percentage (93-96 per cent) of participants were either satisfied or very satisfied with the content and delivery of the workshops, the venue and catering:

"Thank you … for brilliant facilitation and content. I really enjoyed the whole Platforms process and learnt a lot from it. Very inspirational."

A slightly lower percentage of participants were satisfied with the timing and pace of the Raising Awareness Workshop. Participants commented that they would have appreciated a longer duration and a slower pace.

"Due to the time limits, the pace was a little rushed."

At the end of the project, participants were asked to discuss their satisfaction in relation to:

- **Structure:** How they found the structure of QPP platforms project, i.e. the Raising Awareness workshops, two training workshops followed by coaching and support package?
- **Support:** If the support (from the facilitator) was useful?
- **Resources:** If the resources (eg folders and hand-outs) were useful?
- **Representation (who was involved):** Who was missing from the QPP project, and who should be engaged in the future?
-

In regards to the **structure and delivery** of the QPP training, participants valued the time and space between sessions. Participants appreciated the break between sessions to absorb, understand and even embed the lessons of Platforms into their own professional contexts.

"I think it was really good to have that time apart to let it kind of sink in a bit and I was kind of happy with the distance in time because you didn't lose momentum. So it was enough time to take a breather, take it in a bit, look at your own workplace in terms of how could you influence it or embed it in your practice." (Gympie)

Participants in Gympie also reflected on having the time to get to know each other and build relationships, citing the slow pace as supportive of this.

"It actually made me feel much more comfortable with the time and energy invested in the group having that opportunity [to get to know each other] … that to me sort of cemented in my mind that there really is a true willingness to work together." (Gympie)

Although some participants expressed a level of frustration with the slow pace of the Platforms training workshops, many also considered this a virtue. The rationale of the facilitators in taking time to properly explore and consolidate key concepts in order to develop shared understandings; to model the Platforms approach; and to allow relationships within the training group to develop, was generally understood.

''I know we are solutions-focused people and we want to be down the road and we kept trying to go down the road and here's [the facilitators], they were winding us in because we wanted to know where the journey was before we even know what road we were going to head down." (Gympie)

Participants across all three sites were satisfied with the **support and guidance** provided to them by the QPP facilitators. Participants remarked that the facilitators were responsive and created a positive rapport with the groups and that they particularly appreciated the high quality modelling and mentoring provided by facilitators.

"I think the actual modelling they used, it was a really good opportunity to reflect on your own practices." (Gold Coast)

"They [Facilitator 1 and Facilitator 2] were constantly offering support.'' (Gympie)

Participants commented on the change in project coordinator in September 2015. While participants did not consider this to have any significant ongoing detrimental effect, it was noted that it did have some level of impact on the flow and delivery of the project. Overall, sites were considerate and understanding of the unavoidable consequences of staff changes.

"I think the problem, and no fault of anybody, but it was the changeover and that sort of lost a bit in translation." (Gympie)

Participants were very satisfied with the QPP resources. They cited key resources such as the Platforms roadmap and the resource folder as important tools for providing direction and clarity throughout the training.

"Like a rudderless boat, we knew what we were doing and we were still talking about it but we were going around and all of a sudden [as a result of the resources/road map] we went that's where we're going." (Gympie)

During the reflective workshop focus groups, participants were asked to consider **representation** and who was missing from the QPP partnerships. Key groups repeatedly identified were:

- families, parents and community representatives (Gympie and Laidley);
- representatives from the healthcare sector (Gympie and Laidley); and
- representatives from the ECEC sector (Gold Coast).

Participants discussed a number of reasons as to why these key groups were underrepresented in the partnerships. It was considered that:

- families may struggle with childcare and in making a significant time commitment
- the ECCE sector's absence from initial meetings may have prevented the development of relationships and initial rapport; and
- the lack of engagement of the health sector at an upper managerial level may have meant that staff lacked the authorising environment and encouragement necessary for participation.

The lack of representation of families and the health care sector is discussed in further detail in the Discussion section under Limitations of this Report.

4.3 What was the impact of the QPP?

This section reports on findings in relation to changes in the knowledge, attitude and behaviour of professionals and community across the three sites (short-term outcome); and changes in collaborative culture and commitment (medium-term outcome). This is followed by a short summary of progress in each site.

Short Term outcome: Impact on service managers, local professionals and community participants

To measure the short-term outcome, indicators were selected for three groups, i.e. professionals, community members and service managers. However, the findings are presented under professionals and service managers only as community member participation was very limited. As noted earlier in this report under limitations, community member feedback was collected after the training workshops and the reflective workshops, but amalgamated with data from professionals due to low community member sample size and issues of confidentiality. Therefore, community member feedback is presented under 'professionals' in this section.

Professionals

The evaluation data concerning the impact of the project on local professionals was collected at two key points, first via workshop evaluation surveys completed immediately after each workshop, and during reflective workshop focus groups at the end of the project. Four impact indicators related to the short-term outcome are reported.

1) Professionals report increased understanding and acceptance of the rationale and principles for collaborative approaches

Across the three sites, 91 per cent of all workshop participants reported that their understanding and acceptance of the rationale and principles for collaborative approaches had increased. A table detailing the workshop survey findings is located in Appendix 11.

Many of the participants explained that collaboration was a concept that they were already very familiar with and was part of their existing work practices. However, it was reported that Platforms did have an impact on participants' attitudes and behaviours, promoting a positive change in their collaborative practice. Participants identified that the QPP provided participants with background knowledge and evidence, as well as a deeper understanding of collaboration principles.

