

Appendix D—Performance of the Queensland child protection system

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 system²⁴. The National Framework is a long-term program of change promoting a unified approach to child protection in Australia. It shifts the focus of 'protecting children' from a statutory response to abuse and neglect to a more holistic view, where the safety and wellbeing of children is the collective responsibility of families, communities and governments.

Australia's progress on 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'.²⁵ The six supporting outcomes focus on the following complementary areas:

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. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are supported and safe in their families and communities
6. child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support.

The *Third three-year action plan 2015–18* (the Third Action Plan) to implement the National Framework places strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention. As the indicators to measure outcomes for the Third Action Plan have not yet been released, the QFCC has retained its focus on indicators from the *Second three-year action plan 2012–2015* (the Second Action Plan) to measure Queensland's progress.

The Second Action Plan uses eight indicators to measure progress towards the high-level goal that children and young people are safe and well:

1. substantiated child protection cases
2. children in out-of-home care
3. teenage births
4. infants born of low birth weight
5. child homicide

²⁴ The National Framework was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments on 30 April 2009.

²⁵ Council of Australian Governments 2009, *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*, p. 11.

6. early childhood development
7. child social and emotional wellbeing
8. family economic situation.

Queensland's performance in relation to achieving national goals has been examined against the first five of these indicators only²⁶. Data has been sourced from a number of publications and brought together to present a picture of the safety and wellbeing of children in Queensland compared with the national average.

This data is presented in graphs, with definitions and analysis included below. We have included information specifically relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

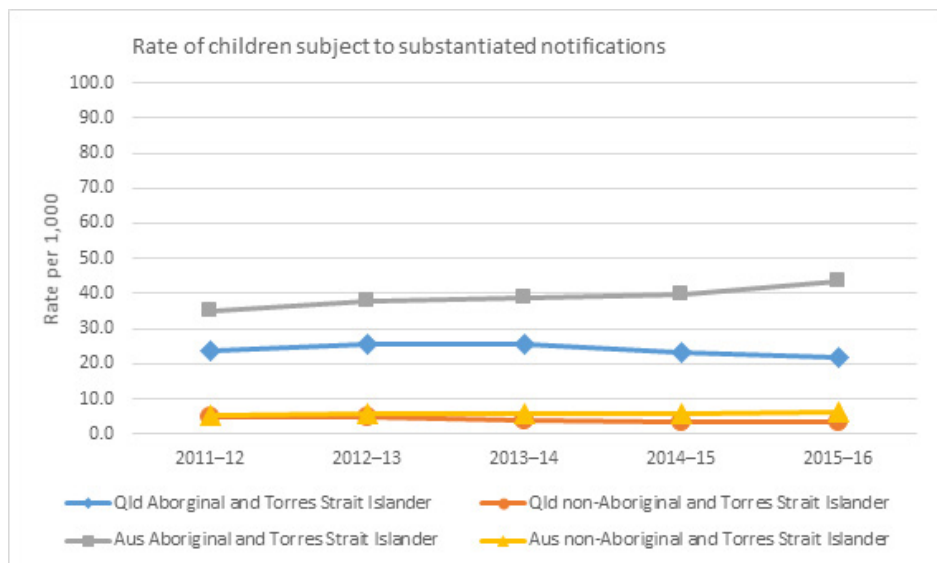
Please note the caveats in each section. As the data used to provide comparisons between Queensland and other jurisdictions is drawn from a variety of sources, which may adopt different data definitions, reference periods or population figures, data is not always directly comparable.

²⁶ Data to support Indicator 6 (early childhood development) has not been updated since the QFCC last reported on this measure in its 2016 Performance of the Queensland Child Protection System report. This data has therefore not been reported again here. The data source to measure Indicator 7 (child social and emotional wellbeing) is waiting on the implementation of an Australian Bureau of Statistics data source and is therefore not yet reportable. The data for Indicator 8 (family economic situation) is not currently available as a measure for each jurisdiction. Therefore, Queensland's performance cannot be measured and the indicator is not included in this report.

Indicator 1—Substantiated child protection cases

Rate of children aged 0–17 (per 1,000) subject to a substantiation, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, 2011–12 to 2015–16

Data



	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
QLD²⁷	6.5	6.5	6.0	5.2	5.0
AUS	7.4	7.8	7.8	8.0	8.5

Source

Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.9.

Definition

Substantiated child protection cases are measured as the rate of children aged 0–17 years subject to a child protection substantiation. Substantiations of notifications occur when an investigation has concluded and there is reasonable cause to believe that the child had been, was being, or was likely to be, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed.

Substantiations may also include cases where there is no suitable caregiver, such as children who have been abandoned or whose parents are deceased²⁸.

Analysis

The rate of Queensland children subject to a substantiation was consistently lower than the national average. In 2015–16, Queensland children were subject to a substantiation at a rate of 5.0 per 1,000 children, while the national rate of children subject to a substantiation was 1.7 times higher at 8.5 per 1,000.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Between 2011–12 and 2015–16, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to a substantiation, both in Queensland and nationally, was consistently higher than for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The rate of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to a substantiation has been slowly declining since 2012–13, while the national rate has seen a significant increase in finalised investigations substantiated in 2015–16.

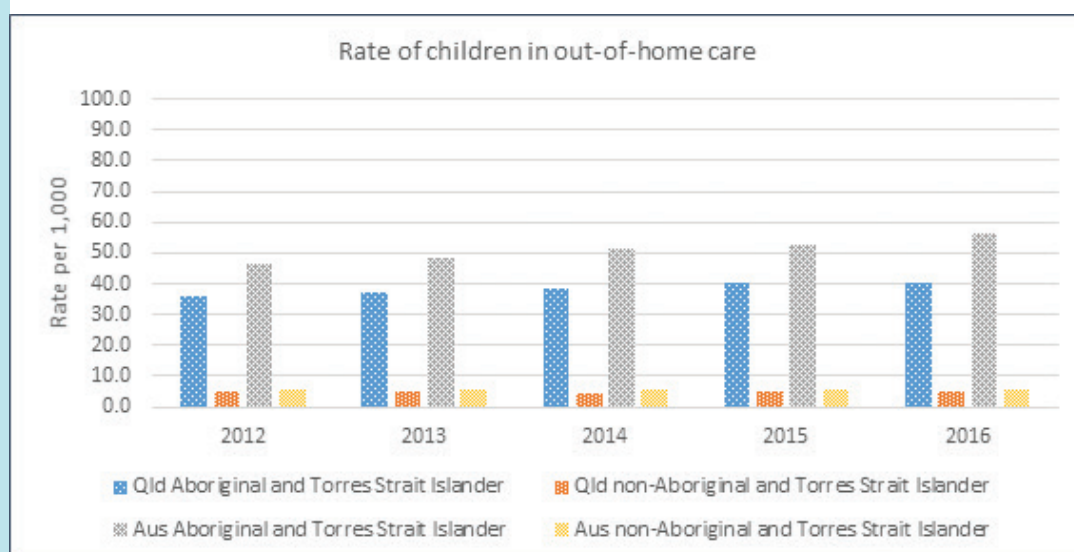
²⁷ This table is a measure of the rate of substantiation for all children, inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children who do not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and children where cultural status is unknown.

²⁸ Quoted directly from: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017, *Child Protection Australia 2015–16*, Child Welfare series no. 66. Canberra, p. 20.

Indicator 2—Children in out-of-home care

Rate of children aged 0–17 (per 1,000) who were in out-of-home care, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, as at 30 June 2016

Data



	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
QLD²⁹	7.4	7.4	7.3	7.5	7.6
AUS	7.7	7.8	8.1	8.2	8.6

Source

Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.17.

Definition

Out-of-home care is defined as overnight care, including placement with relatives (other than parents) where the government makes a financial payment. It includes care of children in legal and voluntary placements (that is, children on and not on a legal order) but excludes placements solely funded by disability services, psychiatric services, youth justice facilities and overnight child care services³⁰.

Analysis

As at 30 June 2016, there were 46,448 children in out-of-home care across Australia, a rate of 8.6 per 1,000 children aged 0–17 years. The national rate of children in out-of-home care has grown steadily over the past five years, up from 7.7 per 1,000 in 2012 to 8.6 per 1,000 children at 30 June 2016.

The rate of children living in out-of-home care in Queensland has remained relatively stable between 2012 and 2016 and was consistently lower than the national average, at a rate of 7.6 per 1,000 children as at 30 June 2016.

