



Objective Two

Raise awareness and advocate for children and their families

The QFCC provides leadership on matters that impact on the safety, rights and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families. We do this by raising awareness and advocating for them. We are in a unique position to do this, with a legislated mandate and a system-level perspective. We deliver objective analysis and advice that supports government decision-making and system improvement. Underpinning this objective is hearing from Queensland children, young people and their families so their views can inform change.

In 2021–22, the QFCC made formal submissions, spoke at public hearings and facilitated youth participation opportunities to make sure children's voices were heard and children's rights were considered in the development and implementation of policy. We use different forums and channels across the Queensland community to raise awareness and influence change. These included:

- our public facing website
- position statements and information papers
- submissions to inform reviews and inquiries
- recommendations about relevant laws, policies, practices and services
- participation on national and state reference groups and working groups
- strong partnerships with government and non-government agencies
- consultation with children, young people and their families and communities.

Public advocacy

During 2021–22, the QFCC and QFCC youth advocates contributed written submissions with recommendations to reviews and inquiries, including:

- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's review of the Australian Curriculum
- Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce first discussion paper
- Implementing the successor plan to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, led by the Department of Social Services (Commonwealth)
- Queensland Parliamentary inquiry into Social Isolation and Loneliness
- Options for legislating against coercive control and the creation of a standalone domestic violence offence for Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce
- Women and girls' experience of the criminal justice system for Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce
- Inspector of Detention Services Bill 2021
- Review of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*

- Review of the *Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*
- Mental Health Select Committee inquiry into the opportunities to improve mental health outcomes for Queenslanders
- Criminal Law (Raising the Age of Responsibility) Bill 2021
- Working with Children (Indigenous Communities) Amendment Bill 2021
- Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021
- The ACCC Infant Inclined Products issues paper
- The ACCC Helium Balloon Kits discussion paper
- The ACCC Toppling Furniture consultation paper on regulatory options
- Workplace Health and Safety Queensland Quad Bikes and Side-by-side Vehicles Safety discussion paper
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications consultation on the Vehicle Reversing Aids Regulation Impact Statement.

Our submissions are available on our website.

Parliamentary hearings and inquiries

Throughout 2021–22, the QFCC commissioners and staff appeared before 3 parliamentary hearings and contributed to one taskforce. These were:

- **Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, oversight hearing:** On 28 March 2022, our commissioners and executive directors gave an overview of the QFCC’s key pieces of work including *Principle focus; Rights, voices, stories; Growing up in Queensland; Measuring what matters; Yarning for change* and the first Child Death Review Board annual report. Our executive team highlighted concerns about the rising incidence of youth suicide in Queensland, the pervasiveness of domestic violence in the case files we review, the life trajectories of children who are removed from their family, and society’s view of children who commit a crime.
- **Mental Health Select Committee:** In February 2022, the Mental Health Select Committee invited representatives of the QFCC Youth Advisory Council to attend a private hearing with committee members. The youth advocates’ candour and courage in speaking about their views and experiences of mental health was admirable. The parliamentary hearing was an excellent opportunity to amplify the voices of young Queenslanders in this important conversation. The Mental Health Select Committee report was tabled in Parliament in June 2022. Youth advocates who appeared before the Committee were quoted in the report and their comments were reflected in the 57 recommendations made to improve mental health outcomes for all Queenslanders.
- **Minimum age of criminal responsibility:** In October 2021, the QFCC made a formal submission to the Queensland Parliament Community Support and Services Committee regarding the Criminal Law (Raising the Age of Responsibility) Bill 2021. In February 2022, the commissioners spoke at the committee’s public hearing, advocating for the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Queensland to be raised to 14 years in line with international expectations and emerging research on children’s capability to understand their actions at such a young age. We will continue to advocate for reform in this area in 2022–23, including through our program of youth justice oversight.
- **Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce:** In 2021–22, the QFCC made 3 submissions to the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce, highlighting the experience of girls and young women of domestic, family and sexual violence. We also provided a copy of the QFCC Model of Participation to the taskforce and facilitated 2 workshops for the taskforce to speak directly to the QFCC Youth Advisory Council about their experiences. The QFCC submissions and comments from the QFCC Youth Advisory Council were directly quoted and referenced in the taskforce’s 2 reports, contributing to the 274 recommendations the taskforce made to reform legislation, policy and practice in Queensland.

Media advocacy

Throughout 2021–22, the QFCC engaged in public campaigns and public commentary to raise awareness and advocate for children and their families. Key topics included:

- school disciplinary absences
- youth participation in the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce
- age of children in residential care
- extending the age of support for children in care from 18 to 21
- *Growing up in Queensland: Living through COVID* report
- youth participation in the Mental Health Select Committee.

