**Director-General**

Greetings from Meeanjin. I begin by acknowledging and paying my respects to the traditional custodians of the lands, waterways and communities of Queensland.

I extend my respect to Elders past and present, and recognise the role histories and cultures play in shaping educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, students and communities.

I am Michael De’Ath, Director-General of the Queensland Department of Education.

Throughout my career, I have worked for governments in Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and New Zealand across a variety of portfolios, including education, community services and health.

In each of these jurisdictions, and across all portfolios, I have seen how important it is to build cultural knowledge and understanding of our nation’s First Peoples so we can work together in a more meaningful way.

Like many of you, I am seeing welcome momentum for change in this space. A desire for genuine engagement is building across the country and affecting all aspects of the way we do business and deliver services.

Formal partnerships and shared decision making are at the forefront of all that we do. For our agency, this means a shared commitment between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work together to close the gap on educational disadvantage.

On arriving in the Queensland Department of Education, I was very pleased to see an established *Commitment Statement to Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. This commits us all to value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ cultures and histories, and provide opportunities for young people to thrive and prosper in their early years and at school.

Every one of us has a critical role to play in building authentic and effective engagement into our everyday work – within classrooms, schools, across regions and in our central office.

To make this happen, we all need to build confidence in engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities in culturally appropriate ways. And as a senior leader, I assure you that I am committed to supporting all staff to gain the skills needed to effectively engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and colleagues.

The department’s *Framework for engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities* and *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework* provide guidance for all of us as we travel on this absolutely essential learning journey.

Our progress has recently been demonstrated by powerful work done in a number of Queensland state schools to reframe their relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, parents and staff. Through this work, we have invested in engagement and co-design processes we expect will have a positive impact for generations to come.

I ask you to join me in supporting the department’s commitment to empower and give voice to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to collaborate and co-design with us.

Don’t wait. Act now. Familiarise yourself with the framework but also, strengthen your journey of building cultural competency through talking to and learning from Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples in your community. Listen carefully to what they have to teach us. We have much to learn. This is everyone’s responsibility.