²⁹ This table is a measure of the rate of out-of-home care for all children, inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children who do not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and children where cultural status is unknown.

³⁰ Quotes directly from: Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 16.37

Rate of children aged 0–17 (per 1,000) who were in out-of-home care, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, as at 30 June 2016

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Both in Queensland and nationally, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (per 1,000) in out-of-home care is consistently higher than the rate of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

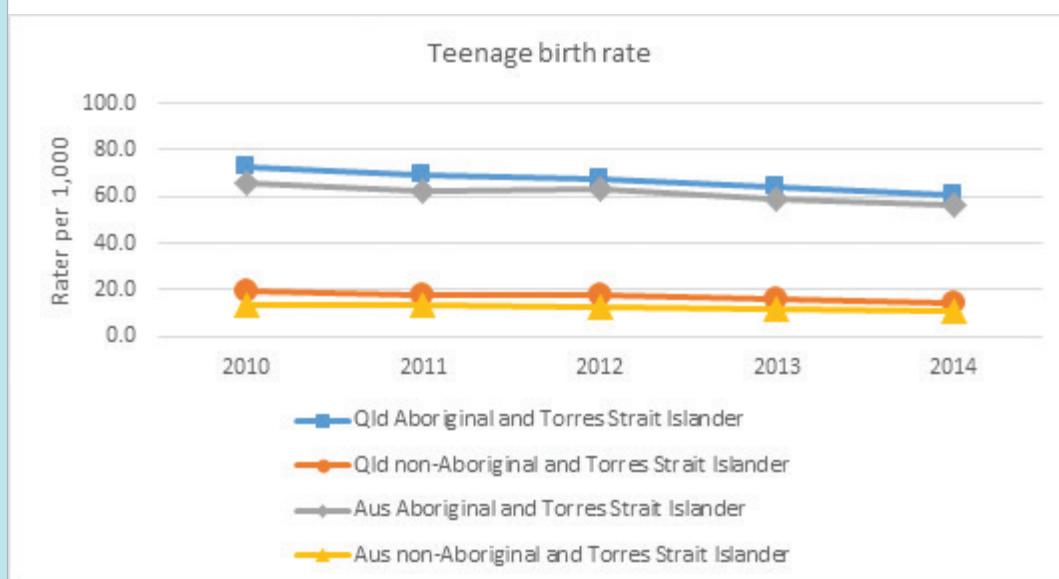
As at 30 June 2016, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were over eight times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (40.6 per 1,000 compared with 4.8 per 1,000).

Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were almost 10 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as at 30 June 2016 (56.7 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children compared with 5.8 per 1,000 non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children).

Indicator 3—Teenage births

Age-specific birth rate for women aged 15–19 years (births per 1,000 females), by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, 2010–2014

Data



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014 ³¹
QLD³²	22.7	21.1	21.3	19.6	17.8
AUS	15.9	15.5	15.5	14.2	13.0

Source

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017, 'Teenage births', *National framework for protecting Australia's children*, accessed 9 August 2017, <http://www.aihw.gov.au/nfpac/>

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Children's Headline Indicators 'Teenage births,' (updated 2016), accessed 9 August 2017, <http://www.aihw.gov.au/chi/>

Definition

Teenage births are measured by the rate of live births to women aged less than 20 years³³.

Analysis

The teenage birth rate for mothers in Queensland has remained consistently higher than the national rate in the five years to 2014. Overall, the teenage birth rate has slightly declined over the past five years, both in Queensland and nationally.

In 2014, the teenage birth rate for Queensland mothers aged 15–19 years was about 1.4 times higher than the national rate (17.8 per 1,000, compared with 13.0 per 1,000).

31 The most recent data published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare at the time of writing is 2014.

32 This table is a measure of the teenage birth rate for all females aged 15–19 years inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, females who do not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and females where cultural status is unknown.

33 Rates are calculated using the population of females aged 15–19 years (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017, 'Teenage births', *National framework for protecting Australia's children*, accessed 9 August 2017, <http://www.aihw.gov.au/nfpac/>).

Age-specific birth rate for women aged 15–19 years (births per 1,000 females), by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, 2010–2014

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

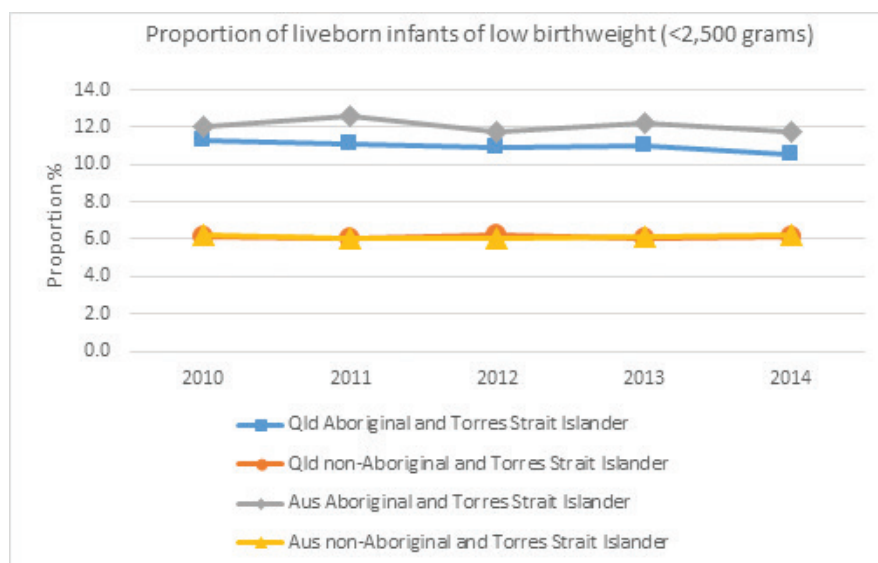
In 2014, the birth rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 15–19 years in Australia was over five times higher than for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (56.2 per 1,000 compared with 10.6 per 1,000), and approximately four times higher in Queensland (60.9 per 1,000 compared with 14.5 per 1,000).

The teenage birth rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers has declined slightly in the five years to 2014.

Indicator 4—Infants born of low birth weight

Live born infants born with birth weight of less than 2,500 grams (per cent of all live births), by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, 2010–2014

Data



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014 ³⁴
QLD³⁵	6.3%	6.3%	6.5%	6.3%	6.4%
AUS	6.2%	6.3%	6.2%	6.4%	6.4%

Source

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Children's Headline Indicators, 'Low birth weight' (updated 2016), accessed 9 August 2017, <http://www.aihw.gov.au/chi/>

Definition

Low birth weight is defined as live born infants with a birth weight less than 2,500 grams³⁶.

Analysis

The proportion of low birth weight babies born each year between 2010 and 2014 was relatively stable both in Queensland and Australia-wide.

In 2014, 6.4% of live born babies were of low birth weight in Queensland and nationally.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

There was minimal change in the proportion of low birth weight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies over the five years to 2014, both in Queensland and nationally³⁷.

Babies born to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers were more likely to be of low birth weight (Queensland 10.5%, Australia 11.8%) than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies (Queensland 6.1%, Australia 6.2%).

³⁴ The most recent data published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare at the time of writing is 2014.

³⁵ This table is a measure of low birth rate for all infants, inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants, non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants, infants who do not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and infants where cultural status is unknown.

³⁶ The World Health Organization defines low birth weight as less than 2,500 grams. Stillbirths, miscarriages and terminations are excluded from this measure (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017, 'Low birth weight', *National framework for protecting Australia's children*, accessed 9 August 2017, <http://www.aihw.gov.au/nfpac/>).

³⁷ Data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births relate to babies born to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers only, and excludes babies born to non-Aboriginal mothers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fathers. Therefore, the information is not based on the total count of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies. (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017, 'NFPAC Indicator 0.4', *National framework for protecting Australia's children* supplementary tables & resources, accessed 9 August 2017, <http://www.aihw.gov.au/nfpac/supplementary/>).

