Are you an individual or making a submission on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

Organisation name

Gladstone Region Engage in Action Together

1. Does the new vision reflect what we all want for children and families?

The proposed vision reflects what communities want for children and families, particularly its focus on wellbeing, safety, connection and strong relationships. These elements are consistent with what families and local partners describe as important for children to grow, learn and feel a sense of belonging.

The vision could be strengthened by recognising that families need to be empowered, supported and connected. Empowerment alone is not always enough when practical, cultural or system barriers limit access to the supports families need. Adding "supported and connected" would more accurately reflect the conditions that help families to thrive.

It may also be valuable to acknowledge the role of community more explicitly. Children and families do best when the wider community is engaged and when services work together in ways that reflect local priorities, culture and context. Naming community support as part of the vision would better capture the collective effort required to improve outcomes.

Overall, the vision aligns well with what we want for children and families, and with these refinements would more fully reflect the conditions needed for all children to grow and develop well.

2. Are the two main outcomes what we should be working towards for children and families? Why/Why not? - Outcome 1: Parents and caregivers are empowered to raise healthy, resilient children - Outcome 2: Children are supported to grow into healthy, resilient adults.

The proposed outcomes are broadly appropriate and reflect what communities want for children and families. Supporting parents and caregivers, and ensuring children grow into healthy and resilient adults, are central goals for any child and family system.

However, the outcomes would be strengthened by acknowledging that

empowerment alone is not always enough. In many communities, including regional areas like Gladstone, families often face practical, structural and system barriers that limit their ability to access supports, even when they are motivated and capable. For this reason, parents and caregivers need to be empowered, supported and connected to raise healthy, resilient children. Naming these conditions would provide a more accurate representation of what families require to thrive.

Similarly, the second outcome could recognise that children need opportunities to grow and develop, not only to "grow into adulthood". Explicitly including development reflects the importance of the early years, social and emotional growth, and the environments that shape children's long-term outcomes.

Overall, the outcomes point in the right direction, and with these refinements would more fully capture the conditions that help children and families to be healthy, resilient and connected.

3. Will a single national program provide more flexibility for your organisation?

A single national program has the potential to create more flexibility, but this depends on how it is designed and implemented. Streamlining programs on its own will not guarantee flexibility for communities or providers. In some cases, consolidation may place additional pressure on local systems if it is not accompanied by the right enabling conditions.

For organisations like GRT, flexibility is strengthened when local communities can shape how services are designed and delivered, when funding arrangements support collaboration rather than competition, and when backbone and integration roles are recognised. These elements help communities respond to changing needs and contexts, particularly in regional areas.

A single national program could improve flexibility if it:

supports local design and delivery

recognises and invests in backbone and coordination functions

enables a mix of smaller local providers and larger organisations

allows communities to adapt services over time

reduces administrative burden rather than shifting it elsewhere

If these conditions are not built in, a single program may reduce flexibility by centralising decisions, limiting service choice, or requiring providers to adjust to new processes without adequate support.

In summary, a single national program could create more flexibility, but only if it is designed to strengthen local leadership, maintain community voice, and support the relationships and coordination needed for effective place-based work.

4. Does the service or activity you deliver fit within one of the three funding streams? Do these streams reflect what children and families in your community need now – and what they might need in the future?

GRT does not deliver services directly. As the backbone organisation for the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative in Gladstone, our role is to bring partners together, support shared planning and coordination, and ensure that community priorities guide local decision making. For this reason, GRT's work does not sit neatly within a single funding stream as proposed in the new model.

Although GRT does not deliver services, we have a clear understanding of local needs through sustained engagement with families, service providers and community leaders. Based on this shared work, the three funding streams cover the broad types of supports that are relevant for children and families in Gladstone. Prevention and early intervention remains a critical priority, along with timely access to developmental supports, family wellbeing services and coordinated responses for families experiencing complexity.

However, the structure of the streams alone will not meet community needs unless they are supported by the conditions required for effective delivery. Families benefit most when services are coordinated, culturally safe and connected to community, and when providers work together rather than in isolation. For this to occur, backbone and integration roles need to be recognised and supported within the new program design.