"[when collaborating] You don't actually put it into, you know, any sort of framework or … you know underpinned by any knowledge or research, you just go out and do it because you're so time poor, and you just get out there and your instincts kick in and that's what you do. So it's nice to have something

that now, if I talk about doing a particular thing with a group of people, I can go 'and this is why I'm going to do it this way', or 'this is what we hope to achieve'." (Gold Coast)

The QPP provided participants with systematic procedures and process to help facilitate collaboration (including the QPP framework and Working Together Agreement.

"It's not, it's not exactly new, but the process of getting to it [community collaboration]. It's like there's always community alongside but to actually do it in more of a systematic approach probably. Having a framework for it is maybe the newness." (Gold Coast).

Participants who took part in QPP explained that they became more accepting and aware of the time and commitment needed to facilitate genuine collaboration.

"Just with the whole like going slow thing is really difficult for me to grasp. I've got lots of things on my plate, why do we have to do this so slowly, but doing it so slowly has taught me to collaborate better with others because I give myself the time to reflect on what's really happening, what they're really trying to say and my understanding, and are they understanding me correctly. So that's been a really good tool for me is the whole going slowly and learning to collaborate better with my staff, my families, people from the community." (Laidley Hatton Vale)

QPP helped to re-energise and stimulate a passion for collaboration among those who participated in the training.

"For me it probably hasn't [changed my understanding of collaboration] because it's already been a part of where I've worked, but what got me excited about this project the fact that it was something happening to get people working together." (Laidley Hatton Vale).

QPP provided participants with a recap of key collaboration principles and provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on their existing collaborative behaviours to ensure that they are using best practices in their day-to-day work.

"I don't think it changed my understanding of collaboration, but it was an excellent and timely reminder to follow the principles that I would have known. It's easy to get side-tracked working within health, it's very easy to work away from what you understand to be best practice or what you know to be the right way of doing stuff, so you move further and further away from that. So you need reminders frequently to come back and to also ask questions about 'hey, am I doing this the best way that I can do this?'." (Laidley Hatton Vale)

Participants were already familiar with principles of collaboration, yet coming from diverse backgrounds they used different language to describe these. The QPP training helped to provide participants with a shared language and consistent framework that brought together elements of collaboration, i.e. the QPP training helped to provide a consistent model.

"The training provided some sort of same page shared understanding, because if you've done other training, if you've done health promotion degree, if you've done community nutrition, then there's lots of similarities, but they all come with slightly different templates or forms or slightly different language. Having all gone through Platforms, everyone is then at least, even if they pick up on different elements, [they] have heard the same road map presented, they've heard the same language around things. So if people share in that one training and if that's the one system that you pin things to then yes, you're

much more likely to get some sort of shared understanding of the process you're following." (Laidley Hatton Vale)

2) Professionals report an increased commitment and intention to work collaboratively with other services and community members

Participants reported that the QPP had increased their commitment and intention to work collaboratively with other services and community members. In regards to working with other services, the participants explained that QPP had provided them with a strong foundation for future collaboration in two ways: QPP provided a forum and opportunity to meet and develop relationships with other agencies; and QPP helped participants to understand what different services do, which enabled better communication and understanding of how they might work together.

"I've met people from agencies I never would've met before and that's resulted in connections between agencies that has helped out countless number of kids already." (Gold Coast)

"I think it just brought more possibilities to our minds about how services could work together, probably things we just hadn't thought of." (Laidley Hatton Vale)

"This is really, really hard work and it was nice to sit with a group of people for four days, and they're on the same page, they know it's going to be hard and frustrating, we are going to hit brick walls, but we're also going to come together and try and do this." (Gold Coast)

3) Professionals report an increase in knowledge, skills and confidence to work in collaboration with other services and communities

The majority of training workshop participants reported an increase in their knowledge, skills and confidence to work in collaboration with other services and communities. To measure this indicator, responses from the training workshop surveys were aggregated and analysed (Appendix 11).

Specific areas of increased knowledge, skills and confidence were reported:

- engaging community members
- collaborative data collection and analysis
- outcomes-based approaches and how to develop an outcomes based plan, and
- developing community partnerships.

In the reflective workshop focus group, participants again reported increased knowledge, skills and confidence to work in collaboration with other services and communities. Participants indicated that, because of their participation in the QPP, they felt they were more systematic in their approach to working collaboratively with other services and the community. Participants valued the skills and knowledge that the QPP has provided.

4) Professionals report an increased **understanding and ability to engage community members** in a manner that enables: empowered and confident community member representatives; community representative role clarity; and genuine community contribution.

The majority of workshop survey participants (94 per cent) reported an increased understanding of engaging community members in a manner, which would empower and facilitate genuine community contributions.

Across the three sites, between 87 and 100 per cent of participants agreed that their understanding of community engagement had improved in areas such as understanding the importance of community representation and participation; how to develop a shared vision; and understanding how to best work in partnership with communities.

During the Reflective Workshop focus groups, participants reported that the QPP had supported them to reflect upon and re-consider what it means to be a 'professional' who works with community members. This resulted in a shift of perceived power, a shift away from the professional as the 'expert' towards more genuine collaboration in which the voice of community can be truly heard.

