



2025 QCOSS Conference:

CHANGING STATE

BRISBANE CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE | 25 - 27 NOVEMBER

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

DAY 1 | TUESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2025

6:30 – 8:30PM

WELCOME RECEPTION

Kick off the 2025 Conference: Changing State with us



Before the formal program begins, join friends and colleagues from across the sector for a relaxed evening at Blackbird Bar on Tuesday, 25 November 2025.

It's a chance to catch up, make new connections and enjoy each other's company in one of Brisbane's most iconic riverside spots.

We look forward to sharing a drink, a laugh, and a great start to the conference with you.

DAY 2 | WEDNESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2025

8:30 – 9:10AM

CONFERENCE OPENING

9:10 – 10:00AM

KEYNOTE

- Rosie Batty AO, a leading voice against domestic violence

Rosie Batty AO is one of Australia's most high-profile lived-experience advocates. Since the murder of her son, Luke, at the hands of his father, she has campaigned tirelessly and selflessly for domestic and family violence awareness and change.

In what has been labelled "The Batty Effect", Rosie's immense generosity in sharing her story has changed the public narrative around domestic and family violence and driven national social and policy reform.

In this keynote session, Rosie will share her story and discuss how we can build a future free from violence and abuse, followed by a short Q&A with the audience.

10:00 – 10:30AM

MORNING REFRESHMENT

10:35 – 11:35AM

PLENARY - DREAMING



In Conversation with Dr Chris Sarra, Stronger Smarter Institute

- Chris Sarra, Stronger Smarter Institute
- Aimee McVeigh, QCOSS

When Dr Chris Sarra sat down with QCOSS CEO Aimee McVeigh in 2022, he spoke of his excitement at being on the "cusp of systemic change" and bringing his ancestors' "dreams to fruition." The former Director-General of the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships was speaking against the backdrop of Treaty being established and the start of a campaign to enshrine a Voice to Parliament.

Much has changed since 2022 but our capacity to dream and bring forward systemic change has not.

In this conversation, Aimee and Chris will talk about the time we are in, the work we are being called to do and the future we're dreaming for our children and their children.



11:40AM - 12:25PM CONCURRENT SESSIONS

DREAMING

Challenging and changing the youth crime narrative



- Ben Smee, The Guardian
- Dr Amy McQuire, QUT Carumba Institute
- Daniel James, 7am
- Robert Hoge, QCOSS

Across Queensland, the conversation about young people is becoming increasingly driven by fear and misinformation rather than backed by evidence. This fuels calls to lock up children, even though we know detention does not make communities safer.

Our speakers will share how they are actively challenging conservative media narratives and political rhetoric — and how we can do this together in Queensland.

This panel will also feature young people with lived experience of the youth justice system, who will speak about the impact of media framing and share how they are advocating to reshape the way young people are seen and heard.

DARING

No place like home: local innovation in a housing crisis

- Dave Grenfell OAM, The Shelter Collective
- Michelle Coats, The Shelter Collective
- Sue Pope, Common Ground Queensland
- Victoria Parker, The Lady Musgrave Trust

As the housing and homelessness crisis deepens, community service organisations are stepping up with innovative, locally driven responses. This session will showcase how the community sector is developing practical, people-centred solutions to improve housing security and wellbeing.

Hear from Dave Grenfell and Michelle Coats (The Shelter Collective), Sue Pope (Common Ground Queensland and Micah Projects collaboration), and Victoria Parker (The Lady Musgrave Trust) as they share how their organisations are implementing new, scalable initiatives that could inform and inspire broader sector change.

Join us to learn how grassroots leadership and sector collaboration are helping to reshape the housing landscape in Queensland.

DOING

From crisis to capacity: community-led recovery in Wujal Wujal

- Melinda McInturff, Community Plus Queensland Inc
- Natasha Odgers, Neighbourhood Centres Queensland
- Joshua Paterson, Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation
- Kathleen Walker, Wujal Wujal Elders Justice Group and Eastern Kuku Yalanjiwarra Elder
- Audrey Deemal, Cape York Institute
- Anita Veivers, Centacare FNQ

In 2023, the remote First Nations community of Wujal Wujal was flooded and 300 residents had to be evacuated by army helicopter.

