health + wellbeing

Queensland

Gather + Grow

Queensland Remote Food Security Action Plan 2023-2026

Consultation Draft – February 2023

making healthy happen

Queensland
Government

Acknowledgement

Health and Wellbeing Queensland respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands, winds and waters where we live, learn and work. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who are the First Nations peoples of Australia, as distinctly different groups with unique cultures, histories, knowledges, and connections to Country.

We pay our respects and acknowledge the important role of Elders, past and present, for they hold the memories of the traditions, cultures and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and have taken on the responsibility to protect and promote their culture and leave a legacy for future Elders and leaders.

We acknowledge any Sorry Business that may be affecting individuals, families and communities.

We recognise and respect the common strengths demonstrated across Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In particular, the resourcefulness and enduring resilience Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families and communities continue to behold. We acknowledge the long-standing relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and traditional foods and recognise that colonisation has forcibly disrupted this. We recognise that Australia was once a food sovereign nation. For over 60,000 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hunted, fished, gathered, grew, prepared and shared food, in ways that promoted planetary and human health. Today, Queensland's food system is very different and in many ways, contributes to and reinforces food insecurity in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Therefore, working towards sustainable, food secure systems means systematically removing barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural ways of wellness and nutrition which have been imposed since colonisation in 1788. We acknowledge that the impacts of colonisation mean that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to fight for sovereignty of land and food.

We thank and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have contributed to, and co-led, this work.

Our Commitment

We commit to being respectful, taking our lead from the community and walking together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations in the journey to better health, equity and food security. We acknowledge the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and *Path to Treaty*. As a government body, we realise there is work to be done to reframe our relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This can only begin with deep truth-telling about the historical and ongoing relationship between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We acknowledge that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples need to be reflected in every step of this journey. We, as an agency, will continue to centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in this work.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are rich and diverse and that we have a responsibility to facilitate efforts that account for this this and ensure equity for all. We celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, the strength, resilience and courage which has occurred over time and now inspires current and future generations to create a healthier, more food secure Queensland. One way we embody this is through recognising and participating in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander days of significance such as National Reconciliation Week, Closing the Gap Day and NAIDOC Week. We are building our organisational awareness and capacity related to this through a Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan.

We recognise and support Australia's National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the Closing the Gap targets which can only be achieved with new ways of thinking and working that share leadership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Health and Wellbeing Queensland supports the *Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2021*, *Making Track towards closing the gap for Indigenous Queenslanders by 2033* and *Queensland's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan*.

Language

Throughout this document, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander* is used to describe the First Peoples of the lands and waters now known as Australia. Where it is described in a title or quote, the term *Indigenous* is used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, noting the distinctly different cultures and histories of groups described by this term.

A Foreword will be developed for inclusion in the final version of the Strategy.

Case studies, infographics, images and photos will be developed for inclusion in the final version of this document.

Contents

Introduction

Gather + Grow 2023-2032 **is the Queensland Government's 10-year strategy to improve food security in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.**

The *Gather + Grow Queensland Remote Food Security Action Plan 2023-2026* is the first in a series of action plans across the next ten years. It outlines steps the Queensland Government will take to work towards its vision for stable, resilient and food secure remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland.

Plant
Establish fertile ground
Cultivate collective leadership and vision to enable system change.

The action delivered through this plan will plant the seed for change by cultivating collective leadership and creating a shared vision for food security in remote Queensland. Actions in the plan are detailed under the four Gather + Grow priority areas for remote food security in Queensland:

- Creating supportive settings for sustainable **local food production**
- Optimising **supply chains and logistics** to ensure quality, affordable, healthy food is consistently available year-round
- Empowering **communities** to utilise healthy food and achieve good nutrition
- Enabling **healthy homes** that support the utilisation of healthy food

Planting the seed for change

Food insecurity is a complex problem impacting many Queenslanders, however, has a disproportionate impact on remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander discrete communities. This action plan focusses on delivering action for those with the greatest need, primarily remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the Torres Strait, Cape York, Northern Peninsula Area and Lower Gulf regions (hereafter, referred to as Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf). Due to various systemic challenges, these communities experience greater barriers to food security compared to the rest of Queensland.

