

# Appendix D—Performance of the Queensland child protection system

Section 40 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* (the Act) requires the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) to include the following information in its annual report:

- Queensland’s performance in relation to achieving state and national goals relating to the child protection system [(s 40)(1)(a)(i)]
- Queensland’s performance over time in comparison to other jurisdictions [(s 40)(1)(a)(ii)]
- Queensland’s progress in reducing the number of, and improving the outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system [(s 40)(1)(a)(iii)].

Under Schedule 2 of the Act (Definitions), the child protection system:

- means the system of services provided by relevant agencies to children and young people in need of protection or at risk of harm
- includes preventative and support services to strengthen and support families and prevent harm to children and young people.

In line with this definition, this report includes performance information relating to prevention, early intervention and protective intervention efforts as they relate to national and state goals.

For the purposes of this report, national and state goals align with the *National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children (2009–2020)*, its *Fourth Action Plan (2018–2020)* and the *Supporting Families Changing Futures* reform agenda, respectively.

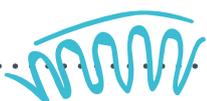
In addition, a range of measures are reported to demonstrate performance in reducing the number of, and improving outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, including those in the child protection system.

Performance measures have been identified for each national and state goal through a scan of agencies’ reports and datasets, and through consultation with agencies to determine the suitability, availability and limitations of the data.

Where possible, existing performance measures have been used to demonstrate progress towards achieving national and state goals. Where these were not available, the QFCC has identified performance measures relevant to the objectives and actions associated with each goal.

To the extent possible, outcomes data have been used to demonstrate performance. Where outcomes data was not available, proxy measures have been used to indicate progress towards achieving goals. Data is disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status where available.

Reporting dates for data sets range from 30 June 2018 to 31 March 2019. In all cases, the most current data set available to the QFCC has been used. Point in time reports are also referenced according to the date of public release.



## Queensland's performance against national goals

The *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* (the National Framework) outlines national goals for Australia's child protection systems.<sup>7</sup>

Progress towards implementing the National Framework is measured against a series of outcomes and performance indicators that support the high-level goal of ensuring Australia's children and young people are safe and well. There are six supporting outcomes:

1. children live in safe and supportive families and communities
2. children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early
3. risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed
4. children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing
5. indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities
6. child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented, and survivors receive adequate support.

The *Fourth Action Plan (2018–2020)* of the National Framework was endorsed by federal, state and territory ministers in December 2018.<sup>8</sup> It outlines four priority areas for action, building on three previous action plans that were intended to lay the foundations for long-term reform to Australia's child protection systems. The four priority areas are:

1. improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems
2. improving prevention and early intervention through joint service planning and investment
3. improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care by enhancing placement stability through reunification and other permanent care options
4. improving organisations' and governments' ability to keep children and young people safe from abuse.

Queensland's performance against each of these national goals is outlined in the following pages.

### National goal number 1—improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems

Over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system remains a major concern for all governments. Significant work is underway in Queensland to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people have the best possible outcomes. This is guided by the *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families* and associated action plans.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people make up 8.8% of the estimated resident population of children and young people aged 0–19 in Queensland (in 2019),<sup>9</sup> while representing 42.4% of all children subject to ongoing intervention with the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (as at 31 March 2019).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Commonwealth of Australia (2009), [Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's children 2009–2020](#).

<sup>8</sup> Commonwealth of Australia (2018), [Fourth Action Plan 2018–2020: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020](#).

<sup>9</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019, [3101.0 – Australian Demographics Statistics, Dec 2018](#).

<sup>10</sup> Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (March 2019 data), [Our Performance](#).

The disproportionate rates of representation of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care has increased steadily since 2010–11, rising to 5.3 times over-representation in out-of-home care services in 2017–18.<sup>11</sup>

The rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be raised in their own culture are recognised throughout the sector. Similarly, we recognise the importance and value of their family, extended family, kinship networks, culture and community. Consequently, in October 2018, Queensland enshrined in legislation the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles of:

- prevention
- partnership
- placement
- participation
- connection.

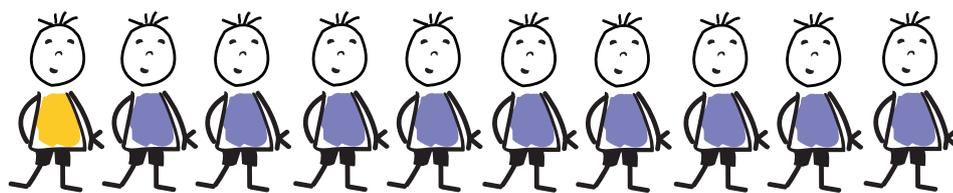
These principles seek to reduce rates of child removal from family and kin, and enhance and preserve children’s connections to family, community and culture as well as their sense of cultural identity.<sup>12</sup>

Queensland is increasingly supporting and investing in community controlled organisations, which are controlled and operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. Through a combination of reforms, the scope of services they offer has changed considerably. Investment is increasingly targeted to the community controlled organisations to deliver culturally safe services across sectors.

Figure 1 provides a snapshot of major reforms, and the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to ongoing intervention since 1997.

As the figure illustrates, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering the child protection system continues to increase. This is despite repeated inquiries and investigations into the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system. Over-representation is a central focus of the *Family Matters* national campaign.

Queensland Population 2019 aged 0-19



8.8% Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland aged 0–19 (ABS 2019)

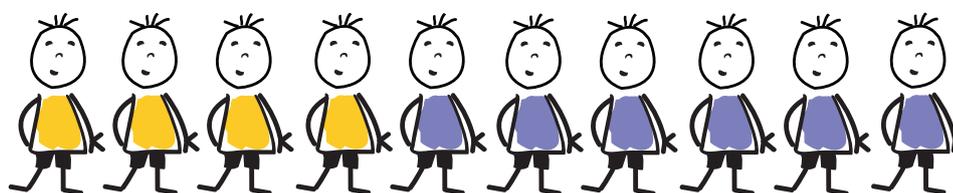


Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children



Non-Indigenous Children

Queensland Children aged 0-19 in the Statutory Child Safety System in 2019

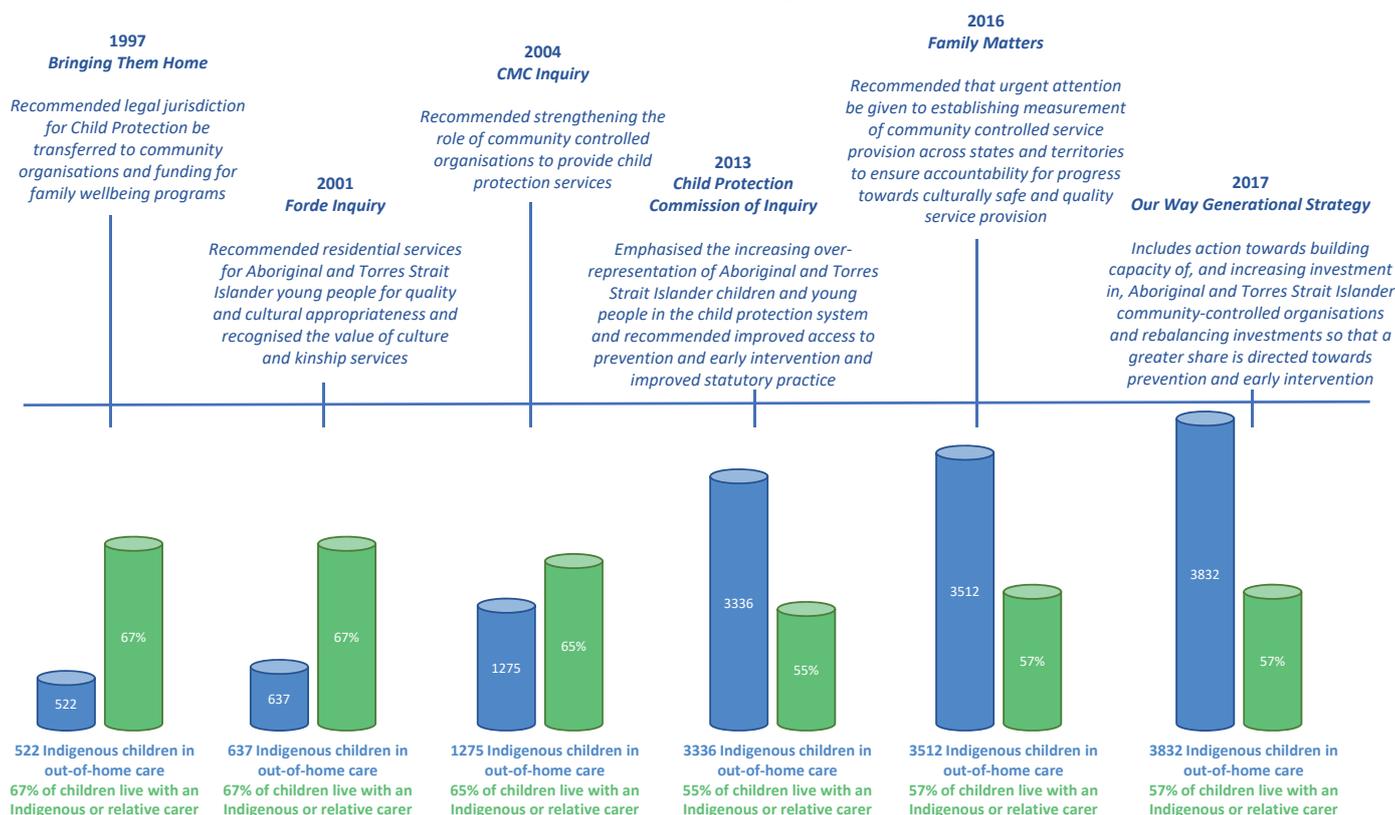


42.4% Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to ongoing intervention with the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (As of 31 March 2019)

<sup>11</sup> Australian Government Productivity Commission 2019, [Report on Government Services 2019](#).

<sup>12</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies 2015, [Enhancing the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles: Policy and practice considerations](#), CFCA Paper No 34.





