




# Framework for stronger **Community Justice Groups**



Queensland  
Government



*The Department of Justice and Attorney-General acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities.*

*We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders both past and present.*

Illustrations by Indigenous creative design agency Ingeous Studios for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's Community Justice Group (CJG) program. The designs depict the work and commitment of CJGs throughout Queensland to the safe and just treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the criminal justice system and to minimising the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this system.

# Introduction



## Community Justice Group Program

Community Justice Groups (CJGs) currently operate in over 40 communities throughout Queensland. CJGs are non-government organisations. In some communities these CJGs have been operating for over a decade, providing practical support to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people coming into contact with Queensland's justice system. In some communities, CJGs also play an advisory role in Alcohol Management Plans.



CJGs were first introduced in Queensland in 1993 under a pilot program designed to address key recommendations following the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The pilot program was later expanded to a state-wide program underpinned by the goal of reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system.

The program provides grant funding to CJGs. The grant includes funding to employ a CJG Coordinator who assists the CJG members (volunteers, local Elders and Respected Persons) to deliver the service agreed to as part of the funding application and service agreement negotiation process with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG).



# Introduction



## Funding enhancement for CJG program

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As a part of the 2019–20 Budget, \$19.4 million over four years was allocated to enhance the funding provided to the Community Justice Group (CJG) program. This enhanced funding will support the development of a grants management system and increase funding provided to CJGs so they can continue to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system.

This investment in the CJG program recognises the critical role CJGs play in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system and their role in contributing to positive outcomes for their communities.

Historically, CJGs core funded activities have been to provide court support to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people to ensure they experience a culturally appropriate and culturally safe court process. This includes CJG staff and Elders taking part in court proceedings, making submissions to help inform the decision-making of judicial officers and supporting offenders and victims through the court process. However, CJGs also play a much broader and holistic role in their communities and deliver a broad range of valuable services.

The enhanced funding for CJG program from 2019–20 provides an opportunity to ensure CJGs:

- are funded in a way which ensures they are economically viable
- can continue to deliver core court-related activities
- are recognised for the work they do outside of the courts which is a part of the broader criminal justice system response.

# Introduction



## Purpose of this framework

The *Framework for stronger Community Justice Groups* (the framework) is a high-level, overarching resource for government agencies.

It outlines:

- the core functions and broader role of CJGs within their communities
- the common challenges faced by CJGs
- presents a refocused model for the CJG program which recognises the breadth of their service delivery.

This framework also outlines how government agencies will enable CJGs to deliver justice-related outcomes in their communities.

This framework reflects a collective commitment by key government agencies about how we will work with and support CJGs to deliver justice-related outcomes in and for their communities. It is a vehicle for government agencies to identify ways of working together to acknowledge, remunerate and support the work of CJGs.

The Queensland Government has a number of current initiatives and strategies which are relevant to this framework. These initiatives are listed below and have been mapped to the Advancing Queensland's Priorities.

### Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities — key linkages

Keep communities safe

Working Together Changing the Story:  
Youth Justice Strategy 2019–23

Domestic and Family Violence  
Prevention Strategy 2016-26

Queensland's Framework for  
Action — Reshaping our approach to  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
domestic and family violence

Be a responsive government

Queensland Government Reconciliation  
Action Plan 2018–21

Tracks to Treaty – Reframing the  
relationship with Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders

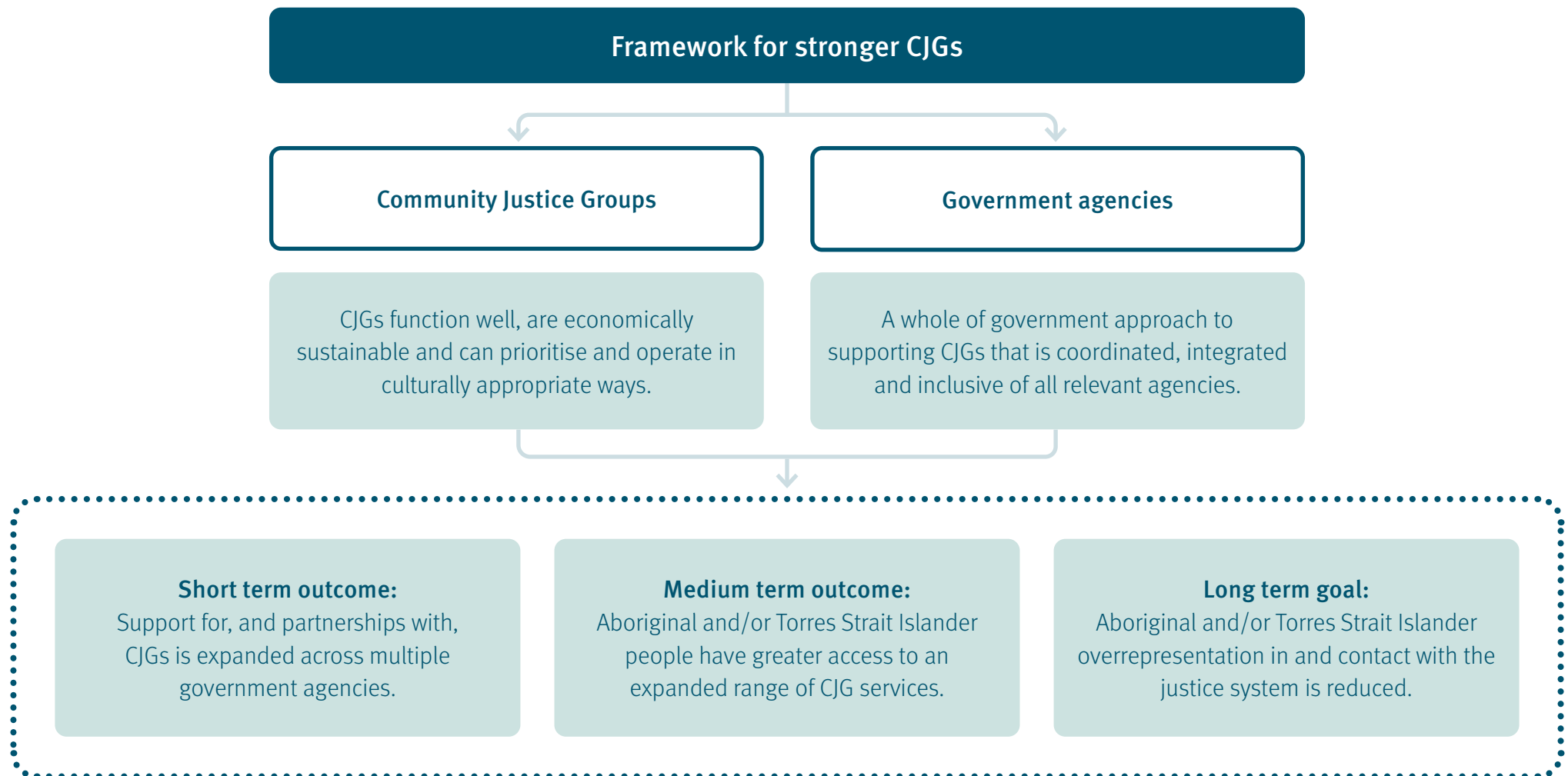
Queensland Housing Strategy 2017–27

Give all our children a great start

Our Way: A generational strategy for  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
children and families 2017–2037

Every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
student succeeding strategy

This framework is expected to have positive outcomes for CJGs, largely in relation to the support they are provided by government agencies to deliver culturally appropriate services within their communities. This framework is expected to enable government agencies to work together in a coordinated way to support CJGs.



CJGs function well, are economically sustainable and can prioritise and operate in culturally appropriate ways.

**This means:**

- CJGs are resourced appropriately to deliver services across the whole justice system.
- The unique, holistic cultural support and leadership CJGs provide to the justice system contributes to addressing the underlying factors for offending.
- Economically sustainable CJGs are able to:
  - engage in long-term planning
  - identify and propose local solutions to local issues
  - provide local leadership in addressing local law and order issues.

A whole of government approach to supporting CJGs that is coordinated, integrated and inclusive of all relevant agencies.