Of the 19 discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland, 13 are situated in the remote and very remote regions of Far North Queensland and the Lower Gulf. Each of these communities are represented in the Torres and Cape Indigenous Council Alliance (TCICA), a regional organisation of local governing authorities from across communities. The TCICA is a food security leader in Far North Queensland and the Lower Gulf and will serve as key partner in the delivery of this action plan.

This action plan will build on and leverage the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, local, state and federal government agencies, and key industry stakeholders. Each action will include investigation, design and consultation phases to ensure implementation is relevant, effective and community driven.

Through collective action and leadership, it is intended that this action plan will:

- **Establish conditions for success**, through developing partnerships, governance and information-sharing mechanisms that enable greater understanding of remote Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf communities and the associated opportunities, challenges, benefits, intended and unintended consequences of food security initiatives. Adopting a learning-based approach will improve system change and drive sustainable, tangible outcomes for communities.
- **Nurture current and emerging opportunities**, guided by community voice, knowledge and evidence.
- **Enable engagement and collaboration at the national level**, in partnership with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). This will include supporting the development of a national Remote First Nations Food Security Strategy and leveraging opportunities to work across states in a combined effort to develop northern Australia.

INFOGRAPHIC: Food security in Far North Queensland and the Lower Gulf *(this will include a map of the regions)*
Place and People[1] • 100% of the region is classified as remote or very remote • 65.7% of the population identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander • 13 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Local Governments
Food Security Challenges • 15 year gap in health-adjusted life expectance compared to the Queensland population [1] • 23.5% of the population is unemployed compared to 6.1% for the whole of Queensland [1] • Communities in remote Far North and Central Queensland regions are 60% more likely to experience food insecurity compared to inner Brisbane[2] • In Cape York, a healthy food basket costs 50% more compared to in Brisbane[3] • Healthy food in very remote Torres Strait Island communities' costs 35% of the median household income[4] • Food security is identified as a community priority in the North West Hospital and Health Service and Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service *Making Tracks Together* health equity strategies

Enabling food secure systems in remote Queensland

Food security is a complex, systemic issue which requires shared understanding, investment, and leadership across all sectors to create meaningful and lasting change

Remote food insecurity is long-standing, driven by the compounding impacts of colonisation, trauma, and stifled economic development. Recently, these issues have been heightened by the ongoing impact of natural disasters and global instability. Despite strong advocacy and dedicated community leadership over many years, shifting the dial on chronic food insecurity remains a systemic issue requiring coordinated leadership across sectors.

To advance food security, it is essential that the right foundations are in place to deliver relevant, feasible and sustainable solutions. This action plan will take critical steps to ensure these foundations are in place across four key enablers:

- **Collective leadership**: working together across government, community, industry and sectors to support co-design, co-implementation, and co-ownership of solutions. The actions outlined in this plan will be shared across government.
- **Evidence and community informed action**: leveraging technical and cultural knowledge of content experts to ensure that decision-making, investment and action is informed by a combination of best-practice evidence and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing.
- **Investment for delivery**: securing appropriate and sustained funding that enables effective implementation and evaluation, and ensures the right mechanisms are in place to support food security into the future.
- **Place-based solutions**: developing initiatives that are responsive to local needs and challenges and bolstering community action that leverages community strengths.

Action	
E.1	Identify critical relevant data sets that enable informed decision-making and investment in food security.
E.2	Strengthen and drive policies and networks that address food security barriers in remote community settings across sectors, including at the national level.
E.3	Drive innovation and collective action through partnership with community, government, industry, the not-for-profit sector, universities and research institutes.
E.4	Develop a Measuring Change Framework to support monitoring, evaluation and learning in the implementation Gather + Grow 2023-2032, including defining measures of success which align with community aspirations and state and national indicators where possible.
E.5	Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander paradigms across food security priorities, with an initial focus on research and evaluation.
E.6	Increase remote workforce capacity and capability to deliver activities pertaining to implementation of Gather + Grow 2023-2032 and contribute to the evidence base.
E.7	Undertake mapping and planning related to food production, in preparation to met Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business opportunities resulting from the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic games.