The proposed streams reflect important areas of need, but their effectiveness will depend on how they are implemented, how local voices inform service design, and how well the broader system supports collaboration, navigation and integrated pathways for families.

5. Are there other changes we could make to the program to help your organisation or community overcome current challenges?

Several changes would help communities like Gladstone overcome current challenges and strengthen the effectiveness of the new program.

First, recognising and funding backbone and integration roles is essential. Coordination, shared planning and community led organising do not occur without dedicated capacity. These functions help local partners work together, reduce duplication, strengthen referral pathways and support families to navigate a complex system. Continued investment in backbone capability would improve continuity and help communities adapt as needs change.

Second, the program should enable local design and decision making. Communities understand their own priorities and are best placed to shape how services are delivered. This includes having the flexibility to tailor supports, involve local partners in planning, and adjust activities as circumstances shift. Local design is particularly important in regional areas where service availability, workforce pressures and transport barriers require practical and place-based solutions.

Third, the program would benefit from long term and stable funding arrangements. Predictable funding supports workforce stability, strengthens relationships and allows communities to plan over multiple years. Short funding cycles can disrupt collaboration and reduce the effectiveness of services.

Finally, improved access to meaningful local data would help strengthen planning and evaluation. Communities need data that reflects their context, including information from state and local agencies, community insights and locally collected indicators. Shared data capability supports more targeted service delivery and better outcomes for children and families.

These changes would enhance the program's ability to respond to local need and would help build the conditions for sustained improvement across communities.

6. Do you agree that the four priorities listed on Page 4 are right areas for investment to improve outcomes for children and families?

The four priorities identified are appropriate and align with what communities describe as important for improving outcomes for children and families. Prevention, early supports, culturally safe services and strong community

connections are all essential components of an effective child and family system.

A stronger focus on prevention is particularly important. Local partners in Gladstone consistently report that timely developmental, educational and family supports reduce escalation into more intensive services. Investment in prevention helps families access support earlier and reduces the long term costs associated with crisis responses.

The priority on connected and culturally safe services is also appropriate. Families engage more effectively with services when they feel seen, respected and understood, and when support is delivered in ways that reflect local culture and context. Coordinated and integrated pathways help families move between services without repeating their story or facing barriers that come from fragmented systems.

Recognising the role of community is critical. Communities contribute knowledge, relationships and practical support that service systems alone cannot provide. Investment that strengthens community capability, local leadership and trusted relationships will improve access, engagement and overall wellbeing.

The priorities are the right areas for investment, and their impact will depend on how they are implemented. They will be most effective when supported by local design, backbone coordination, cultural safety, and sustained collaboration across government, providers and community.

7. Are there any other priorities or issues you think the department should be focusing on?

There are several additional priorities that would strengthen the program and support better outcomes for children and families.

First, the department should prioritise the conditions that allow collaboration to occur. Communities consistently emphasise the importance of coordinated planning, shared governance and strong relationships across government, providers and community. These conditions require dedicated capacity and should be recognised as part of the program's core design.

Second, the department should consider how navigation and integration supports are resourced. Many families experience difficulty finding the right services, understanding eligibility and moving through multiple systems. Navigation roles and integrated pathways help reduce these barriers and improve access to early

supports. These functions are essential in regional areas where service availability, transport and workforce challenges can limit engagement.

Third, local workforce pressures continue to affect the availability and quality of services. Workforce challenges in early childhood, allied health and family support mean that families often wait longer for assessment and intervention. Investment that strengthens the local workforce, including training, recruitment and retention, will be important for improving outcomes.

Fourth, place based communities would benefit from clearer mechanisms for sharing and accessing local data. Local and state agencies hold information that can support earlier identification of need and more effective planning. A focus on data sharing, local capability and relational evaluation would enable communities to use evidence in practical and meaningful ways.

Finally, the department should ensure that any reform supports continuity and stability. Frequent program changes can disrupt relationships and reduce community trust. Long term and stable arrangements allow communities to plan, build capability and sustain momentum.