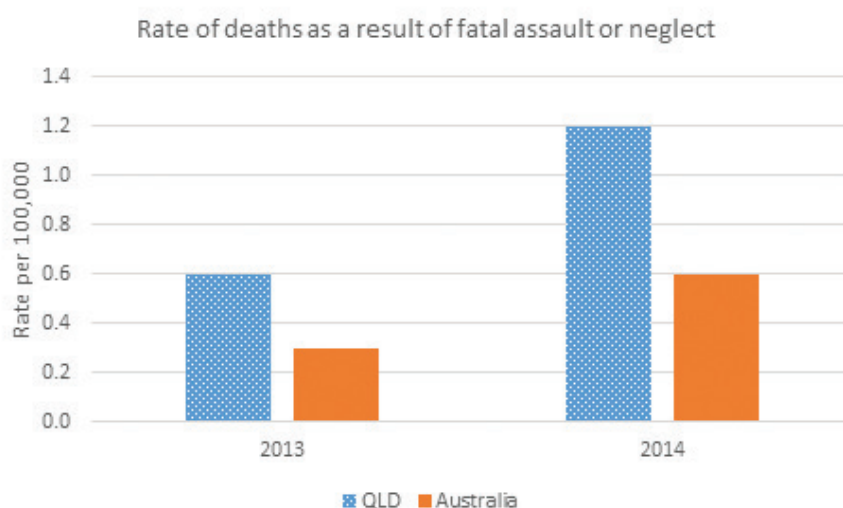
Indicator 5—Child homicide

While a reduction in child homicide rates form an indicator of progress under the National Framework, no national data has been released on this measure since February 2015³⁸. As this data has been previously reported by the QFCC in its *Performance of the Queensland Child Protection System 2016* report, these figures have not been reported again here.

As part of its child death register functions, the QFCC reports annually on the deaths of all children and young people aged 0–17 years in Queensland, and classifies these deaths according to cause, demographic information and other relevant factors. The QFCC works closely with relevant agencies in other jurisdictions to produce an overview of child death statistics across Australia and New Zealand. This has been used here to provide a proxy measure in the absence of current national homicide data³⁹.

Rate of deaths as a result of fatal assault or neglect, 2013 and 2014

Data⁴⁰



Source

Queensland Family and Child Commission 2017, *Australian and New Zealand Child Death Statistics 2014*, p. 12.

Queensland Family and Child Commission 2015, *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people, Queensland, 2014–15*, p. 86.

Definition

While methodological differences exist between jurisdictions, fatal assault is generally defined as the death of a child at the hands of another person who has inflicted harm through some means of force or physical aggression. Fatal neglect is defined as a death where a child who is dependent on a caregiver for the necessities of life dies owing to the failure of the caregiver to meet the child's ongoing basic needs⁴¹.

38 Australian Institute of Criminology 2015, *Homicide in Australia: 2010–11 to 2011–12*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

39 Queensland Family and Child Commission 2017, *Australian and New Zealand Child Death Statistics 2014*, Queensland Government, Brisbane, accessed 8 August 2017, <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/child-deaths-annual-report-2015-16/supplementary-chapter-australian-and-new-zealand-child-death-statistics-2014.pdf>.

40 The rates of child homicide are reported per 100,000 population, compared with per 1,000 as used for other measures included in this report. This aligns with rates as reported in all QFCC child death publications.

41 Quoted directly from: Queensland Family and Child Commission 2016, *Annual Report: Deaths of Children and Young People, Queensland, 2015–16*, p. 53.

Rate of deaths as a result of fatal assault or neglect, 2013 and 2014

Analysis

The rate of child death from assault or neglect in Queensland was higher than the national average in both 2013 and 2014. However, a number of factors must be taken into account in interpreting this data:

- national rates of fatal assault and neglect have been calculated using the information provided by individual states and territories in each reporting year⁴².
- caution must be exercised when making comparisons and interpreting rates due to the small number of deaths analysed, especially at jurisdictional level.
- the high rate of fatal assault and neglect for Queensland in 2014 was due in part to a single incident involving multiple fatalities.
- states and territories differ in approaches to classifying a death as fatal assault or neglect. In some jurisdictions, cause of death is pending until an official cause is determined. In Queensland, the fatal assault and neglect category includes suspicious deaths where information available to the QFCC indicates a homicide investigation was initiated, or where an alleged perpetrator was charged, or the alleged perpetrator is known but deceased.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

No data is currently available to compare the rate of death from fatal assault and neglect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to that of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at a national level.

However, the QFCC's Australian and New Zealand Child Deaths Statistics 2014 report indicates that the rate of death (from all causes) in Queensland was 2.6 times higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (88.8 per 100,000) than for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (33.8 per 100,000). Queensland had the third highest rate of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in 2014, behind the Northern Territory (101.1 per 100,000) and South Australia (93.7 per 100,000)⁴³.

42 In 2013, Western Australia did not provide any data to contribute to the national total. In addition, Victoria did not provide an actual figure of deaths from assault or neglect (it was reported as less than five deaths). As such, in calculating the national total, the number of deaths in Victoria was estimated as four.

43 Jurisdictions may experience difficulty with the collection of child death data regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. This may result in an under-count in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander death rates, limiting the comparability of the data.

Performance against state goals

Progress on implementing the child protection reforms

Queensland's state goals in relation to child protection are primarily captured in the current *Supporting Families Changing Futures* reform agenda resulting from the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry (QCPCOI).

In June 2013, the QCPCOI released its final report, providing 121 recommendations, all of which were accepted by the Queensland Government⁴⁴. The QCPCOI provided a roadmap that proposed the reforms be implemented over a 10-year period⁴⁵.

A number of actions were prioritised for delivery in the planning and early rollout phases. These included creating governance and program management arrangements, and making amendments to legislation to establish the systems and structures needed to support the implementation of the reform program.

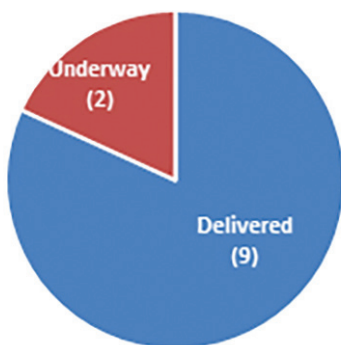
Implementation is currently focused on a gradual rollout of reform strategies and trials. This allows for non-government organisations to build their capacity and workforce capability to effectively deliver the new service models. It enables reform strategies to be trialled in identified locations and adjusted as needed. It also means the specific characteristics and needs of rural and regional communities can be considered.

The following summary provides an overview of the current status of reform recommendations as at June 2017. As part of the organising framework developed for the reform program, the recommendations were grouped into 45 work packages (programs of work) under seven domains.

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

The strategic objective of Domain 1 is 'Government and non-government agencies work in partnership to deliver effective and efficient services and support'. This will be achieved by:

- promoting to families and communities their responsibility for protecting and caring for their own children
- establishing central governance arrangements that provide for cross-sector leadership and responsibility for the protection and care of children
- establishing regional governance arrangements to facilitate strong collaboration and coordination of services at the local level.



There are 11 recommendations divided across four work packages in this domain. As at 30 June 2017:

- nine recommendations had been delivered
- two recommendations were underway.

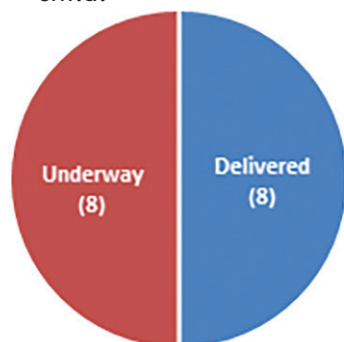
⁴⁴ Six of these recommendations were accepted in principle.

⁴⁵ Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry, 2013, *Taking Responsibility: A Roadmap for Queensland Child Protection*, State of Queensland.

Domain 2: Supporting Queensland families earlier

The strategic objective of Domain 2 is ‘Vulnerable children and young people live in safe and supportive families and communities’. This will be achieved by:

- introducing a new community-based intake gateway (dual pathway)
- building the capacity of the family support services sector (both government and non-government)
- ensuring families who have a child with a disability are adequately supported in continuing to care for their child.



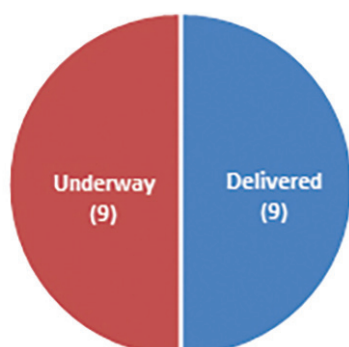
There are 16 recommendations divided across four work packages in this domain. As at 30 June 2017:

- eight recommendations had been delivered
- eight recommendations were underway.

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

The strategic objective of Domain 3 is ‘Child protection practice is focused on engaging with families earlier, and on keeping children safely at home where appropriate’. This will be achieved by:

- introducing a new child protection practice framework (with supporting policies and procedures) that is strengths-based and focused on engaging with families
- strengthening the voices of children and families in the court system and, more broadly, in the best interests of the child.



