

ANNUAL REPORT 2022–23



About this report

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) is a statutory body of the Queensland Government. Its purpose is to influence change that improves the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families.

This annual report describes the progress of the QFCC towards achieving our strategic objectives in 2022–23. These objectives are published in the QFCC Strategic Plan 2022–26. It sets out our financial position and compliance with legislative requirements.

Production costs of this report have been minimised as much as possible. An electronic copy is available on the QFCC website at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/annual-report.

Accessibility



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Acknowledgement

The QFCC acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians across the lands, seas and skies on which we walk, live and work.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique peoples, with their own rich and distinct cultures, strengths and knowledge. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across Queensland and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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Queensland
**Family & Child
Commission**



Telephone: 07 3900 6000
Reference: TF23/582 – D23/9848

The Honourable Yvette D'Ath MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence
GPO Box 149
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Attorney-General

I am pleased to submit for presentation to the Parliament the Annual Report 2022-2023 and financial statements for the Queensland Family and Child Commission.

I certify that this Annual Report complies with:

- the prescribed requirements of the *Financial Accountability Act 2009* and the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*;
- section 40 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*; and
- the requirements set out in the Annual report requirements for Queensland Government agencies 2022-23.

A checklist outlining compliance with the annual report requirements is provided at Appendix B of this Report.

Yours sincerely

Luke Twyford
Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission

28 August 2023

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Commissioners' introduction

I am pleased to present the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) Annual Report for 2022–23. This is my second annual report as Principal Commissioner and marks my first full year in the role.

In last year's annual report, I wrote about the Commission's opportunities for transformation following two independent reviews of our performance and effectiveness. I am proud to reflect on the significant strides we have taken in the last 12 months to act on the findings from these reviews. Our staff have embraced change and seized opportunities to better deliver on our strategic objectives and commitments to Queensland's children and families. Our new organisational structure ensures that our priorities and responsibilities are clearly defined, resourced and streamlined to maximise our impact and influence. I particularly want to thank Commissioner Lewis. Her leadership of the Commissioner's new First Nations and Child Rights Advocacy team was a new step for both of us and the Commission to take.

Across 2022–23, we have remained committed to empowering children, young people and families to share their stories, experiences, triumphs and challenges. Our staff have travelled throughout Queensland, visiting children in schools and kindergartens, speaking with young people, carers, parents and the professionals that work with them and connecting with community and government representatives to influence positive change. We are expanding our Youth Advocate network to engage broader youth perspectives and have launched a new survey to capture the lived experiences of parents and families in contact with the child protection system. Through our user-centric website and a strong social media strategy, we have strengthened the community's engagement with our work.

In reporting on our operations and achievements over the last 12 months, I would like to recognise and thank our government, non-government and community partners for their contributions and their commitment to Queensland's children and families. Improving outcomes for children and families requires focus and effort that reaches across systems and portfolios, and it is through our collective efforts that we can achieve this outcome. Through the sponsorships, joint initiatives and collaborative efforts described throughout this

report, we have engaged with diverse voices and expertise on issues affecting children and families and extended our visibility and influence on related reforms. I also wish to thank the members of the Child Death Review Board who form part of the Commission's work.

Over the last 12 months, the child protection and youth justice systems have continued to generate significant public discussion and debate. Our report on the performance of these systems, contained within this report, describes what is working well and where further improvements are needed.

The forthcoming year will represent ten years since the establishment of the QFCC. Over that time, we have led critical reviews of child safety and youth justice systems, successfully advocated for reforms, and amplified the voices of Queenslanders with lived experience in the child safety, youth justice and other statutory systems. Importantly, the QFCC has matured and evolved, responding to the changing social and policy landscape and needs of children and families. In the year ahead, I am confident that the foundations we have set in 2022–23 will enable us to continue to make a lasting and positive difference in the lives of children and families.



Luke Twyford

Principal commissioner

As Commissioner, I am committed to providing oversight of the systemic and structural issues disproportionately affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland. I have a responsibility to keeping our children's rights and best interests at the forefront of government policy to ensure our children are safe and connected to culture and kin.

Last year we launched the *Queensland Family and Child Commission Strategic Plan 2022–2026* which explicitly made commitment to First Nations children and their families and to advancing the rights of children. To bring this commitment to life, I established a First Nations and Child Rights Advocacy Team, providing dedicated leadership to promote and protect the rights, wellbeing and best interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. The QFCC's budget of \$1.3 million, which includes seven full-time equivalent staff, has supported the establishment of this work.

At a time when the Queensland Government is transforming the way in which it works with First Nations peoples and communities, through the *Path to Treaty Act 2023* and amendments to the *Public Sector Act 2022*, it is critical that we prioritise our investment towards addressing the inequity experienced by First Nations children, young people, and their families, through stronger genuine partnerships built on the right to self-determination.

Our work has been comprehensive, proactive and spans from community-led activities to playing a significant leadership role in reform agendas. This included, influencing the *Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander first Action Plan 2023–2026*, and input into and alignment of our work to the actions required of governments to achieve Closing the Gap priority reforms.

In response to the discussion paper on the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, the QFCC suggested amendments to establish a dedicated, independent, appropriately empowered, and resourced Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Establishing and empowering a Queensland Commissioner for First Nations children and young people will increase the impact of our work overseeing systems to promote and protect the rights, development, wellbeing and best interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and families; ensure that we are accountable to the First Nations community; and support meaningful participation in government reforms. Key to this work is actively hearing and acting on the views of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander children, young people, and their families. *The Yarning for Change: Listen to my voice* report was released in September 2022, following culturally safe conversations with over 100 children and young people about their interactions with the youth justice system.

We continue to monitor and report on the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems, by publishing state and regional snapshots. We continue to celebrate First Nations excellence through the Young, Black and Proud Scholarships, in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service. In the year ahead, as part of our commitment to truth-telling we will release the First Nations Children's Report. This will provide a snapshot of structural racism and the impacts of colonisation and will showcase stories where First Nations children are thriving in sovereignty and strength.

We continue to raise awareness to advocate and promote accountability for the promotion of child rights in Queensland. In June, the QFCC hosted its inaugural Child Rights Dialogue. This was an opportunity to explore how decision makers can better use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to uphold the rights of children in conflict with the law.

We will release the first Queensland Child Rights Report detailing the child rights issues observed by the QFCC in our statutory role of reviewing and improving the systems that protect and safeguard children. This report will help to inform Government on how agencies are interpreting and implementing the Convention. It establishes a way for measuring the broad spectrum of children's rights, with an emphasis on the issues most relevant for children and young people in Queensland. We will also host more dialogues focused on child rights and how they can and should be applied in different settings.

As we head into the 2023–2024 year we will continue to fiercely advocate for the rights of children and young people in Queensland. We are committed to continuing to show up for First Nations children and young people and will work in partnership with all those committed to transformational change.



Natalie Lewis
Commissioner



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.

We influence systemic change by monitoring and reporting on the performance of the child protection system. We collaborate with partners to amplify the voices of Queensland's children and their families and advocate for changes that improve their safety and wellbeing.

Our strategies and activities support the Queensland Government's objective 'Better services - Backing our frontline services' to deliver world-class services in areas that affect children and families such as health, education and community safety.

Our vision

Our vision is that every Queensland 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

Our work is guided by our Strategic Plan 2022–2026, including five 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 legislation

The functions and powers of the QFCC are contained in the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* (the Act). The Act provides a strong foundation for the QFCC to analyse systems and provide advice to government when multiple systems or services affect children and families. It sets requirements for the appointment of a Commissioner and members of the Child Death Review Board who are First Nations, and how the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are to be represented in our work. The Act also establishes our powers and responsibilities to undertake child death prevention activities and engage with children, young people and families across Queensland.