Focusing on these areas will strengthen the overall program and help communities respond more effectively to the needs of children and families.

8. Do the proposed focus areas – like supporting families at risk of child protection involvement and young parents match the needs or priorities of your service?

GRT does not deliver services directly. Our role as the backbone organisation for the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative is to bring partners together, support shared planning and ensure that community priorities guide local decision making. Because of this role, our focus areas reflect the priorities identified by community and local partners rather than a single service type.

The proposed focus areas are consistent with the needs identified in Gladstone. Families who are at risk of child protection involvement, young parents, and families experiencing developmental, social or economic pressures all benefit from early supports and coordinated pathways. Local partners regularly report that timely access to practical assistance, culturally safe family supports and developmental services helps reduce escalation and strengthens family wellbeing.

Although these focus areas are appropriate, the way supports are designed and

delivered will determine their effectiveness. Services need to be connected, easy to navigate and delivered in ways that reflect local culture and context. Coordination across agencies is also important because many families experience more than one area of need.

Overall, the focus areas align with the priorities identified in our community. Their impact will depend on how they are implemented and how well the broader system supports collaboration, navigation and early access to the right supports.

9. Are there other groups in your community, or different approaches, that you think the department should consider to better support family wellbeing?

Several groups and approaches would benefit from additional consideration to strengthen family wellbeing.

First, families with children in the early years continue to require timely access to developmental supports, childcare and early learning. In many regional communities, including Gladstone, access to early childhood education, allied health and developmental assessment is limited by workforce availability and service capacity. Approaches that strengthen early identification, integrated pathways and practical supports for families would help address these gaps.

Second, families experiencing housing stress often face challenges that affect their ability to engage with services. Stable and appropriate housing is closely connected to family wellbeing, and service access can be improved when housing, family support and community services work together. Approaches that acknowledge this relationship and support coordination across housing and family services would improve outcomes.

Third, culturally safe and community led supports for First Nations families are essential. Local partners highlight the importance of trusted relationships, community leadership and safe spaces where families can access support in ways that reflect culture and community priorities. Strengthening community controlled approaches and ensuring cultural safety across all services would make a meaningful difference.

Fourth, young parents and families who are new to the region often need practical help to connect with services and community networks. Navigation supports, peer networks and community based activities help reduce isolation and improve engagement.

Finally, flexible and place based approaches are particularly important in regional areas. Families benefit when services are responsive to local context, when providers collaborate, and when community voice informs design and delivery. Approaches that strengthen these conditions will help address current challenges and support long term wellbeing.

These groups and approaches reflect what families and local partners identify as important in improving access, connection and early support.

10. What are other effective ways, beyond co-location, that you've seen work well to connect and coordinate services for families?

There are several approaches beyond co location that help services connect, coordinate and respond more effectively to families.

The first is structured opportunities for shared planning and problem solving. Regular cross sector meetings, focused working groups and collaborative planning sessions create a space where providers can identify common issues, align their efforts and reduce duplication. These forums help build relationships and support consistent pathways for families.

The second is the use of clear referral pathways and shared tools. Simple, agreed processes for referral, follow up and communication help families move between services without repeating their story or encountering unnecessary barriers. Shared tools or frameworks also support consistent practice across organisations.

The third is the presence of backbone or integration roles. Dedicated coordination capacity helps maintain relationships, support communication and keep partners connected to community priorities. These roles are particularly important in regional areas where services operate across large geographic areas and may not see each other regularly.

The fourth is targeted outreach and community based engagement. When services spend time in community settings, meet families where they are and build trusted relationships, coordination improves naturally. Families are more likely to engage when support is visible, accessible and connected to familiar spaces.

The final approach is shared data and collective understanding of need. When partners have access to relevant local information, they can plan together, identify gaps earlier and respond in a more coordinated way. This includes qualitative insights from families as well as quantitative data from multiple agencies.

These methods have helped strengthen coordination in Gladstone and support more connected and responsive pathways for children and families.