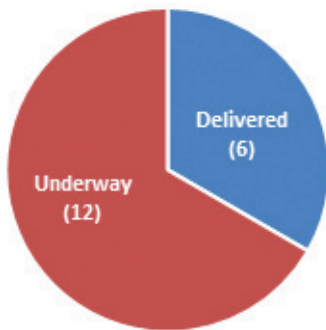
There are 18 recommendations divided across three work packages in this domain. As at 30 June 2017:

- nine recommendations had been delivered
- nine recommendations were underway.

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

The strategic objectives of Domain 4 are ‘Children and young people in care are protected, cared for, and supported to reach their full potential’ and ‘Young people leaving care have high prospects, ready to take on the responsibilities of adulthood, and feel connected to their culture and community’. This will be achieved by:

- strengthening and expanding existing health and therapeutic services to children and young people
- ensuring best match of children and young people to carers and models of care
- enhancing placement stability for children and young people
- building the capacity of the non-government sector to better support and train carers
- strengthening transition planning to better equip young people when they leave care, and providing post-care support.



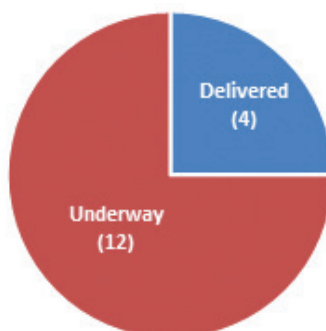
There are 18 recommendations divided across 10 work packages in this domain. As at 30 June 2017:

- six recommendations had been delivered
- twelve recommendations were underway.

Domain 5: Meeting the needs and requirements of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities

The strategic objective of Domain 5 is 'Indigenous children and young people are safe and supported in their communities as part of a culturally responsive and capable system'. This will be achieved by:

- building the capacity of the family support sector for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and redesigning existing program delivery to increase access to existing services
- providing increased training and support to carers and staff, and streamlining our carer assessment processes, where appropriate
- changing our practice to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families
- working to better support children and families in discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



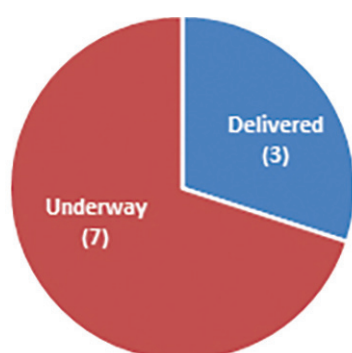
There are 16 recommendations divided across nine work packages in this domain. As at 30 June 2017:

- four recommendations had been delivered
- twelve recommendations were underway.

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

The strategic objective of Domain 6 is 'A client-focused workforce that is appropriately skilled, motivated and supported'. This will be achieved by:

- strengthening the capacity and capability of the child protection workforce and service organisations, and establishing a positive culture
- enhancing the legal services and advice provided to Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services child protection workers.



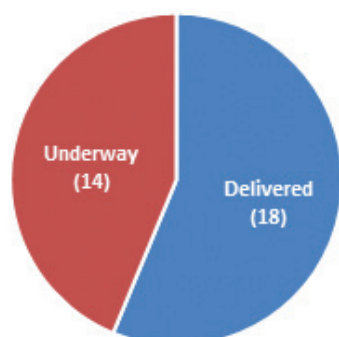
There are 10 recommendations divided across five work packages in this domain. As at 30 June 2017:

- three recommendations had been delivered
- seven recommendations were underway.

Domain 7: Building an accountable, transparent and cost-effective Queensland system

The strategic objective of Domain 7 is 'The child and family support system is efficient, accountable, and informed by a culture of learning'. This will be achieved by:

- improving court processes and efficiencies
- increasing accountability and transparency and reducing duplication and red tape
- reviewing our legislation.



There are 32 recommendations divided across ten work packages in this domain. As at 30 June 2017:

- eighteen recommendations had been delivered
- fourteen recommendations were underway.

Queensland's performance in comparison to other jurisdictions

Queensland's performance has been compared to other jurisdictions using the Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services 2017*. This report provides a framework of performance indicators for child protection and out-of-home care services. Queensland's performance in comparison to other jurisdictions is assessed against this framework⁴⁶.

This section uses data from the Report on Government Services to analyse six of the seven effectiveness indicators as well as the two outcome indicators for which data are available and generally comparable⁴⁷ (these indicators are drawn from the *Report on Government Services 2017*).

The effectiveness indicators are:

1. response times
2. substantiation rate
3. stability of placement
4. children aged under 12 years in home-based care
5. placement maintains connections
6. children with current documented case plans.

The outcome indicators are:

1. improved safety
2. improved education.

This data is presented in graphs, with definitions and analysis included below. Where available, we have included information specifically relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It should be noted that significant legislative, policy and practice differences exist between jurisdictions. As a result, accurate comparisons between jurisdictions cannot always be made. This is reflected in the following results.

Effectiveness indicator 1—Response times

The *Report on Government Services* defines response time by two measures: response time to commence investigations and response time to complete investigations. The time taken to commence an investigation is measured by the number of days between the date a child protection department records a notification and the date an investigation is subsequently commenced. The length of time between recording a notification and commencing an investigation indicates the promptness of response to child protection concerns⁴⁸.

46 Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 16.6. The *Child protection services performance indicator framework* was considered to include the most appropriate indicators to compare performance across jurisdictions because of the specific focus on child protection, regularity of reporting, and continued work towards additional outcome measurement.

47 Data to support the 'safety in out-of-home care' effectiveness indicator (the indicator not analysed in this annual report) is not at all comparable due to differences across jurisdictions in policies, practices and reporting methods.

48 Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 16.10.

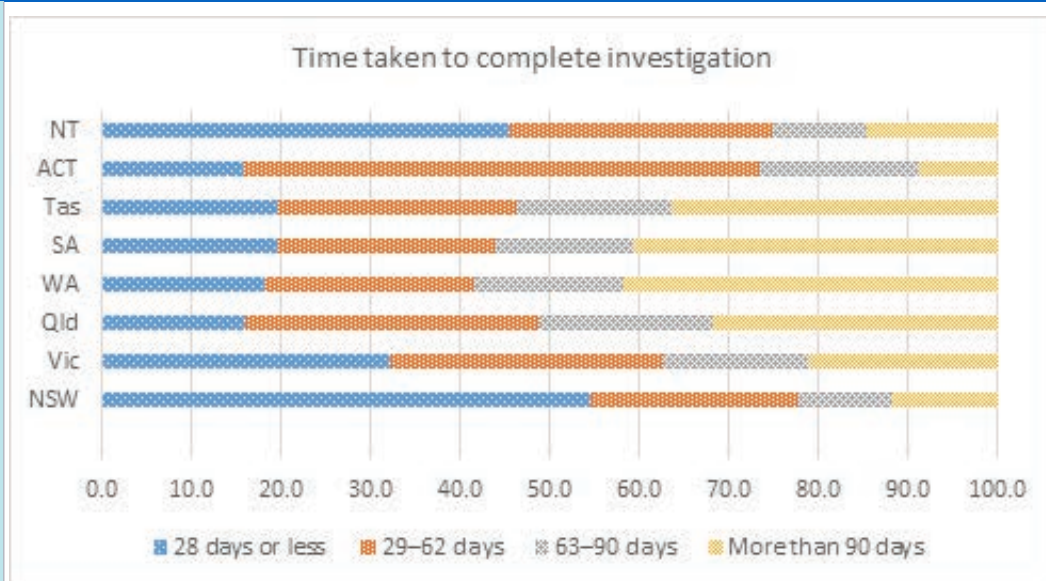
In Queensland, an investigation is not considered commenced until the child is sighted or, in the case of an unborn child, the pregnant woman is interviewed. Prior to sighting the child (or interviewing the pregnant woman) child safety officers begin actively working on the case by reviewing the child protection history of the child and family and determining who will be involved in the investigation process. This may include making contact with other agencies such as police, schools and hospitals⁴⁹.

Data reported for this measure is not comparable across jurisdictions as jurisdictions count notifications at different points in response to a report, and have different policies and protocols governing the type of response to a notification⁵⁰.