Our context - who we work for

There are over 5 million people living in Queensland, with this number increasing. Approximately 30 per cent of Queenslanders are under the age of 25, and eight percent of them identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. About 563,000 families are two-parent families and 230,000 are single parent families. Approximately 23 percent of all Queenslanders are born overseas.

We collect and monitor data on the experiences and strengths of, and issues impacting, the Queensland community to inform our work.

Our structure

Our structure is the outcome of the transformation journey we undertook over the 12 months to 30 June 2023. It outlines clear responsibilities for work aligning with our five strategic objectives and two explicit commitments. It establishes accountability across strategic and operational levels of our work.

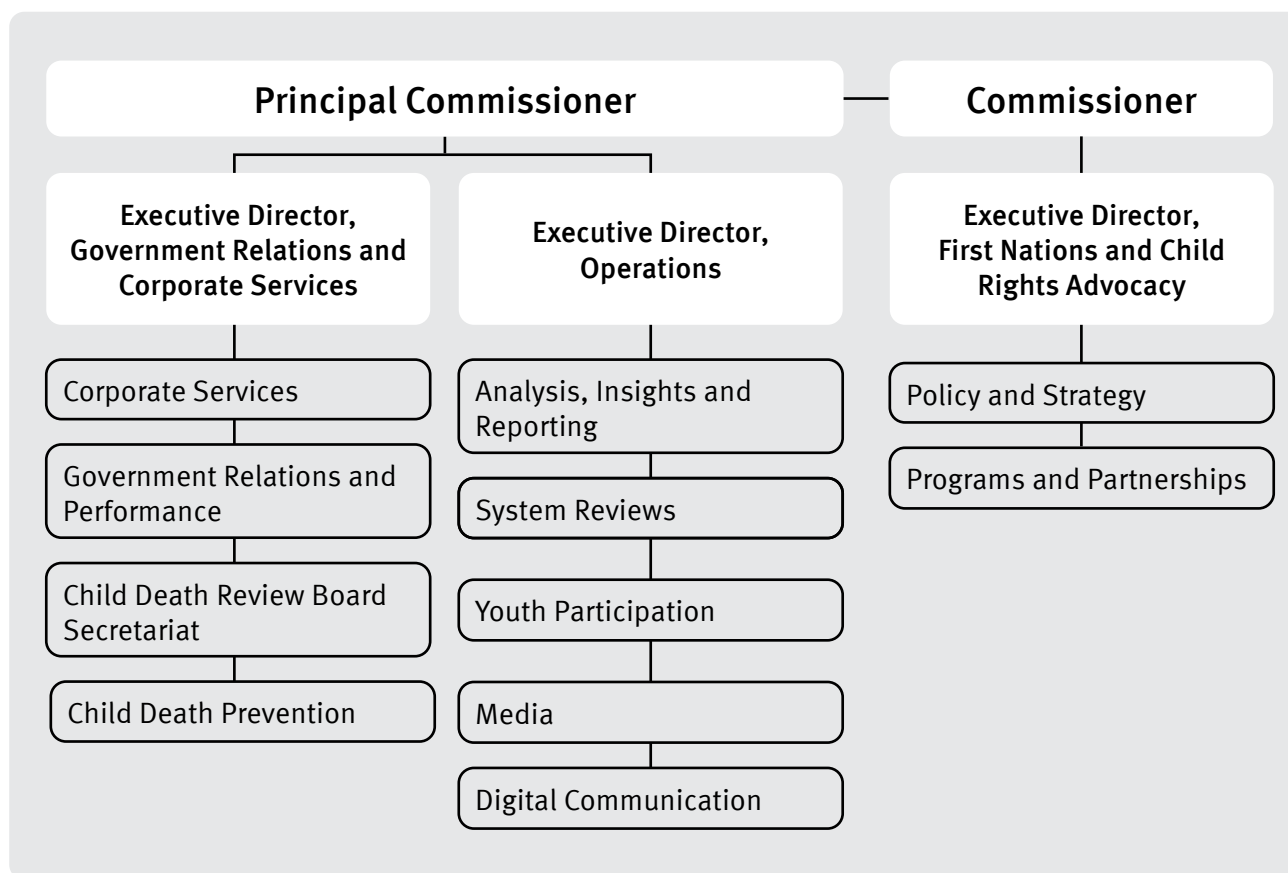


Figure 1: Organisational structure as at 30 June 2023

Our work is led by our executive team, comprising:

- Mr Luke Twyford, Chief Executive and Principal Commissioner
- Ms Natalie Lewis, Commissioner
- Ms Jaime Blackburn, Executive Director, Government Relations and Corporate Services
- Ms Penny Creamer, Executive Director, First Nations and Child Rights Advocacy

The position of Executive Director, Operations is being filled following the departure of Mr Tony King.

Corporate Services

Ensures the Commission's governance, people and finance systems and decision making processes are robust and comply with State and Commonwealth laws.

Government Relations and Performance

Ensures the Commission's parliamentary and cross-government engagement is impactful and targeted and that we are aware of, and have opportunity to be involved in, emerging issues, including government initiatives, reforms and legislation.

Child Death Review Board Secretariat

Ensures the integrity of Child Death Review Board operations and leads the systemic process of reviewing government service delivery to children who have died whilst known to the child protection system to identify system improvements, and supports the Board to make impactful recommendations.

Child Death Prevention

Maintains a comprehensive and contemporary child death register through which we actively facilitate research and promote information to support policy and legislation development that prevents further child deaths

Analysis, Insights and Reporting

Clearly communicates system performance outcomes by using visual, verbal and written storytelling techniques, and leads the collection, collation and analysis of evidence that enables external decision-making and strengthens public understanding.

System Reviews

Delivers high-impact assessments that bring together evidence, the experiences of children and families and the insights of stakeholders to identify and drive system accountability and positive change.

Youth Participation

Designs and leads engagement that elevates and amplifies the views and experiences of children, young people and families to support policy, program and practice design across Queensland and provide authoritative advice on strategic engagement opportunities that support the QFCC's advocacy.

Media

Designs and executes a high volume of media and communications work that promotes the QFCC, its programs and advocacy positions, and provide an agile response to emerging issues that enable the QFCC to be part of, and influential in, public discussion.

Digital Communication


Create and promote public content that connects and engages the community and specific stakeholders in the work of the QFCC to influence positive change, promote our brand, and increase public awareness of current and emerging trends and issues.

Policy and Strategy

Provides high quality strategic advice and alignment to broad government priorities and commitments (e.g. Closing the Gap and Path to Treaty) to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and to advocate for the promotion and protection of the rights of Queensland children.

Programs and Partnerships

Develops and delivers programs and initiatives and build Strategic partnerships that influence outcomes for Queensland children, including building the capacity, capability and integrity of the Commission's delivery against its explicit commitments to child rights and First Nations children.



2022–23 in review: our highlights and achievements

Organisational transformation

Over the last 12 months, we have undergone a process of transformation in response to an internal organisational review and findings. Through this process, we have adopted a ‘value chain’ internal operating model and established a clear portfolio for children’s rights and delivering on our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. Our staff engaged in workshops and consultations to help refine and strengthen our operating model while continuing to deliver on our priorities and commitments. Our new operating model has refocused our work on outcomes and established clear lines of accountability and communication across all levels of leadership.

Partnerships and connections

Over the last 12 months, our formal partnerships have expanded and grown—we were present at key events and consulted on significant matters. Our partnerships extend our ability to influence child-related laws, policies, programs and systems and ensure the sector are informed of, and can provide input into, our oversight work.

We shared advice, data and insights on systemic issues, facilitated youth engagement and supported collective and powerful advocacy across government portfolios. Our Advisory Council now consists of over 30 members from across government and non-government organisations. We have convened the Australian and New Zealand Children’s Commissioners and Guardians group and the inaugural First Nations Children’s Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates group to work alongside national, state and territory leaders. Through our sponsorships and research agenda, we have also empowered other agencies and organisations to deliver meaningful support to children and young people.

