

# 9 Child death prevention activities

## Maintaining the Child Death Register

The QFCC maintains Queensland's Child Death Register in accordance with Part 3 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, under which it is required to produce an annual report on the deaths of all children in Queensland.

The Child Death Register was established in 2004 and currently contains over 8,000 records that have been classified by cause of death, demographic and incident characteristics. It allows the QFCC to extract information from its 18 years of recorded data, highlighting risk factors and trends that can inform research, support policy improvement and community safety initiatives to help reduce the likelihood of child deaths.

The redesigned Child Death Register database ('Coda') was implemented in early 2021. In addition to the QFCC's routine activities to audit and cleanse data in Coda, the QFCC also undertook the following system improvement projects during 2021–22:

- concluded the migration of child death data from the previous system into the Coda database
- completed system enhancements to improve functionality in several areas
- developed the Coda data dictionary and master field list as a resource and reference for QFCC officers involved in the entry, use and analysis of information contained in Coda.

## Publications

In February 2022 the *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people Queensland 2020–21* was tabled in Parliament. This was the 17th annual report to be produced on child deaths in Queensland. The electronic version of the annual report can be accessed on the [Queensland Parliament website](#) (authorised version).<sup>77</sup>

The QFCC also published the *Australian and New Zealand child death statistics 2019* report, prepared on behalf of the members of the Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group (ANZCDR&PG). This report, along with fact sheets and 17-year data tables, are available at [www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/about-us/publications/child-death-reports-and-data](http://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/about-us/publications/child-death-reports-and-data).

In 2022, the QFCC published 2 papers arising from a study of filicide data in the QFCC's Child Death Register—the *Final Report – A study of indicators of red flags for fatal child assault and neglect in Queensland* and the summary paper *Taking lives – A Queensland study on parents who kill their children*.<sup>78</sup>

## QFCC submissions

During 2021–22, the QFCC used information in the Queensland Child Death Register to provide advice and recommendations in relation to the following consultations:<sup>79</sup>

- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) review of infant inclined products. The QFCC supported proposals to introduce mandatory safety standards and information standards
- ACCC confidential discussion paper on helium balloon kit safety. The QFCC recommended improved safety measures and product labelling
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts review of vehicle reversing aid technologies. The QFCC supported the introduction of a new Australian Design Rule, which requires rear visibility and detection devices be fitted into new vehicles
- ACCC's assessment of regulatory options to prevent injury and death from toppling furniture. The QFCC supported the combination of a mandatory safety standard and information standard
- Workplace Health and Safety Queensland's consultation on quad bikes and side-by-side vehicles used in the workplace. The QFCC supported the introduction of regulatory changes for safety requirements including age restrictions on drivers and passengers.

<sup>77</sup> [www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-the-Assembly/Tabled-Papers/Online-Tabled-Papers](http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-the-Assembly/Tabled-Papers/Online-Tabled-Papers)

<sup>78</sup> [www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/node/274](http://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/node/274)

<sup>79</sup> QFCC submissions can be at [www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sector/policy/policy-submissions](http://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sector/policy/policy-submissions)

## Supporting youth suicide prevention

The QFCC continued to monitor and support prevention of suicide deaths of children and young people. This included a crucial information sharing process with the Department of Education to inform student wellbeing policy development and support suicide prevention in affected schools. The QFCC 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.

## Safer infant sleep

The QFCC contributed to SUDI prevention projects resulting in publications released in mid-2022:

- the Queensland Paediatric Quality Council (QPQC) released the *Queensland Clinical Guidelines: Safer infant sleep*, providing safer sleep recommendations for infant care practices that have been associated with a reduced risk of SUDI<sup>80</sup>
- the *Best practice guide for the design of safe infant sleeping environments*, developed by the Infant Safe Sleeping Working Group to provide a guide for industry to reduce the risk of death and life-threatening injuries in infants.<sup>81</sup>

## Researcher access to child death data

A key strategy to support child death and injury prevention is to make data held in the Child Death Register available for research, public education, policy development and program design. Data from the comprehensive dataset is available at no cost to genuine researchers.<sup>82</sup> Applications to obtain data can be made by emailing [child\\_death\\_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au](mailto:child_death_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au).

In 2021–22, the QFCC responded to 21 external requests for Child Death Register data. Data provided to genuine researchers may be either aggregated or presented as confidential unit records. Table 9.1 gives an overview of the key projects and agencies for which data was provided.