**This means:**

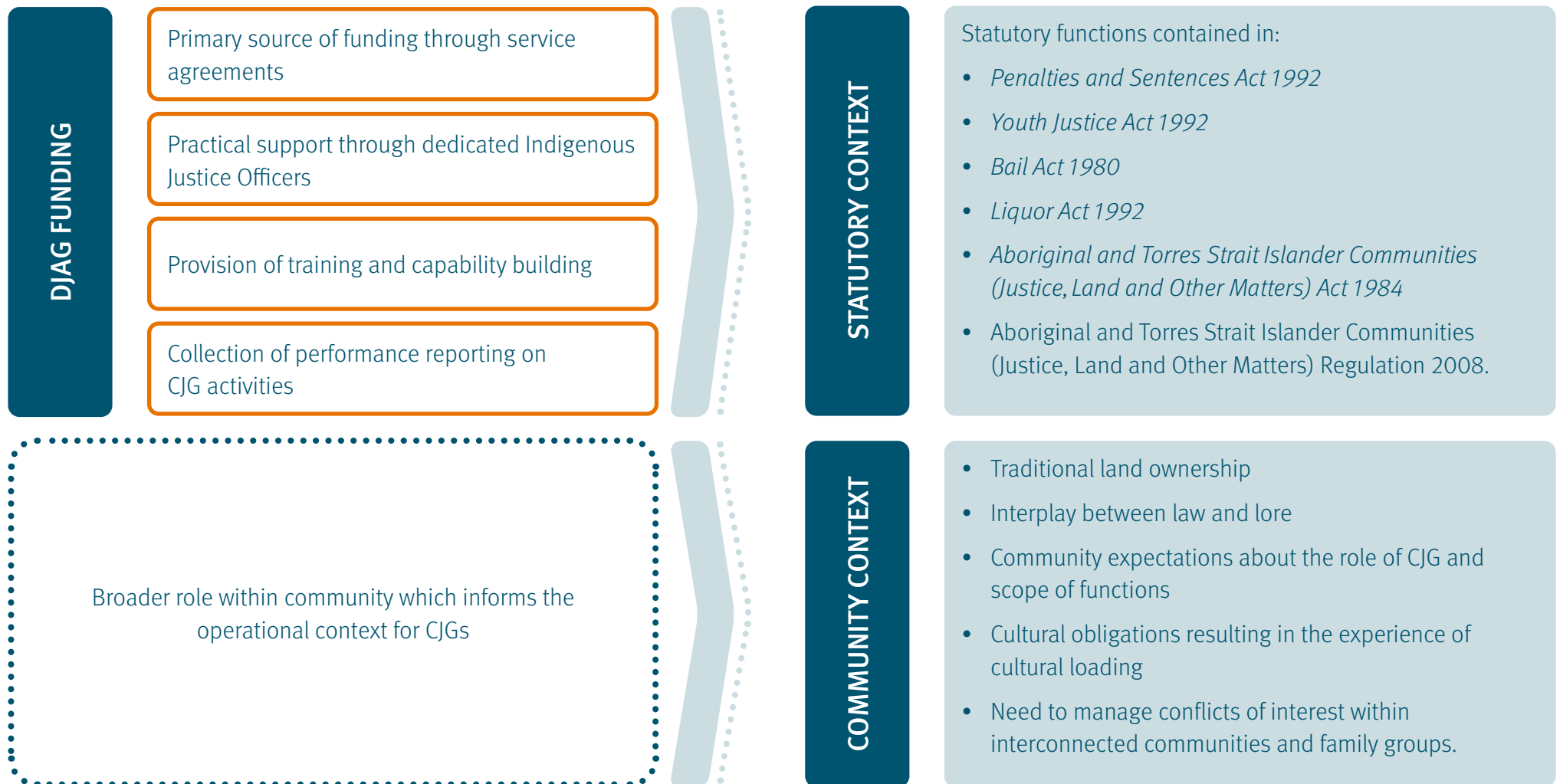
- Culturally appropriate, person-centred services are available across the justice and broader human service system in community.
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander defendants, victims and their families have access to the services they need, when they need them.
- Inter-agency governance structures support the whole of system approach of CJGs in their communities.
- A whole of system understanding and partnership between government and CJGs to reduce contact of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders with the justice system.



CJGs adopt a person-centred approach to addressing crime and justice-related issues in their community utilising cultural leadership and capability to contribute to whole of system outcomes.



CJGs have statutory functions under Queensland legislation which enables them to participate in the justice process. These functions enable CJGs to actively contribute to a culturally capable court process and positive outcomes for victims, offenders and the wider community.



CJGs are currently involved in service delivery at **key impact points** across the criminal justice system including:



## 1. Prevention, awareness and education

Activities that aim to prevent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people from coming into contact with the justice system such as men's and women's groups, education programs in schools, healing programs, sporting activities and Blue Card applications.



## 2. Early intervention

Activities that aim to address matters before escalation to the criminal justice system is necessary, including mediation and peacemaking activities, home visits from Elders or CJG members, yarning circles, on-country healing programs and youth programs.



## 3. Within the court process

Activities that support Magistrates Courts, Murri Courts and Specialist Domestic and Family Violence Courts, including preparing cultural reports, assisting defendants, victims and their families, Youth Justice case conferencing and contributing to the cultural capability of the court process.



## 4. While in custody and under supervision

Activities that support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people during periods of incarceration or while at the watch house, on parole or community-based orders. This includes prison visits from Elders or CJG members, preparing parole support letters, on-call watch house cell visits, working with Queensland Corrective Services regarding compliance with parole and community-based orders alongside practical support like transport and access to housing.



## 5. Transition from custody back into community

Activities designed to assist Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people to successfully transition from custody back into the community, such as prisoner reintegration programs, referrals for support services, yarning circles or transport from custody.

# Current model

## CJG funded activities

Under the current CJG program model, CJGs are largely only recognised for their contribution to service delivery **within the court process**. While some CJGs deliver additional, place-specific programs (such as the Aurukun Restorative Justice Program), most CJGs receive core funding to support mainstream court processes or Murri Courts.