Advocating for an effective youth justice system

Amid community, media and political interest in preventing and responding to youth offending, we have actively promoted an evidence-based and restorative approach, with a focus on understanding and addressing the root causes of offending. Our commitment to creating an effective youth justice system for victims and offenders is evidenced through the advice and insights we share in the media and parliamentary hearings, our stakeholder engagement and our issues paper *Designing a better response to youth offending*. We worked with stakeholders to understand the complex underlying drivers of offending behaviours and identify solutions. We also shared the views and lived experiences of those in the youth justice system with government and decision makers. These views were captured in our report *Yarning for Change: Listen to my Voice*.



Advancing a rights-based agenda

Over the last 12 months, we have continued to implement a child rights approach to our work and raise the visibility of the experiences and aspirations of First Nations children, young people and their families. This has been enabled by the establishment of a dedicated First Nations and Child Rights Advocacy workforce, with clear reporting responsibilities to the Commissioner.

We forged partnerships with state and national bodies and engaged stakeholders and experts in the first of a series of child rights dialogues about the practical application of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In coming months, we will launch reports celebrating the strengths of First Nations children and examining child rights in Queensland. We will continue to monitor and report on drivers of over-representation in statutory systems and engage stakeholders on creating child rights accountability.

Confirming our 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 in-principle by government. In July 2022, we published the *Review of the Queensland Family and Child Commission's Impact*, an independent assessment of how our work contributes to system improvements and influences positive change. 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. It also made nine suggestions to improve the QFCC's influence, all of which were accepted.


It considered 208 recommendations, finding 55 per cent had been completed, 34 per cent were still in progress and three per cent had not commenced. Based on agency advice, a further eight per cent will not proceed due to subsequent policy changes or reforms rendering the recommendations no longer relevant.

Reframing the relationship

This year marked a critical milestone in the work to reframe relationships with First Nations peoples in Queensland with the passing of the *Path to Treaty Act 2023*, providing the legislative framework for negotiating treaties between First Nations peoples and the Queensland Government. As a children's Commission committed to promoting the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and organisations and advocating for their full control in decisions about their children, we provided our support to these legislative changes. We discussed next steps with the Path to Treaty Office and government stakeholders and worked with QFCC staff to deepen our understanding. The learnings are being used to develop the QFCC's Reframing the Relationship Plan, which will help to keep us accountable for our work with First Nation's children, families, communities and organisations.

Learning from child deaths

We continue to record, learn from and work to prevent child deaths in Queensland. This includes sharing our child death prevention data and review reports with stakeholders and the public to promote the individual accountability and systemic improvements needed to safeguard children and young people. For example, this year we released and widely promoted our first *Safer Pathways through Childhood: Action Plan 2022–23* and undertook a regional analysis of drowning and near-drowning incidents in backyard swimming pools — *Swimming pool immersions of young people in Queensland, 2011–2021*. We also partnered with experts to identify the incidence of paediatric sepsis deaths in Queensland.



In its third year, the Child Death Review Board met six times to discuss systemic reviews and to engage with experts and researchers on issues impacting children and families. The Board's 2021–22 annual report, tabled in December 2022, outlined entrenched cross-sector issues impacting service delivery to children and families and made six recommendations for government consideration.

Key milestones

JULY

- Published the *Safer Pathways Through Childhood – Action Plan 2022–23*, outlining our priorities and activities under the first year of our *Safer Pathways Through Childhood Framework 2022–27*.
- Implemented our Strategic Plan 2022–2026, outlining how we will design and implement our work to influence systemic change for Queensland children and families.
- Launched our website with refreshed branding and layout to engage our key audience groups – young people, families and the sector.
- Implemented our internal functional model, including establishing a new First Nations and Child Rights Advocacy team to progress our commitments to children's rights and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
- Published the *Review of the Queensland Family and Child Commission's impact* outlining how our work is influencing positive change for Queensland children and families.

AUGUST

- Commissioner Lewis joined experts to discuss why women and girls are increasingly coming into contact with the criminal justice system at an event hosted by the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council.
- Attended NAIDOC celebrations in South Brisbane and Logan, setting up stalls and engaging with the community to promote key QFCC projects.

SEPTEMBER

- Commissioner Twyford and Commissioner Lewis attended the Child Protection Week Awards to celebrate the achievements and contributions of young Queenslanders.
- Commissioner Twyford presented the keynote address at the Bundaberg Child Protection Week event.
- Published the *Yarning for Change: Listen to my voice* report, which delivered on a Queensland Government election commitment to undertake conversations with First Nations children and young people about their experiences with youth justice.
- Published the *Designing a better response to youth offending in Queensland: Raising the age of criminal responsibility Issues paper*, advocating for the age of criminal responsibility in Queensland to be increased and for the use of restorative justice responses to offending.

OCTOBER

- Commissioner Twyford and Commissioner Lewis sponsored and attended the Young, Black and Proud Scholarships event to award 16 young First Nations people with scholarships to pursue their academic, sports and arts goals.
- Published *Safe Spaces Growing Up in Queensland 2022*, drawing on the ideas and views of young people to advocate for measures to help young people feel safer in public spaces in their communities.

NOVEMBER

- Published *Swimming pool immersions of young people in Queensland, 2011–2021*, reporting on regional patterns in drownings and near drownings and promoting methods of drowning prevention.
- Published findings from our *Community Perceptions Survey 2022* and *Workforce Survey 2022*, reporting on perspectives on the child protection system in Queensland and trends over time.
- Published the Child Death Review Board's *Sudden unexpected death in infancy among vulnerable families in Queensland* and *Reviewing the child protection system's response to violence within families*.
- Convened a workshop with the Queensland Mental Health Commission, bringing together government and non-government stakeholders to discuss opportunities to improve support for children with complex behaviours and needs.

DECEMBER

- Published *Keeping children in focus: A systemic review of supports delivered to Queensland children and families during Intervention with Parental Agreement*, outlining findings from a review into the strengths and opportunities to improve Intervention with Parental Agreement.
- Published *The decision to place an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child or young person in residential care*, reporting on the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in decisions to place children in residential care.
- Our *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people 2021–22* and *Child Death Review Board Annual Report 2021–22* were tabled in Parliament.

JANUARY

- Commissioner Lewis convened the inaugural meeting of the First Nations Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates to develop advocacy priorities for promoting the rights, safety and wellbeing of First Nations children across Australia.
- Published *The barriers to accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme in regional and remote Queensland for children with cognitive disabilities and their families*, reporting on barriers experienced by children and families accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- Published *2021–22 statewide and regional over-representation snapshots*, examining and reporting on the dynamics of over-representation of First Nations children in the child protection system.



FEBRUARY

- Announced that the QFCC would review the drivers that cause children and young people to enter and remain in police watch houses.
- Published *Non-systemic barriers to young people's use of mental health services*, advocating for measures to promote help seeking by young people with mental health concerns.
- Published *Australian child death statistics 2020* (on behalf of the Australia and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group), reporting on child mortality from across Australian jurisdictions.

MARCH

- Our *Seeking safety: Keeping children safe when they remain at home during Child Safety interventions: Summary Report* was tabled in Parliament. Our report considered opportunities to improve the child protection system and made three recommendations which were accepted by Government.
- Provided a submission to the legislative review of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* being led by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General outlining opportunities to improve the QFCC's legislative role, functions and powers.

APRIL

- Commissioner Twyford convened the meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians group.
- Coordinated and participated in Youth Week activities. Youth Advocates co-designed key activities including a regional Youth Advisory Council meeting in the Sunshine Coast, promoting Youth Advocate recruitment and engaging in a workshop on the prevalence of e-cigarette use.