Key Priority 1: Local Food Production

Improving access and availability of healthy food by creating supportive settings for sustainable local food production

Local food production is often identified by communities as a mechanism to improve local resilience, ease supply chain pressures and, ultimately, stimulate economic growth[5, 6]. Agriculture plays a key role in the economy of Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf regions[7]. Pockets of activity currently contribute positively to health, employment, food supply, culture, and social connectedness[7]. There is potential to expand local food production across the region by leveraging existing assets, partnerships, and cultural knowledge[7]. However, several barriers such as complex land tenure arrangements, variable soil quality, reduced market access, freight costs, water and power security, the impact of climate change and workforce and skills shortages challenge the sustainability of local food production ventures across Far North Queensland and the Lower Gulf[7, 8].

To overcome these challenges and enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to meet their aspirations for localised food systems, cross-government leadership and wrap-around support is needed. Similarly, agriculture industry and agri-business partners will be required to share innovation, drive business acumen in remote regions and support regional economic development.

This action plan will focus on setting up remote Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf communities and their businesses for success in local food production by equipping community with the right networks, information, partnerships, and planning. Through understanding the current physical, social and contextual landscape for remote local food production, action can be taken to develop tools which aid decision-making and equitable participation.

Action	
1.1	Develop a multi-criteria analysis to inform investment decision-making by community in viable local food production initiatives in remote communities.
1.2	Conduct feasibility studies to determine the critical inputs and infrastructure required for place-based community food production through partnership between communities, government, industry and universities.
1.3	Explore past, present and future local food production initiatives to understand the opportunities for coordinated production and distribution across a regional food system.
1.4	Pilot evidence-based, sustainable, and scalable place-based healthy food production solutions that are community and data driven, coordinated, and cost-effective over the long term.

Key Priority 2: Logistics and Supply Chain

Optimising supply chains and logistics to ensure quality, affordable, healthy food is consistently available year-round
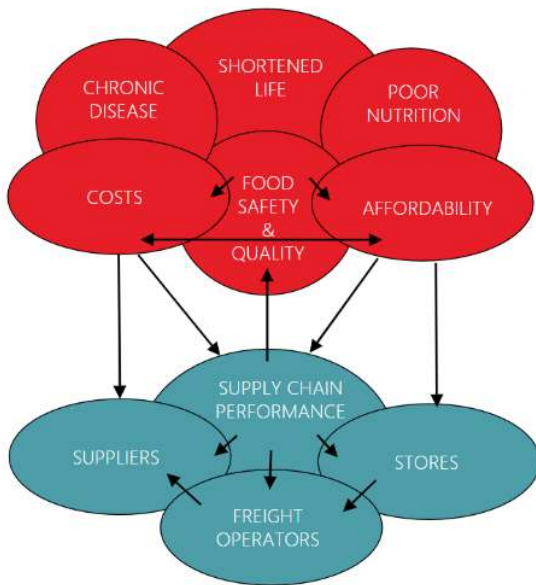

Figure 1. Supply chain performance is related to food safety, quality and health outcomes.

Supply chains to remote Queensland communities are long, complex and vulnerable to disruption. The cost of transport, lack of bulk purchasing power and high operating costs means residents of very remote Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf communities pay up to 31% more for everyday items[4]. This has a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live there (see Figure 1).

Remote supply chains operate in complex regulatory and legislative environments and a challenging climate[9]. Providers must balance competing priorities related to quality, delivery, inventory, cost, customer satisfaction and safety[10]. A deep understanding of these interacting objectives is required to nurture system change of genuine benefit to communities.

This action plan will focus on fostering a shared understanding of, and vision for, Queensland's remote freight system including the generation and coordination of data and information to support solution co-design and prioritisation. To achieve this, the next three years will include efforts to build collective leadership across sectors, including with industry stakeholder such as freight providers, retailers, consumers and other supply chain participants.