### Core court-related activities include:

- preparation of bail and sentence submissions to the court
- attending court sittings
- supporting victims and offenders through the court process
- referring victims and offenders to support and legal services
- providing cultural advice and community input on justice related issues
- supporting the operation of Murri Courts.



Current model

Broader service delivery

In addition to their work in the court process, CJGs deliver services at multiple impact points across the criminal justice system continuum. CJGs facilitate a range of activities which form part of an integrated and whole of system approach to reducing crime, addressing recidivism and promoting community wellbeing and healing. In the past, these activities have been delivered within specific funding. Some examples of these activities are outlined below mapped to the respective impact point. Case studies of CJGs located in Mount Isa, Cherbourg and Brisbane are included in the appendix.





There were many different issues and challenges in delivering services in community highlighted by CJGs, including:

Lack of services in communities to support offenders & victims (e.g. lack of infrastructure such as rehabilitation facilities, safe houses, etc.)

Uneven distribution of funding between agencies

Overlap of services and inconsistent visiting services

Limited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led organisations delivering services and lack of identified positions

Limited cultural awareness

Lack of information sharing between service providers

Lack of recognition of CJG work which limits opportunities for collaboration



Community and social issues

Domestic and family violence

Drug and alcohol issues

Youth disengagement from the education system, young people involved in crime and youth suicide

Mental health issues

Unemployment

Organisational challenges

Workforce issues (e.g. recruitment and retaining staff)

Succession planning

CJG staff and member training

CJG resourcing (e.g. funding for activities, appropriate staff remuneration and staff to cover leave)

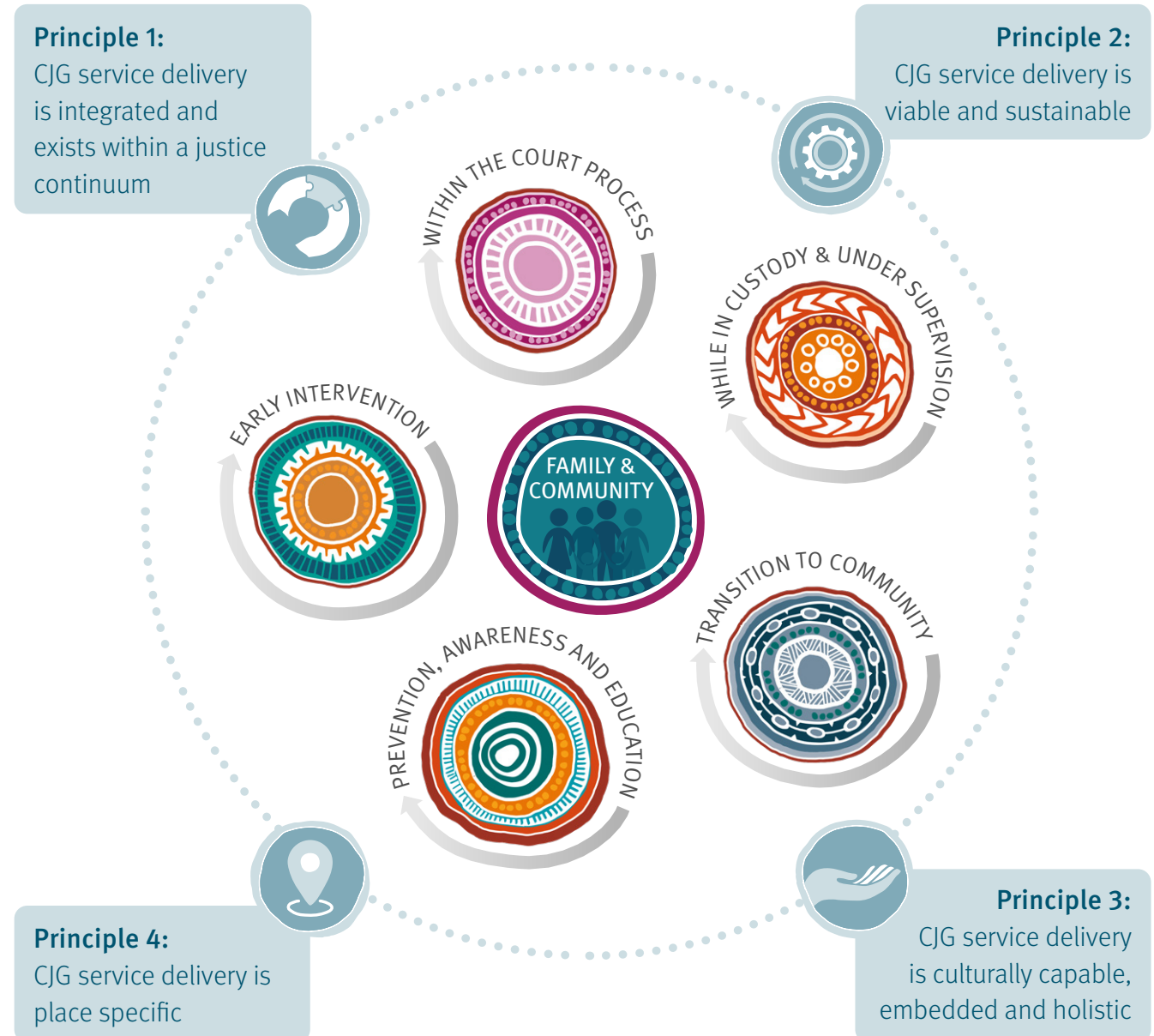
Transportation

Capital funding (e.g. office space, activity equipment and purchase of a vehicle)