MAY

- Hosted the Australia and New Zealand Child Death Review Conference, bringing together professionals working in child mortality, health and clinical services, child safety and injury prevention research. Later that week, we convened the annual meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention group to share experiences, practices, barriers and priorities in child death review and prevention.
- Commissioner Twyford attended the Young Achiever Awards and presented the Queensland Young Achiever of the Year Award.
- Commissioner Twyford presented evidence to assist the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

JUNE

- Published *Restorative Justice Conferencing in Queensland*, comparing legislation and practices across Australia and identifying the model's strengths and opportunities.
- QFCC staff participated in a 20-day challenge to build awareness of First Nations peoples' histories, cultures and achievements, culminating in an all-staff workshop to share learnings and commence development of the QFCC's Reframing the Relationship Plan.

OBJECTIVE ONE

Ensure systems are accountable for the impact they have on children and families

Accountability is essential within any system that impacts on vulnerable populations. This is particularly true for decisions affecting the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families. We work to ensure that government agencies fulfil their responsibilities by overseeing and publicly reporting on system performance.

Throughout 2022–23, we undertook reviews and published reports on the effect systems were having on children, young people and families. We routinely gathered information and insights from young people and families, strategic partners, advisory groups, research bodies and the public to identify and report on trends or emerging issues. Using this data and our child death register data, we improved the sector's understanding of risk factors and supported the development of new policies and practices to reduce harm to children and young people.

Monitoring and reviewing systems

Measuring community confidence and sector insights

In December 2022, we released the results of our annual community and workforce surveys providing evidence on the performance of the child protection, youth justice and family support systems. We undertake these surveys annually to gather contemporary insights into the issues of importance to the Queensland community and the experiences of workers delivering services to children and families. We use the findings to report on system performance and provide advice to government and agencies on trends and areas for improvement.

In 2022, 2509 respondents to the community survey shared their opinions on the child protection system, with 60 per cent agreeing they had trust and confidence in the system—an increase from the year prior. The workforce survey involved 431 child protection and family support sector workers sharing their perspectives on clients, child rights, learning and development, and cultural capability, with respondents sharing generally positive views about their own roles and organisations.

In May 2023, we launched the 2023 versions of the annual community and workforce surveys. As of 30 June 2023, over 500 sector workers and 3154 community members had completed surveys.

Performing systemic oversight

Our oversight work applies a systemic lens, recognising that Queensland children and families interact with multiple systems (such as health, education, housing, employment, child protection, family support and youth justice). Children and families often move between and across systems depending on the complexity and severity of issues they experience. Understanding how different systems interact and influence one another assists in determining the overall impact on children and families, and how legislation, policies and programs need to be improved for better outcomes.

Issues and information identified through our monitoring role helps to target our systemic oversight and review work. In 2022–23, we finalised our *2023–2027 Oversight Framework* and *2023–24 Oversight Forward Workplan*, delivering on a strategic priority under our *Strategic Plan 2022–2026*. The *Oversight Framework* articulates how we will deliver reviews, audits and evaluations that influence positive change. The *Oversight Forward Workplan* outlines the systemic oversight work that we will undertake in 2023–24 and beyond.

In June 2023, we published the *Restorative Justice Conferencing in Queensland* paper. Restorative Justice Conferencing requires children and young people to actively participate and take responsibility for their behaviour by understanding the effects of their offending on the victim. Our report compares Restorative Justice Conferencing legislation and practice in Queensland with other jurisdictions and uses evaluation findings and data to identify strengths and future opportunities.

We have also undertaken reviews into the experiences of children and provided advice to government about their experiences with family, health, education and housing.

In 2022–23, we exercised our legislative powers on 15 occasions to request general information about data, funding and service delivery from other public entities (see Table 1). This included requests for information about children and young people’s involvement in family support, child protection, youth justice, policing and education systems and data on placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Agencies complied with our requests by sharing data (or agreeing to share data in the coming months) to inform our monitoring and review functions.

Table 1: List of Section 35 requests in 2022–23

To	Purpose	Received
Queensland Police Service	Watch house review	Awaiting data
Office of the Public Guardian	Watch house review	March 2023
(then) Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs	Child Rights report card	March 2023
Queensland Police Service	Child Rights report card	March 2023
Department of Education	Growing up in Queensland report	May 2023
Queensland Police Service	Watch house review	May 2023
Childrens Court Queensland	Watch house review	May 2023
Office of the Director of Child Protection Litigation	Permanent Care Orders for First Nations children	May 2023
Queensland Corrective Services	Growing up in Queensland report	June 2023

To	Purpose	Received
Queensland Police Service	Growing up in Queensland report	June 2023
Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services	Watch house review	June 2023
Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training	Watch house review	June 2023
Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training	Growing up in Queensland report and annual report on the performance of the child protection system	Due July 2023
Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training	Growing up in Queensland report	Due July 2023
(then) Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs	Principle Focus (part of an ongoing request to 2024)	September 2022 and April 2023

Reviewing the placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle was developed to protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, including the right to be raised in their own culture, recognising the importance of their family, extended family, kinship networks, culture and community.

In December 2022, we released the report *The decision to place an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child or young person in residential care*. It outlined findings from our review of the implementation of the Child Placement Principle when the decision is made to place an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child or young person in residential care. Our review included a desktop audit of departmental documentation, case file analysis and engagement with an expert panel.

In January 2023, we released an annual data snapshot, using statewide and regional-level Queensland data to monitor over-representation of First Nations children. We have produced annual snapshots since 2019–20 and discussed the data and identified drivers with the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services. Our snapshots and reviews form part of our *Principle Focus* program of work, which examines the dynamics and drivers of over-representation of First Nations children in out-of-home care and recommend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions.

Strengthening safeguards for children who remain at home during Child Safety interventions

In March 2023, the QFCC's report *Seeking safety: Keeping children safe when they remain at home during Child Safety interventions* was tabled in Parliament together with the Government's response to the three recommendations made by the QFCC. The report identified instances where requirements for Intervention with Parental Agreements were overlooked. It also identified the impact of poor information sharing between agencies and the influence of assumptions on agency decisions and actions.

The QFCC was responsible for delivering one recommendation from this report, to undertake a review of the use of Intervention with Parental Agreement. In January 2023, we published the *Keeping children in focus: A systemic review of supports delivered to Queensland children and families during Intervention with Parental Agreement*. This review considered the experiences of children and their families, the

nature of Intervention with Parental Agreement work, the systems and processes that support its use, and the factors that affect children's safety. We reviewed historical and contemporary literature and reports about voluntary and participatory child protection interventions and spoke to parents, frontline child safety staff and non-government organisations. Our review determined that Intervention with Parental Agreement is an important intervention option that enables children to remain with their family and community while child protection concerns are addressed. However, we identified system limitations that mean the intent of these interventions does not always translate into practice. These included support services prioritising children living in care, risk assessment and engagement not being timely, and administrative processes not properly empowering families and their support network.

Monitoring and reporting on child deaths

Child death register

The QFCC is responsible for maintaining and reporting on the Queensland Child Death Register, which records the deaths of all children and young people in Queensland. By 31 October each year, we provide a report on trends in child deaths to the Minister for tabling in Parliament. Our reports on trends in child deaths receive public and media attention and raise awareness of the preventative actions needed by Government and communities to foster safer environments and provide support to children and young people. We use data and information from our register to improve the understanding of risk factors and inform the development of policies and practices to help reduce child deaths in Queensland.

In December 2022, our *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people Queensland 2021–22* was tabled in Parliament. Preliminary data for the 2022–23 report (outlined in Table 2) suggests an increase in child deaths (446 recorded deaths compared with 410 recorded in 2021–22). The number of child deaths from natural causes has increased, while the number from external causes (such as transport incidents or non-intentional injury-related deaths) has decreased.

