

Objective Five

Build our capacity, capability and culture to achieve our vision

The QFCC maintains a culture of continuous improvement to our performance, processes, governance and internal systems, with the aim of achieving operational excellence. We understand the importance of having a diverse and inclusive workplace culture, and we also understand the need to foster excellence and expertise in our staff.

Our workforce profile

Our workforce is employed under the *Public Service Act 2008*, except for the Principal Commissioner and Commissioner, who are employed under the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*. As at 30 June 2022, the QFCC employed 64 full-time equivalent staff. Our staff profile was 82% female and 18% male, with 8% identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 4% identifying as having a disability (see Table 8).

Total employee expenses for 2021–22 was \$9.698 million.

Table 8: QFCC staff demographics

	FTE	
Total FTE for Queensland Family and Child Commission	64.39 ¹⁷⁵	

Gender	Number (headcount)	Percentage of total workforce (calculated on headcount)
Woman	62	81.58
Man	14	18.42
Non-binary	0	0

Table 8: QFCC staff demographics

EEO Groups	Number ¹⁷⁶ (headcount)	Percentage of total workforce (calculated on headcount)
Women	62	81.58
Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples	6	7.89
People with a disability	3	3.95
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse – Born overseas	11	14.47
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse – Speak a language at home other than English (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages or Australian South Sea Islander languages)	5	6.58
	Number (headcount)	Percentage of total Leadership Cohort (calculated on headcount)
Women in leadership roles ¹⁷⁷	6	54.55

Our performance

Service delivery statement

In the service delivery statements of the Queensland State Budget 2021–22, the QFCC had one service area objective. This was to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and the role of families and communities in protecting and caring for them.

This is measured through the following service standards:

Table 9: QFCC service standards and targets

QFCC service standard	Notes	2021–22 target	2021–22 actual
Percentage increase in searches on the <i>oneplace</i> Community services directory (Effectiveness measure)	1, 2, 3	5%	12%
Overall satisfaction with <i>oneplace</i> Community services directory user experience (Effectiveness measure)	1, 2, 3	70%	51%
Queensland Family and Child Commission expenditure per young Queenslanders (Efficiency measure)		<\$12.00	\$11.82

Notes:

- The *oneplace* Community services directory is an easily accessible directory of several of the QFCC's statutory obligations, including supporting families to take responsibility and care for children and informing and educating the community about services.
- Data highlights that although recent promotion has resulted in an increase in people accessing *oneplace*, they are not using the website to access services.
- This service standard will be discontinued from 2022–23 as the QFCC will no longer be supporting the *oneplace* Community services directory.

Independent performance review

Section 41 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* requires the government to commission an independent review of the QFCC's performance. In 2021, an independent third party (ACIL Allen) was appointed to conduct the review and the report was tabled in the Queensland Parliament on 13 January 2022. The review concluded that the QFCC has performed its legislative functions well with some opportunities for improvement.

The review recommended minor changes to the Act and QFCC practice, including:

- working strategically with other agencies
- ensuring effective feedback between the Office of the Public Guardian and the QFCC
- revisiting the workforce development and planning function
- reassessing the child protection information material released by the QFCC
- streamlining or reallocating the research agenda and evaluation capability-building functions
- providing a clear portfolio of work that is the responsibility of the commissioner or consider appointing joint principal commissioners including one who is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person
- considering ways to further demonstrate achievements and outcomes
- engaging and collaborating with the sector in meaningful ways.

The review found that the QFCC was at a 'significant stage in the organisation life cycle. There is, therefore, a need for the QFCC to look forward to the next chapter.' In response to the review's recommendations, we undertook a process to modernise and realign our functions, organisational structure and operating model, to deliver on our legislative objectives more thoroughly. These organisational changes are summarised below.

Review of the QFCC's impact

Since 2014, we have undertaken several system reviews and presented over 200 recommendations to improve the child protection system that have been accepted fully or accepted in-principle by government. In 2021–22, we commissioned an independent assessment to determine whether the QFCC's reviews and recommendations were contributing to system improvement, and consequently whether the QFCC was influencing positive change. The QFCC commissioned this review to be transparent about the strengths and gaps in its performance and to inform how future reviews could be conducted.

The review sought to understand the contribution that completed recommendations had made to system improvements, the relevance of incomplete recommendations; and how future recommendations could have a greater effect on system change. The review considered 208 recommendations, finding 55% had been completed, 34% were still in progress and 3% had not commenced. Based on agency advice, a further 8% were listed as 'proposed to close' due to subsequent changes in policy positions or strategic reforms rendering recommendations no longer relevant.

Overall, the review found that 'the QFCC has played an important role in leading reforms across the system that supports children, young people, and families in Queensland' and that 'There continues to be a role for the QFCC in leading ongoing engagement with agencies and service providers to enhance the oversight of the child and family support system'. The review made 9 suggestions for improving the influence of the QFCC, all of which have been accepted.

