

## Objective Four

# Support, connect and collaborate with organisations that advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children

Improving child and family wellbeing throughout Queensland requires focus and effort that reaches across individual systems and portfolios. All stakeholders must work collaboratively to ensure a comprehensive and coherent approach to legislation, policy, funding and service delivery that benefits Queensland's children and families.

The QFCC is uniquely positioned to bring together diverse voices to contribute to key issues that impact on the wellbeing of children and their families. We work with other statutory agencies, peak bodies and our counterparts in other jurisdictions to achieve common outcomes and collective benefits. By employing a collaborative approach, we can maximise our impact and assist others to achieve common goals.

## Working in partnership

The QFCC develops and maintains partnerships with a broad range of peak bodies, industry partners, communities, advisory groups, academics, and government and non-government organisations.

## QFCC Advisory Council

In line with Part 4 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, the Principal Commissioner established an advisory council to:

- help promote the shared responsibility all Queenslanders have for keeping children safe
- provide insight into the issues affecting children, families and the child and family support sector
- provide guidance on the work of the QFCC.

The Advisory Council met 3 times in 2021–22. Its membership currently comprises:

Luke Twyford (Jan–Jun 22)	Chief Executive Officer and Principal Commissioner, QFCC (Chair)
Natalie Lewis	Commissioner, QFCC
Kay Ganley	Former owner and Chief Executive Officer, Charlton Brown
Assistant Commissioner Cameron Harsley APM	Organisational Capability Command, Queensland Police Service
Hetty Johnston AM	Founder and former Chief Executive Officer, Bravehearts Inc
Zoe Rathus AO	Senior Lecturer in Law, Griffith Law School
Heather Watson	Director and Principal Lawyer, Watson Advisory & Consulting Pty Ltd
Dr Gerald Featherstone	Chief Executive Officer, Kummara Association

## Strategic Cross-Agency Oversight Group

The Strategic Cross-Agency Oversight Group meets quarterly to discuss sector-wide trends and issues relating to children, young people and their families, with a focus on systemic and cross-agency oversight. The QFCC Principal Commissioner chairs the group, which comprises representatives from the following agencies:

- QFCC
- Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
- Queensland Human Rights Commission
- Crime and Corruption Commission
- Queensland Mental Health Commission
- Office of the Health Ombudsman
- Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- Coroners Court of Queensland
- Office of the Public Guardian
- Queensland Integrity Commission
- Office of Child Protection Litigation
- Queensland Magistrates Courts Service.

The Strategic Cross-Agency Oversight Group met in July 2021, when it was addressed by then-Deputy Under Treasurer Graham Fraine, and in November 2021, when it was addressed by Children’s Court of Queensland President, Her Honour Judge Deborah Richards.

## QFCC Community Partnerships Group

The QFCC also chairs the QFCC Community Partnerships Group, an advocacy alliance of non-government peak bodies and statutory bodies. This forum enables the QFCC to engage and partner with key stakeholders and system influencers to identify and discuss persistent and emerging strategic issues that impact on the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and young people. At its first meeting of 2022, the group discussed the upcoming public hearing of the *Criminal Law (Raising the Age of Responsibility) Amendment Bill 2021*, where both our commissioners presented evidence.

By working collectively, the member agencies of the group strengthen their powers of advocacy, using their different roles and areas of influence. Meetings are held 4 times per year.

Other partners the QFCC worked with in 2021–22 include:

- Australia and New Zealand Children’s Commissioners and Guardians
- Family and Child Connect
- Australian Institute of Family Studies
- Queensland Child Protection Week Committee
- Family Matters
- Queensland First Children and Families Board
- QATSICPP
- Queensland Council of Social Services
- Peak Care Queensland
- Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council
- Queensland Equity Framework Partnership Governance Group
- Queensland Police Service (as part of Domestic and Family Violence Advisory Group)
- The Australian Child Rights Taskforce
- The Committee for Economic Development of Australia.