The QFCC led messages that focused on 6 key areas:

- advocating for children and young people
- listening to the views of children and young people
- advocating for the rights of children and young people
- supporting the child protection and family support sector
- influencing policy
- influencing change in the Queensland child protection system.

We analyse our media coverage each year to evaluate our public reputation and the likely impact of our messages among our target audiences. Between May 2021 and April 2022, the QFCC featured in 879 media reports (including syndicated coverage), generated through proactive opportunities, reactive media enquiries, or passing mentions. Overall, 66% of coverage was positive or very positive in tone.

Coverage promoting reports released by the QFCC attracted the most media coverage, with our *Growing up in Queensland* and *Changing the Sentence* reports featuring prominently and positively throughout the period. Other notable media coverage centred around the QFCC’s child death data, our advocacy around raising the age of criminal responsibility and the extension of support for young people in care to age 21.

Media monitoring organisation Isentia assigned us a Media Impact Score of 3.4. This score is derived from a comparative index of more than 400 Australian organisations’ media performance across 2020. Our score is comparable with the media performances of organisations in the university and not-for-profit sectors and sits at the ‘very positive’ end of the spectrum.

In addition to public media activities, QFCC commissioners and staff also raised awareness of the rights, safety and wellbeing of children at events, webinars and panel discussions. In 2021–22, this included:

- Children’s Policy Centre webinar panel discussion on embedding children and young people’s views, experiences, and rights into your work
- Diplomacy Training Program Webinar on advancing Children’s Rights via the UN Reporting Mechanism – the role of the UN and Children’s Commissioners
- CREATE Foundation Voices in Action biennial conference.

Research

The QFCC translates research into easily usable information for policy makers and practitioners, to assist them in helping vulnerable Queensland children and families. Our research agenda identifies opportunities and priorities to expand the evidence base on matters that are relevant to Queensland children, young people and families, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups. In 2021–22, as part of the QFCC’s *Research Agenda 2019–22*, we developed 8 research summaries:

- Alcohol and drug use during pregnancy
- Educational outcomes for children in contact with the child protection system
- Supporting education and training opportunities for young care leavers
- The effectiveness of digital mental health interventions for young people
- The extent and impact of alcohol and drug use by Australian young people
- The extent of infant mental health disorders
- The importance of culture, kinship systems and community
- Trend data on youth suicide in Queensland.

Major research completed by the QFCC this year included:

- ***Taking Lives – A Queensland study on parents who kill their children:*** In 2021–22, we concluded a project on children who are at risk of fatal assault or neglect by a parent—an act known as filicide. The research defined evidence-based red flags for children who died from fatal assault and neglect, using data from the Queensland Child Death Register and agency child death review reports. The research report *Final Report – A study of indicators of red flags for fatal child assault and neglect in Queensland* was released in June 2022. We also produced a summary of key risk factors for filicide: *Taking Lives – A Queensland study on parents who kill their children*, released in June 2022. Both documents contribute to the evidence base on risk factors and were provided to key stakeholders charged with responsibility for protecting children.
- **Annual report on child deaths in Queensland:** The QFCC’s *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people, Queensland 2020–21* was tabled in the Queensland Parliament on 17 February 2022. *Child deaths in Queensland* factsheets outlined the key findings including on drowning, deaths of children known to the child protection system and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child mortality. The QFCC also published the annual Australia and New Zealand Child Death Statistics on behalf of the Australia and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group.

Improving access to our message

The QFCC is committed to building and maintaining strong connections with children, young people, families and other stakeholders. Providing the right information, to the right people, using the right channel is an important part of accessibility. In 2021–22, the QFCC adopted a new digital media strategy and opened a LinkedIn account that, with our Facebook and Instagram profiles has extended our reach to more Queenslanders.

In June 2022, we launched a new, user-friendly website, with refreshed QFCC branding. The website affords a fresh opportunity to connect with Queensland young people, families and partnering organisations. The website has several new features to connect target audiences with the information they need most. There is a dedicated ‘youth’ space, containing a guide to child protection, stories from young people and blogs written by QFCC youth advocates. The ‘families’ space is for parents and carers, containing videos and blogs and promoting the work of the *Families are first* initiative, celebrating First Nations families and communities. The new ‘assistance’ page has quick links to support services that are easily accessible, even on mobile devices.

The redeveloped website also provides a platform to showcase the good work achieved by the commission, our partners and the community. It will continue to provide easy access to QFCC publications, news and policy submissions.