11. What would you highlight in a grant application to demonstrate a service is connected to the community it serves? What should applicants be assessed on?

To demonstrate that a service is connected to the community it serves, a grant application should show clear evidence of local relationships, community insight and ongoing engagement. Services that are well connected understand local context, reflect community priorities and work in partnership with other organisations to support families.

Applicants should be able to show how community voice informs their work. This includes describing how they listen to families, how they incorporate feedback into service design and how they maintain ongoing relationships with community members. Evidence of genuine engagement, rather than one off consultation, is important.

Applications should also demonstrate strong local partnerships. Services that are connected to community work closely with other providers, schools, early childhood settings, health services and community organisations. They understand local pathways, collaborate to reduce duplication and contribute to shared planning. Clear examples of these relationships should be part of assessment.

Cultural safety and responsiveness should be a key assessment area. Services need to demonstrate they understand the cultural context of the community, including the strengths and priorities of First Nations families. This includes showing how they create safe and welcoming environments and how they partner with community leaders.

Applicants should also show awareness of local challenges and strengths. A connected service understands the practical realities families face, such as transport, cost of living, workforce availability and limited service choice in regional areas. Applications should describe how the service adapts its approach to meet these local conditions.

Finally, strong applications should show evidence of consistent participation in local coordination mechanisms. This includes involvement in cross sector planning, information sharing and collaborative activities that support better

outcomes for families.

Assessing applicants on these areas would help ensure that funded services are grounded in community, responsive to local needs and able to contribute to a coordinated system of support for children and families.

12. Beyond locational disadvantage, what other factors should the department consider to make sure funding reflects the needs of communities?

Funding allocations should consider a broader set of factors that shape the needs and circumstances of communities. Locational disadvantage is important, but it does not fully capture the pressures that influence access, engagement and wellbeing.

One factor is population change. Communities experiencing growth, workforce shifts or industry transitions may have increasing demand for family and community services, even if they do not meet traditional measures of disadvantage. Funding should reflect the impact of population movement on service capacity, workforce pressure and access to early supports.

Another factor is service availability and workforce capacity. In many regional areas, families face long waits for early childhood education, allied health, parenting supports and developmental assessment. Funding needs to consider the practical limitations created by workforce shortages and limited provider choice.

Housing stability is another important factor. Families experiencing housing stress or insecure living arrangements often face barriers to engaging with services. Funding approaches should consider how housing pressures intersect with family wellbeing and access to supports.

Cultural context should also be considered. Communities with significant First Nations populations or diverse cultural groups may require additional investment to support culturally safe and community led approaches. Funding should recognise the importance of trusted relationships and local leadership in these contexts.

Finally, the department should consider the strength of local collaboration and the presence of coordination mechanisms. Communities that have established backbone functions, shared governance and collaborative planning structures are well positioned to use funding effectively. Recognising these conditions would help

ensure that investment aligns with local capability and supports system level improvement.

Considering these factors alongside locational disadvantage will support a more accurate and equitable allocation of funding and help communities respond to the needs of children and families.

13. What's the best way for organisations to show in grant applications, that their service is genuinely meeting the needs of the community?

Organisations can show that their service is genuinely meeting community needs by providing clear evidence of how local priorities, community insights and lived experience inform their work. Strong applications demonstrate both an understanding of community context and a commitment to ongoing engagement.

First, organisations should show how they listen to community. This includes describing the methods they use to gather insights from families, how feedback influences service delivery and how they maintain ongoing relationships with community members. Evidence of repeated engagement over time, rather than one off consultation, strengthens this claim.

Second, applicants should demonstrate how their service adapts to local conditions. This may include responding to workforce pressures, transport barriers, cultural considerations or specific developmental needs identified in the community. A clear explanation of how the service has changed or improved in response to local circumstances is a strong indicator of genuine connection.

Third, organisations should describe their partnerships with other local providers. Services that are connected to community work collaboratively, participate in shared planning and contribute to coordinated pathways for families. Providing examples of joint work or shared initiatives can show that the organisation is part of the broader local system.