**Figure 1: Landscape of Queensland reforms (1997–2017)**  
**Source: Queensland Family and Child Commission (2019)**

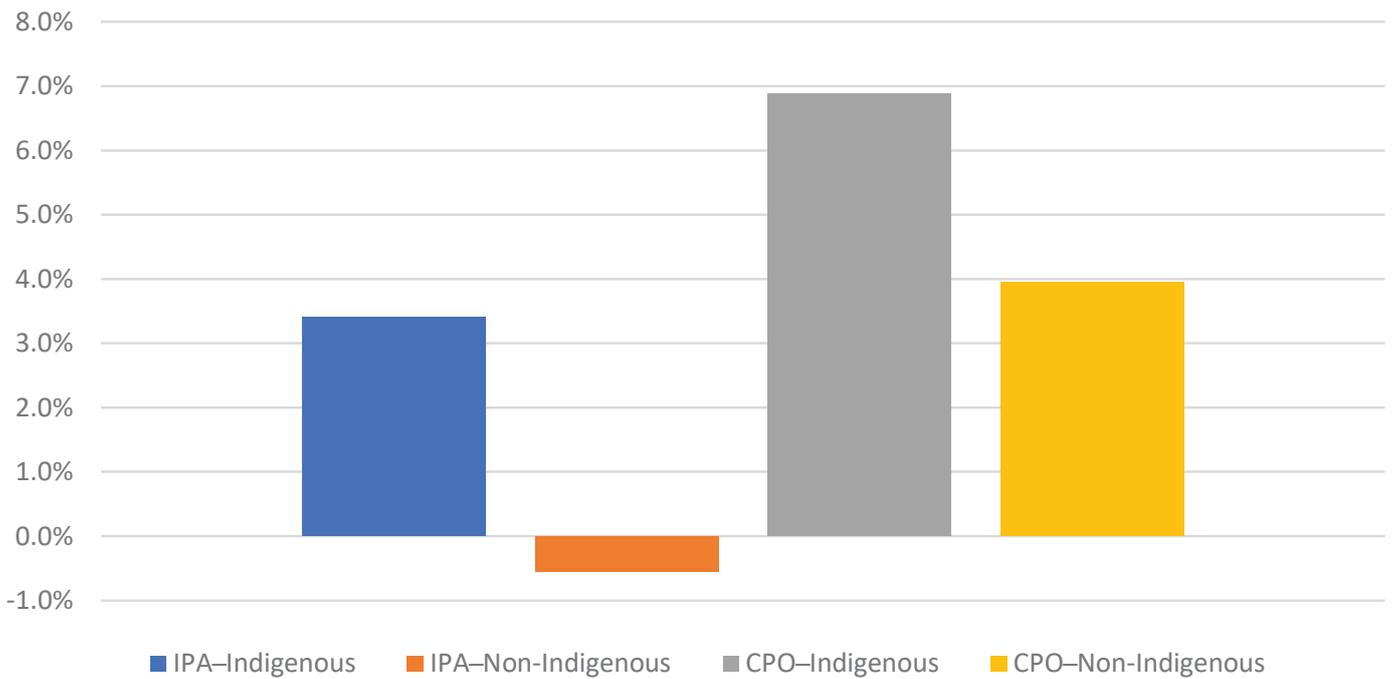
Three measures have been selected to show progress towards the national goal of improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems:

1. number and percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people subject to ongoing intervention, by intervention type
2. percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care placed with kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers or residential care services
3. percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care indicating they feel connected with culture.

### *Number and percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people subject to ongoing intervention, by intervention type*

As at 31 March 2019, there were 5,141 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people subject to an ongoing intervention with Child Safety Services, compared to 6,980 non-Indigenous children and young people.

The following figure provides a comparison of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children subject to ongoing intervention, by intervention type. It demonstrates that child protection orders (CPO) have increased significantly (14.8%) between 2014–15 and 2017–18 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, while increasing by only 4.0% for non-Indigenous children. Interventions with parental agreement (IPA) have increased by 3.4% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people while decreasing for non-Indigenous children and young people by half a percent (-0.5%).

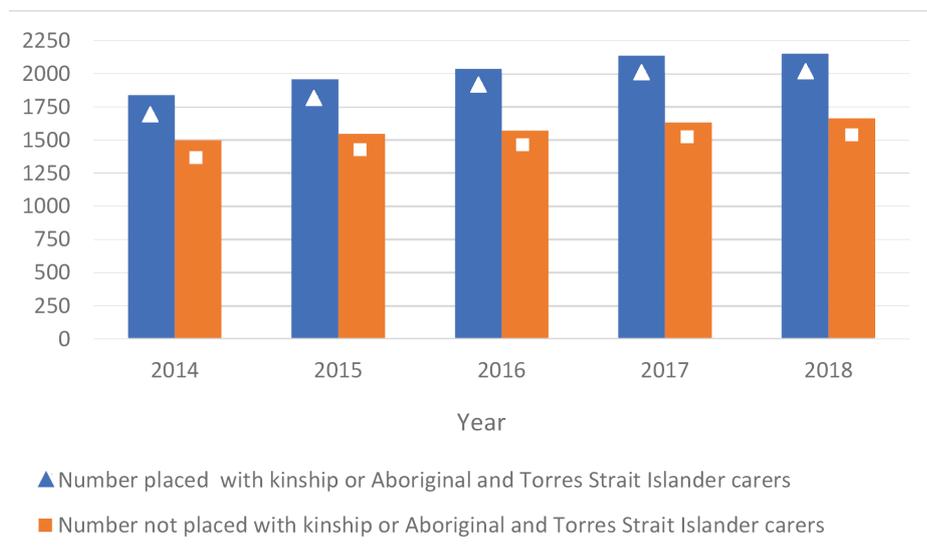


**Figure 2:** Percentage increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to ongoing intervention by type, between 2014–15 to 2017–18 **Source:** Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (2018)

### Percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care placed with kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers or residential care services

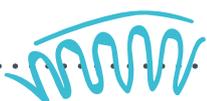
The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care in Queensland who are placed with relatives or kin, or with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carer or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service, has steadily increased each year since 2014. This includes children placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander foster carers, provisionally approved carers, kinship carers and in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential care services.

However, a large percentage (43.6%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care continue to be placed with non-Indigenous carers or in non-Indigenous care and support services.



**Figure 3:** Percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care placed with kin or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers/services

**Source:** Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (March 2019 data), [Our Performance](#).



## Percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care indicating they feel connected with culture

A significant number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care are not placed with kin or with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carer. It is critical that they are given the opportunity to remain connected to their culture.

In 2018, the CREATE Foundation conducted a study eliciting the views of children and young people living in out-of-home care. CREATE asked whether children felt connected to culture. The survey identified that 56.8% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people reported feeling connected to culture, while 30% reported 'little connection'.<sup>13</sup>

CREATE found that carers and family members were the strongest source of information about culture for children and young people in Queensland.<sup>14</sup>

Of all Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to an ongoing intervention, 95.4% have a cultural support plan<sup>15</sup> recorded and 90.9% of those plans were current as at 30 June 2018.<sup>16</sup> However, CREATE reported that fewer than 20% of Indigenous survey respondents in Queensland were aware of having a cultural support plan.<sup>17</sup>

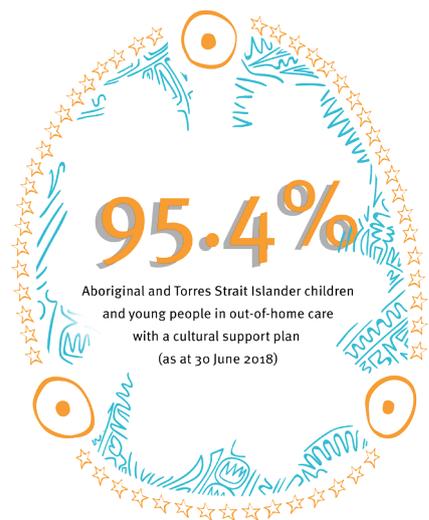
## National goal number 2—improving prevention and early intervention through joint service planning and investment

The importance of prevention and early intervention is widely recognised across service systems as a critical factor in ensuring the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families. All children deserve to grow up in thriving families and communities and develop into healthy, connected, nurturing and productive adults and parents.

Significant investment has been made in recent years to establish a range of preventative and early intervention support services to ensure Queensland families have the support they need at the right time. The child and family support sector works diligently in cross-agency, multi-sector collaborations across regions to develop solutions to challenging issues and address the underpinning drivers of entry into child protection systems.

Two proxy measures have been selected to show progress towards the second national goal:

- proportion of government expenditure on early intervention and prevention services
- active engagements [of families] by Family and Child Connect.



<sup>13</sup> CREATE Foundation 2018, [Out-of-home care in Australia: children and young people's views after five years of national standards](#), p. 63.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>15</sup> A cultural support plan is developed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are subject to ongoing intervention. It aims to keep children connected to their culture, families and communities regardless of where they are living.

<sup>16</sup> Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (March 2019 data), [Our Performance](#).

<sup>17</sup> CREATE Foundation 2018, [Out-of-home care in Australia: children and young people's views after five years of national standards](#), p.66.

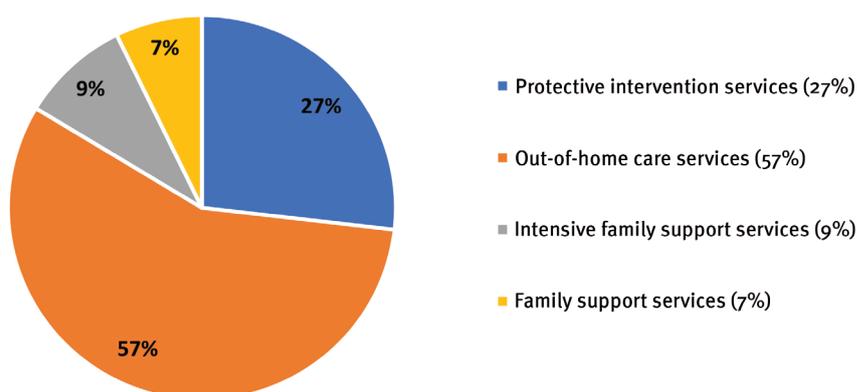
## Proportion of government expenditure on early intervention and prevention services

The best way to protect children is to prevent harm or abuse from occurring in the first place. This requires accessible and high-quality prevention and early intervention services and supports so needs are met before they escalate.<sup>18</sup>

The Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry emphasised this, finding that Queensland was significantly underspending on early intervention and voluntary support services for families.<sup>19</sup> This formed one of the major work programs of Queensland's *Supporting Families, Changing Futures* reform agenda.

As at 30 June 2018, Queensland's proportional expenditure on statutory intervention services (for example, out-of-home care and protective intervention services) compared with voluntary intervention services (Family Support Services and Intensive Family Support services) is 84% and 16%, respectively.

Queensland has substantially increased spending on Intensive Family Support and Family Support services—by 127% and 28% respectively since 2013–14—placing it third in terms of total expenditure among Australian states and territories for early intervention spending.<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 4:** Queensland's expenditure on services, by service type (2018)

**Source:** Australian Government Productivity Commission 2019, *Report on Government Services 2019*.

## Active engagements by Family and Child Connect

Family and Child Connect (FaCC) is a non-government service that provides information, advice and referrals to prevention and early intervention services to address concerns about the wellbeing of children, young people and families. FaCC services assist families with navigating local service systems and increase access to services and supports.

