



# About us

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) is a statutory body established by the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* to:

- promote the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people
- promote and advocate for the responsibility of families and communities to protect and care for children and young people
- improve the child protection system.

In 2022, the QFCC undertook an extensive review of its strategic direction. Our objectives and strategies support the government's objective 'Backing our frontline services' to deliver world-class services in areas such as health, education and community safety, particularly where the rights of Queensland children, young people and their families are impacted.

## Our vision

*Our vision is that every child is loved, respected and has their rights upheld.*

## Our purpose

Our purpose is to influence change that improves the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families.

## Our commitments

We have made explicit commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families and advancing the rights of children.

## Our strategic objectives

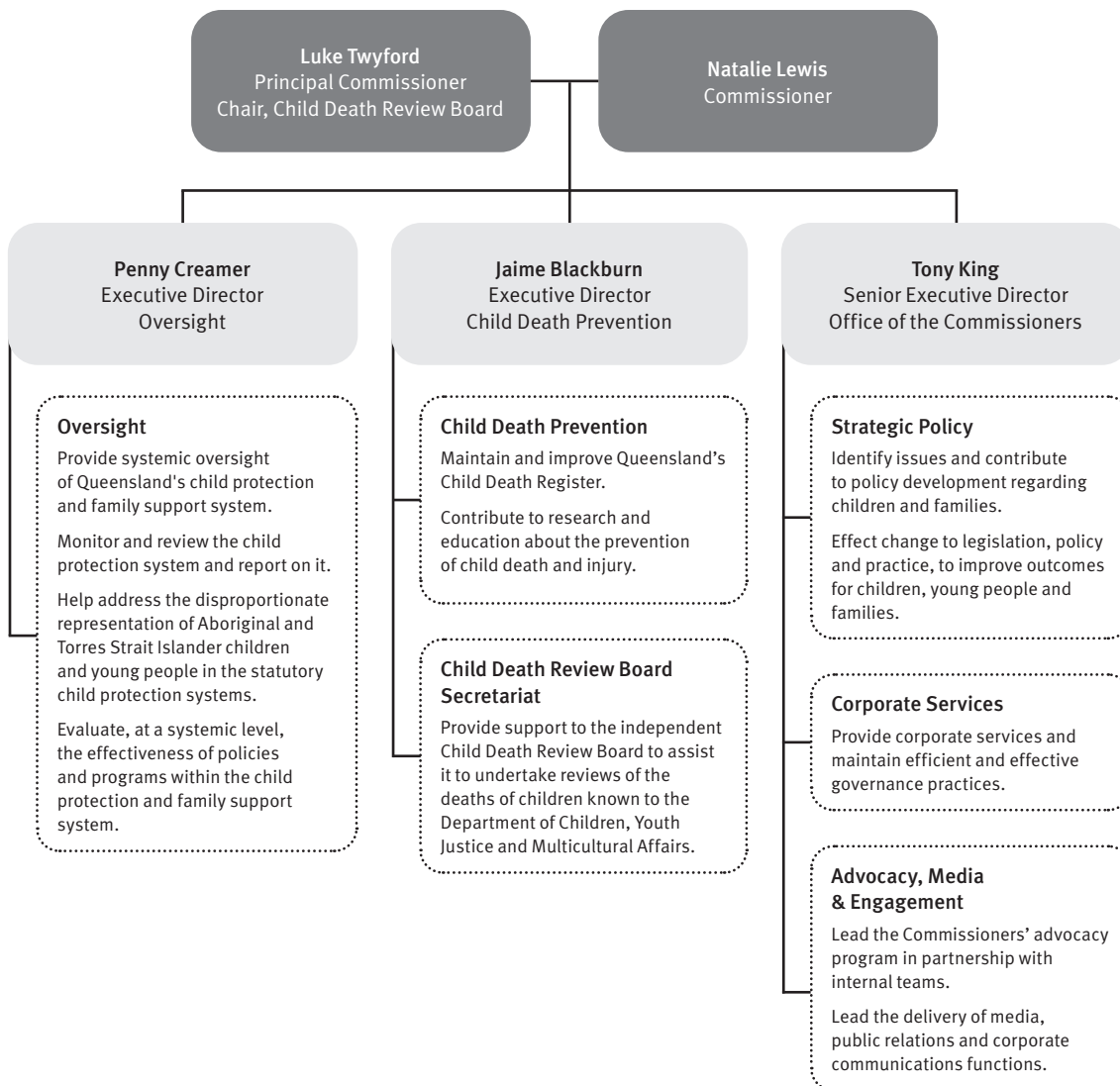
1. Ensure systems are accountable for the impact they have on children and families.
2. Raise awareness and advocate for children and their families.
3. Empower children and their families to influence decisions that affect their lives.
4. Support, connect and collaborate with organisations that advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children.
5. Build our capacity, capability and culture to achieve our vision.

## Our workforce

As at 30 June 2022, the QFCC's workforce comprised: 64.39 full-time equivalent staff (FTE), with 8% identifying as Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. The QFCC employs a diverse, highly skilled and empowered team that reflects the community we serve. In addition to our permanent staffing, youth advocates from diverse backgrounds are periodically engaged on a casual basis to amplify the voices of young Queenslanders and provide youth perspectives, advice and leadership to the QFCC.