Fourth, applicants should show evidence of cultural safety and responsiveness. This includes demonstrating that the service understands the cultural context of the community, respects local leadership and has practices in place to ensure all families feel welcome and supported.

Finally, organisations should provide data and insights that reflect community needs. This can include local service data, community feedback, demographic trends or qualitative information gathered through engagement. Using local

evidence shows that the service is grounded in the realities of the community it serves.

Together, these elements demonstrate that a service is responsive, connected and genuinely aligned with the needs and priorities of its community.

14. How could the grant process be designed to support and increase the number of ACCOs delivering services to children and families?

The grant process can support and increase the number of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations delivering services by creating conditions that recognise cultural knowledge, community leadership and the practical barriers that ACCOs often face when applying for and implementing government programs.

First, the process should value cultural strength and local relationships. Assessment criteria should consider cultural authority, community trust and connection to local families as core strengths. These factors are essential for effective service delivery and should be recognised alongside technical capability.

Second, the application process should be simple and accessible. Many ACCOs operate with small teams and limited administrative capacity. Clear guidance, plain language information and reduced duplication would help more ACCOs participate. Providing support sessions or direct assistance during the application period would further increase accessibility.

Third, the process should include flexible eligibility and realistic contract requirements. Smaller ACCOs may need time to build capacity or form partnerships before delivering the full scope of a program. Flexible requirements and staged implementation can allow ACCOs to grow their role over time while still meeting community needs.

Fourth, funding should be long term and stable. Short funding cycles can disrupt service continuity and make it difficult for ACCOs to recruit and retain staff. Longer term arrangements support workforce stability and build the conditions for sustainable community controlled service delivery.

Fifth, partnership approaches should be encouraged. Grant processes can promote collaboration where ACCOs lead or share leadership, and where mainstream organisations support capability building, knowledge sharing and community led practice.

Finally, assessment panels should include First Nations representation and local knowledge. Decisions are stronger when those assessing applications understand cultural context, community priorities and the strengths of Aboriginal community controlled approaches.

These changes would help create a grant process that enables ACCOs to participate on a more equal footing and supports the expansion of culturally safe, community led services for children and families.

15. What else should be built into the program design to help improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families?

Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families requires program settings that recognise culture, community leadership and the strengths of Aboriginal community controlled approaches. Several elements should be built into the program design to support this.

First, the program should prioritise culturally safe and community led service delivery. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families engage more effectively when services are grounded in cultural knowledge, trusted relationships and local leadership. Program settings should recognise the authority of Aboriginal community controlled organisations and strengthen their ability to lead or share leadership in service delivery.

Second, partnerships with Elders, cultural leaders and local community groups should be formally supported. These relationships provide cultural guidance, help shape service design and ensure that supports reflect community priorities. Creating space for ongoing cultural advice within planning and decision making would improve the quality and safety of services.

Third, the program should include flexible and accessible funding arrangements. Aboriginal community controlled organisations often face additional administrative and workforce barriers that limit their ability to apply for or deliver programs. Flexible eligibility, staged implementation and long term funding would help strengthen capability and support sustainable service delivery.

Fourth, data collection and evaluation should be designed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This includes shared decisions about what outcomes matter, how data is interpreted and how learning is used to improve services. Approaches that respect community ownership of knowledge will lead to more meaningful and accurate understanding of progress.

Finally, the program should support strong connection to culture, community and Country. These are protective factors that improve wellbeing, identity and resilience for children and families. Services that help build or maintain these connections, and that recognise the strengths of cultural practices and community networks, are more likely to achieve positive outcomes.

Embedding these elements in the program design would strengthen cultural safety, support community leadership and improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

16. What types of data would help your organisation better understand its impact and continuously improve its services?

As the backbone organisation for the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative in Gladstone, GRT does not deliver services directly. Instead, we support shared planning, coordination and community led organising. The types of data that strengthen our work are those that help partners understand community need, monitor change over time and identify where collaboration is most effective.