The number of referrals and active engagements with referred families has increased steadily since the establishment of FaCC services in 2015. This increase is due in part to the increasing state-wide coverage of FaCC services.

<sup>18</sup> Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth 2009, [Inverting the Pyramid: Enhancing systems for protecting children](#).

<sup>19</sup> Queensland Government 2013, [Taking Responsibility: A Roadmap for Queensland Child Protection](#).

<sup>20</sup> Australian Government Productivity Commission 2019, [Report on Government Services 2019](#).

For the 12 months ending 31 March 2019, 18,424 families had actively engaged with FaCC services across the state.<sup>21</sup> From 30 June 2017 to 31 March 2019, FaCC services experienced a 21.4% increase in active engagements across the state.<sup>22</sup>

The Queensland Government has also allocated significant investment towards increasing service system capacity to respond to the increased demand from families for voluntary support services (generated from FaCC referrals). To date, 44 Intensive Family Support services and 33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services have been established across Queensland.

## National goal number 3—improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care by enhancing placement stability through reunification and other permanent options

This national goal focuses on safety and stability for children and young people in out-of-home care, to be achieved in a timely manner that will support lifelong relationships, a sense of belonging, identity and connection.

All children have the right to grow up feeling stable and safe. Research indicates that a sense of security, stability, and permanency are strong predictors of better outcomes for young people after they leave care.<sup>23</sup>

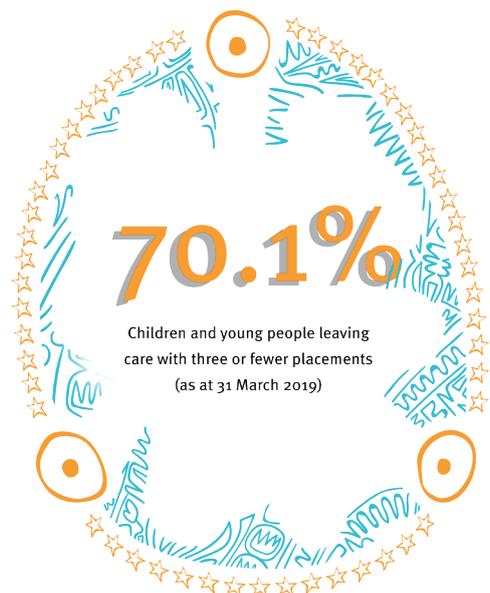
Several actions are underway across Queensland to improve placement stability and permanency for children and young people in out-of-home care. This includes initiatives aimed at building the capacity of foster and kinship carers and strengthening partnerships across the care sector.

Four measures have been selected to show progress towards the third national goal:

- percentage of children and young people who had less than three placements prior to exiting care
- percentage of young people leaving care with a transition to adulthood plan who then participated in their plan
- percentage of children and young people who report feeling safe and secure in their current placement
- percentage of children and young people in out-of-home care placed with kin.

### Percentage of children and young people who had less than three placements prior to exiting care

Decades of research have established that a stable attachment to a responsive adult caregiver is important for all children and young people.<sup>24</sup> A stable and consistent home environment is important for the healthy development of all children. Placement instability, however, can be common for many children in out-of-home care.



<sup>21</sup> Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (March 2019 data), [Our Performance](#).

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Commonwealth of Australia 2018, [Fourth Action Plan 2018–2020: National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020](#).

<sup>24</sup> Queensland Family and Child Commission 2017, [Research Summary: Placement Stability](#).

Legislative changes in October 2018 aimed to improve placement permanency and stability for children by promoting physical, relational and legal permanency for children and young people in care.<sup>25</sup> As at 31 March 2019, nearly one in three (29.9%) Queensland children and young people exiting out-of-home care had four or more placements, and one in eight (11.7%) had seven or more placements.<sup>26</sup>

### *Percentage of young people leaving care with a transition to adulthood plan who then participated in their plan*

The Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women’s Child Safety Practice Manual advises that transition from care planning should be a joint process between a Child Safety Officer and a young person, to be undertaken throughout the case planning cycle of assessment, planning, intervention and review.<sup>27</sup>

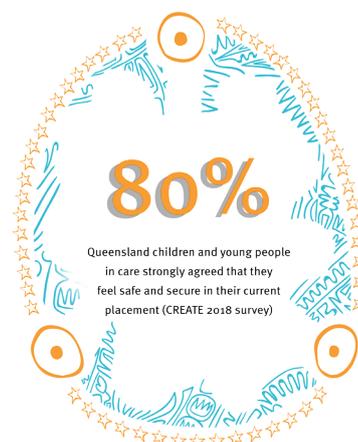
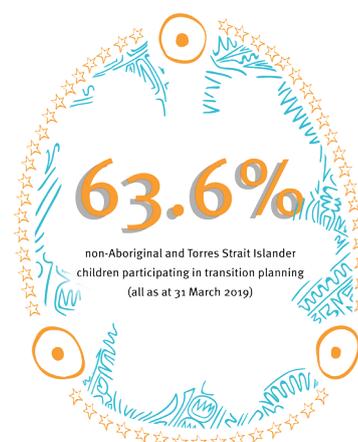
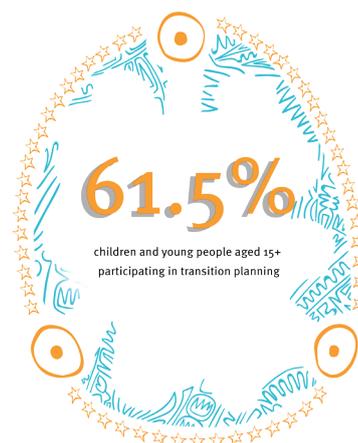
As at 31 March 2019, 61.5% of young people (938) aged 15 years and over, subject to a child protection order granting custody to the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women Chief Executive, participated in transition to adulthood planning.

The difference in proportional participation rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people is 5.1%.<sup>28</sup> That is, on average, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people participate less in formal transition to adulthood planning.

### *Percentage of children and young people who report feeling safe and secure in their current placement*

The first of the national standards for children in out-of-home care is measured by children’s and young people’s feelings of safety and security in their placement. Research shows that children and young people in out-of-home care must have safe and predictable care for healthy development, and that stability contributes to a sense of feeling safe—safe in their placement, and also safe in the stability of their relationships, connections, schooling, community and/or participation in community activities such as sports teams.<sup>29</sup>

CREATE Foundation’s 2018 survey of children and young people in out-of-home care revealed that 92.7% of the children and young people across Australia (who responded to this survey) strongly agreed with the statement ‘I feel safe and secure’ in their current placement. Approximately 80% of Queenslanders responding to this survey question strongly agreed with this statement.



<sup>25</sup> Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2018, [Child protection legislative reform](#).

<sup>26</sup> Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (March 2019 data), [Our Performance](#).

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Commonwealth of Australia 2011, [An Outline of National Standards for out-of-home care](#), p. 36.



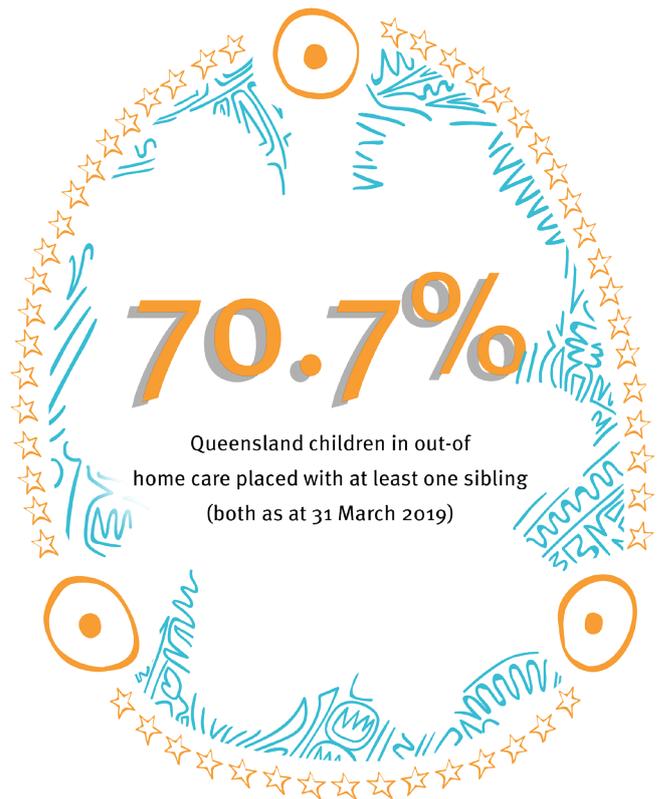
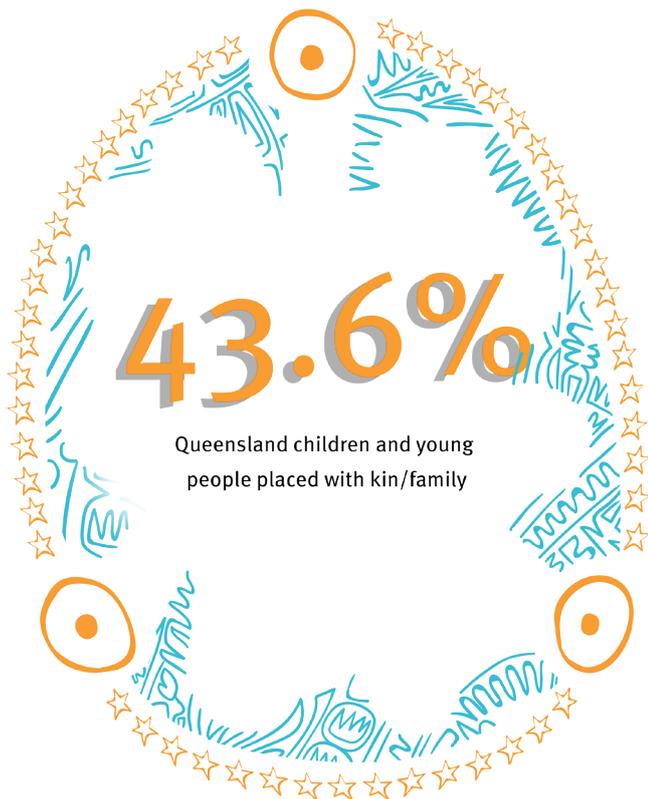
## Percentage of children and young people in out-of-home care placed with kin

Where children and young people can no longer live with their parents, the preferred out-of-home care placement is with kinship carers who are relatives or other members of a child's social network.

As at 31 March 2019, 43.6% of all Queensland children and young people in out-of-home care were placed with kin.

