



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

Changing State: the conversation begins

- Dr Dinesh Palipana OAM, MC

Welcome to Country

- Tribal Experiences

It starts with a dream

- Aimee McVeigh, CEO, QCOSS

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

A word from our Platinum Sponsor,
Kambu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Health

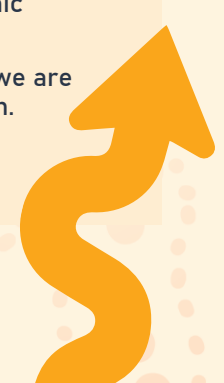
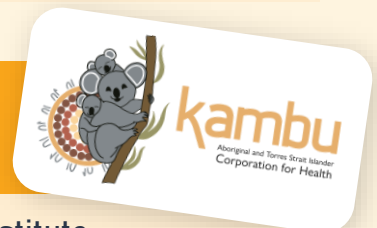
In Conversation with Dr Chris Sarra, Stronger Smarter Institute

- 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

- Dr Amy McQuire, QUT Carumba Institute
- Ben Smeed, The Guardian
- Daniel James, 7am
- Katherine Hayes, Youth Advocacy Centre (YAC)
- Maiya, Youth Ambassador Program
- Willow, Youth Ambassador Program

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, 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

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

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

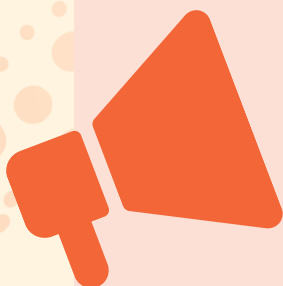
Speaking up, shifting minds: changing the narrative on domestic, family and sexual violence

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

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.

ADITS



2:20-3:05PM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

DREAMING

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

- Atlas, Hometime Campaign representative
- Fiona Caniglia, Q Shelter
- Linda Bowden, Habilis
- Stephen Hawkins, Homelessness Queensland
- 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

- Professor Jody Currie, Queensland University of Technology
- Karyn Walsh, Micah Projects
- Neil Willmet, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland
- Nick Ryan, Lutheran Services
- 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
- Isabella Crombie-Tait, Business Chamber of Queensland
- Wayne Graham, University of the Sunshine Coast
- Jamie Brown, QCOSS
- Stacey De Calmer, 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.

Kurbingui
youth & family development

3:05 - 3:35PM

AFTERNOON REFRESHMENT

3:40 - 4:30PM

PLENARY - DOING

The power of the Human Rights Act

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

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

What we heard, what we're holding

- Dr Dinesh Palipana OAM, MC

6:30 - 10:30PM



QUEENSLAND COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARDS DINNER

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Connecting people & purpose

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

A word from our Gold Sponsor,
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Magic Notes

powered by **beam**

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

- Christine Thomas, Cygnet Centre for Peacebuilding & Transformation Ltd
- Jonty Bush MP, Member for Cooper
- Dr Joseph Hongoh, Queensland Human Rights Commission
- Richard Dening, Restorative Justice Leader

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

- Lucas Patchett OAM, Orange Sky
- Nic Marchesi OAM, Orange Sky
- Peggy Flannery, Peggy's Place
- Nadja Van Schie, QCOSS

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 and Peggy Flannery from Peggy's Place about how their organisations are purposefully harnessing innovation to deliver social change.

54 reasons

DOING

Evidence based practice:
your proof is your power

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

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.

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

- Candice Hughes, YFS Legal
- Damon Atkinson OAM KC, Barrister
- Lucy Gregory, Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast
- Murray Benton, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak
- Pam Barker, Brisbane Youth Service

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

- Bob Gee, Office of the Victims' Commissioner
- Geoff Rowe, Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia
- Luke Twyford, Queensland Family and Child Commission
- Dr John Chesterman, The Public Advocate
- 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, leaders from key statutory bodies, including the Australian Human Rights Commission, Queensland Family and Child Commission, The Public Advocate, 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
- Mena Waller, Cancer Council QLD
- Rebecca Ketton, 54reasons
- Richard Boele, KPMG
- 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.

2:05 - 2:55PM

PLENARY - DARING

| HESTA |



Everyday dialogue, extraordinary change

- Cr Ellie Smith, City of Moreton Bay
- Hayden Johnson, The Courier Mail
- Mary Crooks AO, Victoria Women's Trust
- Paula McGrady, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre
- Simon Welsh, Director, The RedBridge Group Australia

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

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

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.

Anglicare
Southern Queensland

4:20 - 4:45PM

CONFERENCE CLOSE

Changing State: carrying it forward

- Aimee McVeigh, CEO, QCOSS

Keep daring, keep doing

- Dr Dinesh Palipana OAM, MC

Thank you to our Platinum Sponsor:
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