It was six months before they could return. The event prompted the community to put in place a long-term disaster response to ensure self-determination and resilience for future events.

As extreme weather events increase in number and severity, the need for culturally sensitive, community-centred disaster responses is becoming increasingly clear. In this session, community leaders will share their knowledge and experience of Wujal Wujal's innovations in disaster resilience, as an example of what can be done.

12:25 - 1:25PM LUNCH

1:25 - 2:15PM

PLENARY - DARING

Speaking up, shifting minds: changing the narrative on domestic, family and sexual violence

- Karina Hogan, Blak Dance
- Rosie Batty AO, a leading voice against domestic violence
- Jess Hill, University of Technology Sydney
- Bri Lee, author, academic and activist

Through unapologetic truth-telling, our speakers have harnessed the power of storytelling, media and public discourse to spotlight critical social issues. Together they have elevated the national conversation on domestic, family and sexual violence, helping Australians see, listen, care, dream bigger and expect more from how we talk about and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence.

In this session, our journalists, authors and advocates will share what drives their work, the challenges they've faced, and how their words have helped shift the narrative around this complex social issue.

2:20- 3:05PM**CONCURRENT SESSIONS****DREAMING**

Shifting the story: from crisis response to homelessness prevention in Queensland

- Professor Hal Pawson, City Futures Research Centre UNSW
- Atlas, Hometime Campaign representative
- Linda Bowden, Habilis
- Bronwen Kippen, QCOSS

Homelessness is not inevitable — and ending it doesn't have to remain a distant dream. Across Queensland and beyond, there is growing momentum for a fundamental shift in how we respond: from managing crises to preventing them altogether.

This session will explore how we can reshape the housing and homelessness system through strategic, systems-level reform and service delivery. Speakers with deep experience in policy, service design, and sector leadership will share the changes needed to embed prevention and early intervention at the heart of our response.

The session will also include a lived experience perspective, grounding the conversation in the realities of navigating the system and highlighting the urgency for change.

DARING

The reformers and the future: how leaders are reshaping Queensland's community sector

- Neil Willmet, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland
- Karyn Walsh, Micah Projects
- Professor Jody Currie, Queensland University of Technology
- Aimee McVeigh, QCOSS

Activism doesn't happen without people, and Queensland's community sector has long been shaped by those who have stood up, spoken out, and pushed for change. In this session, you'll meet some of the state's most effective advocates and reformers — leaders whose work continues to drive progress on social justice, equity, and community wellbeing.

Through powerful personal stories and thoughtful reflections, speakers will explore what makes an effective advocate, how past movements have shaped today's sector, and what the future demands of the next generation of changemakers.

This is a chance to hear from people who have been at the heart of major reforms, who have challenged systems, influenced policy, and inspired action. Their experiences offer valuable insights and motivation for those continuing the work to build a fairer Queensland.

DOING

Future-proofing community services: workforce planning 101

- Kyle Newey, Department of Trade, Employment and Training
- Wayne Graham, University of the Sunshine Coast
- Isabella Crombie-Tait, Business Chamber of Queensland
- Stacey De Calmer, QCOSS
- Jamie Brown, QCOSS

The future of the community services workforce starts with planning today. This session will blend workforce planning theory with practical strategies that organisations can use to shape a resilient, skilled, and sustainable workforce.

We will look at key workforce trends and take away actionable steps to engage in workforce planning. This session will introduce you to several pathways to navigate workforce challenges and drive long-term impact, both within your organisation, and systemically.

3:05 - 3:35PM**AFTERNOON REFRESHMENT****3:40 - 4:30PM****PLENARY - DOING**

The power of the Human Rights Act

- Hon. Yvette D'Ath, Consultant, Former Attorney-General and Health Minister
- Genevieve Sinclair, Youth Empowered Towards Independence
- Professor Susan Harris Rimmer, Griffith Law School
- Tim Gordon, Clayton Utz
- Adjunct Professor Sandra Creamer AM, University of Queensland

In the six years since the hard-fought-for Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld) was passed into legislation, what impact has it had on our policy, advocacy and culture?