In addition to these formal groups, our staff attended a range of other events with our partners in 2021–22. These included the 2022 Qld Parliament’s Flood Appeal Reception, the Daniel Morcombe Foundation’s Dance for Daniel, the Office for Youth’s Speak Out event, meet ups with yourtown and Kids Helpline, the PeakCare awards, National Reconciliation Week Launch and Breakfast, QCOSS 2022 State Budget Breakfast, and the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership Parliamentary Event.

The QFCC’s child death prevention staff participated on several advisory bodies, such as the:

- Consumer Product Injury Research Advisory Group
- Queensland Government Births and Deaths Working Group
- Interim Queensland Suicide Prevention Network
- Queensland Paediatric Quality Council Steering Committee
- Infant Mortality Sub-committee
- Road Safety Research Network
- Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group
- Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) Multiagency Advisory Group.

## Collaborative projects

Projects delivered in partnership are summarised below.

### Online safety—*Out of the Dark*

This initiative involves the collaboration of the QFCC with the Queensland Police Service Task Force Argos, the Department of Education, the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, yourtown, Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation and Bravehearts.

*Out of the Dark* helps children, young people and adults to prevent, recognise and respond to online child sexual exploitation. It undertakes community education activities to raise awareness of the need for online safety, especially regarding online sexual grooming of children and young people. In May 2022, the QFCC hosted the Amplify Forum: Solutions for Online Safety, which focused on children's rights online and designing key messages and resources that promote healthy digital practices among young people. The forum was co-designed by QFCC youth advocates and featured guest speakers from Kids Helpline, eSafety and the Australian National University.

### Children's Week

In 2021–22, the QFCC provided funding for Children's Rights Queensland, a not-for-profit organisation that delivers initiatives to raise awareness of children's rights, including providing a central coordination point for activities held during Children's Week. Children's Rights Queensland administered 79 small grants to community organisations across Queensland to run children's week events, commissioned and launched *The Right to Be Me* picture book, launched the Children's Rights Queensland ambassador program and delivered the Young Leaders Challenge.

### Queensland Youth Week

The QFCC partnered with the Office of Youth to celebrate young people aged 12 to 25 and the positive contributions they make to Queensland. Our youth advocates were profiled throughout Youth Week in April 2022 on the QFCC's Instagram channel, with youth advocates sharing their experiences and issues that are important to them. The youth advocates also participated in a consultation session with the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce and attended the Speak Out event with government ministers.

### The Right to Be Me picture book

Volunteers from the QFCC, Queensland Foster and Kinship Care, Mercy, Troocoo and Child Rights Foundation came together to pack calendars and *The Right to Be Me* children's picture book for every foster and kinship care home in Queensland. Delivering this book will help develop literacy skills, teach children about their rights and thank foster and kinship care families.

### Mental health service access for young people

Among the recommendations of the 2020–21 Child Death Review Board Annual Report, was to 'develop and deliver youth-friendly messages to raise awareness about mental health services for children and young people, and about their right and ability to access these.' In response, the QFCC partnered with headspace to deliver a campaign about accessing services and the benefits of young people having a Medicare card.

We recognised headspace's leadership in youth mental health and rapport with young people and took advantage of their communication channels for this 4-week campaign in June 2022. The campaign reached one million young people. Those young people saw the social media advertisement, on average, 6 times with almost 8,000 reading a detailed blog about the benefits of a Medicare card to access support.

### Triple A Radio multimedia program for young First Nations people

The QFCC collaborated with Triple A Radio to deliver a multimedia program for young First Nations people throughout June 2022. The Intro to Radio program provided young people, aged 13–18 years, a voice and different ways to tell their story.

The young people learned how to produce a radio show using storytelling, with a special focus on yarning about the history and culture of First Nations Peoples and finding songs that mean something to them. The 5-week program focused on the history and culture of how First Nations people have used storytelling as a powerful means of passing on knowledge and culture. It also taught the fundamental principles of radio, song selection to enhance stories and how to develop your own radio program.

## Child death data

The QFCC maintains the Queensland Child Death Register containing data available for research, public education, policy development and program design. Access to the comprehensive dataset is available at no cost to researchers. In 2021–22, we responded to 21 requests from researchers and government agencies for detailed data from the register and we produced key factsheets on key matters including the deaths of children known to the child protection system and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child mortality.