Children and young people identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander were somewhat less likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to be placed with kin, demonstrated by a difference of 3.9 percentage points (41.3% compared with 45.2%, respectively). As at 31 March 2019, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people made up 39.9% of all children in kinship care placements.

Relational permanency is also an important factor for stability for young people in care. Where possible, the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women aims to place siblings together when it is in the best interests of all children.<sup>30</sup> As at 31 March 2019, 70.7% of siblings in out-of-home care in Queensland were placed with at least one sibling.<sup>31</sup>



<sup>30</sup> Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (March 2019 data), [Our Performance](#).

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

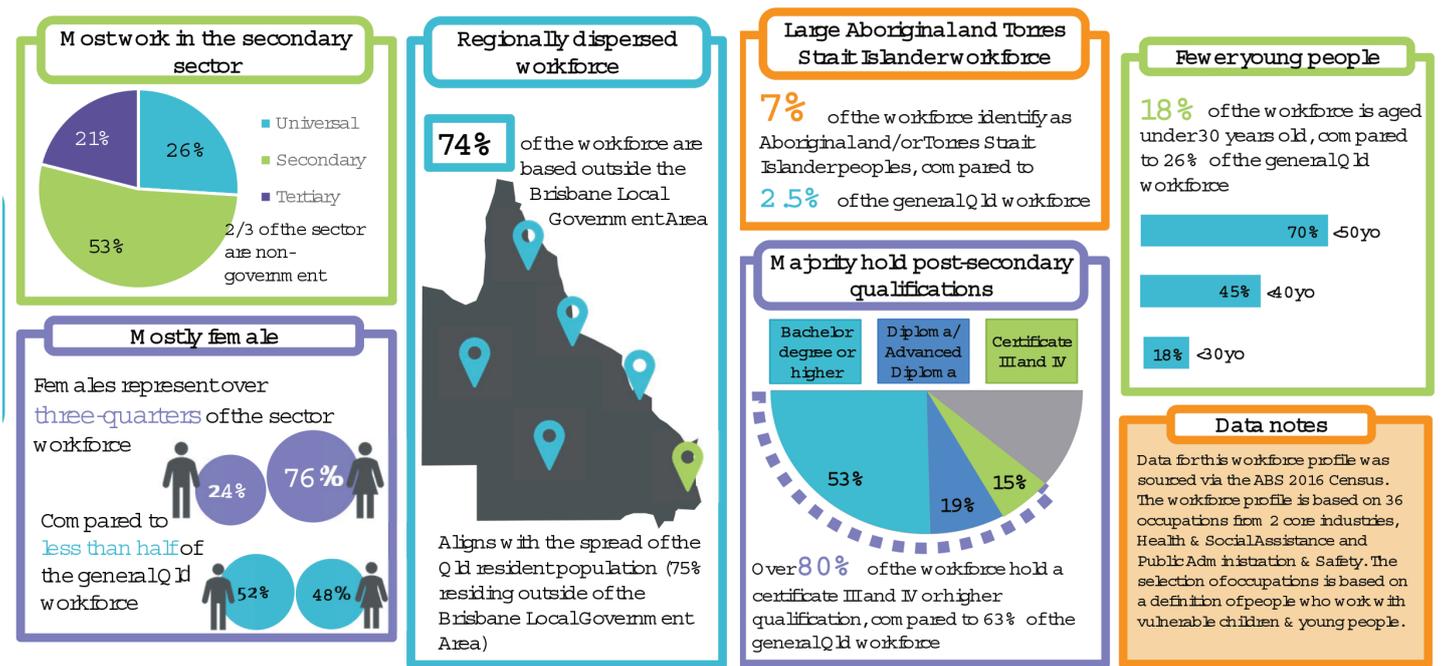
## National goal number 4—improving organisations’ and governments’ ability to keep children and young people safe from abuse

Every day, child and family support services strive to protect children and young people and keep them more than safe. Significant effort has gone into building capacity and strengthening families and communities to care for their children through responsive and high-quality support services.

State and territory child protection agencies continue working towards establishing robust protocols and procedures facilitating information sharing between agencies and jurisdictions so that potential risks are identified, and children are better supported.

The *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*, agreed by the Council of Australian Governments in February 2019, aim to ensure organisations engaging with children and young people have cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing.

Significant work has also gone into building the capacity of the workforce through the *Strengthening our Sector Strategy*<sup>32</sup> delivered by the QFCC in partnership with government and non-government partners. The following figure provides a snapshot of Queensland’s child and family support workforce. As it shows, a significant proportion of the workforce is located outside of South-East Queensland, which aligns with the distribution of the population.



**Figure 5:** Snapshot of Queensland’s child and family support workforce

**Source:** Queensland Family and Child Commission 2019

Children and young people have the right to feel safe at home and in their communities. The QFCC conducted a survey of over 4,900 Queensland young people, asking them about their feelings of safety at home and in the community.

<sup>32</sup> Queensland Family and Child Commission 2016, *Strengthening our sector*.



As reported in *This place I call home: The views of children and young people growing up in Queensland*, young people who responded to these survey items reported:

- being bullied (in person) in the past three months (4%)
- being cyberbullied in the past three months (30%)
- feeling safe in their neighbourhood or town (78%)
- feeling concerned about family conflict (34%)
- feeling concerned about domestic violence (20%).

Four proxy measures have been selected to show progress towards the fourth national goal:

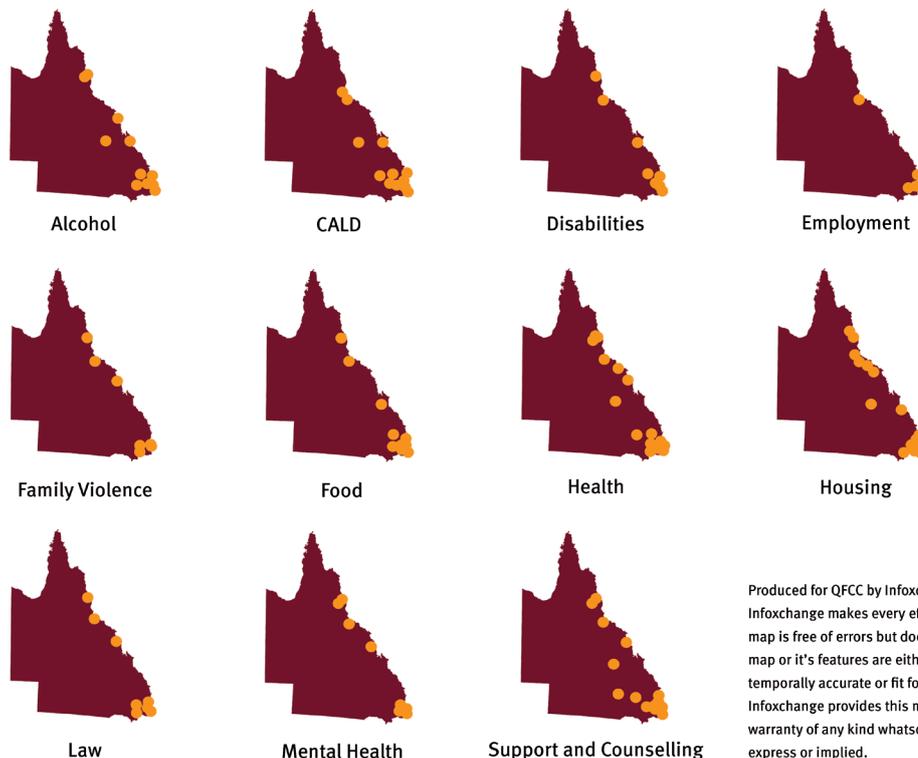
- provision of service information to organisations and families
- number of individuals and organisations registered with blue cards
- percentage of notifications received, by primary source
- percentage of children in care who report they have opportunities to have a say in decisions that impact on their lives and that they feel listened to.

### *Provision of service information to organisations and families*

In 2015, the QFCC developed the *oneplace* Community Services Directory, which provides individuals and organisations with access to information about more than 53,000 Queensland family and community services. In 2019, over 180,000 searches were undertaken on the *oneplace* directory.

The *oneplace* directory is continuously monitored to track the services being searched and the locations of the individuals conducting the searches.

## oneplace Community Services Directory



**Figure 6:** *oneplace* service directory searches, by service type and location in which the search originated  
**Source:** Queensland Family and Child Commission 2019

## Number of individuals and organisations registered with blue cards

The blue card system aims to minimise the risk of harm to children and young people and contribute to safe and supportive environments. It does this by registering and monitoring individuals and organisations working with children and young people in Queensland.

In 2018–19, 255,933 blue cards were issued in Queensland, bringing the total of blue card holders and applicants to 769,283 individuals. These figures indicate the extent of community participation and the scope of ongoing monitoring activity required by Blue Card Services (the administrators of the system).

In 2018–19, 3,606 individuals<sup>33</sup> were prohibited from working with children due to known high-risk police or disciplinary information.<sup>34</sup>

Where blue card holders have a change in their criminal history that relates to their child-related employment, their card may be suspended or cancelled. At June 2019, 824 blue cards had been suspended or cancelled, demonstrating the active and ongoing monitoring of card holders.<sup>35</sup>



## Percentage of notifications received, by primary source

Keeping children and young people safe is everyone's responsibility, from parents, families and communities through to allied networks of service providers and government agencies. Two central aspects of Queensland's *Supporting Families Changing Futures* reform agenda is shared responsibility for keeping children and young people safe and providing timely support for families so that all Queensland children and young people have the best possible chance to thrive.

Individuals who work in certain professions are legislatively required to make a report to the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women if they form a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering harm. Legislation also allows them to refer concerns that do not meet the risk threshold to non-statutory family support services such as Intensive Family Support services.<sup>36</sup> Children, young people and families can also self-refer and self-report.