Action	
2.1	Conduct investigations about remote food supply chains to understand the challenges, opportunities and influencing factors, including identification of strategies to improve resilience.
2.2	Co-design evidence-based supply chain solutions with communities, government, industry and universities to enable improved healthy food accessibility and availability.
2.3	Establish strong governance across remote supply chains to support improved coordination, data sharing and collective action.

Key Priority 3: Healthy Communities

Empowering communities to choose and prepare healthy food by building awareness, capability and commitment around good nutrition

The consumption of healthy food is a pillar, and outcome, of food security. Enabling healthy food consumption through policy, education, awareness raising, and healthy environments will support the food system by driving demand for healthy food in rural and remote locations. Ultimately, this contributes to improved nutrition and diet-related health outcomes.

Remote stores are an important avenue through which community food supply and purchasing behaviours can be influenced. Many remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Far North Queensland and the Lower Gulf are serviced by one grocery or general store which provides the dominant source of food, in conjunction with other sources such as bush food and community gardens. See Figure 2.

Achieving consistent healthy messaging and policy across community settings requires greater cross-sectoral collaboration. By building and strengthening partnerships with Queensland's major store group, Community Enterprise Queensland (CEQ), and other industry groups, this action plan will focus on developing and trialling new policies, practices, and infrastructure to support healthy store environments. This work will be supported through the community-controlled health sector and will facilitate health promotion across community settings.

Figure 2. Remote Food Store Map

Action	
3.1	Drive evidence-based and community-led food security and health promotion action by strengthening partnerships between community, government, industry and universities.
3.2	Enhance the capability of remote stores to support healthy in-store environments around the price, placement and promotion of healthy and unhealthy food and drink products.

3.3	Increase access to, and availability of, programs which support timely provision of appropriate, nutritious foods for families impacted by food insecurity.
3.4	Fund and expand healthy lifestyle and education programs which increase demand for and utilisation of healthy food in remote Queensland.
3.5	Map the nutrition pathway of Queensland to understand how nutrition flows across the state and determine how to improve its distribution.

Key Priority 4: Healthy Homes

Enabling communities to prepare, cook and store healthy food in homes with reliable and functional health hardware

Healthy homes are essential to food security as they enable the utilisation of healthy food. A healthy home, in the this action plan, is one equipped with appropriate health hardware – the equipment needed for inhabitants to realise health benefits within their home. In the context of food security, this includes the safe preparation, consumption, and storage of healthy food.

To date, there has been significant investment in healthy remote homes to support chronic disease prevention. There is opportunity to leverage these existing initiatives, which share strategic objectives with remote food security, to improve home environments in remote Far North Queensland and Lower Gulf communities.

This action plan will support shared leadership by bringing together key stakeholders to understand the intersection of priorities, roles and responsibilities. This in turn will support a strengthened approach to using shared data and information to ensure future action plans deliver solutions that are relevant, feasible and of greatest benefit to communities.

Action	
4.1	Conduct an audit of remote households to understand the factors influencing healthy food utilisation in remote homes and use data and community voice to inform solutions.
4.2	Map and evaluate the agencies responsible for healthy housing, including relationships and the opportunities to improve service delivery and coordination.
4.3	Collect data and evidence about the availability and accessibility of healthy home products in remote stores to establish a baseline measure.
4.4	Work with stores to promote healthy home products that prevent chronic disease and illness through the in-store environment.
4.5	Investigate opportunities to support home-gardening by partnering with communities to understand capacity, capability and potential funding models.

Next steps

Working together across government, community, and sectors to improve food security in Far North Queensland and the Lower Gulf

The *Gather + Grow Remote Food Security Strategy 2023-2032* is an aspirational plan to improve food security and health and wellbeing outcomes in Queensland's remote communities. It will require shared leadership and investment across all levels of government, and genuine collaboration with community organisations, industry, and other partners.