"For me, I'm used to getting an action plan and doing the thinking for the people. Whereas this time it's like well we need to bring people in. So normally it's we organise the solution and we put it to the person, but this time we're bringing them in to be part of it. We're hearing their voice right from the beginning. Whereas sometimes we don't always do that". (Gold Coast)

"I think everybody seemed to take that on really strongly, you know, get rid of that professional badge, you're not an expert, get rid of that." (Gold Coast)

Service managers

Eleven service managers were invited to take part in the Service Managers Online Survey (Appendix 10). Of the 11, five took part, a response rate of 45 per cent. The low number of responses poses limitations for data analysis, including validity of quantitative analysis. This needs to be considered when interpreting the results presented below.

1) Service managers report recognition and acceptance of the rationale and principles for collaborative approaches.

Service managers were asked to rate the importance of six principles of collaboration as defined in the QPP Partnership Assessment Tool (PAT). All five respondents rated the principles of collaboration as very or moderately important. This indicates that those who responded recognise and accept the rationale and principles of collaborative approaches.

2) Service managers are engaged with and support the processes of collaboration, e.g. enable their staff to participate in project and training activities.

Service managers were asked to detail the ways they support and contribute to the QPP project. The five service managers who responded indicated that they allow time for staff to participate in the QPP training workshops. One service manager engaged with QPP by providing organisational and senior-level support for QPP facilitation. Service managers were also asked to describe what they consider to be their role within the QPP. In line with the findings presented above, the majority of service managers viewed their role as ''supporting staff to be involved in the project'', some also hoped to gain knowledge from direct participation in the project.

3) Service managers are engaged with and support the process of establishing initial common community data frameworks and utilisation of common data sources.

To measure this indicator, service managers were asked if they encourage data sharing for the QPP. Only one of the five respondents engaged with QPP by supporting the establishment of initial common community data frameworks and the utilisation of common data sources.

4) Service managers report an increase in knowledge and skills to work in collaboration with other services and communities.

To measure this indicator, service managers were asked if they had noticed an increase in their staff knowledge and skills to work in collaboration with other services and communities as a result of the QPP project. Four of the five respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the QPP had resulted in an increase in collaboration skills and knowledge, with one service manager indicating that they were 'undecided'. In addition, three of the five service managers reported that the QPP had increased the number of collaborations/partnerships across service sectors in their local community, and all five agreed that the QPP program had increased their own personal commitment to working in partnership with community members and other services.

Medium term outcome: Impact on local culture between services and community members

Five indicators were used to measure the overall project medium term outcome of "A common and collaborative culture, that engenders an understanding of local needs and priorities and a shared commitment to improve outcomes for local children and families, exists between services and community members.

These were:

- increased number of collaborative partnerships between services across sectors;
- a Working Together Agreement is in place in each partnership and has been agreed by all partners;
- collaboration is established based on the principles of partnership;
- community partnerships represent both service providers and community members ; and
- QPP has brought about changes in the level of community member participation.

1) Increased number of collaborative partnerships between services across sectors.

Participants across all three sites cited cross-sector collaboration as a very positive outcome of QPP. Working with diverse agencies and building productive relationships was considered one of the most worthwhile and positive outcomes of QPP. Although it was noted by participants that some sectors, including the health sector, were missing from the partnership. This is discussed in further detail in section 6.3 of this report.

> *"Just broadening those networks that people wouldn't ... normally have met or worked with and established connections with, even though you relatively work closely." (Laidley Hatton Vale)*

2) A Working Together Agreement is in place in each partnership and has been agreed by all partners.

Participant responses to the PAT tool in June/July 2015 (baseline) and in November 2015 indicated that a Working Together Agreement had been established and agreed on in all three sites. At the baseline data collection point, 53 per cent (n=24) either agreed or strongly agreed that a Working Together Agreement had been jointly developed. At the follow-up data collection point, 96 per cent (n=23) either agreed or strongly agreed that a Working Together Agreement had been jointly developed.

3) Collaboration is established based on the principles of partnership.

Six collaboration principles were designed for inclusion in the QPP Partnership Analysis Tool (PAT). These principles were designed in close collaboration with the QPP project team and are based on the

Nuffield Partnership Analysis tool[4]. For a full list of questions, please refer to Appendix 12.

As presented in table 8 below, participants' level of agreement, regarding whether their partnership had achieved each of the six principles of partnership, increased as their engagement in the QPP progressed. The greatest change was demonstrated for principle 5: Reviewing and reflecting on the work we do, while principles 1 and 2 experienced only a moderate change between baseline and follow-up. This might be attributable to existing levels of commitment to collaboration at baseline for principles 1 and 2.

Table 8 Percentage of participants who agree that the partnership has achieved each of the six partnership principles

	Baseline: Percentage who agree that the partnership has achieved each principle	**Follow-up:** Percentage who agree that the partnership has achieved each principle	**Percentage change**
Principle 1: Sharing a commitment to improve outcomes for local children and families	84%	92%	9%
Principle 2: Working in partnership: behaviour and attitudes	82%	86%	5%
Principle 3: Working in partnership: governance and organisation	49%	67%	36%
Principle 4: Developing an outcomes-based plan	40%	44%	12%
Principle 5: Reviewing and reflecting on the work we do	25%	40%	60%
Principle 6: Commitment to the partnership	52%	70%	33%

4) Community partnerships are representative of both service providers and community members.