**Table 9.1:** Child death data requests by agency and purpose, 2021–22

Type of data	Requesting agency	Purpose
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths	Queensland Government Statistician's Office	Inform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy analysis
		Closing the Gap reporting on suicide deaths of children and young people
Drowning	Kidsafe Queensland Inc.	Prepare presentation for child protection officers on preventable child deaths
	Queensland Building and Construction Commission	Prepare presentation on pool barrier compliance for local government, pool safety inspectors and building certifiers
	Royal Life Saving Society Australia	Inform the National Drowning Report and drowning prevention research and advocacy

<sup>80</sup> [www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/chq/health-professionals/qpqc](http://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/chq/health-professionals/qpqc)

<sup>81</sup> [www.productsafety.gov.au/about-us/publications/best-practice-guide-for-the-design-of-safe-infant-sleeping-environments](http://www.productsafety.gov.au/about-us/publications/best-practice-guide-for-the-design-of-safe-infant-sleeping-environments)

<sup>82</sup> Under section 28 of the FCC Act, the QFCC is able to provide child death information for genuine research, defined as research relating to childhood mortality or morbidity with a view to increasing knowledge of incidence, causes and risk factors relating to same. Genuine research includes policy and program initiatives to reduce child death or injury.

**Table 9.1 (continued):** Child death data requests by agency and purpose, 2021–22

Type of data	Requesting agency	Purpose
Interstate residents	ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee	Inform ACT reporting on deaths of residents in other jurisdictions
	NT Child Death Review and Prevention Committee	Inform NT reporting on deaths of residents in other jurisdictions
	Safer Care Victoria	Inform Victorian reporting on deaths of residents in other jurisdictions
Children known to the child protection system	Child Death Review Board	Provide child death and coronial information required to undertake case reviews
Non-intentional injury and SUDI	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)	Inform a review of safety standards in relation to toppling furniture Inform issues papers reviewing infant inclined products and the risks associated with infant sleep products Inform the Keeping Baby Safe campaign and Know Your First Steps website and social media
	Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit	Support ACCC research into potential safety issues associated with sleep aid toys in the sleeping environment for infants and toddlers Information for the national car restraint standards advisory group in relation to reducing the risk of heat stress deaths in vehicles
	University of Sunshine Coast	Inform a report responding to Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority guidelines on Safe Sleep and Rest Policy for use in childcare centres around Australia
Suicide	Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships	Inform development of support services in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
	First Children and Families Board	Inform understanding suicide risk for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and children known to the child protection system
	Local Government Association of Queensland	Contribute to youth suicide prevention policy and advocacy to support First Nations councils

Notes: Not all requests are shown.

## Participation in state and national advisory groups

QFCC officers participated in the following advisory bodies during 2021–22:

- Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group
- Consumer Product Injury Research Advisory Group
- Interim Queensland Government Suicide Prevention Network
- QPQC Infant Mortality Sub-Committee
- QPQC Steering Committee
- Queensland Government Births and Deaths Working Group
- Road Safety Research Network
- SUDI multiagency advisory meeting.

## Child death prevention framework: Safer pathways through childhood

In 2022 the QFCC launched *Safer pathways through childhood*.<sup>83</sup> The framework, designed to maximise the impact of the QFCC's legislated child death prevention functions, provides a roadmap for the QFCC's child death prevention activities over the next 5 years (2022–27).

Working collaboratively with our stakeholders, each year the QFCC will develop a program of work intended to address the following focus areas:

- the influence of family-level adversity across all causes of child death
- origins and impact of risk-taking behaviour
- guidelines for supervision
- barriers to help-seeking and access to services
- advancements in regulation and product safety
- improved data for First Nations children
- impacts of COVID-19
- preventing youth suicide
- certification and classification of sudden unexpected death in infancy
- deaths from preventable natural causes.

In addition to fulfilling our legislative obligations the QFCC will, in consultation with stakeholders, identify specific prevention activities to address priority areas each year. The action plan for the coming year can be found on the *Safer pathways* webpage.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> [www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/safer-pathways-through-childhood](http://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/safer-pathways-through-childhood)

<sup>84</sup> [www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/safer-pathways-through-childhood](http://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/safer-pathways-through-childhood)