The Queensland Government is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure actions are responsive to their needs. This action plan (2023-2026) is the first in a series of plans. It is a starting point for working together to deliver on shared priorities. Over the coming years, the strategy will be reviewed to assess progress against the objectives outlined in the strategy and to ensure the approach remains contemporary and reflective of the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The implementation of the action plan will be coordinated by the *Gather + Grow Queensland Remote Food Security Steering Committee,* including representation from lead agencies across the Queensland, local and federal government and key community stakeholders. Implementation of the action plan will be bolstered in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through existing community-driven processes for shared decision-making, such as local government and Local Thriving Communities Local Decision Making Bodies.

Appendices

1. **Related documents**
   - Making Healthy Happen: Strengthen Action Plan 2023-2025 (pending)
   - Communities 2032 Action Plan 2022-2025
   - Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025
   - Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023
   - Ending Rheumatic Heart Disease: Queensland First Nations Strategy 2021-2024
   - Deadly Kids, Deadly Futures: Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Ear and Hearing Health Framework 2016-2026
   - Queensland Freight Action Plan 2023-2025 (pending)
   - North Queensland Regional Freight Action Plan (pending)
   - Making Tracks Together Health Equity Strategies (pending)
     - North West Hospital and Health Service
     - Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service

Glossary

Acronyms

CEQ	Community Enterprise Queensland
DAF	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
DCHDE	Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy
DESBT	Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
DoH	Department of Health
DPC	Department of Premier and Cabinet
DSDATSIP	Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
DTMR	Department of Transport and Main Roads
HWQld	Health and Wellbeing Queensland
LTC	Local Thriving Communities
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
TCICA	Torres and Cape Indigenous Council Alliance

Terms and definitions

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander discrete community

A discrete community refers to a geographic location, bound by physical or other boundaries, and inhabited or intended to be inhabited by predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with housing or infrastructure that is either owned or managed on a community basis. Discrete communities include:

- communities in urban areas where the title to a parcel of land has been transferred to an Indigenous organisation
- well established communities and outstations in remote areas;
- Deed of Grant in Trust communities and their outstations in Queensland as well as the two shires of Aurukun and Mornington Island; and
- communities on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pastoral properties/leases.

Community-Controlled Sector

Services initiated and operated by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders community to deliver holistic, comprehensive and culturally appropriate services to community which control it, through a locally elected board of Management[11].

Food security

All people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life[12].

Healthy food

Food and drinks that support a healthy and active lifestyle as per the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian Guide to Healthy Eating[13].

Health hardware

The physical equipment needed to access to the health-giving services of housing, including reliable and safe water and electricity supply[14].

Industry

In the context of this strategy, industry refers to service providers, consultancy firms, industry advocacy bodies and other industry-based organisations that have expertise in, or influence over, matters related to the key priority areas.

Lead Responsible Agency

Based placed government agency or department to lead delivery of the action due to their workforce expertise, program of work and/or responsibilities to Queensland.

Support Responsible Agency

Will support the led responsible agency in delivery of the action. May have a role in driving particular, discrete functions within an action through workforce expertise and/or programs of work.

Local Decision-Making Body

Established through the Department of Disability Services, Seniors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Local Decision-Making Bodies are community determined groups that engage directly with Government to share decision making about the design, delivery and effectiveness of Queensland Government-funded services in remote and discrete communities[15].

Local food production

Food is produced within a short distance of where it is consumed, often accompanied by a social structure and supply chain different from the large-scale supermarket system.

Local Thriving Communities

Local Thriving Communities (LTC) is a significant, long-term reform that will result in a visibly different way of government working with communities. LTC requires government and community to work together to move decision making closer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, embrace self-determination, and engage in high expectations relationships so that service design and delivery better meet the needs of each community[16].

Supply chain

A supply chain is the network of individuals, organisation, resources, activities and technology involved in creation and sale of a product[17].

Remote

The Australian Statistical Geographic Standard determines five levels of remoteness based on relative access to services. Under this structure, remote if defined as Remote and Very Remote Areas in the context of this strategy[18].

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