## Our structure

The QFCC organisational structure as of 30 June 2022



## Our executive team

As at 30 June 2022, our executive team comprised 5 members:

- **Luke Twyford**, Chief Executive and Principal Commissioner
- **Natalie Lewis**, Commissioner
- **Tony King**, Senior Executive Director, Office of the Commissioners
- **Jaime Blackburn**, Executive Director, Child Death Prevention
- **Penny Creamer**, Executive Director, Oversight.

Cheryl Vardon’s appointment as the Principal Commissioner ended on 24 December 2021. There were no further changes in the executive team.

## Our legislation

The functions and powers of the QFCC are contained in the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*. There were no amendments to the governing legislation during 2021–22.

## Our focus

Queensland children are a diverse group, coming from many different social, cultural, geographic and family backgrounds. The 2021 Census estimates the resident population of Queensland to be 5,156,138 and just over 30% of Queenslanders (1.6 million) are under 25 years of age (Table 1). There are approximately 563,327 two-parent families with children in Queensland and 230,026 one-parent families.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1: *Number of Queensland children and young people in 2021, by age range*

	0–4 years	5–9 years	10–14 years	15–19 years	20–24 years	0–24 years total
Number	292,452	329,311	342,560	313,506	323,739	1,601,568
%	5.7	6.4	6.6	6.1	6.3	31.1

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021<sup>2</sup>

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people

237,303 Queenslanders (4.6%) identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Of these, more than 50% (124,374) are under 25 years of age.<sup>3</sup> In 2021, 19,000 (8.0%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people used an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language at home.<sup>4</sup>

## Culturally and linguistically diverse children and young people

In Queensland, 80.5% of people only speak English at home and just over one in five Queenslanders (22.7%) were born overseas.<sup>5</sup> One in eight Queenslanders were born in predominantly non-English speaking countries and 1.8% reported that they did not speak English well or at all.<sup>6</sup>

## Where children and young people live in Queensland

Just over half (50.9%) of Queensland's children and young people live in the Greater Brisbane area.<sup>7</sup> Of the 124,374 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people living in Queensland, only one-third (32.9%) live in the Greater Brisbane area.<sup>8</sup>

## Family income and employment

While the median total family income in Queensland is \$105,248 per year, more than 94,000 Queensland families have a family income of less than \$33,800 per year. More than 66,000 families with children under 15 years of age had no parent employed.<sup>9</sup>

## Child development and education

In 2021, 51.4% of Queensland children commencing their first year of full-time school were developmentally on track.<sup>10</sup> During semester 1 of 2021, only 67.5% of Queensland students in years 1–10 had an attendance rate of at least 90%, down from 76.9% in 2016.<sup>11</sup> In May 2021, most young Queenslanders (79.0%) aged 15–24 years were undertaking some work or study, or a combination of both and a further 11.6% were engaged in part-time work or study. Around 64,600 young people (10.2%) were not engaged in either study or employment.<sup>12</sup>

## Maternal and infant health

In 2020, 2.8% of Queensland women who gave birth were under 20 years of age and 11.5% smoked during their pregnancy. Just over 4,000 babies (6.8%) were born with a low birthweight (less than 2500g).<sup>13</sup> As at 31 March 2022, 92.8% of Queensland children were fully immunised by age 2.<sup>14</sup>

## Children and young people with a disability

Estimates indicate that in 2018, 11,900 (3.8%) children aged 0–4 years had a disability, 64,600 (9.9%) children aged 5–14 years had a disability and 51,700 (8.2%) children aged 15–24 years had a disability.<sup>15</sup>

## Children and young people experiencing a mental health disorder

In 2021, 9.6% of Queenslanders reported suffering from a mental health condition including depression or anxiety.<sup>16</sup> Prior studies have found that 13.9% of Australians aged 4–17 experienced a mental health disorder, with males more commonly affected than females (16.3% compared with 11.5%).<sup>17</sup>

## The impact of COVID-19 on the safety of Queensland's children

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact children and families in 2021–22. While there was a gradual easing of restrictions over the year, Queensland experienced several lockdowns, including a 2-week delay of the start of the 2022 school year.<sup>18</sup>

Research has identified that the pandemic affected the health and wellbeing of Australian children and young people. The nationwide Kids Helpline reported that in 2020 they received 176,012 contacts from children and young people aged 5–25 years, an increase of 21% compared with 2019.<sup>19</sup>

Queensland school students were vulnerable to having their learning compromised due to COVID-19-related closures. This was particularly prevalent in families that lacked the time and resources to support their children's learning, and with parents with lower levels of educational attainment.<sup>20</sup>

Research about the impact of the pandemic on child protection services indicates that COVID-19 led to various stresses on families, including financial concerns, domestic and family violence, housing instability and poor mental health. All of these increased as COVID-19 progressed<sup>21</sup> and many of these are risk factors for child abuse and neglect.

Research also identified some disruption to the operation of child protection services during the pandemic. This included a decrease in the reporting of child maltreatment,<sup>22</sup> likely due to decreased contact between children, school and health services.<sup>23</sup>

In Queensland, while the number of reports of suspected child abuse and neglect decreased during the initial national lockdown (April 2020), there was an increase in reports from May 2020. As restrictions eased and students returned to school, the number of reports exceeded pre-pandemic figures. Demand data in the statutory system showed a steady increase in child notifications and entries to care in Queensland, which persisted throughout the period of COVID-19 restrictions.