# Refocused model

## Recognising whole of system CJG service delivery

The refocused model for the CJG program recognises and acknowledges the wide range of services CJGs deliver within the criminal justice system. CJG service delivery may differ depending on the needs identified within the specific community and any gaps identified in the local service system. Each CJG may not deliver services at each impact point, however all CJGs will continue to work in the court process.



# Refocused model

## Guiding principles

The refocused model is underpinned by **four key guiding principles** which are critical to ensure CJGs are enabled and supported to contribute to positive outcomes for their communities.



### Principle 1:

CJG service delivery is integrated and exists within a justice continuum

Recognises that CJGs must be resourced to ensure they can: attract and retain staff with strategic and operational capability; employ, train and retain paid staff to deliver CJG services; ensure succession planning; and grow the organisational capacity of the CJG so they can identify gaps and deliver solutions to address issues within community.



### Principle 2:

CJG service delivery is viable and sustainable

Recognises that CJGs are subject to community and cultural expectations about their role and contribution to their community. CJGs implicitly adopt a person-centred, whole of system approach with a focus on healing, community cohesion and connection to culture.



### Principle 3:

CJG service delivery is culturally capable, embedded and holistic

Recognises that CJGs deliver services within a cultural context. CJGs must ensure their activities are culturally safe, balancing compliance with the law and conceptualisation of lore, while maintaining relationships within their community.



### Principle 4:

CJG service delivery is place specific

Recognises that CJGs are embedded within their communities and already actively identify gaps in service delivery. This local and cultural knowledge is vital to inform service design and delivery and it is critical to enable CJGs scope to identify and devise solutions for their community.

# Refocused model

## Key roles

It is critical for Government agencies to work in partnership with CJGs. Partnership denotes each entity making and fulfilling a commitment to see a common goal come to fruition. Agencies must commit to acknowledge the work of CJGs and work together to ensure CJGs are enabled to identify and embed services which work for their community.

### ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

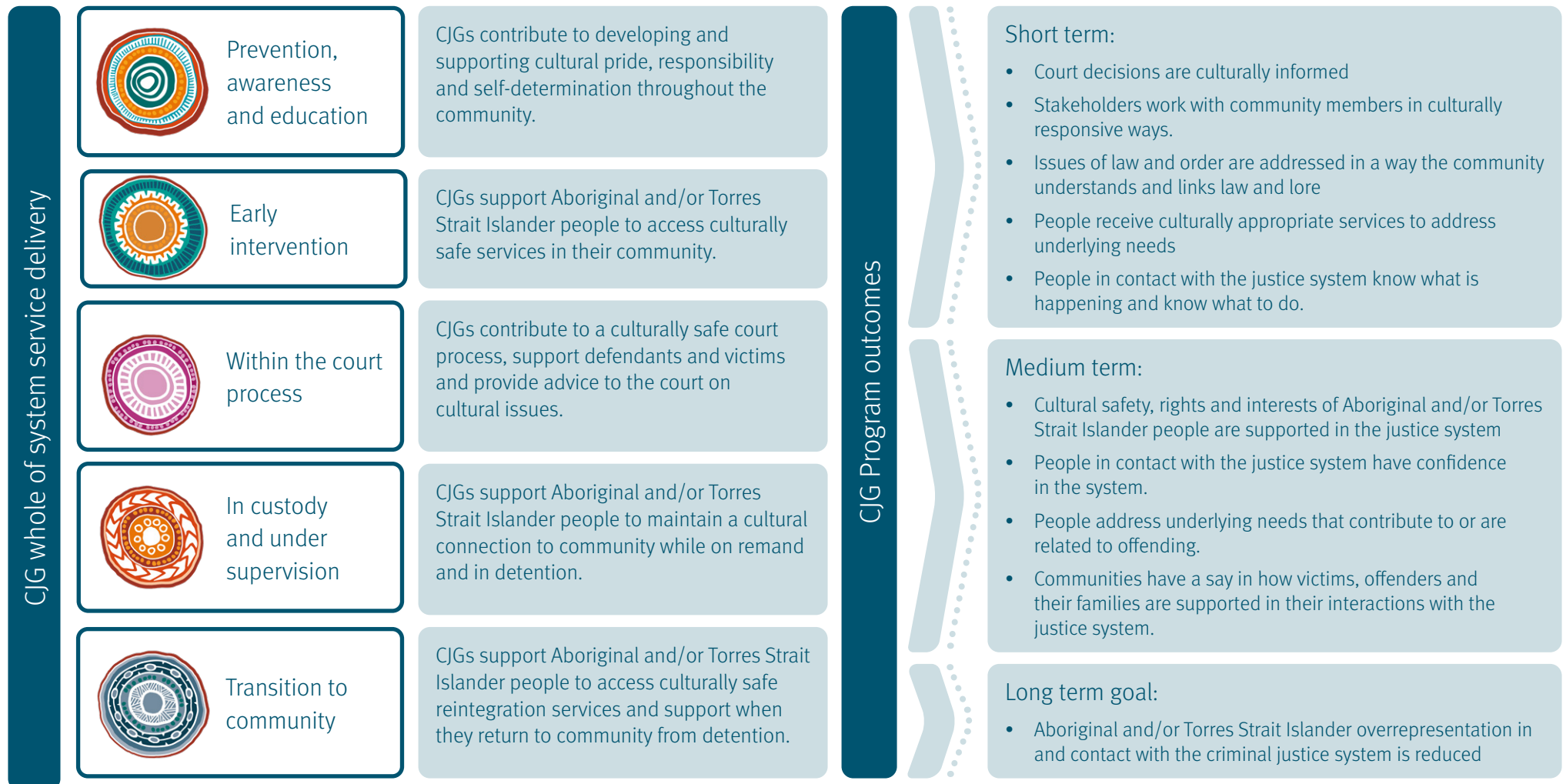
- Recognise the value and contribution of CJGs.
- Embed culturally capable ways of working with CJGs.
- More appropriately remunerate CJGs for services delivered in line with program outcomes.
- Acknowledge and respect the role Elders and Respected Persons play in CJG service delivery.
- Work together as Government agencies with CJGs to develop, embed and share responsibility for place-based service delivery in the justice system.
- Support CJGs to identify gaps and deliver place-based initiatives within community.