In this panel discussion, leading human rights experts and advocates from across Australia will share their insights into how human rights legislation can be used to drive social change.

Drawing on legal, social, and lived experience perspectives, the panel will explore how legislation can serve as a vital framework for protecting individual freedoms, promoting equality, and holding governments to account — both within Queensland and beyond.

4:30 - 4:35PM**DAY 2 CLOSE**

DAY 3 | THURSDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2025

7:30 – 8:30AM

QCOSS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

8:00 – 9:00AM

REGISTRATION AND EXHIBITION

9:00 – 10:00AM

PLENARY - DOING

In conversation with the Honourable Amanda Camm MP

- The Honourable Amanda Camm MP, Minister for Families, Seniors and Disability Services Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence and Child Safety
- Aimee McVeigh, QCOSS

Member for Whitsunday, the Honourable Amanda Camm is the Minister for Families, Seniors and Disability Services and the Minister for Child Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. Her knowledge of these key portfolios was gained in North Queensland where, as Deputy Mayor of Mackay Regional Council, she set up a widely lauded and emulated community-led domestic and family violence taskforce, successfully advocated for quality strategic planning and housing development, and led the community through multiple natural disasters.

In this conversation, Minister Camm will share insights into her political career her portfolio and vision for Queensland's community services sector.

10:00 – 10:30AM

MORNING REFRESHMENT

10:35 – 11:20AM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

DREAMING

Healing toward peace: opportunities that arise from restorative justice processes

- Dr Joseph Hongoh, Queensland Human Rights Commission
- Christine Thomas, Cygnet Centre for Peacebuilding & Transformation Ltd
- Jonty Bush MP, Member for Cooper
- Richard Denning, Justice and Community Safety Directorate, ACT Government

Restorative justice offers unique opportunities to address and prevent harm by moving beyond punishment towards healing. It brings together those affected by harm in a safe, structured way to discuss the impact and work towards repair.

With flexible and responsive practices, restorative justice can be tailored to meet the needs of individuals, communities, and prevention efforts.

In this session, a dynamic panel of experts and leaders in human rights, peacebuilding and justice policy will explore how restorative justice fosters healing, accountability, empathy and lasting change.

DARING

Innovating for a fair go

- Nic Marchesi OAM, Orange Sky
- Lucas Patchett OAM, Orange Sky
- Luke Terry, White Box Enterprises
- Peggy Flannery, Peggy's Place

Some of the most creative and successful innovation in our sector is driven by a desire to help people meet needs many of us take for granted: clean laundry, good conversations, safe refuge and employment. Behind this innovation is a simple belief: everyone deserves and can have a good quality life.

In this session, we will hear from Orange Sky Laundry founder Nic Marchesi OAM, Luke Terry from White Box Enterprises, and Peggy Flannery from Peggy's Place about how their organisations are purposefully harnessing innovation to deliver social change.

DOING

Evidence based practice: your proof is your power

- Sara Parrott, Hand Heart Pocket
- Ben Gales, Queensland Treasury
- Jordana Brown, The Smith Family
- Sandy Blackburn, Social Outcomes

If you want to diversify your organisation's funding sources and ensure the continuous quality improvement of your programs, it helps to have a strong evidence base.

In this powerful session, we'll shine a spotlight on the critical intersection of DFV and youth offending. Join us as we unpack the latest evidence, showcase innovative support models making a real difference, and explore bold, collaborative strategies to prevent harm and help young people heal.

In this session, sector and business professionals will share how your organisation can implement a strong evidence base and the benefits of doing so.

11:25AM – 12:15PM

PLENARY - DOING



Women with clout, cash and cause

- Cat Fay, Perpetual

As the wealth of Australian women grows and their economic influence expands over the coming decades, women are having a transformative impact on a range of causes and societal issues.

In this session, we'll examine how women's influence, time and burgeoning economic power can be harnessed to help shape a stronger, more equitable Australia.