Table 2: Preliminary data from Child Death Register 2022–23

	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23 (preliminary) ¹
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status			
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	73	71	94
Non-Indigenous	325	339	352
Geographical area of usual residence (ARIA+)			
Remote and very remote	11	10	19
Inner and outer regional	156	164	181
Major cities	227	224	237
Outside Queensland	4	12	9

¹ By 31 October each year, the Principal Commissioner must prepare and give to the Minister a report about information contained in the register and child death prevention activities. Data reported in this report may differ from data reported in the child death annual report where further information about the classification of death becomes available.

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	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23 (preliminary) ¹
Classification of death			
Natural causes ²	280	269	318
External causes ³	88	88	67
Unexplained ⁴	30	35	5
Cause of death pending ⁵	0	18	56
Total recorded deaths of children (0-17 years)	398	410	446

Safer Pathways Through Childhood

We use data in the Child Death Register to guide the child death prevention activities under our *Safer Pathways Through Childhood: Framework for the Queensland Family and Child Commission's Child Death Prevention Activities 2022-2027* and associated action plans. In 2022–23, under our first *Safer Pathways Through Childhood: Action Plan 2022-23*, we undertook projects to examine child mortality and promote preventative messages.

Case example

Swimming pool immersions of young people in Queensland, 2011–2021

One of our first actions under the *Safer Pathways Through Childhood Framework 2022-27* was to identify ways to improve the safety of young children around swimming pools.

In November 2022, we published and widely promoted a regional analysis of drowning and near-drowning incidents in backyard swimming pools. In the paper, we analysed data from the Child Death Register, immersion notifications and the Queensland Pool Register and identified critical compliance issues with pool fencing regulations and issues surrounding the supervision of young children in and around pools.

In partnership with clinical experts from the Queensland Paediatric Sepsis Program (Children's Health Queensland), we commenced research on the incidence of paediatric sepsis deaths in Queensland. Sepsis stems from infection and is a leading cause of preventable childhood morbidity and mortality in Australia and worldwide. We also started a review of existing frameworks for measuring potentially avoidable deaths, which will help to measure the impact of our child death prevention activities over time.

Child Death Review Board

Since July 2020, the QFCC has hosted the Child Death Review Board, which undertakes a system review following the death of a child in the child protection system. The Board works to keep systems

² Diseases and morbid conditions.

³ Such as transport incidents, drowning, non-intentional injuries, suicide and fatal assault and neglect.

⁴ Where a cause of death could not be determined even after thorough investigation. It includes deaths from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and undetermined causes.

⁵ Cause of death is not available until the outcomes of autopsy and coronial investigations are final.

accountable by making recommendations to government and non-government agencies about legislative, policy and practice improvements. In 2022–23, the Board met six times to discuss child death reviews and invited researchers and experts to share contemporary advice and best practice on issues affecting Queensland children and families. Commissioner Twyford chairs the Board and is supported by QFCC staff. In 2022–23, the Chair exercised legislative powers to request and receive information from government agencies about home education, mental health funding and separation periods in detention to inform the Board’s reviews.⁶

In November 2022, the Board published two research papers with opportunities for systemic improvements:

- *Reviewing the child protection system’s response to violence within families.* The paper reported that families affected by domestic and family violence often face other complex issues, particularly parental substance use and poor mental health. Opportunities for improvement included strengthening intersections between violence, substance use and mental health interventions, with a focus on children and keeping perpetrators ‘visible’ across the system.
- *Sudden unexpected death in infancy among vulnerable families in Queensland.* In 2021–22, the Queensland Paediatric Quality Council finalised research on behalf of the Board about risk factors for Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI). Three opportunity areas for system improvement were presented: clearer referral pathways for families with infants and young children facing multiple challenges, integration of safe sleep assessments into existing planning processes, and statewide implementation of multimodal programs to enhance infant safe sleeping practices.

The Board’s Annual Report 2021–22 included six recommendations for government consideration. They related to workforce reform, working with children and young people with complex needs, responding to domestic and family violence, safety of infants and unborn children, and safety of children with disability. By 31 October 2023, the Board will report to the Minister on its 2022–23 operations, including responses to its earlier recommendations.

Board members are appointed for a term of three years. With several Board members’ terms concluding on 30 June 2023, we partnered with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General between January and June 2023 to undertake a significant recruitment process. There was a strong aspiration to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership on the Board. The QFCC led a digital and media campaign to encourage applications from across Queensland and provided advice to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to support assessment of applicants’ expertise and knowledge.

6 Section 29P of the Family and Child Commission Act 2014 (Qld) enables the chairperson to ask any entity for stated information for the purpose of the board’s functions. This includes confidential information.

Annual report on the performance of the Queensland child protection system

Section 40 of the Act requires us to report annually on:

- Queensland's performance in relation to achieving state and national goals relating to the child protection system
- Queensland's performance over time in comparison to other jurisdictions
- Queensland's progress in reducing the number of, and improving the outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system.

This chapter delivers on this legislative requirement. For this report, we have used the most current performance data available to the QFCC, including by scanning agencies' reports and data sets. We also invited agencies to share any information they thought should be included in our reporting.

The Act defines the child protection system as 'the system of services provided by relevant agencies to children and young people in need of protection or at risk of harm.' It includes preventative and support services to prevent harm to children and young people, and strengthen and support families. Using this definition, we assessed Queensland's performance across 2022–23 against:

- state goals in the *Supporting Families Changing Futures 2019–2023* whole-of-government strategyⁱ
- national goals (focus areas) in *Safe and Supported: The national framework for protecting Australia's children 2021–2031*ⁱⁱ
- key indicators from the *Family Matters*ⁱⁱⁱ and *Closing the Gap*^{iv} reports (reducing the numbers of, and improving outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people).

There are overlaps between the goals in state and national strategies. Rather than addressing each separately, we have reported against state and national goals by aligning them against five common themes (see Table 3):

1. Is the Queensland child protection and family support system supporting families earlier?
2. Are there sufficient resources to provide quality support services to Queensland children and families when needed?
3. Are Queensland's out-of-home care and youth justice systems upholding the rights of the children and young people they serve?
4. Are Queensland's out-of-home care and youth justice systems meeting the needs and upholding the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities?
5. Is the Queensland child protection and family support system a collaborative and accountable system?

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Table 3 Alignment of state and national goals for the 2022–23 section 40 report.

State goals ^v	National goals ^{vi} (National framework focus areas)
Theme 1: Is the Queensland child protection and family support system supporting families earlier?	
2. Supporting Queensland families earlier	1. A national approach to early intervention and targeted support for children and families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage
Theme 2: Are there sufficient resources to provide quality support services to Queensland children and families when needed?	
3. Working better with Queensland families who are in contact with the child protection system	4. Strengthening the child and family sector and workforce capability
6. Delivering quality services to Queensland children and families through a capable, motivated, and client-focused workforce	
Theme 3: Are Queensland's out-of-home care and youth justice systems upholding the rights of the children and young people they serve?	
4. Improving care and post-care for Queensland children and young people	4. Strengthening the child and family sector and workforce capability
Theme 4: Are Queensland's out-of-home care and youth justice systems meeting the needs and upholding the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and communities?	
5. Meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and communities	2. Addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems
Theme 5: Is the Queensland child protection and family support system a collaborative and accountable system?	
1. Sharing responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of Queensland children	3. Improved information sharing, data development and analysis
7. Building and maintaining an accountable, transparent, and cost-effective system	

* Children and young people who have experienced abuse and/or neglect, including children in out-of-home care and young people leaving out-of-home care and transitioning to adulthood, are a priority group for the National Framework.

Theme 1

Is the Queensland child protection and family support system supporting families earlier?

