



# QFCC Oversight Strategy

2020–2022

Queensland  
**Family & Child**  
Commission



## Acknowledgements

The Queensland Family and Child Commission acknowledges the Traditional custodians of the nations across Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first peoples of Australia. We acknowledge the Countries and blood lines of the First Nations peoples and pay respect to their culture, identity and connection to land and sea. We respect their enduring spiritual relationship to the Country on which we walk, live and work, and their wisdom in raising generations of strong, thriving children. We recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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*QFCC Oversight Strategy 2020-2022*





# Principal Commissioner's message

**The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children — their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialisation, and their sense of being loved, valued and included in the families and societies into which they are born.**

## UNICEF

As the first Principal Commissioner of the Queensland Family and Child Commission I am proud to lead an organisation which exists to support and improve the lives of all children and young people and their families. Our success in doing this is measured by how well we advocate on their behalf, how we support them through our partnerships and collaborations and how well we guide the performance of the child protection and family support system. The *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* enshrines these responsibilities in law. I am committed to making sure we achieve these in reality for young Queenslanders.

Our oversight role is to monitor, review, evaluate and report on the performance and outcomes of the Queensland child protection and family support system. We do this to improve the system but most importantly we do this to improve the lives of our most vulnerable children. To make sure they are well cared for, their rights are protected and they have access to support and opportunities so they can thrive.

The Oversight Strategy 2020-2022 outlines the priorities of the Queensland Family and Child Commission for the next two years with a particular focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by making sure the system is operating in a way that is culturally respectful and responsive, and contributes to healing the wrongs of the past.

We will also attend to how children and young people in out of home care or in contact with the child protection system are supported regarding their education. Education is a powerful agent for changing people's lives. It impacts on our health and livelihoods, our social fabric and our economy. Lack of education is one of the most certain ways of transmitting poverty across generations.

The Strategy has been developed in collaboration with our partners and two of its priorities will be to assess the effectiveness of collaborations both within government itself but also between government and the non-government sector. How well these collaborations are established, maintained and operate is fundamental to addressing risks, intervening early to preventing harm and ultimately supporting and caring for our children and young people.

The Oversight Strategy 2020-2022 builds upon the QFCC's successful history of systemic reviews and will ensure that we continue to keep young Queenslanders safe and contribute to giving them a great start in life both now and in the future.



**Cheryl Vardon**  
Principal Commissioner





# What is the QFCC's role in providing oversight for Queensland's children and young people?

**We actively consider how well the child and family support system upholds and protects children's rights, wellbeing and safety and generates positive outcomes.**

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) is a statutory authority of the Queensland government. Our role is to conduct systemic oversight of the child and family support sector. Through our oversight function we seek to promote a reliable, productive and sustainable child and family support system.

Our oversight function focuses on vulnerable children:

- **at risk of having, or who have had, their rights denied** – a child is entitled to certain rights, freedoms, special safeguards and care, without distinction, as set out in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.<sup>1</sup>
- **at risk of harm** or who have been harmed – harm is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>
- **with a care experience**<sup>3</sup> – a child or young person who has been placed by the state in out-of-home care as a result of having suffered significant harm, is suffering significant harm, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm, and does not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from the harm.<sup>4</sup>

To date, QFCC oversight activities have sought to uncover what works well or could be strengthened in the child and family support system so Queensland's children and young people are able to thrive and reach their full potential.

Since its establishment in 2014, the QFCC has conducted a series of oversight projects.

These include:

- *When a child is missing: remembering Tiahleigh – a report into Queensland's children missing from out of home care (2016)*
- *Recommendation 28: Supplementary Review (2016)*
- *A systems review of individual agency findings following the death of a child (2017)*
- *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe: review of the foster care system (2017)*
- *Review of the Blue Card system (2017)*
- *Healthcheck Report I: changes to mandatory reporting and referral behaviour in the child protection and family support system (2014–15)*
- *Healthcheck Report II: mandatory reporting and referral behaviour in the child protection and family support system (2015–17).*