12:20 – 1:05PM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

DREAMING

Breaking the cycle: preventing youth crime through DFV-informed reform



- Murray Benton, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak
- Candice Hughes, YFS Legal
- Pam Barker, Brisbane Youth Service
- Lucy Gregory, Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast
- Dr Eva Klambauer, QCOSS

We know punitive, tough-on-crime responses to youth offending don't work and can even cause more harm by deepening trauma and entrenching young people in the justice system.

Culturally safe, trauma-informed approaches offer a better way forward. They move beyond punishment to address the real issues behind youth offending — including one of the most significant, yet often overlooked, drivers: exposure to domestic and family violence (DFV).

In this powerful session, we'll shine a spotlight on the critical intersection of DFV and youth offending. Join us as we unpack the latest evidence, showcase innovative support models making a real difference, and explore bold, collaborative strategies to prevent harm and help young people heal.

DARING

Behind the reform: working with statutory authorities to move the needle

- Geoff Rowe, Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia
- Luke Twyford, Queensland Family and Child Commission
- Beck O'Connor, Former Victims' Commissioner
- Rosemary Kayess, Australian Human Rights Commission

Statutory authorities play a critical role in shaping laws, policies, and systems — and the people within them often drive reform.

In this session, current and former leaders from key statutory bodies, including the Australian Human Rights Commission, Queensland Family and Child Commission, the Office of the Victim's Commissioner, and the Public Trustee Advisory and Monitoring Board, will reflect on their roles as decision-makers and advocates for change. They'll explore how community organisations can work effectively with statutory authorities, and where the real opportunities lie — both within these institutions and through genuine partnership.

Join this conversation to gain practical insights into collaborating across sectors to influence policy and improve outcomes for the people and communities we serve.

DOING

From intent to impact: what does it take to really embed human rights in frontline work?

- Professor John Tobin, University of Melbourne
- Rebecca Ketton, 54reasons
- Richard Boele, KPMG
- Mena Waller, Cancer Council QLD
- Charlotte Beaumont-Field, QCOSS

Delivering services that truly respect and uphold human rights takes more than good intentions and organisational policies — it requires the right skills, culture, and leadership.

In this session, we'll explore the sector, organisational and individual roles that exist in embedding human rights in frontline community services. We'll consider what it takes to develop maturity at a state level, how some organisations are making great strides, and how they got there.

Learn what works, what challenges to expect, and how your organisation can mature its approach to ensure dignity, fairness, and equity for the people you support.

1:05 – 2:05PM

LUNCH

2:05 – 2:55PM

PLENARY - DARING

Everyday dialogue, extraordinary change

- Ellie Smith, Community Independent Candidate for Dickson
- Mary Crooks AO, Victoria Women's Trust
- Paula McGrady, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre
- Kos Samaras, Co-founder and Director, The RedBridge Group Australia
- Hayden Johnson, State Political Editor, The Courier Mail

While we may sometimes feel powerless to influence the systems that shape our society — especially when change is slow and decisions feel distant — it's empowering to remember that change doesn't only come from the top down. As organiser and activist Adrienne Maree Brown observes: "...every single large system or structure or network or political protocol, all of it is made up of small things — of humans either having or not having necessary conversations, and humans being willing to stand up for what is right and stand up against what is wrong."

This is a conversation about harnessing the power of communities as changemakers to spark collective action and change.

2:55 – 3:25PM

AFTERNOON REFRESHMENT

3:30 – 4:20PM



PLENARY - DREAMING

Poverty is a policy choice

- Yarraka Bayles, The BlackCard
- Professor Karen Healy AM, University of Queensland
- Dr Faiza El-Higzi OAM, University of Queensland
- Natalie Lewis, Queensland Family and Child Commission

Poverty and inequality are not inevitable, but the result of deliberate policy decisions. This session will examine how government could end poverty, transforming lives and ending intergenerational disadvantage.

Join the panellists to hear about some of QCOSS' key priorities for the next few years as they discuss how bold and inclusive policy can shape a fairer Australia for all.

4:20 – 4:45PM

CONFERENCE CLOSE