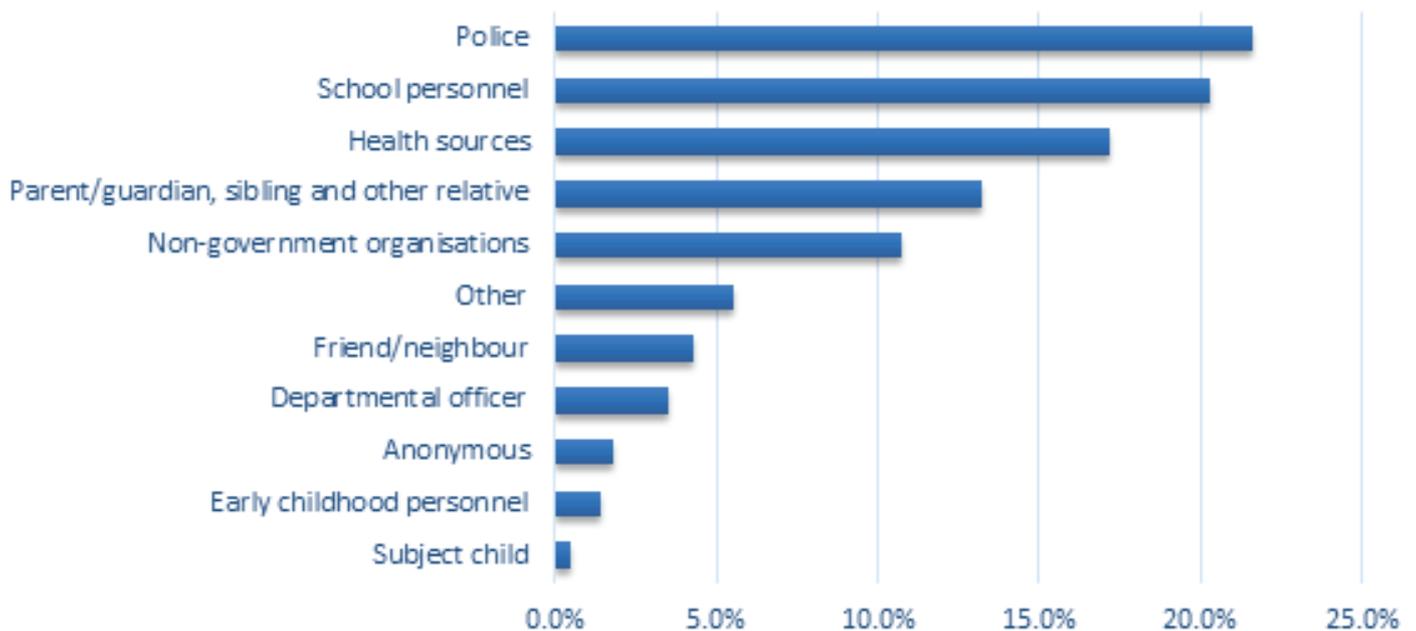
<sup>33</sup> Blue Card Services, [Reporting—June 2019](#).

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Blue Card Services, [Reporting – June 2019](#).

<sup>36</sup> Queensland Government, [Child Protection Act 1999](#), Mandatory Reporters, Division 2, section 13 E.

The following figure shows that police officers, school personnel and health professionals make up a combined 59.1% of the total notifications to the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women. Parents, family, friends and neighbours and the child themselves make up another 18.0% of notifications.



**Figure 7:** Notifications, by primary source (year ending 31 March 2019)  
**Source:** Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, Our Performance

### *Percentage of children in care who report they have opportunities to have a say in decisions that impact on their lives and that they feel listened to*

A 2018 CREATE Foundation report highlighted the extent to which children and young people in out-of-home care felt they had a say about education, family contact and placement changes. On a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 being ‘never’ and 6 being ‘all the time’, Queensland respondents reported the following (*estimated*) responses:

- education: 4.4
- family contact: 4.2
- placement changes: 3.5.

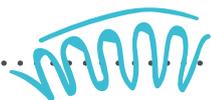
## Queensland's performance over time compared to other jurisdictions

Queensland's performance over time in comparison with other jurisdictions is assessed according to specific performance measures relating to the national goals. The Productivity Commission's 2019 *Report on Government Services* is the primary source. Any other sources are referenced within the tables in Figure 8. The QFCC has used available data that is comparable across states and territories and years.

QFCC's assessment ratings are as follows:

- 'good' means Queensland data was better than the national totals or the majority of states and territories
- 'satisfactory' means Queensland data was on par with national totals or the majority of states and territories
- 'requires improvement' means Queensland data was below par compared to national totals or the majority of states and territories.

National goal	Measure	Main result	Supporting data	Assessment
<b>Improving prevention and early intervention through joint service planning and investment</b>	State and territory government recurrent expenditure on all child protection services (2017–18 dollars) at 30 June 2018 *Issues with comparability limit analysis to 2017–18.	Queensland had the third highest proportional expenditure on voluntary (Intensive Family Support and Family Support) intervention services (16%) of the states and territories, and the third lowest proportional expenditure on statutory (protective and out-of-home care) intervention services (84%);  The Northern Territory had the highest proportional expenditure on voluntary intervention services (24%) and Western Australia the lowest (5%), while Western Australia had the highest expenditure on statutory intervention services (95%) and Victoria the lowest (73%).		Satisfactory
<b>Improving prevention and early intervention through joint service planning and investment</b>	Proportion of children on guardianship/custody orders achieving the national reading and numeracy benchmarks, Year 5 level	Of the three jurisdictions reporting on achievement of national minimum standards for literacy and numeracy for children on guardianship or custody orders (Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland), Queensland achieved the highest percentages in all categories except numeracy for children on orders. However, the rates of literacy and numeracy are considerably lower for children on orders than for the entire student population (including children not on orders)		Requires improvement



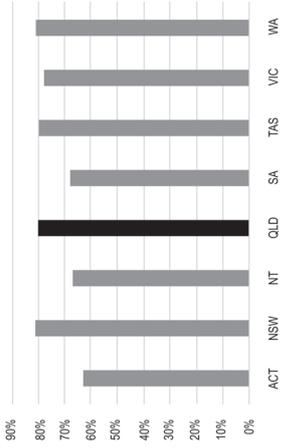
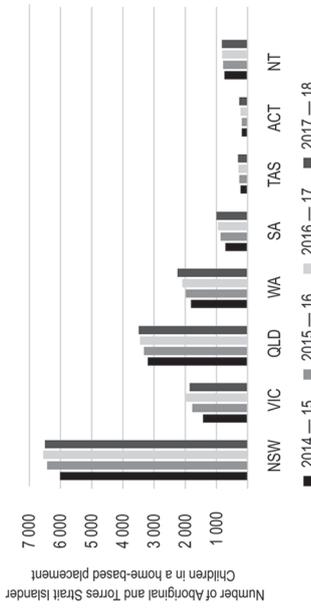
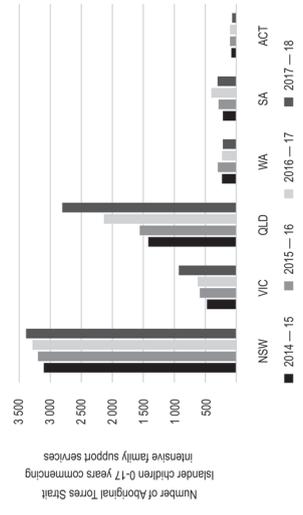
National goal	Measure	Main result	Supporting data	Assessment
Improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care by enhancing placement stability through reunification and other permanent options	(Estimated) percentage of children and young people who report feeling safe and secure in their current placement	Approximately 80% of Queensland children and young people reported feeling safe and secure in their placement, surpassed only by children and young people in Western Australia and New South Wales  Source: CREATE Foundation Report (2018) <i>Out-of-Home Care in Australia: Children and Young People's Views After 5 Years of National Standards</i>		Satisfactory
Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in a home-based placement at 30 June 2018	Queensland has seen an 8.5% increase (+272) in home-based placements between 2014–15 and 2017–18, representing the third lowest proportional increase in home-based placements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across all states and territories. Victoria showed a decrease of -7.4% (-438) while South Australia showed an increase of 30.1% (+324) over this period.		Requires improvement
Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems	Intensive Family Support services: number of children aged 0–17 years starting Intensive Family Support services  * issues with comparability limit analysis to five states/territories.	The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland accessing Intensive Family Support services rose by 98.5% between 2014–15 and 2017–18, the highest increase in Intensive Family Support service access of all states and territories involved in this comparison. Victoria also saw a considerable increase in Intensive Family Support service access by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (98.1%), while Western Australia saw a decrease (-7.6%).		Good

Figure 8: Queensland's performance over time in comparison to other jurisdictions

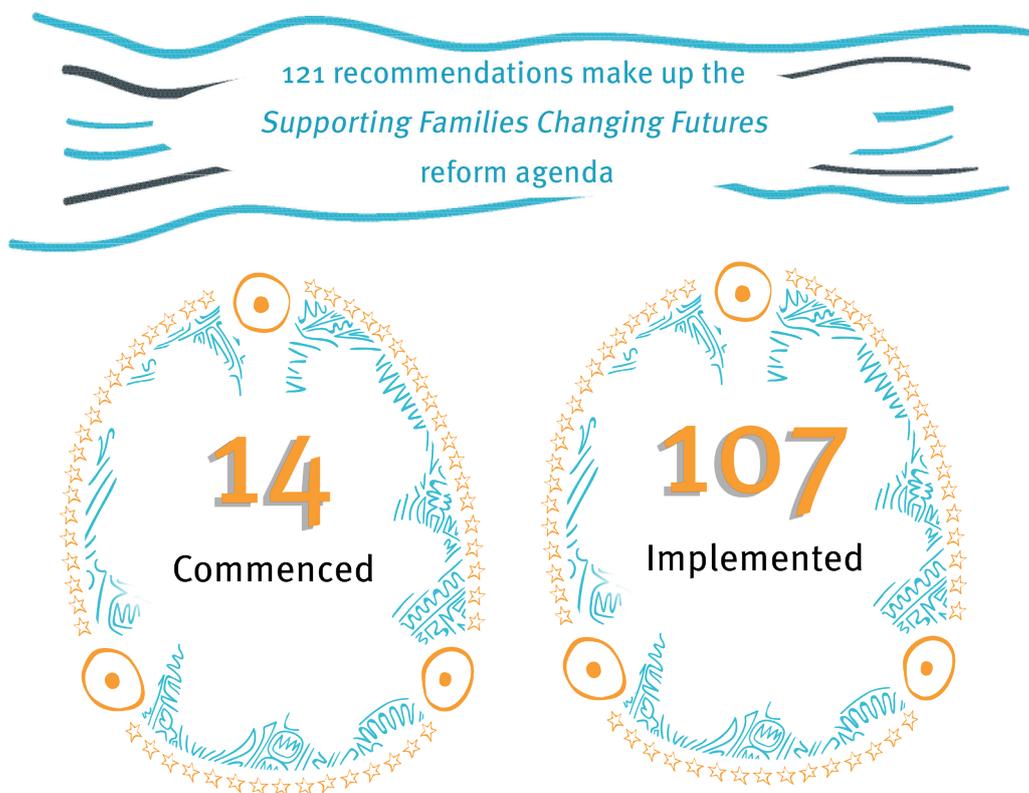
## Queensland's performance against state goals

Queensland's child protection system goals are captured in the *Supporting Families Changing Futures* reform agenda, which followed on from the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. Implementation of this reform agenda began in 2014 and has been rolling out gradually over the last five years. The second five-year *Supporting Families Changing Futures* strategy was released on 25 July 2019.<sup>37</sup>

This section reports on progress with implementation of the *Supporting Families Changing Futures* reform agenda. The state goals against which progress is reported relate to seven domains that comprise the strategic directions of the reform agenda. They are:

- Domain 1: Sharing responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of Queensland children
- Domain 2: Supporting Queensland families earlier
- Domain 3: Working better with Queensland families who are in contact with the child protection system
- Domain 4: Improving out-of-home care and post-care experiences for Queensland children and young people
- Domain 5: Meeting the needs and requirements of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities
- Domain 6: Delivering quality services to Queensland children and families through a capable, motivated workforce and client-focused organisations
- Domain 7: Building an accountable, transparent and cost-effective Queensland system.