The QFCC maintains Queensland's Child Death Register based on notifications from the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages and details of all child deaths reported to the Office of the State Coroner. From 1 July 2020, the QFCC will host the Queensland Child Death Review Board (CDRB), an independent governing body responsible for carrying out systems reviews following child deaths connected to the child protection system. The QFCC's Principal Commissioner is the Board Chair and remains independent in this role. The child death review process is intended to promote learning, consider systemic issues and strengthen collaboration between the reviewing agencies.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Convention on the Rights of the Child, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>, Accessed 28 November 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Queensland Government, *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, Schedule 1 definition of 'harm' references Queensland Government, *Child Protection Act 1999*, Section 9

<sup>3</sup> This includes young children, as defined in the Queensland Government, *Child and Family Commission Act 2014*, Schedule 1 definition of young person

<sup>4</sup> Queensland Government, *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, Schedule 1 definition of 'in need of protection' references Queensland Government, *Child Protection Act 1999*, Section 10

# What is the QFCC Oversight Strategy 2020–2022?

The **QFCC Oversight Strategy 2020–2022** (the Strategy) describes an ongoing program of oversight to monitor how well the system upholds and protects children’s rights, wellbeing and safety and generates outcomes across Queensland’s population. It identifies key priority areas for the QFCC’s oversight function.

The Strategy does not replace monitoring, evaluation and data collection activities by other agencies. Rather, the Strategy leverages this existing work to build insight into the performance of the whole system, points of risk and areas for improvement. The majority of data used in the strategy will be drawn from available public data from agencies and will be complemented by QFCC specific data collected in key projects such as Growing up in Queensland.

The Strategy is influenced and shaped by a range of initiatives, such as:

- *Human Rights Act 2019*<sup>5</sup>
- *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland’s priorities*

- *Supporting Families, Changing Futures 2019–23*
- *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families*
- *Working together-Changing the Story – Youth Justice Strategy 2019–2023.*
- *National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020*

The Strategy has drawn on contemporary research and evidence that will inform continuous system improvement including rights-based approaches, system theory and results-based accountability.

## Rights-based approaches

measure the way policy and practice impacts on human rights. This includes system management and accountability, attainment of equity and inclusion and levels of participation.<sup>6</sup>

**System theory**<sup>7</sup> considers the design of the support system as a whole, including the range of agencies and interventions that make up the system. It offers insights for thinking and learning about the way the system behaves and adapts to its environment so issues can be examined holistically before determining the best way to intervene. System theory provides a framework for examining parts of the system to see if they are working in the most resourceful way to achieve the desired outcome.

## Results-based accountability

focuses on the end result and works backwards to see how the result was achieved. It is a measured approach to strengthening performance, which asks ‘What would it take to succeed?’ and ‘Is anyone better off?’. Results-based accountability aims to identify if proposed changes support the end conditions for which the system is aiming. This approach highlights what is needed to improve quality of life outcomes over the long-term.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland was renamed as the Queensland Human Rights Commission on 1 July 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Theis, Joachim. April 2003, *Rights-based Monitoring and Evaluation. A discussion paper*, Save the Children

<sup>7</sup> Pennie, G. Foster-Fishman, P.G. Nowell, Branda. Yang, Huilan. 2007, *Putting the system back into systems change: a framework for understanding and changing organizational and community systems*, American Journal of Community Psychology: Springer, 39, pp197-215 and Peters, David H. 2014, *The application of systems thinking in health: why use systems thinking*, Peters Health Research, Policy and Systems, 12, pp4-5 and Renger, Ralph. 2015, System evaluation theory (SET): a practical framework for evaluators to meet the challenges of system evaluation, Evaluation Journal of Australasia, Vol. 15, Number 4, pp16-17 and Renger, Ralph. Foltysova, Jirina. Renger, Jessica. Booze, Wayne. 2017, *Defining systems to evaluate system efficiency and effectiveness*, Evaluation Journal of Australasia, Vol. 17, Number 3, p.6 and Wulczyn, F. Daro, D. Fluke, J. Feldman, S. Glodek, C. Lifanda, K. 2010, *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations*, United Nations Children’s Fund: New York, pp1-47

<sup>8</sup> Friedman, Mark. 2009, *Trying Hard is not good enough. How to improve measurable improvements for customers and communities*, Booksurge, 1st Edition

# What are the components of the QFCC Oversight Strategy 2020–2022?

The Strategy consists of three components: impact areas, indicators and a cultural lens.