At the baseline data collection point, 69 per cent (n=31) either agreed or strongly agreed that *the Partnership had an appropriate mix of members with skills and expertise to allow the Partnership to gain a well-rounded and inclusive understanding of community needs and priorities*. At the follow-up data collection point, the number decreased slightly to 63 per cent (n=15). This decline may indicate that while participants perceived a satisfactory diversity of representation within their partnerships at the beginning of the project, this perception changed over the course of the project. One feasible explanation for this shift is that as the participants progressed through the training and follow up activities, their understanding of the importance of community participation grew and influenced their perception of levels of satisfactory diversity within their own partnership.

[4] The Nuffield Partnership Analysis tool can be found at: http://www.rde.nsw.edu.au/outreach/files/2014/11/AssessingStrategicPartnership-The-PArtnership-Assessment-tool-UK-147hxpf.pdf

At the baseline data collection point, 67 per cent (n=30) either agreed or strongly agreed that *community members were empowered and felt confident to work in partnership with professionals and services in the Partnership.* At the follow-up data collection point, the percentage decreased slightly to 58 per cent (n=11). This decline may again indicate that participants became more aware of the need for genuine community engagement toward the end of the project.

5) The Platforms project has brought about changes in the level of community member participation.

Reflective workshop focus group participants seemed hesitant to declare that the QPP has increased the level of community member participation in their local region, instead noting that their own practices have evolved as a result of the QPP. This includes a shift in attitudes towards working with and engaging community members in a more inclusive and systematic manner.

"It's about how to get that lived experience from children and families and their voice, to be affected by them, and I think that was a flip on collaboration for me because it was a different way of thinking about collaboration other than just service system collaboration." (Laidley Hatton Vale)

In Laidley/Hatton Vale, participants explained that QPP strengthened collaborative culture for those who are directly involved in the partnership, but this has not yet extended to the wider community and those outside the partnership.

"Between people here yes [QPP has strengthened collaborative culture], but not in the wider community and certainly not in the region here. There's a lot of work to be done." (Laidley Hatton Vale)

Site Progress

The following summary outlines progress in each of the three QPP sites. It represents information from the reflective workshop focus groups, site visits and documentation provided by sites for recent newsletter articles.

Gympie

The Gympie Platforms site has established a 'core/leadership group' of training participants interested in furthering the Platforms initiative in the Gympie region. This group includes staff from DET (North Coast region), local government; early childhood education and care services; education (schools), and local non-government organisations (NGOs). The group has progressed toward a cohesive Platforms collaboration; has identified its role amongst the existing network and early childhood environment; has a draft community vision; and is very active in expanding its membership and forming strategic partnerships.

The Gympie Platforms collaborative is committed to engaging with and strengthening its relationship with local health services, and to consulting with and involving parents and carers. Toward this aim, it will host a workshop as part of the 'Little Kids Day Out' festival, an annual event attended by thousands of community members. During the workshop, community members will be invited to participate in an outcomes-based planning exercise, 'Turn the Curve' from 'Results Based Accountability', using data that is currently being collected by group members. The Gympie Platforms Group has started conversations with community members about their experience of raising children in Gympie, and is exploring options for resourcing a community liaison position to help facilitate and expedite the work of the group.

Laidley/Hatton Vale

The Laidley/Hatton Vale Platforms site has established a self-named leadership group: 'Together44341' (4341 being the local postcode). This group is attended by local government, primary schools, multiple representatives from within the early childhood sector, local NGOs (including Kambu, a regional Aboriginal Health Service), Queensland Health, and DET (South West Darling Downs region). The group was the first of the sites to publish a communication about their involvement in the project - a two-page introduction to Platforms and the group - which they used to strengthen their communication with stakeholders and the community. This group undertook a stakeholder analysis early in the coaching phase to identify those people and organisations who could potentially add value to the initiative. It commenced consultations with the community using an appreciative enquiry framework to better understand the strengths and needs of families living in the region. Recently, the group surveyed parents during events at Laidley State School and a local parent is undertaking this data analysis. The group is also intending to provide an interface to inform the community about emerging data trends (including the 2015 AEDC data) and involve them in developing a community response.

Gold Coast

The Gold Coast Platforms site has established a Platforms Leadership Group, attended by DET (South East region), QLD Health regional staff, primary school and early childhood education and care sector staff, a local community member and local NGOs. This group, having grappled with defining its place in an environment dense with early childhood-focused programs and networks, has agreed and articulated a clear direction. It is currently developing its plan for engaging more broadly with local families to gain a deeper understanding of what challenges parents and carers face in raising happy healthy kids in the suburbs of Burleigh/Miami. Once this data is collected, the intention is to communicate with the many early years services and networks, and invite their participation in a long-term initiative to address the identified challenges. The group is particularly interested in enhancing data availability around key transition points to identify children and families at risk.

In summary, each site is focussed on becoming more familiar with early childhood services in their locations and understanding the challenges faced by families in navigating service systems. Each site has articulated a commitment to strengthening and broadening their local partnerships; gaining and sharing new knowledge, skills; and developing a set of principles to better coordinate, strengthen and evaluate local early childhood initiatives and outcomes. The near future will see each site engage in coordinated community engagement activities, skills development for community members and local service representatives, and collaborative responses to the release of AEDC data in 2016.

Summary: 'What was the impact of the QPP?'

To understand the impact of QPP, change was assessed against the short and medium term outcomes at the level of service managers, professionals and community members across the three sites. To provide a summary of the three sets of indicators we have provided three tables with a simple 'traffic light' assessment of achieved, somewhat achieved and more work required.