Effectiveness indicator 1—Response times

Proportion of investigations finalised, by time taken to complete investigation - Australian states and territories, 2015–16

Data



		2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
QLD	< 28 days	20.0%	27.0%	26.5%	21.3%	16.1%
	29 to 62	27.5%	33.8%	35.7%	36.3%	32.7%
	63 to 90	15.9%	17.5%	17.0%	18.0%	19.3%
	90 days +	36.7%	21.8%	20.9%	24.4%	31.9%
AUS	< 28 days	37.4%	36.4%	45.8%	38.2%	40.7%
	29 to 62	20.4%	23.8%	25.7%	25.8%	26.4%
	63 to 90	12.2%	13.4%	12.8%	13.5%	13.5%
	90 days +	30.0%	26.4%	15.7%	22.5%	19.4%

Source

Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.15.

⁴⁹ *ibid*, Table 16A.14, explanatory notes.

⁵⁰ *ibid*.

Proportion of investigations finalised, by time taken to complete investigation - Australian states and territories, 2015–16

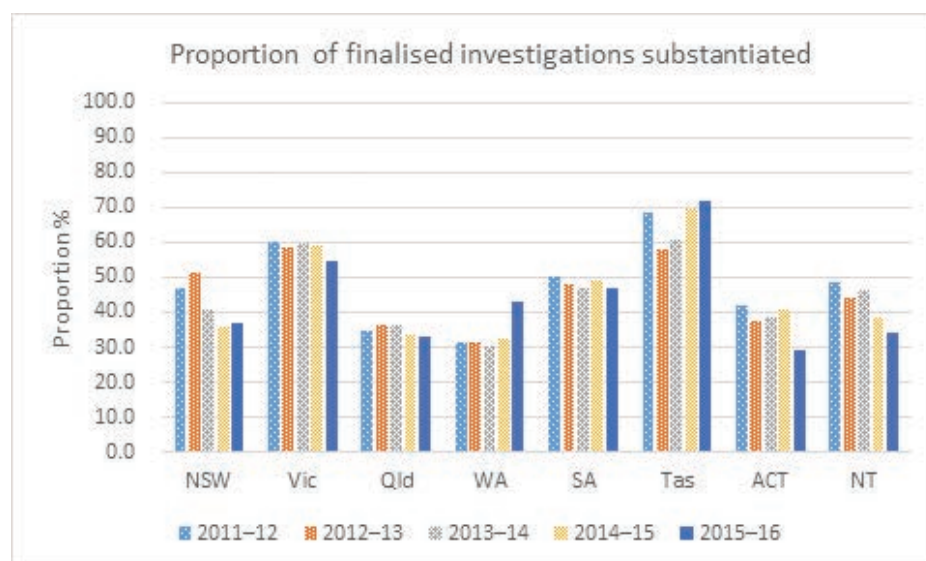
Definition	<p>The proportion of investigations completed within specified time periods is measured by the number of days between the date a child protection department records a notification and the date an investigation is completed (that is, the date an investigation outcome is determined).</p> <p>A higher and increasing proportion of investigations completed in shorter time periods is desirable. The length of time between recording a notification and completing an investigation indicates the effectiveness in conducting investigations in a timely manner⁵¹.</p> <p>Caution should be exercised when interpreting results, as jurisdictions count notifications at different points in response to a report, and have different policies and protocols covering the type of response to a notification.</p>
Analysis	<p>In 2015–16, Queensland completed 16.1% of investigations within 28 days, which was significantly lower than the national average of 40.7%. The majority of investigations in Queensland took between 29 and 62 days to complete (32.7%).</p> <p>The proportion of investigations in Queensland taking more than 90 days to complete has increased from 24.4 % in 2014–15 to 31.9% in 2015–16.</p> <p>This increase may be due to the implementation of a number of reform initiatives, including the introduction of the new <i>Strengthening Families Supporting Children Framework for Practice</i>. The QFCC will continue to monitor Queensland's performance in relation to time taken to complete investigations in 2017–18.</p>
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	<p>The <i>Report on Government Services 2017</i> data does not differentiate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for this indicator.</p>

51 Quoted directly from: Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 16.10.

Effectiveness indicator 2—Substantiation rate

Proportion of finalised investigations substantiated, Australian states and territories, 2011–12 to 2015–16

Data



	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
QLD	34.9%	36.6%	36.1%	33.5%	33.3%
AUS	45.4%	47.3%	42.7%	40.1%	40.3%

Source

Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.10.

Definition

'Substantiation rate' is defined as the proportion of finalised investigations where abuse or neglect, or risk of abuse or neglect, was confirmed. The substantiation rate provides an indication of the extent to which services were targeted to those at greatest risk, thereby avoiding the human and financial costs of an investigation where no abuse or neglect had occurred or was at risk of occurring. Neither a very high nor very low substantiation rate is desirable⁵².

Analysis

In 2015–16, 33.3% of investigations finalised in Queensland were substantiated. This substantiation rate is significantly lower than the national average of 40.3%, and lower than the majority of other states and territories, with only the Australian Capital Territory reporting a lower substantiation rate of 29.0%. Queensland's rate of substantiation has remained relatively steady over the past five years, with a slight decline in the last two reporting periods.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

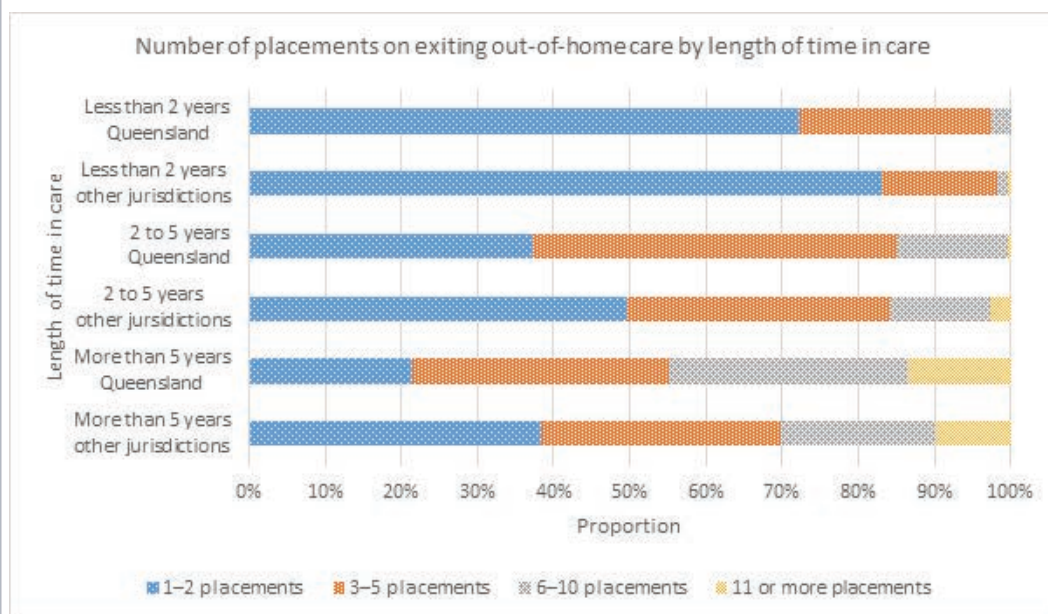
The *Report on Government Services 2017* data does not differentiate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for this indicator.

52 Quoted directly from: Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 16.12.

Effectiveness indicator 3—Stability of placement

Proportion of children on a care and protection order exiting out-of-home care during the year, by number of placements and length of time in care, 2015–16

Data



Source

Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.25.

Definition

'Stability of placement' is defined as the proportion of children who had one or two placements during a period of continuous out-of-home care.

A low number of child placements (one or two) per period of care is desirable, but must be balanced against other placement indicators⁵³.

Analysis

Across all measures of length of time in care, Queensland recorded a lower proportion of children who had only one or two placements compared to the national average. In 2015–16, of those children exiting care after two to five years, 37.2% of children in Queensland had only one or two placements, compared to the average of 49.6% for other jurisdictions.