### ROLE OF CJG

- Provide cultural leadership and expertise in the court process through the delivery of core court related activities.
- Contribute to broader justice system outcomes through identifying and embedding place- based initiatives and activities.
- Build partnerships with local stakeholders, including government agencies to improve and strengthen service delivery for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.
- Develop, lead, support and contribute to cultural pride and responsibility and agency across the community.

# Refocused model CJG Program outcomes

The outputs expected from CJGs involvement at specific impact points is outlined below. These outputs are expected to contribute to a number of key program outcomes, with the long term goal to reduce Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander overrepresentation in and contact with the criminal justice system.





# Implementation

## Enabling the refocused model

The key short term outcome for this framework is expanded support for, and partnerships with CJGs across multiple government agencies. This framework should be used by enabling agencies to support the refocused CJG model which recognises the breadth of CJG service delivery at key impact points and supports CJGs to achieve the intended outcomes of the program.

### Enabling agencies

- Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Queensland Treasury
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Queensland Police Service
- Queensland Corrective Services
- Department of Youth Justice
- Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
- Queensland Health
- Department of Education
- Department of Housing and Public Works
- Department of Transport and Main Roads
- Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs

### Enabling principles

Remunerating CJG Coordinators and Members in line with sector standards to reflect the true value of their skills, cultural knowledge and contribution.

Funding CJGs to deliver services within community.

Simplifying and coordinating funding and contractual arrangements across agencies to minimise administrative burden on CJGs.

Reflecting acknowledgement and respect for Elders and Respected Persons in practical and culturally appropriate ways.

Working in partnership with CJGs to define future opportunities and place-based solutions.

Investing in CJG organisational capacity and capability through training and support.

Engaging with CJGs in a coordinated way to ensure expectations and deliverables are clear and aligned with defined outcomes.

Enabling agencies will work collaboratively at both a strategic and local level to enable and empower CJGs in practical ways. Each agency involved in service delivery at key impact points will be responsible for defining how they will work with and support CJGs in line with the enabling principles. Below are some examples of how enabling agencies may partner with CJGs to deliver culturally appropriate services in communities.



### Consult with CJGs

#### Key actions agencies should consider:

- ensure CJGs are aware of visits or consultation activities occurring within community
- embed culturally appropriate ways of sharing information with CJGs and gathering local insights from CJGs.



### Partner with CJGs

#### Key actions agencies should consider:

- work with CJGs to define local needs and design responses to meet these needs
- remunerating CJGs (including Elders and Respected Persons who are CJG members) for their role in supporting service delivery
- adopt a place-based approach for investment in communities recognising the need for self-determination
- deliver training and support to CJGs relevant to specific service delivery
- sharing information with CJGs (as applicable) to enable them to deliver services.