All information in this section is current as at 30 June 2019.



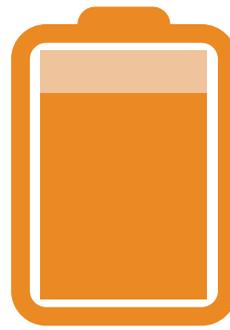
<sup>37</sup> Queensland Government Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (2019), [Supporting Families Changing Futures 2019–2023](#).



## Domain 1—Sharing responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of Queensland children

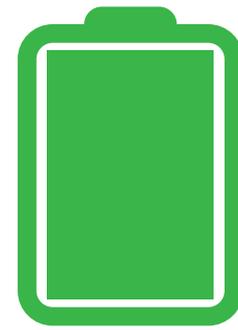
Sharing responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of Queensland children is based on partnership approaches delivering effective and efficient services and support. This involves government and non-government entities, as well as families and communities who have responsibility for protecting and caring for their own children.

There are 11 recommendations within this domain. All (100%) have been implemented.



2017—18

2 commenced (18%)  
9 implemented (82%)



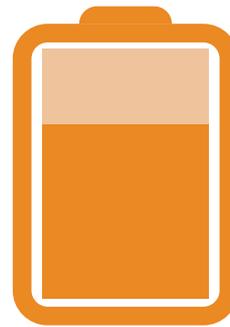
2018—19

11 implemented (100%)

## Domain 2—Supporting Queensland families earlier

Supporting families earlier is a central aspect of the *Supporting Families Changing Futures* reform agenda. Significant investment has been made in Queensland to provide the full continuum of care so families are supported, and children and young people have the best possible start to life.

Of the 16 recommendations making up this domain, 15 (93.8%) have been implemented and one (6.3%) is in progress.



2017—18

5 commenced (31%)  
11 implemented (69%)



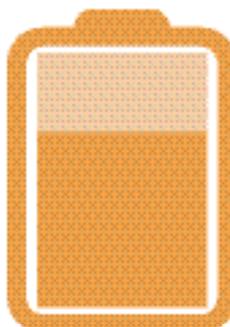
2018—19

1 commenced (6.2%)  
15 implemented (93.8%)

## Domain 3—Working better with Queensland families who are in contact with the child protection system

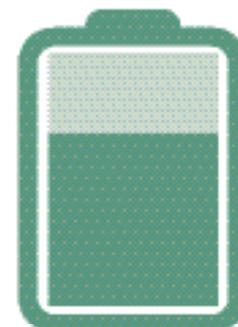
Significant effort has been made to improve practice so that families who have come into contact with the child protection system are treated in a client-centred way, and their voices and views are heard. The new *Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Framework for Practice* has been embedded to improve consistency and quality of practice so families can improve their capacity to care for their children and cope with challenges.

There are 19 recommendations within this domain. Sixteen (84.2%) have been implemented. Three (15.8%) have commenced and are reported to be 'on track'.



2017—18

5 commenced (31%)  
11 implemented (69%)



2018—19

3 commenced (15.8%)  
16 implemented (84.2%)

### Domain 4—Improving out-of-home care and post-care experiences for Queensland children and young people

Where it is not possible for children and young people to remain with their families, great care must be taken to ensure their experience in out-of-home care is safe and stable, they have access to information and remain connected to their support networks.

There are 18 recommendations within this domain. All 18 (100%) have been implemented.

### Domain 5—Meeting the needs and requirements of Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities

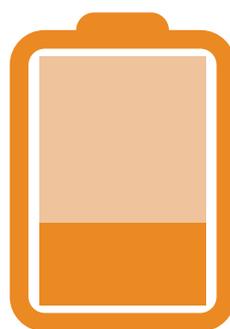
A central focus of the *Supporting Families Changing Futures* reform agenda is to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system. While the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are safely cared for by their families and communities, they remain significantly over-represented in the child protection system. We need a fundamental shift in how we work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

There are 16 recommendations within this domain, all of which have been implemented (100%).

### Domain 6—Delivering quality services to Queensland children and families through a capable, motivated workforce and client-focused organisations

The child and family support sector works to help families to care for and nurture their children, through the delivery of high quality services at the right time and in the right place.

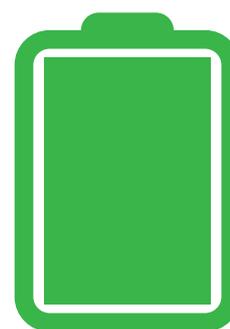
There are nine recommendations within this domain, focused on building the capacity and capability of the frontline workforce. Eight recommendations (89%) have been implemented. One recommendation (11%) has commenced and is reported to be on track.



2017—18

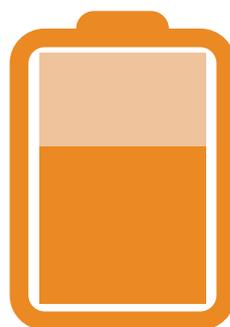
11 commenced (61%)

7 implemented (39%)



2018—19

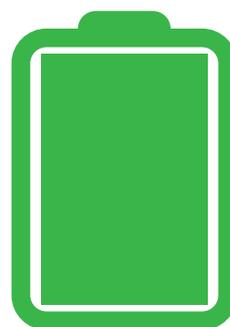
18 implemented (100%)



2017—18

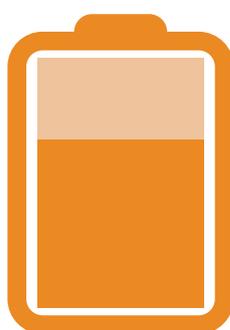
6 commenced (37.5%)

10 implemented (62.5%)



2018—19

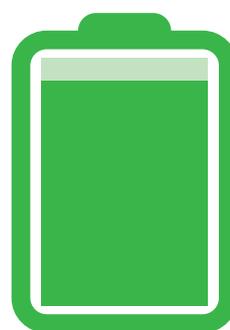
16 implemented (100%)



2017—18

3 commenced (33%)

6 implemented (67%)



2018—19

1 commenced (11%)

8 implemented (89%)

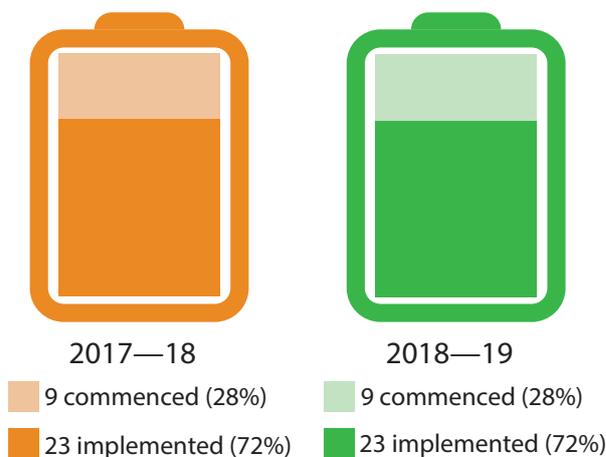


## Domain 7—Building an accountable, transparent and cost-effective Queensland system.

To be accountable to Queensland’s children, young people and families, the child and family support system must be seen to be accountable, transparent and reliable. For it to be sustainable, it must be cost-effective and productive. This requires oversight, performance monitoring, quality assurance and inter-agency cooperation.

The system must have robust mechanisms in place to ensure confidentiality and privacy, while allowing for action that gives paramount consideration to the best interests of children, young people and families.

There are 32 recommendations within this domain. Of these, 23 (72%) have been implemented and 9 (28%) have commenced and are reported to be ‘on track’.



## Reducing the number of, and improving the outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system

A range of state and national strategies specifically focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and addressing their over-representation in statutory child protection and youth justice systems. These strategies address similar health, educational, economical and wellbeing indicators of disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that are known to cause and perpetuate disadvantage.

There are some areas in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families have seen a statistical improvement in life outcomes. A range of initiatives have been designed, built and implemented with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. There are also areas that require improvement.

Queensland is currently progressing *Our Way: a generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families (2017–2037)* to address the disadvantage and inequality of wellbeing and life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This strategy is aligned with the national *Family Matters Roadmap* and its *Building Blocks* for change which are:

1. All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive.
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children.
3. Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive.
4. Governments and services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The policies and practices outlined in the *Family Matters Roadmap* closely align with performance measures and information identified under national and state goals. However, given the continuing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the child protection system, further performance measures have been identified. These will monitor performance in reducing the number of, and improving the outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland.

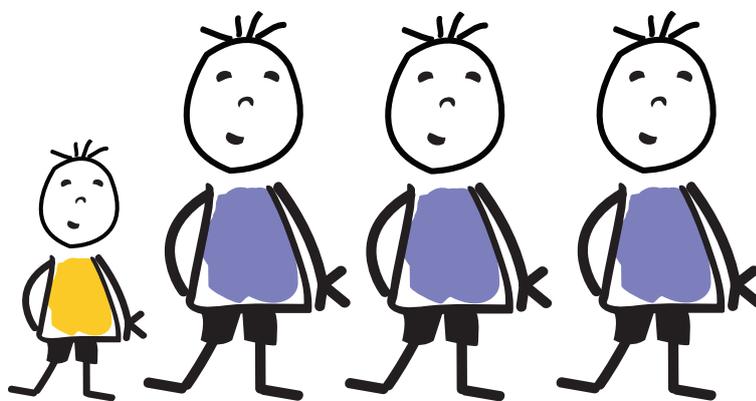
A selection of measures is provided in this section relating to child protection, education, health and youth justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

### *Child protection*

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data estimates there are 1,261,693 children and young people aged 0–19 in Queensland, comprising approximately 27.3% of Queensland’s population.<sup>38</sup> Children and young people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander make up 8.1% of Queenslanders aged 0–19 and approximately 2.2% of all Queenslanders.<sup>39</sup>

Approximately 5% of Queensland children and young people identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander are subject to ongoing intervention with the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women. The remaining 95% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are not involved with Child Safety services.<sup>40</sup>

### Queensland Population



1 in 4 Queenslanders are children and young people aged 0-19

<sup>38</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019, [3101.0 – Australian Demographics Statistics, Dec 2018](#).

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018, [3238.0.55.001 – Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2016](#).