First, local data on early childhood development, service access and wait times is important. Information about developmental vulnerability, participation in early childhood education and delays in accessing health or allied health supports helps partners understand where families may require earlier or more coordinated assistance.

Second, data on family wellbeing and social connection is valuable. This includes information about housing stability, cost of living pressures, mental health supports and the factors that influence family stress. These indicators help partners understand the broader conditions that affect children's outcomes.

Third, information about service pathways and system navigation is useful. Data on referral patterns, engagement rates and reasons why families disengage can help improve coordination and reduce barriers across the local system.

Fourth, qualitative insights from families and community members are essential. Community voice helps partners understand the lived experience behind the numbers and identify changes that will make services more accessible, culturally safe and responsive.

Finally, data that supports shared learning across organisations strengthens local

collaboration. When partners have access to consistent and timely information, they can identify gaps, coordinate responses and review progress together.

These types of data help GRT and local partners understand community need, reflect on what is working and adapt approaches to improve outcomes for children and families.

17. What kinds of data or information would be most valuable for you to share, to show how your service is positively impacting children and families?

As the backbone organisation for the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative in Gladstone, GRT does not deliver direct services. Our contribution is through shared planning, coordination and supporting community led priorities. The most valuable information for GRT to share relates to how these collaborative functions strengthen the local system and improve access, connection and outcomes for families.

First, information that demonstrates improvements in coordination and alignment across local services is important. This includes examples of joint planning, shared priorities, strengthened referral pathways and reduced duplication. These indicators show how collaboration is functioning and how the local system is working together on behalf of families.

Second, data that describes earlier or improved access to supports would be valuable. Changes in wait times, referral processes and engagement with early childhood, health or family services provide an indication of whether local coordination is helping families receive timely assistance.

Third, qualitative insights from families and partners help demonstrate impact. Feedback that shows families feel more supported, more connected or better able to navigate services provides meaningful evidence of improved community experience.

Fourth, information that shows progress on community identified priorities is important. This includes tracking changes in areas such as early childhood access, developmental pathways, workforce pressures or housing related barriers where these issues influence family wellbeing.

Finally, sharing examples of how local partners have adapted their work in response to shared data or community voice helps demonstrate a culture of continuous improvement. These examples show how collaboration leads to

practical changes that improve outcomes for families.

Together, these types of information provide a clear picture of how backbone coordination and community led organising contribute to a more connected, responsive and effective system for children and families.

18. If your organisation currently reports in the Data Exchange (DEX), what SCORE Circumstances domain is most relevant to the service you deliver?

NA

19. What kinds of templates or guidance would help you prepare strong case studies that show the impact of your service?

NA

20. What does a relational contracting approach mean to you in practice? What criteria would you like to see included in a relational contract?

A relational contracting approach is one that focuses on trust, shared purpose and collaboration rather than compliance alone. In practice, it means that government, community and service providers work together as partners, with a clear commitment to shared outcomes for children and families. This approach values relationships, flexibility and local knowledge, and it recognises that complex social issues cannot be addressed through transactional arrangements.

In practice, relational contracting means regular communication, joint problem solving and a shared understanding of what success looks like. It includes space for services and communities to adapt their work as needs change, and it encourages learning rather than penalising organisations for adjusting their approach. It also means that contracts recognise the importance of coordination, cultural safety and community leadership, and that these functions are supported through the funding arrangement.

The criteria for a relational contract should include several core elements. First, there should be a clear commitment to collaboration. Services should demonstrate how they work with other local partners, contribute to shared planning and support coordinated pathways for families.

Second, the contract should include flexibility. Services should be able to adjust activities as community needs shift, provided that changes are agreed through collaborative processes and remain aligned with community priorities.

Third, relational contracts should include measures that reflect both outcomes and the conditions that support those outcomes. This includes cultural safety, accessibility, family experience and the quality of relationships between services and community.

Fourth, the contract should recognise the value of backbone and coordination functions. Effective collaboration does not occur without dedicated capacity, and contracts should support the roles that help maintain communication, alignment and shared learning.