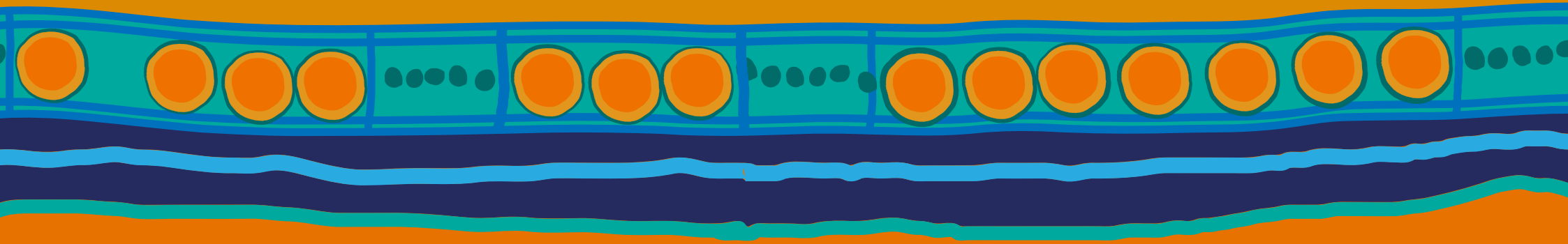
### Recognise CJGs

#### Key actions agencies should consider:

- communicate proactively with CJGs to ensure they have information relevant to service delivery
- demonstrating respect in culturally appropriate ways such as the provision of refreshments at meetings with CJGs
- ensuring funding for services is sustainable and is aligned with industry standards
- consider formal recognition of CJGs through visits, letters of support, awards or sharing good news stories.