## Education

Of a total enrolment of 298,532 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across Queensland, 13,424 (4.5%) were enrolled in early childhood education as at March 2018.<sup>42</sup>

Using 2016 census figures for children aged 0–4, we can estimate the proportion of children enrolled in early childhood education, noting the enrolment data is dated two years later than the census data. Of the total estimated population of Queensland children aged between 0–4 in Queensland, 58.7% of non-Indigenous children aged 0–4 years are enrolled in early child education compared to 34.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

This shows that enrolments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are significantly lower than for the general population.

As at February 2019, 58,143 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled full-time in Queensland state schools. This equates to 10.4% of all Queensland state school enrolments.<sup>43,44</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments have grown 16.9% since 2015 and continue to increase.

School attendance rates are higher for non-Indigenous students across all grade levels.<sup>45</sup>



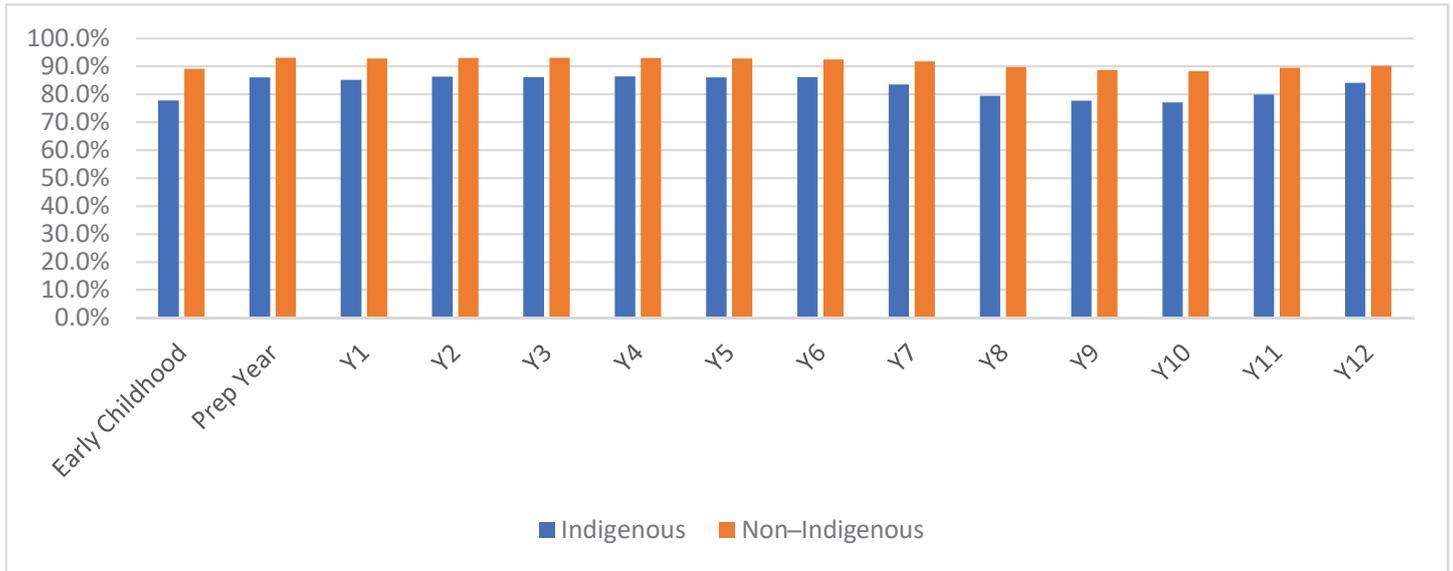
<sup>41</sup> This service information was provided to the QFCC by the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women.

<sup>42</sup> Queensland Department of Education 2018, [Service Level Enrolments \(Indigenous Children\)](#).

<sup>43</sup> Queensland Department of Education 2019, [Corporate Enrolment Collection – 2019 February](#).

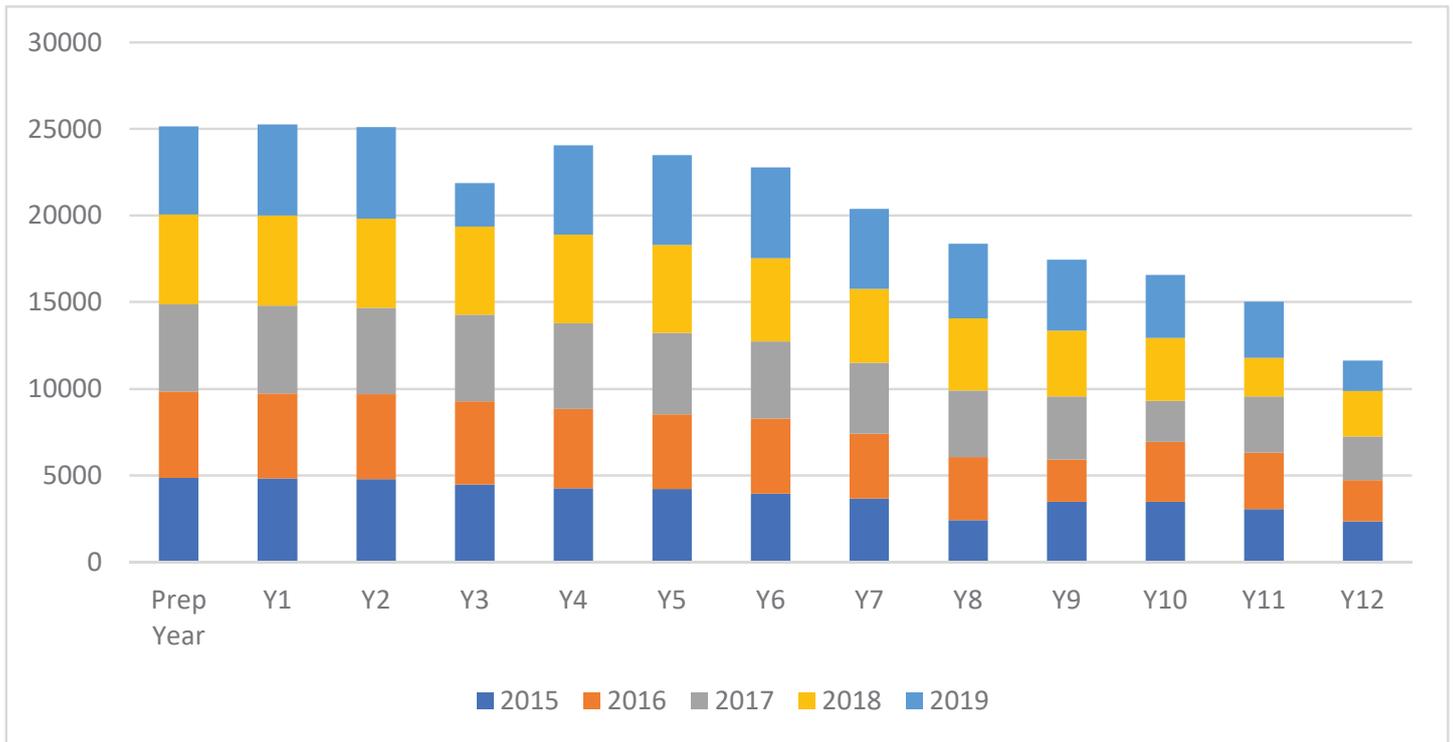
<sup>44</sup> Note: This data is for full-time students only and is for students who self-identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

<sup>45</sup> Queensland Department of Education 2019, [Student Enrolment – Student Attendance \(2014–2018\)](#), Attendance rates by year level and Indigenous status.



**Figure 9:** School attendance rates by Indigenous status and level  
**Source:** Queensland Department of Education (2018)

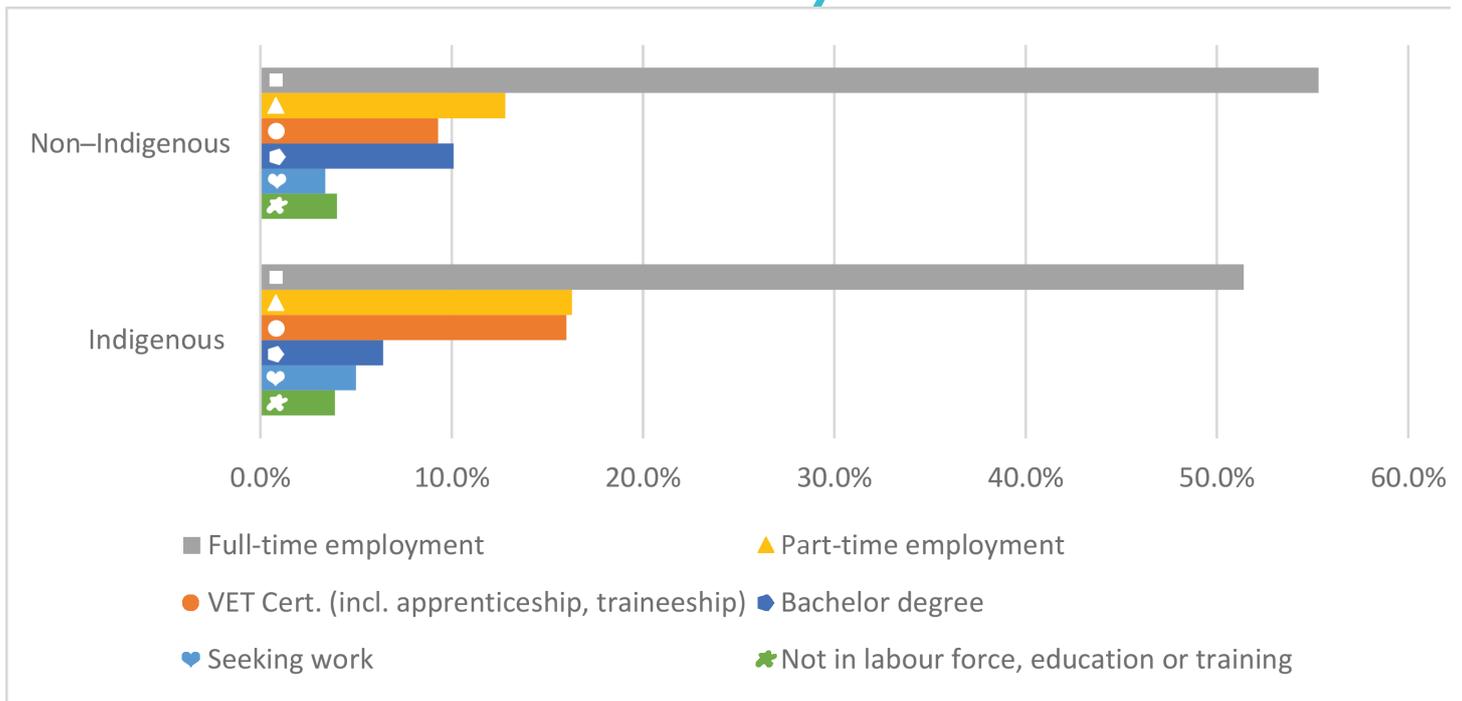
However, the data shows a trend of decreasing retention as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ progress to higher grade levels. This is more pronounced as students reach high school age.