## 1. Impact areas

The Strategy focuses on children, family and system outcomes across three impact areas:



These three impact areas are considered essential for the child and family support system to work well and achieve the desired outcomes for the children and families.

## 2. Indicators

Each impact area has five indicators, reflecting the desired outcomes for children and families, and the system that supports them.

Against each indicator, the QFCC will gather, review and analyse data from a broad range of sources to provide a comprehensive picture of system performance, points of risk and areas for continuous improvement.

A data development agenda will be established to fill data and information gaps as they are identified. Where gaps exist, the QFCC will work collaboratively with agencies to develop strategies to identify possible data sources.

## 3. Cultural Lens

One of our highest priorities is to deliver the best possible outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.<sup>9</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to be disproportionately represented in Queensland's child protection and youth justice populations.

Across all impact areas, the QFCC promotes a system that upholds and fosters a child's sense of belonging, culture, connection and identity. It is important the system recognises the history of disadvantage that surrounds these issues, and efforts are dedicated to adequately meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children throughout their childhood.

A cultural lens is placed across each impact area to report on the performance of the system, points of risk and areas for continuous improvement in upholding and protecting the rights, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and promoting a responsive system enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's self-determination.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women October 2018, *Our Way Strategy and Action Plan*, <https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/child-family/our-performance/representation-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-children/our-way-strategy-action-plan>, Accessed 17 December 2018

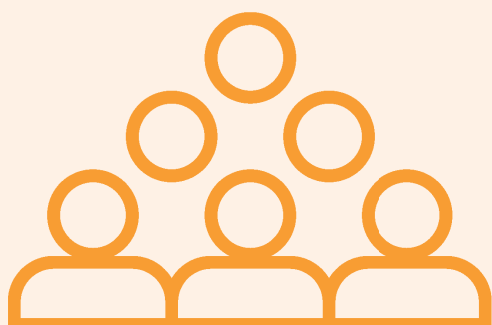
# QFCC Oversight Strategy 2020–2022:

## Impact areas

**We monitor system performance by focusing on children, families and system outcomes across three impact areas. Across all impact areas we promote a system that upholds and fosters a child’s sense of belonging, culture, connection and identity.**

### Reliability

A trusted system built on shared connections and commitment

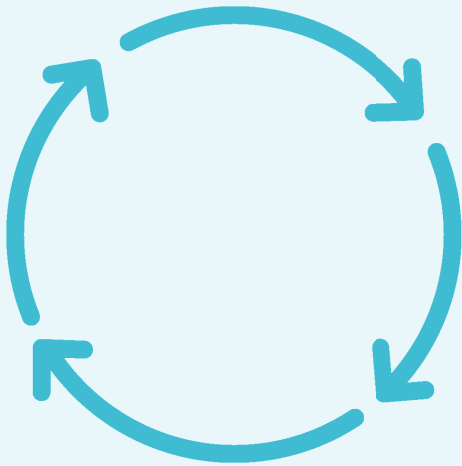


- **Children** experience equality, choice, privacy and justice.
- **Children** are healthy, educated, hopeful and have time to play.
- **Families** are accessing services early to assist children as they grow and develop.
- The **system** provides children and families with access to specialist services and support when needed.
- The **system** responds swiftly to provide children with help and protection when needed.