Table 9 Assessment of the indicators of change based on Service Manager Survey data

Service manager indicators of change	Assessment
A **recognition and acceptance** of the rationale and principles for collaborative approaches	Achieved

Service manager indicators of change	Assessment
Are engaged with and **support the processes of collaboration**	More work required
Are engaged with and **support establishing initial common community data frameworks** and utilisation of common data sources	More work required
Increase in **knowledge and skills** to work in collaboration with other services and communities.	Achieved

Table 10 Assessment of the indicators of change based on the Reflective Workshop Focus Group data

Professional indicators of change	Assessment
Increased **understanding and acceptance** of the rationale and principles for collaborative approaches	Achieved
Increased **commitment and intention** to work collaboratively with other services and community members	Achieved
Increase in **knowledge, skills and confidence** to work in collaboration with other services and communities	Achieved
Increased understanding and **ability to engage communities** in a manner that enables: empowered and confident community member representatives; community representative role clarity; genuine community contribution.	Somewhat Achieved

Table 11 Assessment of indicators of change relating to collaborative culture, and shared commitment based on the Reflective Workshop Focus Group data

Collaborative culture and shared commitment indicators	Assessment
Increased number of collaboration partnerships between services across sectors	Achieved
A Working Together Agreement is in place in each partnership and has been agreed by all partners	Achieved
Community partnerships represent service providers and community members	Somewhat Achieved
Within each partnership, collaboration is established based on the six principles of partnership from the Nuffield Partnership Analysis Tool (Nuffield Institute for Health, 2000)	Achieved
The QPP has brought about changes in the amount of community collaboration	Somewhat achieved

4.4 What worked well and how could the QPP be improved?

QPP participants, CCCH and DET staff were asked, 'what worked well?' and 'what could be improved?' during the reflective workshop focus workshops and semi-structured interviews at the end of the project.

What worked well?

Participants were asked to identify factors that had the greatest impact on the success of QPP. Some of the key 'enabling factors' indicated were:

- the strengths and success of relationships formed within each partnership
- initial engagement and raising support for the project and;
- governance and support from DET, at both the state and regional level.

1) The strengths and success of relationships formed within each partnership

Respondents highlighted the success of the QPP in establishing and strengthening relationships between the members of the local Platforms groups and the services in which they work. These relationships form the foundation of future initiative within the QPP communities and are a critical element to service integration.

"The people within each site have been the absolute success factor in this, their readiness to engage with other people, to be respectful in their interactions with each other, to actually think 'we' rather than 'I' and to draw other people in." (Semi-structured interview participant)

2) Initial engagement and raising support for the project

Respondents indicated that the preliminary engagement of communities and relevant stakeholders was key to ensuring sufficient interest and buy-in to progress through each subsequent phase of the QPP. The strength of relationships between CCCH, regional DET representatives, and local services, and the shared interest and investment in the project, meant that the QPP progressed as intended, modelling collaborative practice and shared responsibility for project outcomes.

"It would have been very hard for a project of this length to get off the ground and do what it's been able to do without that initial engagement happening in a very positive way." (Semi-structured interview participant)

3) Governance and leadership from DET, at both the state and regional level

Both CCCH and DET staff believed that the involvement of regional DET staff was an enabling factor and will be an important element if the work of each partnership is to continue and progress.

"Certainly at each site, that [Departmental leadership] is very alive and present, which is … a real asset … the departmental people present at both the training and the mentoring, particularly at the coaching and support phase, have been very leaderful, but also respectful and collaborative with the other members of the group … supportive and leaderful, but also not compromising the participation of others, so that has been a real strength." (Semi-structured interview participant)

What could be improved?

Suggestions to improve the implementation of similar projects were made by participants under the following four themes.

1) Providing examples of the type of work that has occurred in other sites as a result of Platforms

During the end of project reflections, respondents recommended that clear and practical examples be provided to participants at the onset of the project, to detail how similar projects have worked in other communities. Participants and DET staff believed that establishing realistic expectations, and learning about the experiences of other communities would have enhanced participants' experiences of QPP. This includes making it clear that using the Platforms process is a long-term commitment, a focus on modelling collaborative approaches, relationship building, understanding the community (and not necessarily taking immediate action).

It was also felt that more time engendering an understanding of the 'go slow to go far' philosophy, and the importance of taking time to establish representative partnerships, community member involvement, and shared understandings would have been worthwhile and alleviated the tension some participants articulated regarding pace.

"Make it clear that this is a time commitment for greater outcomes in the future, including giving examples of how long it's taken in other places, including positive examples." (semi-structured interview participant)

2) Incorporating short-term goals and recognising achievements

In response to the identified challenges of time commitment, the feeling of 'inaction', and the 'slow pace' of QPP, it was suggested that short-term goals and milestones be incorporated into the training. Having short-term goals could help to maintain momentum and ensure that participants remained engaged and active in the QPP processes. DET stakeholders, who recognised a 'need to put it into practice a lot sooner', also supported this view.

In addition, the benefit of celebrating milestones was acknowledged, as a strategy for maintaining momentum and reminding participants that they are making positive inroads.