This theme relates to the following state and national goals:

State goal 2:

Supporting Queensland families earlier

National goal 1:

A national approach to early intervention and targeted support for children and families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.

Remaining at home safely with their family is in every child's best interests.^{vii} Providing early support to children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability can safeguard their wellbeing and development and prevent their entry to the statutory system. Starting in 2014–15, the Queensland Government invested in the establishment of:

- a community-based referral service—Family and Child Connect
- secondary family support services—Intensive Family Support services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing services for families who, without appropriate support, would be at risk of entering the statutory system.

These services provide families experiencing vulnerability with access to a range of supports to help them meet the safety and wellbeing needs of their children. These services were also expected to reduce demand on the statutory system; Queensland families can also access universal services, such as health, early childhood and school initiatives, and other services, such as drug and alcohol, and domestic and family violence services. These make an important contribution to keeping children and young people safe and preventing their entry into the child protection system. However, their impact can be hard to quantify as agencies generally do not directly measure and monitor child protection prevention outcomes.^{viii}

How does Queensland compare?

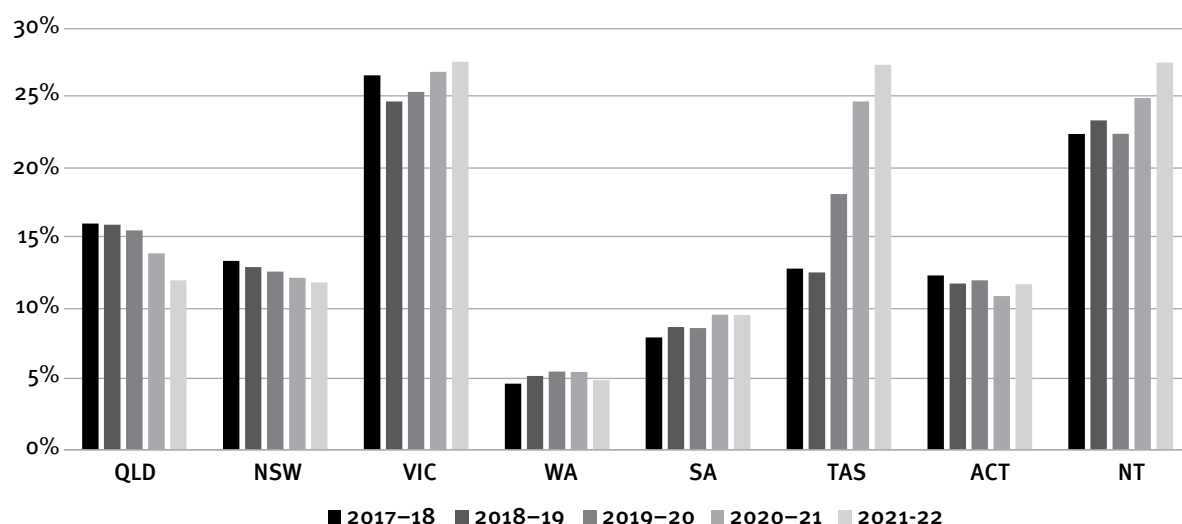
More Queensland children and young people are coming into contact with the system. In 2021–22, 14.6 per 1,000 Queensland children and young people received intensive family support services. For each of the past five years, Queensland has had the second highest rate of children receiving services behind Tasmania. In 2021–22, across Australia there was a small 0.7 per cent reduction in the total number of children who came into contact with the child protection system (a decrease from 178,813 in 2020–21 to 177,556 in 2021–22). This means around 31 per 1000 Australian children aged under 18 came into contact with the child protection system in 2021–22. By contrast the number of Queensland Children coming into contact with the child protection system continued to increase at a rate of 9.9 per cent (from 36,060 in 2020–21 to 39,627 in 2021–22) and the rate of children coming into contact in Queensland at 33.2 per 1000 was slightly higher than the national average at 31.3 per 1000.

Queensland has increased total investment in family support services but as a proportion of budget this investment is reducing and Queensland's spend per child is among the lowest in the country. In 2021–22, Queensland spent an average of \$7,260 per child on intensive family support services—lower than most other jurisdictions except Western Australia (\$6,600 per child) and Tasmania (\$4,385 per child). Since 2017–18, Queensland's average expenditure per child on intensive family support services has ranged between \$6,444 and \$7,725.

Queensland's investment in family support and intensive family support increased by 12.5 per cent

from 2017-18 to 2021-22.^{ix} The 2023-24 Queensland Budget includes \$48.5 million over three years from 2024-25 and \$16.2 million ongoing from 2027-28, with a further \$17.1 million over three years from 2024-25 and \$5.8 million ongoing being internally met for the delivery of local, community-based Family and Child Connect services. It also included an additional \$26.6 million over four years and \$10.3 million ongoing, with a further \$1.5 million internally sourced to expand the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services. Acknowledging this additional expenditure, Figure 2 presents data on the proportion of child protection services funding spent on intensive family support and family support services. It shows that on average since 2017-18 around 15 per cent of Queensland's expenditure has been allocated to these services. Only the Northern Territory, Victoria and Tasmania have consistently allocated a greater proportion of expenditure on these services than Queensland, however Queensland's investment is falling to 12 per cent and has the sharpest decline over five years.

Figure 2: A comparison across Australian jurisdictions of the percentage of government real recurrent expenditure on intensive family support and family support services as a percentage of all child protection services (FY2018-FY2022).



Source: Productivity Commission, 2023 Table 16A.8^{x 7}

What is working well or improving?

Families are proactively seeking help and trusting the system. One in six referrals to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services and Family and Child Connect services were initiated by the families themselves, which indicates that families are directly seeking help and trust these services.^{xi} QFCC's survey of parents involved in the system indicated that 45 per cent of respondents agreed (26 per cent agreed, and 18 per cent strongly agreed) that they received family support services that helped their family.

The Family and Child Connect, Intensive Family Support and Family Wellbeing services received a combined 41,476 referrals in 2021-22. Overall, this was a similar level of referrals compared to previous year's activity. In 2021-22, referrals to the Family Wellbeing Service were above the five-year average (2018-2022), while referrals were slightly below the five-year average for the Family and Child Connect and Intensive Family Support services:

- 4,899 referrals to Family Wellbeing Services, which was 14.6 per cent above average^{xii}
- 30,417 enquiries to Family and Child Connect services, which was 3.2 per cent below average^{xiii}

⁷ Time series financial data are adjusted to 2021-22 dollars (i.e., 2021-22=100) using the General Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GGFCE) chain price deflator.

- 6,160 referrals to Intensive Family Support services, which was 1.7 per cent below average^{xiv}

There is evidence that services are improving outcomes for children and families. Queensland families who attended a family support service in 2021–22 and whose cases were closed with ‘all or the majority of their needs met’ were less likely to have a notification within six months than families who did not receive a service (see Table 4).^{xv}

Table 4: Percentage of children whose case was closed with ‘all or the majority of their needs met’ who had a subsequent Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services’ notification within 6 months, as at 30 June 2022.

	Service		
	Child Concern Report	Intensive Family Support	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Service
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	20.4%	16.1%	13.2%
Non-Indigenous children	12.2%	10.7%	4.8%

Source: Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, 2023

What needs further improvement?

Our understanding of the rates and frequency of child maltreatment needs further improvement. The groundbreaking Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS) found that the current rates of child abuse and neglect exceed the rates found by Australia’s child protection systems. For all Australian’s the research revealed that as children:

- 32 per cent experienced physical abuse
- 28 per cent experienced sexual abuse
- 30 per cent experienced emotional abuse
- nine per cent experienced neglect and
- 40 per cent experienced exposure to domestic violence.