Finally, relational contracts should include long term and stable arrangements. Trust and collaboration develop over time, and short contract cycles can undermine relationships and continuity.

Including these criteria would create contracting arrangements that support shared purpose, strengthen local systems and enable communities to respond effectively to the needs of children and families.

21. What's the best way for the department to decide which organisations should be offered a relational contract?

The department should offer relational contracts to organisations that have strong relationships with their community, work collaboratively with other local partners and demonstrate the capability to contribute to shared outcomes. Relational contracting works best when organisations are already part of a connected local system and have a track record of working in ways that reflect local priorities and culture.

First, organisations should demonstrate deep community connection. This includes an understanding of local strengths and challenges, ongoing engagement with families and community members and the ability to adapt their work in response to community feedback. Cultural safety and trusted relationships are central to this connection.

Second, the department should consider how well organisations collaborate with others. Relational contracts depend on strong partnerships, shared planning and consistent communication across services. Organisations that participate actively in local coordination structures and work constructively with other providers are well placed to deliver within a relational approach.

Third, organisations should demonstrate stability and reliability. This includes consistent leadership, transparent governance and a history of delivering services that families value. Stability helps build trust and supports the long-term relationships required for a relational contract.

Fourth, organisations should show a willingness to share learning and use data to improve practice. Relational contracting is strengthened when providers reflect on their work, engage in joint problem solving and contribute to shared understanding across the local system.

Finally, the department should consider the presence of community led or community-controlled organisations where appropriate. These organisations often hold cultural authority and local trust that are essential for effective service delivery.

Using these criteria would help ensure that relational contracts are offered to organisations that can deliver on the intent of this approach and contribute to stronger outcomes for children and families.

22. Is your organisation interested in a relational contracting approach? Why/why not?

GRT is interested in a relational contracting approach because it aligns with the way our community works and reflects the principles of the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative. As a backbone organisation, GRT supports collaboration, shared planning and community led priorities. These functions are strengthened when the broader system enables relationships, trust and joint problem solving rather than transactional arrangements.

A relational contracting approach would support the conditions needed for effective place-based work. It would create space for partners to adapt their work as needs change, to use local knowledge and data to guide decisions and to work together on shared outcomes for children and families. It would also recognise the value of coordination and integration roles, which are essential for maintaining alignment and supporting families to navigate complex systems.

Relational contracting would help maintain continuity and stability. Trust and collaboration develop over time, and long-term arrangements support stronger relationships across government, services and community. This stability is important in regional areas where workforce pressures, access challenges and changing population needs require flexible and coordinated responses.

For these reasons, GRT sees relational contracting as an approach that would strengthen collaboration, improve alignment across services and support better outcomes for children and families in Gladstone.

23. Is there anything else you think the department should understand or consider about this proposed approach?

There are several considerations that would help ensure the proposed approach leads to better outcomes for children and families.

First, the department should recognise that strong relationships and shared decision making take time to build. Communities that have established collaboration, governance structures and backbone functions have done so through sustained effort. Any new approach should protect this progress and avoid disruption to existing partnerships. Continuity is essential for trust and stability.

Second, the department should consider the practical realities faced by regional communities. Workforce shortages, limited service availability and transport challenges influence how programs are delivered and how families engage. Flexibility in program design and contracting will be important to ensure regional communities can respond to these conditions.

Third, meaningful community voice should remain central. Communities are clear about their priorities and the conditions that support family wellbeing. The proposed approach will be more effective if communities are supported to guide local design and shape decisions about how services work together.

Fourth, evaluation should focus on learning rather than compliance. Place based work often involves adapting and testing new approaches. Evaluation frameworks that value partnership, cultural safety, family experience and improvements in pathways will better reflect the real progress being made.

Finally, the department should consider how different parts of government work together. Many of the challenges facing families sit across multiple portfolios, such as health, education, housing and child protection. A coordinated approach across agencies will strengthen the impact of the program and reduce the burden on families and providers.

Considering these factors will help ensure that the proposed approach supports

collaboration, strengthens local systems and creates the conditions for sustained improvement in outcomes for children and families.