## Productivity

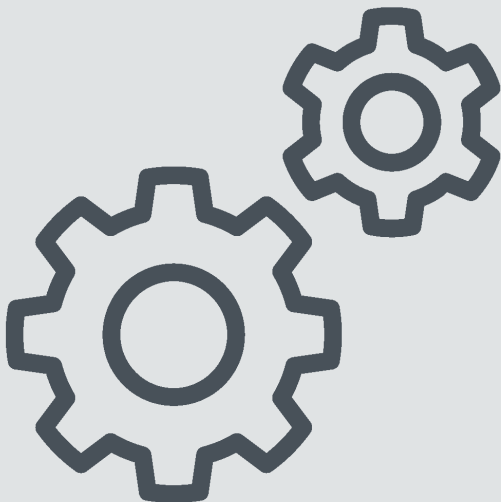
*An efficient and effective system that uses its resources to achieve outcomes*



- **Children** are safe and well and their rights are upheld.
- **Children and families** are provided with clear information and are empowered when making decisions about their future.
- The **system's** legislation, policies and practices are consistent, current and reflect the best interests of children.
- The **system** shares sound governance and capacity building practices.
- The **system** has a capable and motivated workforce that meets the needs of children and families.

## Sustainability

*An outcome focused system which achieves return on investment now and into the future*



- **Children** are supported to contribute to society, know their rights and lead a complete and full life.
- **Families** are supported to care for their children and cope with challenges.
- The **system** is focused on accountability and service impact.
- The **system's** service providers operate in a stable environment.
- The **system** uses data and evidence to guide future investment to meet ongoing demand.

# What sources of data will the QFCC use for oversight?

Against each performance indicator we will seek a combination of quantitative and qualitative data from a range of sources. The majority of data will be drawn from other agencies, including government agencies, non-government organisations and service providers, as well as advocacy, peak and research bodies.

In addition to the data collected within the strategy, the QFCC also:

- listens to the voices of children and young people
- monitors the views and perceptions of community and the media
- hears stakeholders' and communities' concerns
- understands the priorities of government
- connects with other oversight agencies
- monitors changes to the system following the implementation of recommendations from

systemic reviews

- takes the learnings from one systemic oversight review into the next, to deepen our understanding of how the system is functioning
- reflects upon the findings of the QFCC's evaluations of the child protection system and the findings from systemic reviews triggered by the death of a child.

This data will give an indication of system performance and outcomes being achieved for children, young people and families, and helps to prioritise where we need to focus our attention.



# How will the QFCC report on system performance?

The QFCC will provide information on system performance through:

1. reporting against impact areas (snapshot reports)
2. reporting annually on the performance of the child and family support system
3. reporting annually on child deaths
4. proactive systemic reviews.

As part of its work to provide proactive and independent oversight, the QFCC will report publicly, where appropriate, and share findings with relevant agencies within the child and family support system.



## 1. Reporting against impact areas (snapshot reports)

Snapshot reports will provide information on the state of the child and family support system as it relates to system reliability, productivity and sustainability. The snapshots will draw from a combination of quantitative and qualitative data from a range of sources including government agencies, non-government organisations and service providers, as well as advocacy, peak and research bodies. This data will give an indication of system performance and outcomes being achieved for children, young people and families.

The QFCC has worked in partnership with the Queensland Government Statistician's Office to identify measures against each indicator from qualitative and quantitative data sources. These measures will assist the QFCC to produce three snapshot reports per calendar year. Each report will focus on a single impact area and provide a snapshot of the reliability, productivity or sustainability of Queensland's child and family support system, based on a selected set of measures.



QFCC will release system snapshots focusing on three indicators for each Impact Area, starting in the 2020 calendar year:

Impact Area	Indicator	Measure <sup>10</sup>
 <b>Reliability</b> A trusted system built on shared connections and commitment.	1. Children are healthy, educated and have time to play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children are fully immunised</li> <li>Children are ready for school</li> <li>Children are attending school</li> <li>Children aged 5–17 are meeting the physical activity guidelines</li> </ul>
	2. Families are accessing services early to assist children as they grow and develop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pregnant women are accessing ante-natal care</li> <li>Families can access primary medical services swiftly</li> </ul>
	3. The system provides children and families with access to specialist services and support when needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families are engaged with family support and specialist services</li> <li>Young people are contacting support agencies</li> </ul>
 <b>Productivity</b> An efficient and effective system that uses its resources to achieve outcomes.	4. Children are safe and well and their rights are upheld	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people indicate they are happy or very happy with life as a whole</li> <li>Children feel safe and culturally connected</li> <li>Child protection services respond quickly to reports of harm to a child</li> </ul>
	5. Children and families are provided with clear information and are empowered when making decisions about their future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information is readily available about decisions made by service delivery agencies</li> <li>Young people and their families are supported to participate in decisions that affect their lives</li> <li>Young people feel able to have a say within community on important issues</li> </ul>
	6. The system has a capable and motivated workforce which meets the needs of children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child and family support sector workforce indicate that they received quality practice supervision to support them to do their job well</li> <li>Child and family support sector workforce would recommend working in the child protection and family support sector to others</li> </ul>
 <b>Sustainability</b> An outcomes focused system which achieves return on investment now and into the future	7. Children are supported to contribute to society and lead a complete and full life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people feel hopeful about the future</li> <li>Young people are engaged in school or vocational opportunities</li> </ul>
	8. Families are supported to care for their children and cope with challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children with disabilities are supported by their families</li> <li>Families know where to look to seek help</li> </ul>
	9. The system uses data and evidence to guide future investments to meet ongoing demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data is shared across the child and family support system</li> <li>Lessons learnt are captured from program and system evaluations</li> </ul>

<sup>10</sup> The QFCC has worked with the Queensland Government Statisticians Office to map and identify appropriate measures and available data sources. These measures may change over time as further datasets are identified and made available.



## 2. Reporting annually on the performance of the child protection system

The QFCC has a legislative requirement to report annually on the performance of Queensland's child and family support system. In accordance with the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* Section 40, the QFCC must 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
- Queensland's performance over time in comparison with other jurisdictions
- Queensland's progress in reducing the number of, and improving outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system.

This report will continue to be included as an appendix within the QFCC Annual report.

## 3. Proactive systemic oversight reviews

The QFCC has developed a rolling program of oversight for 2020–2022, listed on the table below. The focus of these reviews is to check whether the system is working as it should. This involves identifying areas where things are working well, where improvements can occur and where identified strengths could be incorporated into other areas of the system. Proactive systemic oversight reviews focus on those children who experience vulnerabilities and are at greater risk of falling through gaps in the system.

The QFCC will use the various sources of data to determine and prioritise topics for proactive systemic oversight reviews. While this may change, an indicative schedule is outlined on page 12.



## Proactive systemic review schedule

	Reliability Productivity Sustainability		2019–20 Current program	2020–21 Planned program	2021–22 Proposed program
1. Missing children post-implementation review assessing how changes arising from the <i>When a child is missing: Remembering Tiahleigh – A report into Queensland’s children missing from out-of-home care</i> report recommendations have improved outcomes for children (completed October 2019).					
2. Reviewing Investigation and Assessment models being used in Queensland to respond to child safety notifications in a timely manner. It is expected to generate insights into what is working well and support and promote continuous improvement (due for completion by mid 2020).					
3. Monitoring Queensland youth justice reforms and examining options that will inform future directions for investment in the youth justice system (due for completion by late 2020).					
4. Review the implementation of the five (5) elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) to the standard of active efforts, safeguarding the rights, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of or in contact with statutory systems.					
5. A review of the multi-agency response to the needs of children and families subject to intervention with parental agreement (IPA).					
6. An analysis of the effectiveness and efficiencies of the partnerships between the statutory child protection system and the non-government agencies who provide family support, assessment and intervention.					
7. A focus on how Queensland’s children are supported to remain engaged in education.					
8. A review of outcomes for children and young people living in residential care.					
9. A systemic review focused on mental health responses for children and young people.					
10. A focus on how Queensland’s children living with a disability are supported to reach their full potential.					
11. Post-Implementation reviews (generally 12 months after implementation) to assess whether the intent of QFCC recommendations have been achieved and the evidence of positive systemic change for Queensland’s children, families and communities. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Recommendation 28: Supplementary Review (2016)</i></li> <li>• <i>A systems review of individual agency findings following the death of a child (2017)</i></li> <li>• <i>Review of the foster care system (2017)</i></li> <li>• <i>Review of the blue card system (2017)</i></li> </ul>					