The ACMS report suggests that children and young people may be experiencing higher rates of abuse, and different types of abuse, than what is currently being identified. In 2021–22, Queensland Child Safety reported that for all substantiations, the single most serious abuses assessed in each case were: emotional abuse (49 per cent); neglect (26 per cent); physical abuse (16 per cent); and sexual abuse (7 per cent). Domestic violence is not a distinct reported category, and the reported rates of abuse vary considerably from those collected by the ACMS.

More specifically, the rate of child abuse substantiations per total population for each of the abuse categories collected by child safety across Australia are each under one per cent of all children (see Child Protection Australia Report, Table S3.14). While there are clear differences in the definitions and counting rules – including that child safety is only responsible for taking action when a parent causes significant harm – the distinction between the rates of prevalence of abuse – particularly the high rate of child sexual abuse and low prevalence of neglect - requires much consideration by government policy makers focused on protecting children.

The capacity of the family support system is limited. Our review of the use of Interventions with Parental Agreement showed that long waitlists and lack of available services were impacting on families’ ability to address and recover from risks. Stakeholders reported that specific services of concern include community-based mental health services, affordable housing in regional and remote areas, and programs for male perpetrators of domestic and family violence. Only 8.2 per cent of respondents to the QFCC’s 2023 survey of frontline workers agreed there is sufficient capacity within the secondary support service system to meet demand and less than one-quarter (21.3 per cent) agreed that the services had reduced tertiary system demand. The results were relatively unchanged from our 2022 survey.

Theme 2

Are there sufficient resources to provide quality support services to Queensland children and families when needed?

This theme relates to the following state and national goals:

State goal 3:

Working better with Queensland families who are in contact with the child protection system.

National goal 4:

Strengthening the child and family sector and workforce capability.

State goal 6:

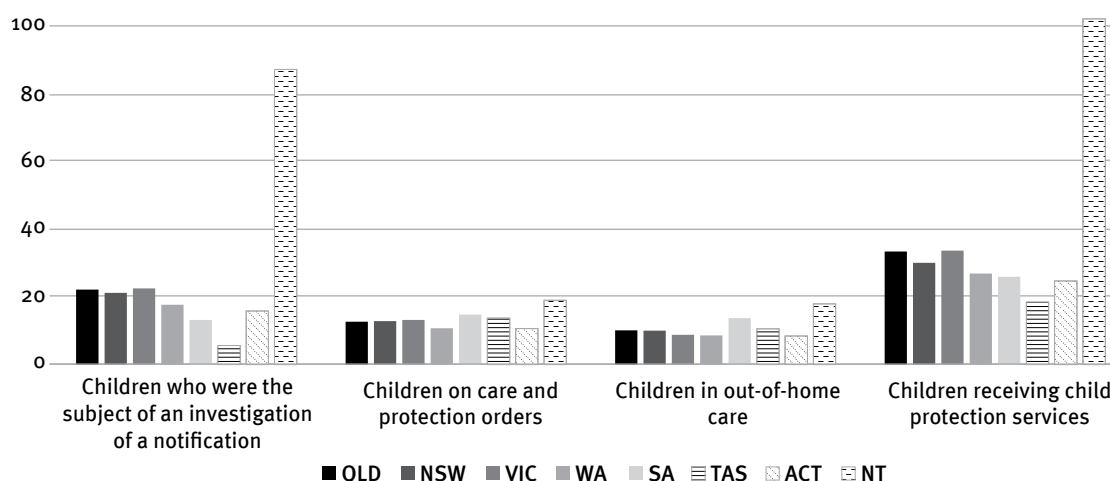
Delivering quality services to Queensland children and families through a capable, motivated and client-focused workforce.

In Queensland, the child protection and family support system responds to concerns about the care and protection of children who have been, or are at risk of, being abused, neglected or exploited by their family. The child protection and family support system consists of both secondary and statutory approaches, which are provided based on the level of need, risk and harm. Children and their families may receive support services to keep children safe, or be subject to investigations.

How does Queensland compare?

During 2021–22, 177,556 children received child protection services in Australia, including 39,626 Queensland children and young people (a 9.9 per cent increase over the 36,060 figure in 2020–21). Queensland's rate in 2021–22 of children and young people who were the subject of an investigation of a notification is slightly above the national average (22 per 1,000 in QLD vs 21 per 1,000 nationally)^{xvi}

Figure 3: A comparison across Australian jurisdictions of the rate per 1,000 children and young people receiving child protection services (2021–2022).



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023 Table 2.2^{xvii}

While Queensland has seen increases in the total number of children entering and in care the State does not have a high rate in comparison to Australia. Rates of children and young people in out-of-home care have risen consistently in Queensland and South Australia since 2017–18, while Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania have seen slight decreases since 2020–21. Rates have consistently decreased in New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory since 2017–18.^{xviii}

What is working well or improving?

Queensland continues to have a strong and resilient workforce committed to the safety of children The importance of the child protection and family support workforce cannot be understated.^{xix} Many of the decisions workers need to make involving vulnerable children, young people and their families involve extremely complex situations with multiple stakeholders. The decisions can be ethically fraught and emotionally challenging, demanding a high level of knowledge and skill.^{xx} This workforce includes:

- 1,844 child safety case workers employed by Child Safety as at 31 March 2023^{xxi}
- 5,854 foster and kinship carer families as at 31 March 2023^{xxii}
- one dedicated student protection principal advisor in each of the seven Department of Education regions.^{xxiii}

Respondents to the QFCC's 2023 survey of frontline workers agreed their work serves an important purpose (96.3 per cent), leads to positive change (74.8 per cent), and gives them a sense of satisfaction (76 per cent).^{xxiv}

The effectiveness of child safety interventions is improving. Since 2017–18, there has been a 15.4 per cent increase in the number of children and young people who did not experience subsequent substantiations after their initial substantiation (Table 5). This means child safety actions are protecting safety outcomes for the children they work with.

Table 5: Number (and per cent) of individual children and young people who did not experience a further substantiation after their first substantiation (FY2018–2022).

	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	Change since 2017–18	Change since 2020–21
No substantiation after first substantiation (within 12 months)	5460 (82.2%)	5422 (81.5%)	5830 (82.7%)	6277 (84.3%)	6300 (85.6%)	15.4% increase	0.4% increase