Over the year our child death data was made available to inform:

- suicide data – First Children and Families Board, Government Statistician’s Office, Local Government Association and Local Thriving Communities (Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships)
- safety standards – ACCC in relation to infant sleep products, sleep aids, prams and toppling furniture
- infant safety – University of Sunshine Coast in relation to baby slings and strangulation hazards
- drowning data – Royal Lifesaving Society, Kidsafe and Queensland Building and Construction Commission
- interstate residents – for child death reporting in the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and Victoria.

QFCC child death data was also used to make submissions in relation to:

- infant inclined products issues paper – ACCC
- helium balloon kits confidential discussion paper – ACCC
- toppling furniture assessment of regulatory options – ACCC
- vehicle reversing aid technologies regulatory impact statement – Department of Infrastructure
- quad bike safety regulations – Workplace Health and Safety Queensland.

Our partnerships relating to child death include a crucial information sharing process with the Department of Education to inform student wellbeing policy development and support suicide prevention in affected schools. We have contributed to suicide prevention by:

- increasing awareness across government of trends and spikes in suicide numbers
- reporting on situational circumstances and risk factors affecting young people
- providing suicide data to government agencies to support development of mental health and wellbeing initiatives

During 2021–22, we concluded the migration of data into the new child death database Coda, developed a data dictionary and made system refinements to improve functionality in several areas.

## Safer Pathways Through Childhood framework

The QFCC has developed a framework to set the direction of the QFCC’s child death prevention activities for the next 5 years to 2027. The *Safer Pathways Through Childhood* framework is designed to maximise the impact of the QFCC’s legislated child death prevention functions and direct its priorities for the future. It details how the QFCC will use its data and expertise on child deaths to uphold all children’s rights to a full life and health equity. It is not intended as a state-wide strategy or to govern the work of other agencies.

To ensure the framework is supported by clear and tangible actions, the QFCC will identify specific prevention activities with stakeholders in an annual action plan. The framework was released in June 2022.

## Child Death Review Board

The Child Death Review Board was established under legislation in 2020 to conduct systemic reviews following the death of a child connected to the child protection system, identify opportunities to improve the child protection system and prevent future deaths. The QFCC hosts the Board, with QFCC staff providing the corporate, secretariat and review coordination functions. The board comprises 12 members with relevant experience and skills and has 50% non-government members and 2 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander members. It is chaired by Luke Twyford, Principal Commissioner of the QFCC.

In 2021–22, with the support of the QFCC secretariat team, the board:

- finalised research with the Queensland Paediatric Quality Council on sudden unexpected death in infancy and considered this research to inform its findings
- undertook a review of cases considered by the CDRB that involved domestic and family violence in the year prior to the child's death and commissioned a literature review of domestic and family violence responses and promising practices
- published a research paper on the prevalence and drivers of suicide among children known to the child protection system (commissioned in 2020–21)
- shared learnings with Queensland, inter-state and national stakeholders through presentations and conferences
- undertook an evaluation of the CDRB implementation and operations, with findings to inform updates to CDRB processes in 2022–23
- developed data framework and tools to help monitor and report on recurring issues observed across child death review cases
- continued to lead the Cross-Agency Reviews Group to identify emerging issues and share learnings from the new child death review model
- wrote to multiple government agencies to share findings from child death reviews and encouraging action to be taken by agencies in response
- delivered its inaugural annual report, tabled in Parliament on 17 February 2022.

The board's inaugural annual report highlighted several areas that required monitoring including:

- over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children amongst those who had died
- trends of great concern in relation to youth suicide, including females using more lethal means and younger children committing suicide
- multiple sudden unexpected deaths in infancy.

The board made 10 recommendations which were accepted or accepted in-principle by government, across 3 key areas:

- improved access to family support services and evaluation of their effectiveness in diverting families from needing child safety interventions
- more thorough assessments of a child's family protection history, previously observed exposure to harm, patterns of parental behaviour, cultural factors and health advice
- greater investment in suicide prevention and postvention across government and the sector—specifically to reduce the over-representation of suicide in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children—to establish a shared understanding of the long-term impacts of childhood trauma and to improve access to mental health and suicide support in schools.