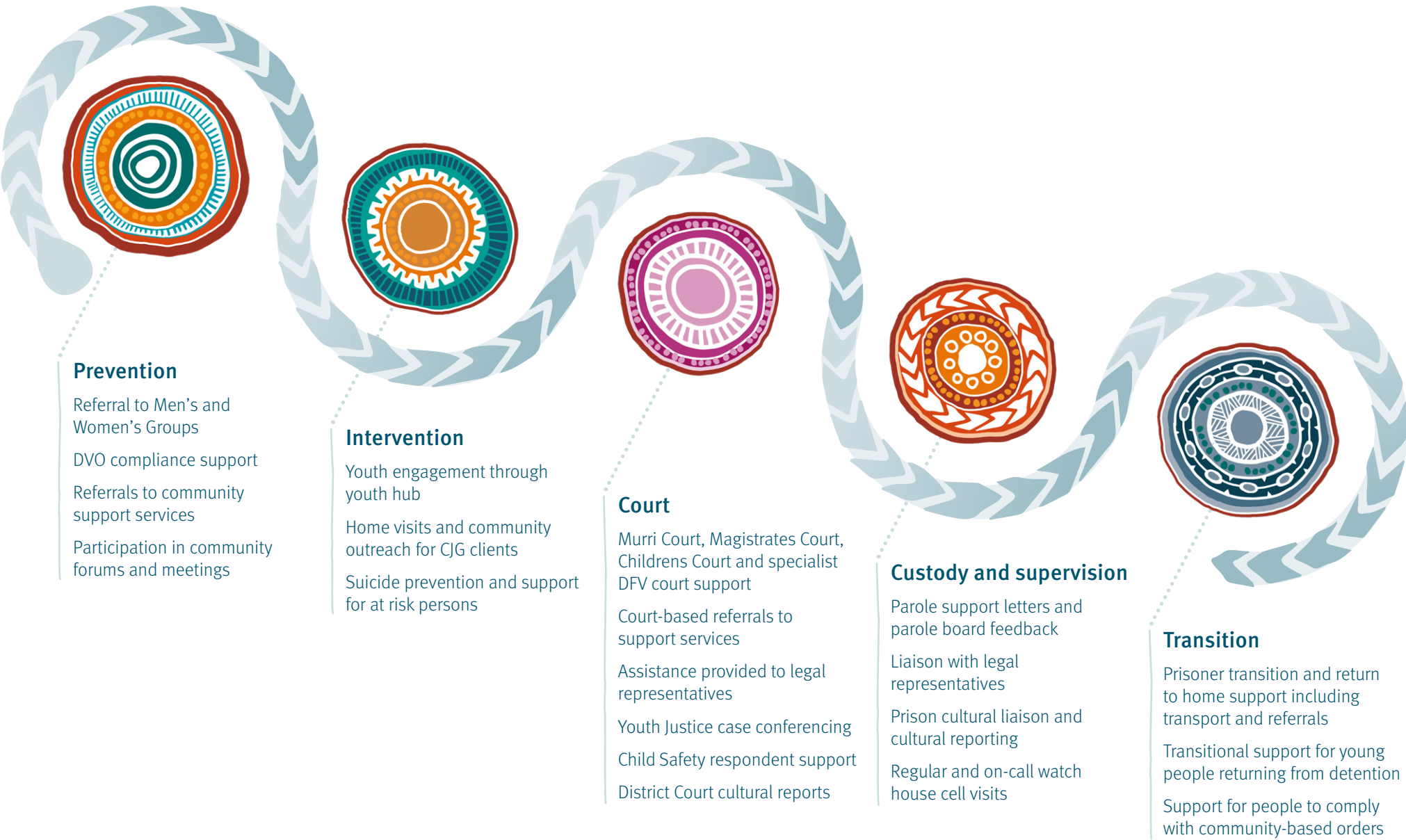
# Appendix 1

## CJG case studies



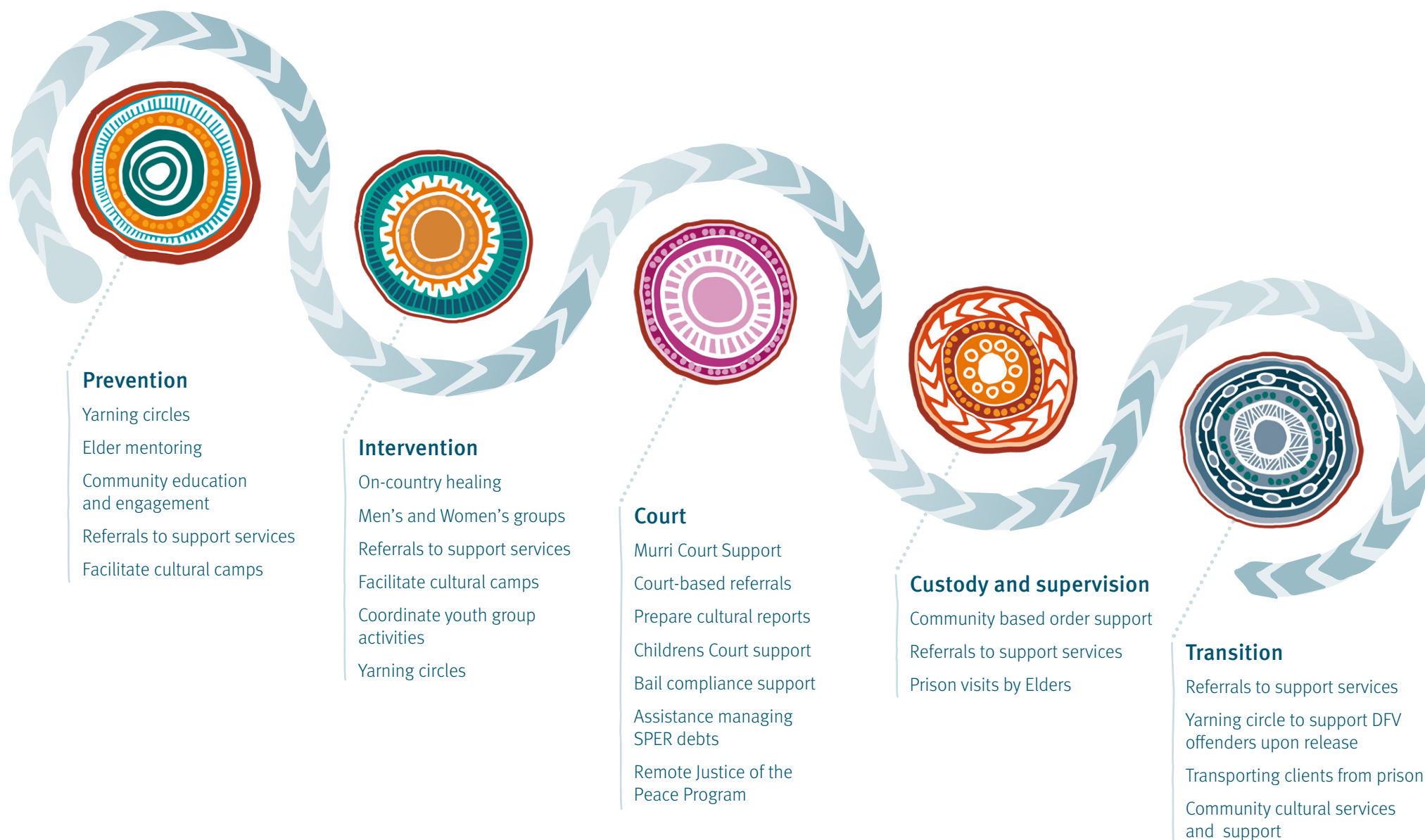
# CJG case study 1

## Regional CJG



# CJG case study 2

## Discrete CJG





# CJG case study 3

## Urban CJG