When looking at combined data for one to two and three to five placements, Queensland becomes reasonably consistent with the national average for timeframes of less than two years and two to five years. However, almost half of Queensland children (44.9%) exiting after five or more years in care had experienced upward of six placements, compared with 30.3% across all other states and territories.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

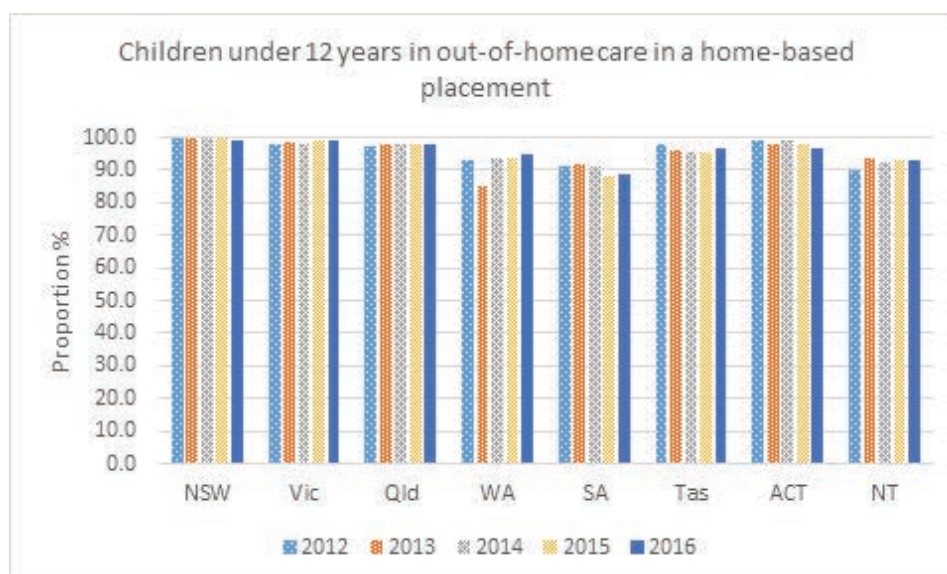
The Report on Government Services 2017 data does not differentiate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for this indicator.

53 Quoted directly from: Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 16.15.

Effectiveness indicator 4—Children aged under 12 years in home-based care

Children aged under 12 years in out-of-home care and in a home-based placement, 2012–2016

Data



	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
QLD	97.4%	98.1%	97.7%	97.6%	97.6%
AUS	97.5%	96.5%	97.6%	97.4%	97.4%

Source

Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.24.

Definition

'Children aged under 12 years in home-based care' is defined as the number of children aged under 12 years placed in home-based care divided by the total number of children aged under 12 years in out-of-home care.

A high or increasing rate of children aged under 12 years in out-of-home care that are placed in home-based care is desirable⁵⁴.

Analysis

At 30 June 2016, the proportion of all children aged under 12 years in care nationally who were placed in home-based care was 97.4%.

Queensland's proportion of children aged under 12 years in care who were placed in home-based care is comparable to the national figures. Queensland's performance for this indicator has remained consistently high, measuring between 97.4% and 98.1% over the last five years.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

At 30 June 2016, proportions of children aged under 12 years placed in home-based care were similar for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in both Queensland (96.7% to 98.3%) and Australia (96.3% and 98.2%).

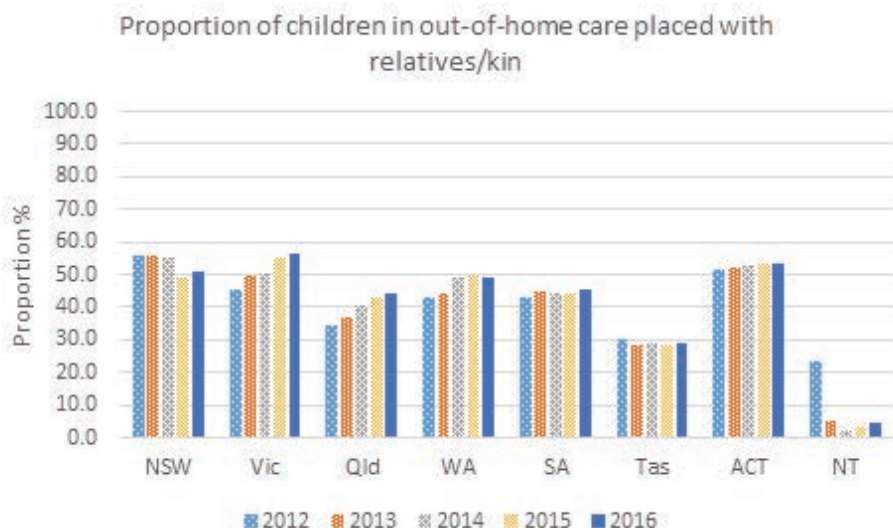
These numbers have been consistent across available time series data.

⁵⁴ Quoted directly from: Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 16.17.

Effectiveness indicator 5—Placement maintains connections

Proportion of children in out-of-home care placed with relatives/kin, 2012–2016

Data



	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
QLD	34.6%	37.2%	40.4%	42.9%	44.3%
AUS	46.7%	47.7%	48.5%	47.3%	48.7%

Source

Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.22.

Definition

This is the proportion of all children in out-of-home care who are placed with relatives or kin who receive government financial assistance to care for that child⁵⁵.

Analysis

At 30 June 2016, the proportion of children placed with relatives or kin in Queensland was 44.3%, slightly lower than the proportion of children Australian-wide (48.7%).

Queensland's proportion of children placed with relatives or kin has steadily increased by almost 10% since 2012.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

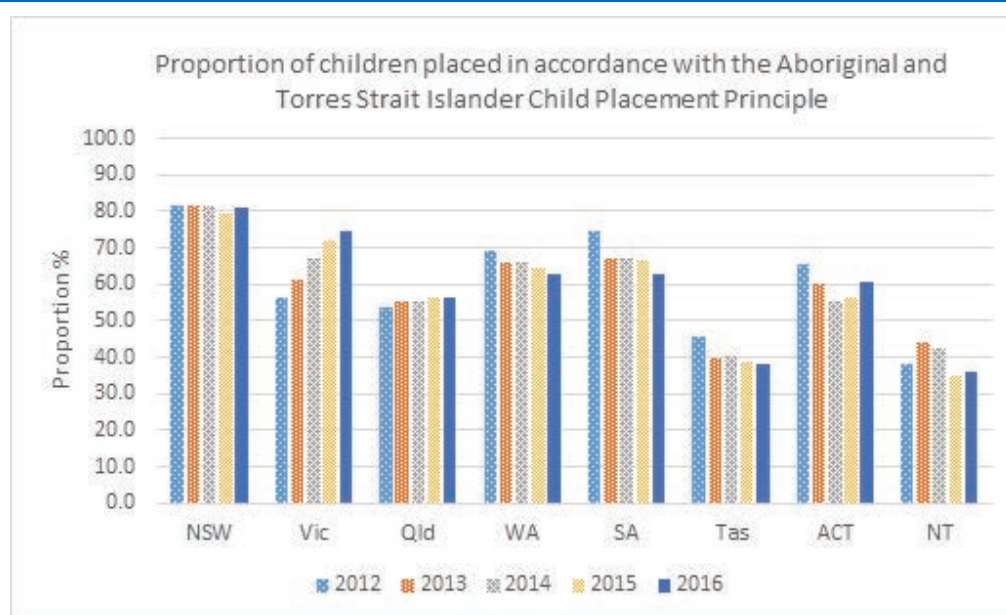
At 30 June 2016, 49.9% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care nationally were placed with relatives/kin. This number was marginally higher than the proportion of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at 48.1%.

The proportion of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children placed with relatives/kin has consistently risen since 2012. However, Queensland continues to measure below the national average. At 30 June 2016, Queensland had the second lowest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care placed with relatives/kin at 42.6%, ahead only of Tasmania at 26.3%.

⁵⁵ Quoted directly from: Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 16.18.

Proportion of children placed in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, 2014–16

Data



	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
QLD	53.7%	55.5%	55.1%	56.5%	56.6%
AUS	68.8%	68.8%	68.7%	67.1%	67.9%

Source

Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.23.

Definition

All Australian states and territories have adopted a hierarchy of placement options when placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care. 'Placement in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle' is the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care placed with the child's extended family, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people⁵⁶.

⁵⁶ The measure 'placement in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle' should be interpreted with care. This is a proxy measure, reporting the placement outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children rather than compliance with the principle (that is, the process of determining placement options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children) (Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p 16A.18).

Proportion of children placed in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, 2014–16

Analysis

Compared with other states and territories, Queensland's performance regarding children placed in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle is relatively poor.

It must be noted that definition of compliance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle used in the *Report on Government Services 2017* is not in strict accordance with the *Child Protection Act 1999*. Therefore, Queensland's results are not directly comparable with the national average and the data should be interpreted with caution.