New strategic plan

In 2021–22, we refreshed our strategic plan, to ensure a clear vision and strategic objectives for the future, based on a united approach and shared leadership. Throughout its development, we used a consultative process to engage staff and stakeholders on our purpose and our objectives for the future. The new strategic plan presents a vision that 'Every child is loved, respected and has their rights upheld.' This vision puts children and their best interests at the centre of all decision-making and will guide our future work. The strategic plan is accessible on our website.

New governance model

A major focus of the QFCC in 2022 has been to embed a ‘one commission’ governance model across the agency that emphasises transparency and shared accountability. The implementation of this new governance model has included:

- clear decision-making processes and greater staff participation, including at the highest level of our corporate governance body, our Executive Leadership Board
- a new briefing template to encourage collaboration and information sharing and reduce decision-making silos.

Internal policies and procedures

In 2021–22, the QFCC adopted and implemented a number of new policies and procedures to support staff during their employment with us. These included:

- adopting a new recruitment policy and procedure with a clearer expectation about the use of internal and external merit-based selection processes including a focus on positive performance management principles and greater referee input
- revising our financial and human resource delegations to support additional accountability and responsibility, tailored to our operating environment, for greater consistency in decision-making
- drafting a new individual employee grievance policy and procedure for the effective and timely resolution of employee grievances
- continuing our participation in the Career Pathways Service to increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in leadership and decision-making roles
- increased reporting and oversight of performance and hours of work arrangements monitored through the Human Resources Strategic Sub-Committee and the Executive Leadership Board.

Workforce planning

As an equal opportunity employer, we value and respect the skills and insights of people who are diverse in gender, culture, age, life stage, sexual orientation and disability. We support inclusion and an environment that fosters cultural integrity. We strive to create a healthy and safe working environment free from harassment, bullying, discrimination and violence.

Our workforce planning is regularly reviewed to make sure our workforce strategies and initiatives remain relevant and consider the needs of staff and the organisation. In 2021–22, we:

- offered broad and targeted health and wellbeing initiatives to support mental, physical, financial, and social wellbeing
- provided staff with a diverse range of on-the-job and external professional development opportunities to build leadership capability
- engaged all people managers in mandatory performance conversations training to strengthen engagement and help individuals and teams perform at their best
- addressed findings from the 2021 Working for Queensland Employee Opinion survey
- implemented a new ‘one commission’ governance model with clearer decision-making processes, and greater staff participation
- participated as a partner agency in the Public Service Commission’s career pathways service to increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in leadership and decision-making roles across the sector
- implemented a corporate communications strategy for increased communication and information sharing, including celebrating events and days of significance
- increased engagement with young people to influence the work of the QFCC
- developed a Journey with Us—resource library on our intranet to strengthen our organisational culture, and embed approaches and perspectives that help us respond to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

- had several staff participate in the Public Safety and Integrity Agencies Leading Women’s Network, which promotes a diverse and inclusive work environment and provides increased professional development and networking opportunities
- continued to promote and provide flexible work arrangements to optimise staff health and wellbeing, particularly during the pandemic
- refreshed our strategic plan, to ensure clear vision and strategic objectives for the future based on a united approach and articulation of a shared vision and values
- provided proactive professional support services to staff whose roles expose them to vicarious trauma
- delivered a Youth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health First Aid course and vicarious trauma training to staff who conduct engagement activities with children and young people and families who have a youth justice experience
- implemented a new workplace health and safety policy and procedure and individual employee grievance policy and procedures
- continued to fine-tune our organisational structure and governance arrangements to best support our strategic direction and work priorities.

Attraction and retention

The QFCC has implemented initiatives to attract and retain an inclusive, diverse and capable workforce, by:

- using strategies and initiatives from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy
- joining as a partner agency the Leading Women Network which aims to promote a diverse and inclusive work environment through the representation of women in all levels of workplaces—we conducted several professional development opportunities and networking events in 2021–22.

Early retirement, redundancy and retrenchment

- No redundancy, early retirement or retrenchment packages were paid in 2021–22.

Queensland public service values

In 2021–22, the QFCC continued to embrace the Queensland public service values of *Customers first*, *Ideas into action*, *Unleash potential*, *Be courageous* and *Empower people*. These values help guide our staff’s behaviour and the way we conduct business.