"Reminding the sites constantly about their progress, they can really get bogged down in why they are not further ahead. It's really important that they are reminded of the progress that they have made … it's amazing what they have accomplished and the strengths of their relationships that they have developed … it's about celebrating every little step, not just the big steps." (semi-structured interview participant)

3) Engaging with upper-level management to create supportive authorising environments

It was widely acknowledged that a lack of engagement with and support from upper-level management, and thus the absence of an authorising environment, hindered engagement with some key groups, such as health sector workers. This lack of understanding and communication with upper-level management across sectors also extended to management of the organisations who were involved. This became a barrier for participants to implement new ways of working within their local community.

"Not enough time was spent establishing strategic relationships [with the health sector in particular] … the QPP is underpinned by public health type frameworks, which are reliant on multi-sectoral engagement to get change occurring … in very complex systems, and because those relationships weren't established at the front end we are struggling to establish those relationships [with health sector} now. It would have been very useful to engage the hospital and health service board, the primary health care networks which were the previous Medicare locals, and even engaging state-wide preventative health services." (semi-structured interview participant).

The respondents suggested that, in future, employers could be engaged earlier and better informed about the intention and processes involved in Platforms before the project commencement. They believed this would increase support for their participation.

"One of the things that could be improved … has been that engagement with the management level for the people who have been heavily involved, that level of understanding of the project itself and continuing to support the engagement of their staff within it … there seems to be a little bit of a gap there in that, I'm not sure how we could have overcome that, it was suggested that a session just with the managers happened along the way … to build their closer engagement with the project, I guess it was left to the participants to go back and nurture the project with their management." (semi-structured interview participant).

4) Strategies to support ongoing sustainability

The sustainability of the partnerships in the future is a concern reported by the three QPP sites. In response to this challenge, two enablers were often cited. These were:

- the establishment of a governance structure and authorizing environment; and
- the employment of community liaison worker.

There was strong agreement that a higher level of commitment was required by participating organisations to provide the partnerships with endorsement, support and legitimacy. This would include the allocation of specified roles and responsibilities, and an organisation nominated to oversee coordination. This would also better facilitate the establishment and implementation of agreed action plans and the monitoring of the partnership's progress.

"There needs to be a mechanism, to keep the momentum going. This needs to be one of the outcomes, established at the beginning and built upon throughout the training. Having a commitment made. For example, an organisation to take it on, that this then becomes the backbone, keep momentum going or one person allocated one day a week" (semi-structured interview participant).

Employing a local community liaison worker was considered an important step to provide a practical, coordinating role within each site to further develop partnerships, engage with community members and families, and coordinate activities. This position would help in raising awareness and establishing support for the partnership, as well as increasing engagement with underrepresented groups, in particular parents and families.

"Had there been a designated person doing a bit more community liaison on the ground at each site, then that [community engagement] could have been more powerful. I think our coordinators did a great job of building and maintaining the relationships at each site, but it had to be intermittent, where if there had been someone on the ground who was continuing to wave the flag and bring people together, facilitate conversation, engage with people who weren't already engaged and was known to be a local person – that may have given the project more energy on the ground level." (semi-structured interview participant)

5. Summary and discussions

This section provides an overview of the QPP's key achievements, enablers and challenges.

5.1 Key achievements

The establishment of common and collaborative partnerships
The establishment of early years' partnerships, the development and strengthening of relationships within these, and the beginnings of local governance structures, including 'working together agreements', demonstrate positive progress towards the growth of collaborative cultures in each of the three sites. Professionals reported that the QPP had increased their understanding, knowledge, skills and confidence to work in collaboration. They also reported that they were supported to develop a shared language and consistent framework for collaborative work, and the QPP increased their commitment and intention to work collaboratively with other services and community members.

Diversity of engagement
The 107 participants in the QPP's activities represented a diverse range of services and professional disciplines across the three sites. Participants indicated that the QPP's initial engagement phase was key to engaging interest and establishing an enduring commitment. Each local collaborative continued to broaden its membership throughout the QPP coaching phase, inviting new members, establishing strategic links with other agencies and networks, and maintaining strong inter-sectoral and cross-disciplinary approaches.

Relationships
The QPP resulted in a significant increase in networking between early years' services in the three sites. During each phase of the QPP, the facilitators observed local practitioners establishing professional relationships with others who worked within close geographical proximity, but who had, prior to the QPP, been unfamiliar with each other and their role/service.

Commitment
Each of the Platforms leadership groups are committed to building local capacity, and acknowledging community strengths and barriers. Each site has acknowledged the lack of community participation and is planning engagement strategies to support and encourage community members' involvement. This commitment reflects the QPP's intended outcomes of developing an enhanced culture of collaboration among service providers and community members.

Shared understandings
The QPP's activities helped establish shared understandings and agreement between participants about ways to move forward together. While many participants were involved in collaborative work previously, the Platforms approach (a step-by-step guide fortified with relevant resources and materials for each stage) supported their collaborative practice and increased their confidence in working with others in their community.

5.2 Key enablers

Investment in site engagement
The investment in initial site engagement and in bringing people together to raise awareness proved invaluable in establishing support and a shared understanding of the QPP across services. This resulted in the active participation by diverse stakeholders in project activities at each site.

The Queensland Platforms Project processes
Participants saw value in the implementation of a phased approach to Platforms within their communities. Those involved in QPP generally expressed a high level of satisfaction with their experience. Participants also placed a high value on the accompanying resources, including the Platforms roadmap that supported the quality of their ongoing work within their respective communities.