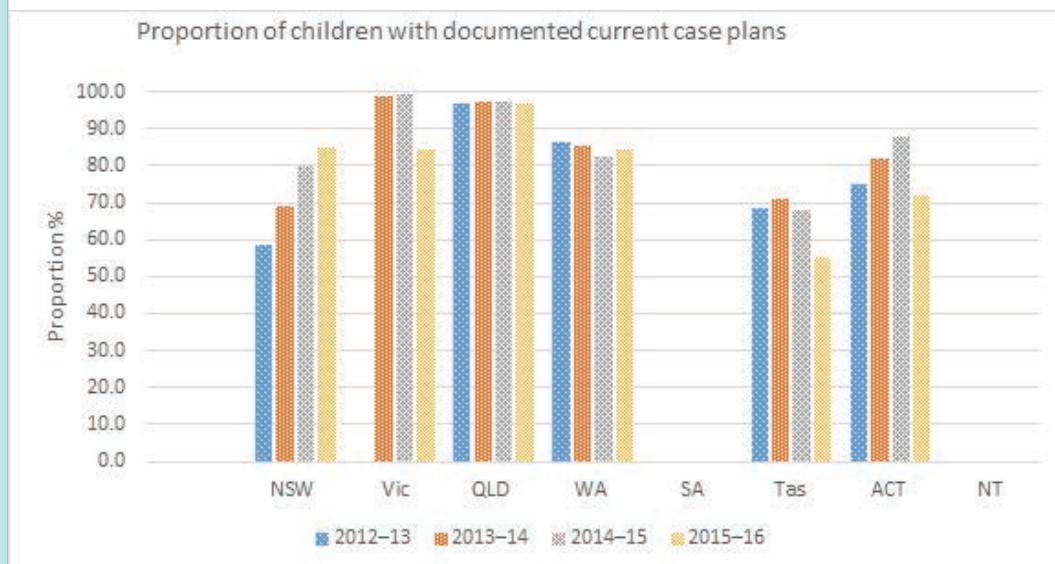
As at 30 June 2016, 56.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care in Queensland were placed in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principle. This is lower than the national proportion of 67.9%.

Nationally, the proportion of children placed in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle has decreased slightly over the past five years. In comparison, while consistently lower than the national average, Queensland's proportion has increased from 53.7% to 56.6%.

Effectiveness indicator 6—Children with current case plans

Proportion of children with documented current case plans 2012–16

Data



	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
QLD	97.0%	97.1%	97.1%	96.6%
AUS ⁵⁷	75.1%	82.1%	86.6%	86.3%

Source

Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.16.

Definition

A case plan is an individualised, dynamic written plan (or support agreement) developed between a family and an agency on the basis of an assessment process. A current documented case plan is one that has been approved and/or reviewed within the previous 12 months⁵⁸.

Data reported for these measures is comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time, but is not comparable across jurisdictions, as policies and legislation varies⁵⁹.

Analysis

Nationally, 86.3% of children required to have a current documented case plan had a plan at 30 June 2016.

The proportion of children with a current documented case plan in Queensland has remained relatively stable between 2013 and 2016 (96.6% to 97.1%) and consistently higher than the national average.

⁵⁷ Data is not available for SA due to systems changes in the case management and data reporting system. Data is not available for NT due to recording issues. Data is not available for Vic for the 2012–13 reporting period.

⁵⁸ Quoted directly from: Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p 16.21. This data was collected for the first time for the 2011–12 reporting period. Data is experimental and subject to further review and refinement in future reports (Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.16, explanatory notes).

⁵⁹ Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p 16A.18); Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.16, explanatory notes.

Proportion of children with documented current case plans 2012–16

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

In Queensland, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with a current documented case plan was higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

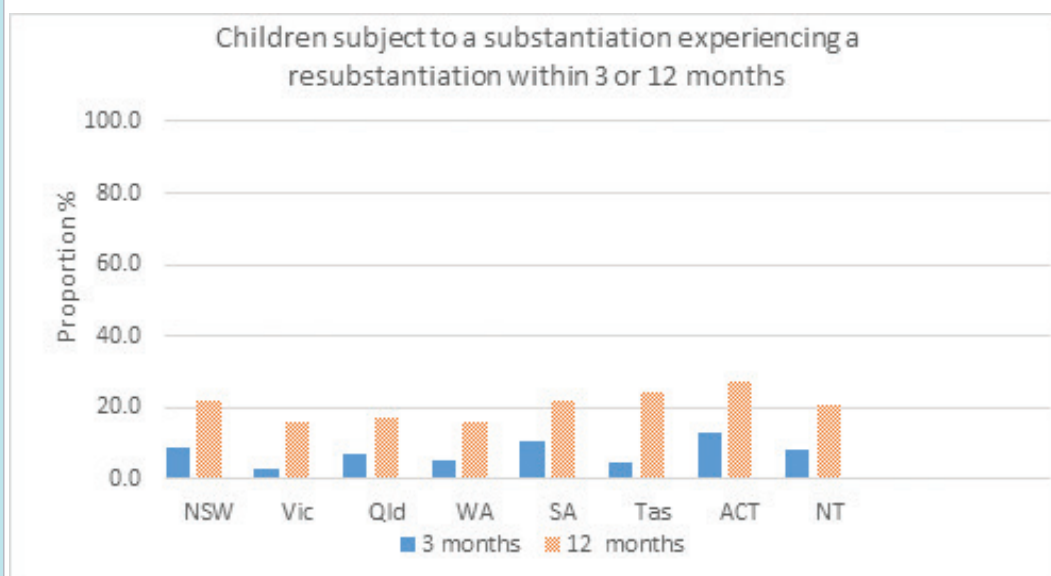
As at 30 June 2016, the proportion of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with a documented current case plan was 17.0% higher than the proportion of national population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with a documented case plan and 14.4% higher than the proportion of national population of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with a documented case plan.

Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are less likely to have a current documented case plan than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as at 30 June 2016 (80.5% compared with 83.1%).

Outcome indicator 1—Improved safety

Proportion of children aged 0–17 who were the subject of a substantiated investigation, who were also the subject of a resubstantiation within 3 and/or 12 months

Data



	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
QLD 3 months	8.4%	8.6%	7.4%	7.1%
QLD 12 months	20.4%	19.8%	18.2%	17.1%

Source

Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.12.

Definition

Substantiation rate after a prior substantiation is defined as the proportion of children who were the subject of a substantiation in the previous financial year, who were then the subject of a further substantiation within the following 3 or 12 months⁶⁰.

Data reported for these measures is comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time but is not comparable across jurisdictions. The year reported relates to the year of the initial substantiation⁶¹.

Analysis

The proportion of children subject to a substantiated investigation, who were the subject of a subsequent substantiation within 3 and/or 12 months in Queensland has decreased between 2012 and 2015 (8.4% to 7.1% and 20.4% to 17.1% respectively).

Queensland compares favourably against other jurisdictions, (7.1% in Queensland compared with 7.7% nationally for resubstantiation within 3 months and 17.1% compared with 20.7% for resubstantiation within 12 months).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

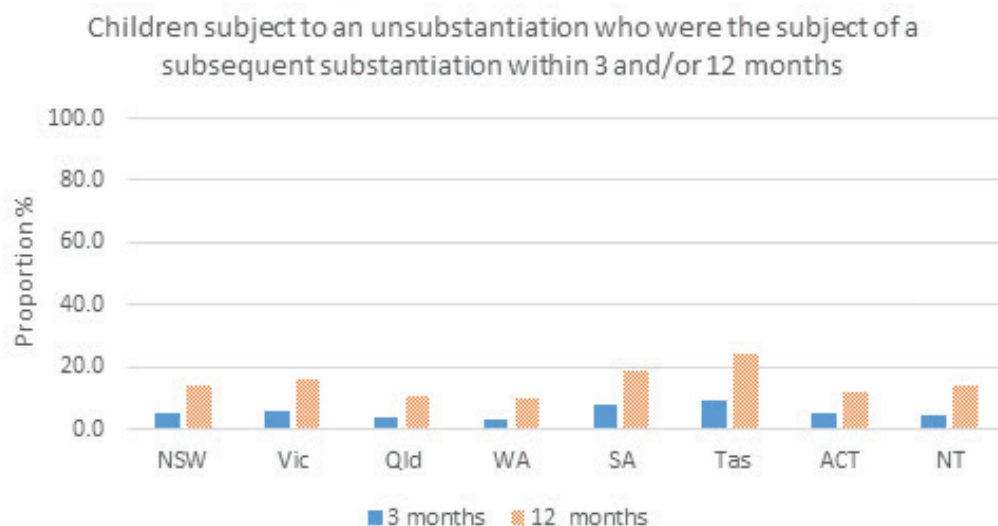
The *Report on Government Services 2017* data does not differentiate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for this indicator.