Customers first

- Know your customers
- Deliver what matters
- Make decisions with empathy



Ideas into action

- Challenge the norm and suggest solutions
- Encourage and embrace new ideas
- Work across boundaries



Unleash potential

- Expect greatness
- Lead and set clear expectations
- Seek, provide and act on feedback



Be courageous

- Own your actions, successes and mistakes
- Take calculated risks
- Act with transparency



Empower people

- Lead, empower and trust
- Play to everyone’s strengths
- Develop yourself and those around you

Performance and development

The QFCC implemented several initiatives to support staff performance and development during 2021–22, such as:

- completing annual performance development plans to identify individual and organisational learning and development initiatives
- developing a new learning and development policy and delegations to provide a renewed focus on learning and development opportunities and devolving training budgets to program areas
- developing and launching a new performance and development template to focus on the positive performance principles and link to a range of resources to support meaningful performance and development conversations
- leadership training in effective performance conversations, which takes a strengths-based approach to empowering our employees through effective conversations
- providing mandatory online training on code of conduct, information privacy, right to information, bullying, domestic and family violence, and cultural capability
- encouraging staff to take up development opportunities offered by the Public Service Commission.

Careers Pathways Service

The QFCC partnered with the Public Service Commission for the Careers Pathways Service, available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees who aspire toward leadership and decision-making roles. The service is designed to improve career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the Queensland public sector, by providing culturally safe development opportunities, networking events, formal training and mentor support.

A pool of cultural advisors (including 2 of our executives) will provide cultural support to participants, and support supervisors in building their cultural knowledge and understanding. The QFCC reached out to eligible employees for the first intake in August 2021, with 7 QFCC staff joining the initiative.

Flexible working arrangements

The QFCC provides flexible employment options to assist staff to blend work, family and life responsibilities and enhance staff wellbeing. Many opportunities are available to staff and are regularly promoted. Most of our staff work remotely from home in some capacity with staff taking advantage of flexible work arrangements as set out in the *State Government Entities Certified Agreement 2019*, *Industrial Relations Act 2016* and the 2020 Queensland Government election commitments.

Code of conduct

QFCC staff are covered by the single code of conduct established for the Queensland Public Service. Code of conduct principles and their associated set of values form part of induction training for new staff, and staff are required to complete mandatory online code of conduct training.

Our performance and development framework and processes also address code of conduct expectations. Staff are encouraged to raise any workplace issues with their line manager, with local resolution the preferred option.

In 2021–22, we introduced our new individual employee grievance policy and procedure.

Our governance

In March 2022, we implemented a new governance model with clearer decision-making processes and greater staff participation. Under the revised framework, we operate several internal committees to help maintain effective governance, including:

Executive Leadership Board: as the commission's primary decision-making body, it comprises senior executives and senior officers (and human resource and finance representatives as advisors). It oversees QFCC performance against strategic objectives, financial performance, performance management, effective collaboration, risk management, innovation fostering, governance administration and organisational compliance.

Commissioners' Meeting: reviews the operations of the organisation by the commissioners.

Senior Executive Meeting: delivers greater connectivity between all areas of our business and advises on media/communication issues concerning children, young people and their families.

Budget Oversight Sub-committee: ensures the effective allocation and management of resources to achieve service delivery outcomes within a balanced budget.

Strategic Human Resources Sub-committee: provides an in-depth review of the QFCC's strategic human resources practices and operations.

Workforce Consultation Forum: provides a formal mechanism for staff to share their views on workplace issues, raise concerns and engage in two-way information sharing with the QFCC leadership.

Audit and Risk Management Committee

Established in 2018, the Audit and Risk Management Committee meets quarterly, with the chair and deputy chair positions held by members external to government. The committee oversees risk management, financial management, compliance and internal controls, and internal and external audit.

The committee's purpose is to provide independent assurance and advice to the Principal Commissioner on the QFCC's:

- risk and compliance management frameworks
- accountability responsibilities as prescribed in the:
 - *Financial Accountability Act 2009*
 - *Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982*
 - *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*.

The committee's responsibilities and achievements in 2021–22 included:

- reviewing and monitoring the corporate and operational risk registers
- monitoring risk mitigation controls of QFCC major projects
- monitoring of the register of previous (internal and external) audit recommendations
- reviewing and endorsing the annual audit plan for the upcoming financial year.

Remuneration for external members is \$500 (Chair) and \$300 (Deputy Chair) per meeting.

As at 30 June 2022, there were 4 standing members and 4 regular observers of the Audit and Risk Management committee. The committee met 4 times in 2021–22.

Standing members

Heather Watson	Director and Principal Lawyer, Watson Advisory and Consulting Pty Ltd (Chair)
Peter Dowling AM	Accountant and experienced company director (Deputy Chair)
Jaime Blackburn	Executive Director, Child Death Prevention
Tony King	Senior Executive Director, Office of the Commissioners

Regular observers

Jacqueline Thornley	Director, Queensland Audit Office
Linda Holm	A/Manager, Audit Services, Corporate Administration Agency
Lyle Gerbich	Director, Corporate Services, QFCC
Luke Twyford	QFCC Principal Commissioner

Risk management

Overseen by the Audit and Risk Management Committee, the QFCC strategic and operational risk registers are formally reviewed twice a year, with teams providing operational updates. The QFCC's Corporate Services area maintains the strategic and operational risk registers and the QFCC Risk Management Framework. A number of strategic risks and opportunities were identified in our strategic plan.