The role of CCCH
The qualities and skills demonstrated by the CCCH project coordinator and other team members were identified as a strength, particularly in the site engagement phase of the QPP. The ongoing availability of the QPP coordinator to attend face-to-face meetings across the three sites was an important factor in establishing and maintaining momentum.

Local participation
Despite small numbers of community members participating, a strong level of enthusiasm and participation by key service providers acted as a catalyst for involving others and inspiring people to work together towards a common goal. A strength of the local groups was their willingness to discuss the Platforms approach, reach out to their clients and colleagues, and welcome broad participation.

Regional DET commitment and leadership
DET regional officers were instrumental in forging relationships during the initial engagement phase and throughout the QPP. Their involvement emerged as an important influence in the progress of each local partnership group.

5.3 Key challenges

Engagement of local community members
A guiding principle of the Platforms Framework is the meaningful and ongoing engagement of community members in the 'co-production' of locally responsive plans and service strategies. The impacts of not engaging sufficiently with community member are long-lasting and include:

- the adoption of a professionalised view of local issues with the risk of making decisions based on practice assumptions not in line with lived experience of parents and their children
- the consequential disengagement of families in decision making that affects their lives
- missing the opportunity to build knowledge, skills and general capacity of community members, parents and carers that they can apply in other areas of their lives, ultimately benefitting the child.

The engagement of local community members was very limited across all three sites. As a result, limited progress was made towards community members feeling empowered and confident to work in partnership with professionals to address their community needs and priorities. The community members who did participate were generally already active members of the community, and therefore, could be considered to be 'less at risk' than those that the QPP needed to engage.

From their participation in the QPP, professionals reported a greater appreciation of the importance of community representation and participation. Factors that contributed to the lack of community representation were: limited time and resources; the lack of a designated local 'connector' with the appropriate local knowledge, skills and qualities to engage community members; delivery of QPP activities during working hours; and an over-emphasis on the engagement of professionals and services. Each site will continue to negotiate effective ways to meaningfully engage with their communities.

Previous experience in working with communities on projects, which similarly sought to engage with families, has demonstrated that the following factors are necessary to bring about meaningful, sustained participation:

- *Understanding the complexity of engaging families in the process.* Parents and other community members view their situations from a different perspective to professionals. Regardless of how hard practitioners and managers try, it is never possible to fully understand or take account of these perspectives without those stakeholders sitting at the table as equal partners in the process. For this reason, their presence and voice are critical at the earliest stage of projects when they can provide insights and advice on first steps, and appropriate and effective methods for engaging other families and community members.
- *Service systems working in partnership with communities or groups of families who know and support each other, not just engaging with lots of individual families.* One of the preconditions for community engagement is that multiple opportunities are provided for families to meet one another and build support networks.
- *'Go slow to go far' - all relationships take time to develop.* All parts of the process must demonstrate an appreciation that relationships between all stakeholders are developing and, as such, appropriate timeframes must be dedicated to enable this to occur. It also takes time for people to feel confident to the degree that would enable them to freely speak their mind and actively participate in opportunities to influence the 'way things are done'. For many parents, the idea that their voice, experience, and opinions are valuable is foreign and it takes time to build their efficacy.
- *Informality and inclusiveness that puts individuals at ease and welcomes non-professionals*. There are multiple factors that can either help or hinder the engagement of parents. Professional behaviour, service environments, meeting formats, intonation and clothing can all act as enablers or barriers. Individuals who are lacking in confidence often find less formal environments and behaviours more inviting and less intimidating.
- *Engaging the right families.* Mobile, articulate and already engaged families are not generally representative of the families that projects such as QPP need to engage. Families experiencing multiple complex needs are often service resistant due to suspicion and lack of trust in professionals. Engagement of such families in contributing to local system design requires trusting and respectful relationships with individuals who can perform a boundary-spanning role in linking both parent and service communities
- *Value the contribution*. Parents need to experience the value of their contribution to a process that they may have previously viewed as outside of their sphere of influence or 'out of their league'. A strengths based approach would suggest that parents should be supported to understand that their lived experience and opinions are in fact a body of expertise that, in this process, is of equal value and complimentary to the expertise held by professional workers.
- *A culture of understanding that enables engagement.* Restoring trust can be challenging. In order for previously disengaged parents to participate in the change process, all service stakeholders must understand and model behaviours that communicate respect, genuineness, a willingness to learn, and equality.

- *People come and go*. Ongoing processes must take account of how newcomers are supported to participate and understand the journey to date and the defining qualities of the community partnership.

Lack of a local community liaison resource
Although the QPP effectively engaged with a diverse range of stakeholders in each site, the absence of a local community liaison resource had implications for the project. The lack of this resource as a constant presence 'on the ground' made ongoing communication, the coordination of activities and the broader engagement of community members, difficult throughout the QPP.\

Local leadership and an authorising environment
Local leadership varied across the three sites. Where leadership was present, it helped to establish an authorising environment in which to work. For example, the presence of both DET regional staff and school principals in the training workshops brought a level of commitment that resulted in a strong momentum for the QPP within a particular site.

Although service managers reported an increased understanding and commitment to the principles of collaboration and reported evidence of increased collaboration between services, they saw their role as limited to authorising and supporting staff to participate. The professionals participating in the QPP saw a need for service managers to fully appreciate the necessary and ongoing processes of effective collaboration, in order to better support new ways of working within their local community. It was also acknowledged that a lack of engagement with and support from upper-level management, hindered engagement with some key groups, such as health sector workers.