60 Quoted directly from: Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 16.28.

61 *ibid*.

Proportion of children aged 0–17 who were the subject of an unsubstantiated investigation, who were also the subject of a subsequent substantiation within 3 and/or 12 months

Data



	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
QLD 3 months	3.4%	4.2%	3.7%	4.1%
QLD 12 months	9.8%	11.6%	10.6%	10.6%

Source

Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.11.

Definition

Substantiation rate after a decision not to substantiate is defined as the proportion of children who were the subject of an investigation in the previous financial year that led to a decision not to substantiate, and who were later the subject of a substantiation within 3 or 12 months of the initial decision not to substantiate⁶².

Data reported for these measures is comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time but is not comparable across jurisdictions. The year reported relates to the year of the initial substantiation⁶³.

Analysis

The proportion of children subject to an unsubstantiation who were the subject of a subsequent substantiation within 3 and/or 12 months in Queensland has increased slightly between 2011 and 2015 (3.4% to 4.1% and 9.8% to 10.6% respectively). Queensland has the second lowest proportion of children subject to an unsubstantiation who were the subject of a subsequent substantiation within 3 and/or 12 months, after Western Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

The *Report on Government Services 2017* data does not differentiate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for this indicator.

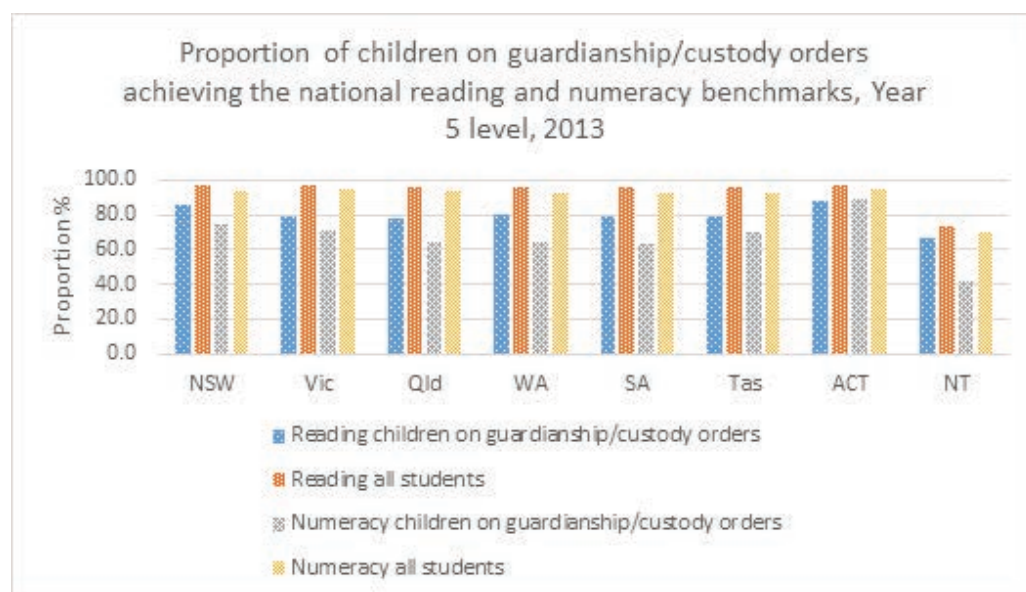
62 Quoted directly from: Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 16.28.

63 *ibid*.

Outcome indicator 2—Improved education

Proportion of children on guardianship/custody orders achieving the national reading and numeracy benchmarks, Year 5 level, 2013

Data⁶⁴



Source

Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, Table 16A.13.

Definition

'Improved education' is defined as the proportion of children on guardianship and custody orders achieving at or above national minimum standards in reading and numeracy in Year 5, compared with all children. It is desirable to have a high or increasing rate of children on guardianship and custody orders achieving at or above national minimum standards in reading and numeracy⁶⁵.

The availability of NAPLAN data for government and non-government school students varied across jurisdictions. Queensland includes government and non-government schools. For 2013 data: New South Wales, Victoria and Australian Capital Territory includes government, Catholic and Independent schools; Western Australia and Tasmania includes government schools only; Northern Territory includes government and Christian schools. This should be considered when interpreting the results, along with other contextual factors⁶⁶.

⁶⁴ Data reported for this measure is complete for the reporting period of 2013. Only Queensland and SA have data available for the 2014 reporting period.

⁶⁵ Quoted directly from: Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', *Report on Government Services 2017*, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 16.31.

⁶⁶ *ibid*, Table 16A.13, explanatory notes.

Proportion of children on guardianship/custody orders achieving the national reading and numeracy benchmarks, Year 5 level, 2013

Analysis	<p>In Queensland, the proportion of children in care who are at or above the national minimum standards for Year 5 reading and numeracy was significantly below the proportion for all students (78.0% for reading and 64.5% for numeracy, compared to 96.2% and 93.6% of all Queensland children respectively).</p> <p>In comparison to other jurisdictions, the proportion of children in care in Queensland achieving the national reading and numeracy standards is below the national average for children in care for both reading and numeracy⁶⁷.</p>
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	<p>The <i>Report on Government Services 2017</i> data does not differentiate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for this indicator.</p>

⁶⁷ When interpreting NAPLAN data, it is important to take into account student participation rates. Children exempted from NAPLAN testing are recorded as not having met the national minimum standards in reading and numeracy. Experimental data indicates that children on guardianship and custody orders are exempted from NAPLAN testing at significantly higher rates than the general student population, which might contribute to poorer reported NAPLAN results for children on orders, compared with the general student population (Productivity Commission 2017, 'Chapter 16: Child protection services', Report on Government Services 2017, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 16.31).

Assessment summary

In assessing Queensland's performance over time in comparison with other jurisdictions, the QFCC considers performance to be:

- 'good' when Queensland data is better than the national totals or the majority of states and territories,
- 'satisfactory' when Queensland data is on par with national totals or the majority of states and territories
- 'requires improvement' when Queensland data is below par with national totals or the majority of states.

Overall, the most recent publicly available national child protection data suggests that Queensland's performance is variable, being good in some areas and requiring improvement in others. The table below summarises the key result for each measure, supporting data, and our assessment of these results.

Summary of key results and the QFCC's assessment by measure

Measure	Key results (2016–17)	Supporting data	Assessment
Response time to complete investigations	Fewer investigations are completed within 28 days in Queensland.	16.1% in Queensland compared to the national total of 40.7%.	Requires improvement
Stability of placement	Queensland children in care for five or more years are more likely to have experienced between six and 10 placements, and less likely to have had only one or two placements than children elsewhere in Australia.	31.46% of Queensland children exiting care after five years or more had experienced between six and 10 placements, compared to 20.49% of children in all other states and territories; 21.46% of Queensland children had experienced only one or two placements, compared to 38.52% of children in other jurisdictions.	Requires improvement
Children aged under 12 years in home-based care	The majority of Queensland children in care aged under 12 years are in home-based care.	97.6% of Queensland children compared to the national total of 97.4%.	Good
Placement with relatives or kin	Fewer children in care are placed with extended family in Queensland.	44.3% of Queensland children compared to the national total of 48.7%.	Requires improvement
Placement in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle	Fewer Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are placed with kin or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers.	56.6% of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are placed in accordance with the placement principle compared to 67.9% for all jurisdictions.	Requires improvement

Measure	Key results (2016–17)	Supporting data	Assessment
Children with current case plans	The majority of children in care in Queensland have a current case plan.	96.6% of Queensland children; national total is 86.3%.	Good
Improved safety	<p>A smaller proportion of Queensland children were subject to a substantiation compared to other states and territories.</p> <p>A smaller proportion of Queensland children were subject to a substantiation within 12 months following a decision not to substantiate than in other states and territories.</p>	<p>17.1% of Queensland children were re-substantiated within 12 months, compared to a range of 15.8% to 27.4% in other jurisdictions.</p> <p>10.6% of Queensland children were subject to a substantiation compared to a range of 9.7% to 24.5% in other jurisdictions.</p>	Satisfactory
Improved education	Fewer children in care in Queensland are achieving the national minimum standards for Year 5 reading and numeracy.	78% compared to an average total across jurisdictions of 79.5% for reading, 64.5% compared to 67.4% for numeracy.	Requires improvement

Queensland's performance on these indicators is expected to be affected over the coming years with the continued implementation of the reform agenda, most notably, the significant investment in developing the secondary support system. The QFCC will continue to examine and appraise Queensland's performance in these areas in comparison to other states and territories, as one part of our systemic oversight role.