**Figure 10:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments, by year, by grade. 2014–2019  
**Source:** Queensland Department of Education (2019)

The primary destination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who stay the course to year 12 is full-time employment, followed by part-time employment and vocational education.





**Figure 11:** Main destination of Year 12 completers from 2010, by Indigenous status, Queensland 2018

**Source:** Queensland Government 2018, [Next Step Longitudinal study 2018](#)

## Youth justice

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are disproportionately represented in the youth justice system, particularly in detention.<sup>46</sup> The Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women reports that, as at 12 February 2018, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were:

- 11 times as likely to have a proven offence
- 17 times as likely to have a supervised order
- 29 times as likely to be held in custody on remand
- 31 times as likely to be held in custody.

Queensland’s *Working Together to Change the Story 2019–2023* strategy has a core focus on reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the youth justice system. This is mainly being achieved by addressing the causes and the consequences of youth crime.

The strategy outlines actions that include empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to prevent and deal with crime in their communities and to help design effective community-led initiatives to address youth justice issues.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Queensland Government 2018, [Report on Youth Justice, Version 2](#).

<sup>47</sup> Queensland Government 2019, [Working Together, Changing the Story: Youth Justice Strategy 2019–2023](#).

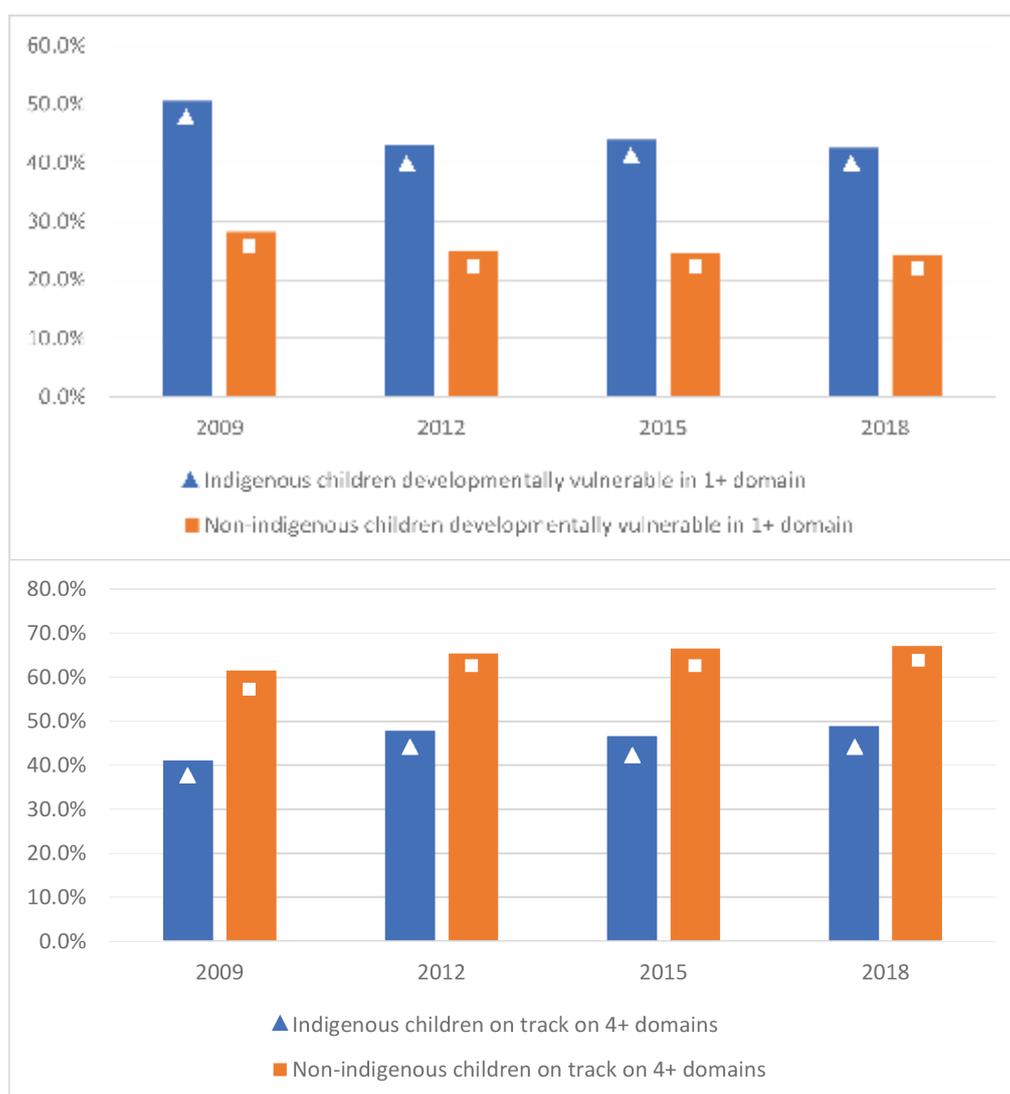
## Developmental outcomes

The 2018 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) involved more than 98% of Queensland's eligible children across 1,414 schools. The AEDC assesses children according to five domains of vulnerability, including:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- communication skills and general knowledge.

The following figures show that rates of developmental vulnerability have decreased since 2009 by 15.1% for Indigenous children and 13.8% for non-Indigenous children. However, Indigenous children continue to be more developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains than their non-Indigenous counterparts.

The inverse is true for children who are developmentally on track in four or more domains, with non-Indigenous children being more likely to be on track than their Indigenous counterparts.



**Figure 12:** AEDC 2018 Queensland data snapshot

**Source:** Queensland Government Department of Education (2019)



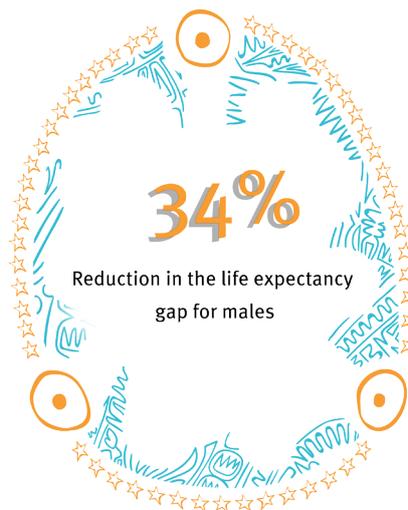
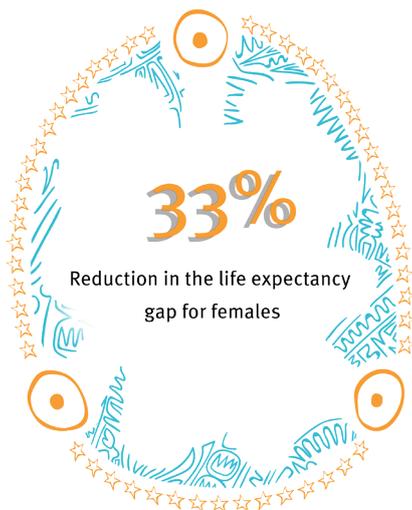
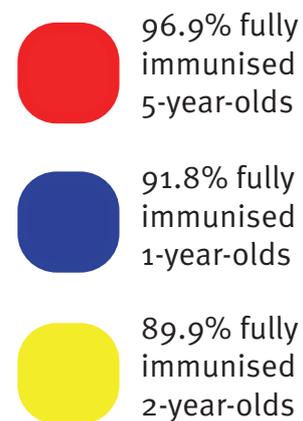
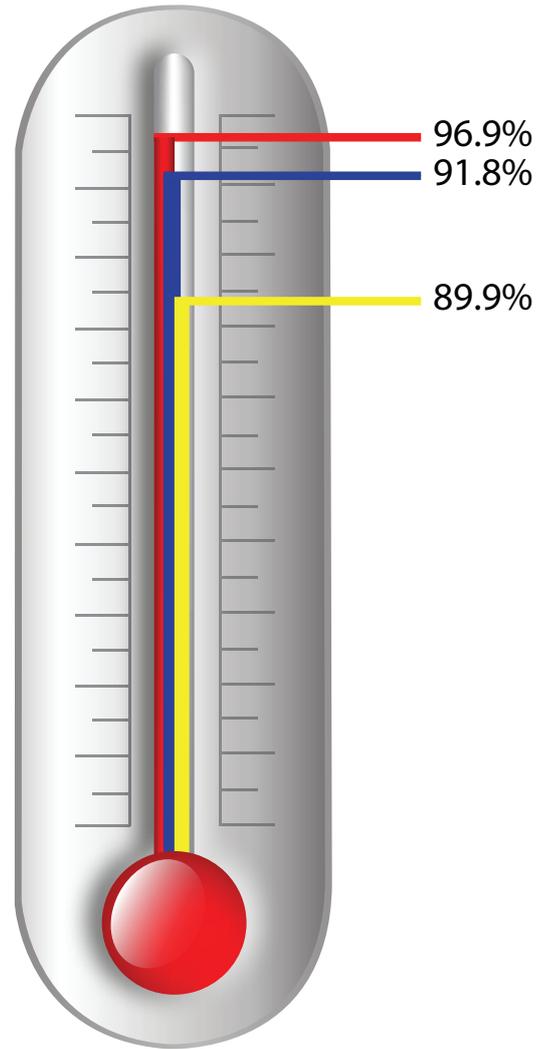
## Health

Queensland continues to experience a baby boom, with a 21% increase in births from 2015–16 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers gave birth to 5,410 babies, which is 8.4 percent of births in 2016.<sup>48,49</sup>

Queensland has seen a range of improvements in the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, including:

- positive growth in life expectancy at birth 3.3 years for males and 2 years for females (surpassing all other jurisdictions over the past five years)
- reduction in child (0–4 years) mortality rates of 14% from 2004–08 to 2013–17
- reduction in the life expectancy gap with other Queenslanders for both males (34%) and females (33%).<sup>50</sup>

An important factor for children’s health is early and timely immunisation. Trends suggest that in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community this message is being heard. According to 2017–18 Queensland Health data, 96.9 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 5-year-olds were fully immunised.<sup>51</sup>



<sup>48</sup> Queensland Government Statistician’s Office 2018, [Births, Queensland, 2017](#)

<sup>49</sup> ABS 2016 census data was the most recent data available to the QFCC on birth rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

<sup>50</sup> Queensland Government Department of Health 2018, [Closing the gap: Performance report 2018](#).

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*