Strategic risks

- An inability to source high-quality data outcomes—reduces our capacity to effectively monitor the impact of the child and family support system, restricting our ability to drive improvements and build a culture of accountability.
- Failure to include the voices of young Queenslanders in our decisions—diminishes our ability to influence change.
- Ineffective partnering with stakeholders—limits opportunities to facilitate sustainable system change.

Strategic opportunities

- Extend our capability and influence to provide stronger oversight over the systems responsible for the safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable children and young people.
- Expand engagement with young Queenslanders from all backgrounds and geographical locations to further inform decisions impacting their lives.
- Reaffirm the role and responsibilities of family, community, government and service providers in protecting children's rights.
- Position the QFCC as an authoritative source of advice and expertise on issues impacting the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Engage with non-government service providers to enhance our oversight of the child and family support system.

Internal audit

In 2021–22, the Corporate Administration Agency (CAA) undertook internal audit assessments in accordance with the 2021–23 internal audit plan. Audits of QFCC governance and delegation functions were completed and presented to senior management. A third audit on staff training and development and performance planning and review was commenced in June 2022, with the final report expected in August 2022.

The objective of the governance audit was to assess whether the QFCC has appropriate policies, procedures and processes in place to comply, to the extent applicable, with governance requirements. The CAA auditor determined that there was a reasonable framework in place for the management of our governance.

The objective of the delegations audit was to assess whether the QFCC has appropriate policies, procedures and processes in place to comply with Queensland Government requirements for defining and managing delegations. The CAA auditor determined that the application of QFCC delegations were compliant.

The QFCC's internal audit plan for the period 2022–24 was reviewed by the CAA internal audit manager and was endorsed by the Audit and Risk Management Committee in May 2022.

External audit

Each year the QAO performs an audit assessment of the design and implementation of QFCC internal controls. This includes an interim and final audit.

The QAO final 2021 audit was completed in August 2021 and focused on financial statements and transaction testing. No control deficiencies or other financial reporting issues were identified through the audit. The final audit report was presented to the Audit and Risk Management Committee at their August 2021 meeting. At the exit meeting, the QAO provided positive comments on the QFCC's working papers and reconciliations.

In May 2022, the QAO released their interim audit report 2022 to the QFCC. The interim audit undertook substantive testing over expenditure, payroll and journals. No unresolved internal control deficiencies or financial reporting issues were identified.

All internal and external audit reports were presented to the Audit and Risk Management Committee for consideration.

Human Rights Act 2019

The QFCC received no complaints under the *Human Rights Act 2019* in 2021–22.

QFCC staff undertake annual mandatory online training on human rights for public sector employees. In April 2022, staff attended a workshop on ‘the rights of the child’ to increase our understanding of how we can apply a child rights lens to our work and our progress in applying child rights.

External scrutiny

Pursuant to the Queensland Legislative Assembly Standing Rules and Orders (SO 194A), the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee has responsibility to perform the following functions in relation to the QFCC:

- monitor and review the performance by the entity of the entity’s functions
- report to the Legislative Assembly on any matter concerning the entity, the entity’s functions or the performance of the entity’s functions that the committee considers should be drawn to the Legislative Assembly’s attention
- examine the annual report of the entity tabled in the Legislative Assembly and, if appropriate, comment on any aspect of the report
- report to the Legislative Assembly any changes to the functions, structures and procedures of the entity that the committee considers desirable for the more effective operation of the entity or the Act which establishes the entity.

The committee held its oversight hearing on 28 March 2022. At the hearing, the Principal Commissioner and Commissioner briefed the committee on: the QFCC’s activities, the independent review of the QFCC, the rise in the incidence of youth suicide, the continued over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in statutory systems, domestic and family violence, the use of school disciplinary absences and the incidence of harm in care.

Information systems and record keeping

The QFCC operates under the requirements of the *Public Records Act 2002* and the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*. It maintains full and accurate records of its activities in accordance with the Queensland Government Records Governance Policy.

We use a Micro Focus Content Management application to meet our record-keeping governance obligations.

The QFCC information technology systems were successfully transitioned into government in September 2021 with infrastructure managed by Citec and service management contracted to the CAA.

A primary driver of the transition was having information technology support by a government agency with superior knowledge of security requirements. Improved Wi-Fi coverage and resilience with a dedicated internet connection and automatic remote access connection to the office were also benefits of the transition.