Duration of the QPP and continued direction and support
The relatively short duration of the QPP has led to some uncertainty about the future for the community partnership groups. Experience tells us that where processes are reliant on relational change within a local geographic area (central to the Platforms approach), sufficient time is essential to achieve desired outcomes.

The participants also noted that they would have like to have heard stories from other communities that had used the Platforms framework to develop collaborations. They saw this as having the potential to assist them in establishing realistic expectations for the QPP. They also saw benefit in incorporating short-term goals to acknowledge progress and to recognise their achievements. There remains some uncertainty about how the work will progress without any further dedicated support.

Sustainability
The sustainability of the local partnerships was a concern reported by participants in all three sites. They noted that the establishment of a governance structure would build a stronger authorising environment to provide the partnerships with endorsement, support and legitimacy. They also indicated that the employment of community liaison worker would support sustainability into the future.

6. Final recommendations for consideration

The CCCH offers the following recommendations to the Queensland Government DET relating to a) the participating QPP site sustainability and b) future investments in early years' service integration.

6.1 QPP site sustainability

Community liaison and coordination

Key to the sustainability and success of the existing local collaborative partnerships is continued coordination, engagement and support from local and regional government agencies; local and regional community services; and community members and families. The local partnerships in each of the QPP sites require adequate resources to strategically engage with these stakeholders.

Recommendation 1
Investment in a local community liaison role is considered at each site to: facilitate ongoing communication; support the coordination and workings of the local partnership group; and to continue to build meaningful community engagement.

Authorising environments for QPP sites.

The existing and potential membership of the local Platforms groups in each of the QPP sites require endorsement and support from their respective management to continue their participation and to legitimise the Platforms work. Multiple levels of organisational commitment will engender a sense of confidence that the initiative has the authority and resources to proceed.

Recommendation 2
Regional DET staff maintain their level of involvement, in particular working toward vertical engagement and partnership development with service management and executive within participating and non-participating organisations

6.2 Informing future initiatives

Practice supports

Key to the sustainability and success of the existing local collaborative partnerships is continued coordination, engagement and support from local and regional government agencies; local and regional

It was the experience of participants of the QPP that their use of the Platforms practice framework and its associated processes and tools were key enablers to the achievement of key project outcomes, and the work now occurring within each of the sites.

Recommendation 3
Future projects involving cross-sectoral and community involvement in service re-design and development embed a practice framework, such as Platforms, to guide all processes of collaboration.

Clarity of purpose, process and outcomes

The QPP aimed to establish or enhance a collaborative culture, committed to improving outcomes for children within the QPP sites. The QPP activities focused on developing shared understandings, skills and confidence as the first steps in this process. There were differences in participant expectations of what could be achieved during the QPP's timeframe. Some participants wished to focus on building a

representative group and engaging more community members and parents, but others, despite the absence of community representation, wished to 'get on with it' and start developing plans and actions.

Recommendation 4
The timeframe, rationale and intention of future projects are articulated to communities in ways that enable them to establish realistic expectations.

Timeframes supporting appropriate practice and sustained change

To achieve long-term outcomes, establish, integrate and sustain new ways of working, local community partnership groups require adequate time to work with these change processes.

Recommendation 5
Future projects allow a minimum of three to five years' investment in coordination and engagement support and includes localised governance and exit strategies that explicitly addresses risks to sustainability and ensures that communities are adequately resourced.

Recommendation 6
Realistic timeframes are set to achieve appropriate levels of community involvement; adequate and ongoing resourcing; and provide appropriate structures and supports to build sufficient capacity within each site to achieve sustained change.

Community participation

It was unfortunate, though not surprising, that the community partnerships that were established in each of the QPP sites lacked the involvement, participation and perspectives of parents, families and community members in these early planning stages. Place-based community engagement, collaboration, co-design, and planning should become the default way of working.

Recommendation 7
Future projects prioritise effective community engagement through specific agreement on minimum acceptable levels of community participation; and

Recommendation 8
Future projects facilitate community engagement by providing resources which support sites to engage communities including: a local community liaison role; learning and development strategies to support the shift in culture from service-driven to community-driven; and the necessary funded timeframe for these processes to occur in a reflective manner.

Authorising environments

System change processes can only experience success at the service delivery level if it is enabled by a complementary policy and governance environment. A major effort to gain long-term cross-sectoral, high-level commitment to place-based ways of working is needed to ensure sustainability of these initiatives.

Recommendation 9
In future projects of this type, DET consider taking a lead role in establishing cross-sectorial relationships with other government departments, such as Health and Social Services, and with other key strategic stakeholder groups. This 'strategic liaison role' would be most beneficial in the early stages of a project to provide an authorising environment when key relationships and governance arrangements are being established.

7. Appendices[5]

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference & Governance Group Membership

Appendix 2: DET and CCCH Working Together Agreement

Appendix 3: Key Messages

Appendix 4: Initial Site Visits

Appendix 5: QPP Activity Participant Tables

Appendix 6: QPP Program Logic

Appendix 7: Outcomes Based Evaluation Framework

Appendix 8: Evaluation Plan

Appendix 9: Activity Based Participant Numbers and Representation

Appendix 10: Service Manager Online Survey

Appendix 11: Training Workshop Survey Findings

Appendix 12: QPP Partnership Analysis Tool

[5] *Please note that all appendices are collated in a separate project document*

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