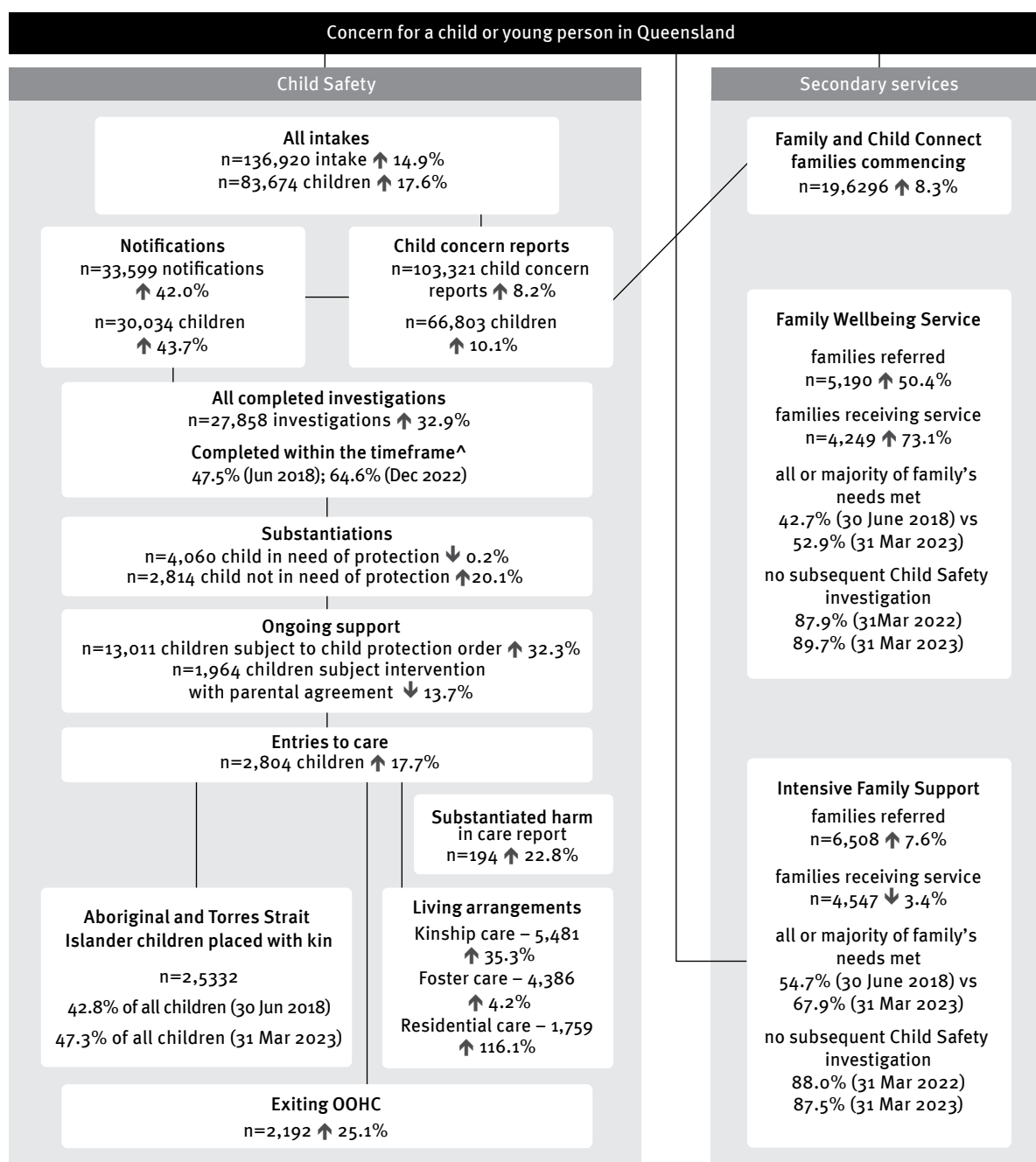
Source: Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, 2023

Despite persistent increasing demand, the number of children entering the statutory system is at its lowest level in four years.

Figure 4 describes the demand pressures in the Queensland child protection and family support system for the 12 months ending 31 March 2023.

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Figure 4: Flow chart with relevant available data for various points of the child protection and family support system—12 months ending 31 March 2023 noting percentage change from 12 months ending 30 June 2018.



Source: Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, 2023

*Data notes: data is for the year ending March 2023 (12 months of data). Unless otherwise stated, percentage change reference point (where relevant) is 12 months ending 30 June 2018. Family and Child Connect services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services and Intensive Family Support services were implemented from 2017, with new services rolled out over time.

[^] Note: From 1 September 2019, the prescribed timeframe for completing an investigation and assessment changed from 60 calendar days to 100 calendar days.

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Whilst the figures show increased demand in intakes, notifications, and investigations there is not a corresponding increase in substantiations or children entering care. Between 2018-19 and 2021-22, there has been a 3.4 per cent decrease in the number of children entering out-of-home care. Over the last year, the number entering out-of-home care has decreased by 8.6 per cent and the number of children subject to a substantiation has decreased by 3.8 per cent (see Table 6).

Table 6: Number of individual children and young people subject to Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services interventions during the financial years (FY2018–2021).

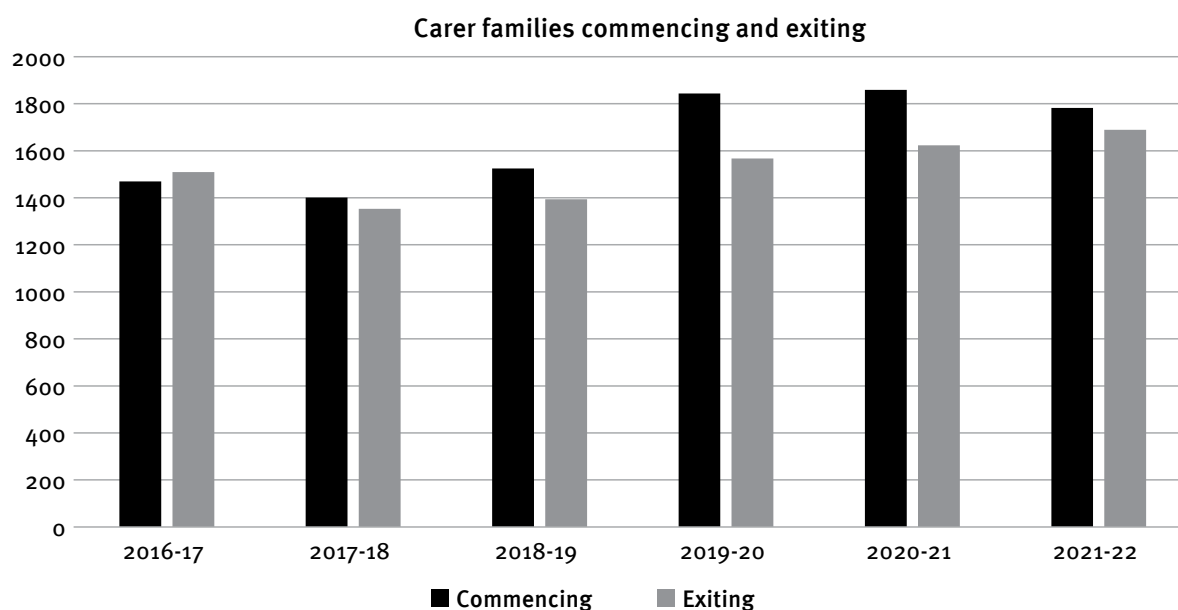
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	3 year trend	Change since last year
Notifications	22,767	23,273	25,233	28,587	25.6% increase	13.3% increase
Substantiations	6063	6551	6408	6249	3.1% increase	2.5% decrease
Entering out-of-home care	2807	3117	2958	2705	3.6% decrease	8.6% decrease
In out-of-home care	9647	10527	11065	11323	17.4% increase	2.3% increase
Exiting out-of-home care	1786	1803	2022	2096	17.4% increase	3.7% increase
Intervention with parental agreement	2095	1988	1863	2043	2.5% decrease	9.7% increase

Source: Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, 2023^{xxv}

What needs further improvement?

The number of carer families is not increasing at the rate of demand. In 2021–22, there were 5,967 carer families, a 1.8 per cent increase over 2020–21 however, while the number of kinship and foster carer families has slightly increased, it has not matched the growth in children needing care, and there was a noticeable decline in the number of provisionally approved carers over the last three years. Consistent with previous years, the modest overall increases have not kept pace with the number of children and young people in out-of-home care.^{xxvi} There has also been a steady increase in the number of carer families exiting (Figure 5).

Figure 5 Number of carer families commencing and exiting (FY17-22).



Source: Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, 2023

During Queensland Foster and Kinship Care's 2021-22 carer exit interviews, 105 carer respondents gave the following reasons for discontinuing as a foster/kinship carer: 35 per cent cited a perceived lack of support and services from the Department of Child Safety; 23 per cent cited carer or family reasons including difficult interactions with birth parents or health reasons; and 15 per cent cited child related reasons including placements ending and child behavioural difficulties.

There is remarkable effort going into recruiting 1782 new carer families over 12 months, however the real benefit is minimised when 1689 carer households leave the system each year. This is close to a 30 per cent turnover in foster carers per annum.

Community confidence in the child protection system is fragile. In 2023, QFCC's annual Community Perceptions survey 3,154 respondents were asked if they had confidence and trust in the Queensland child protection system, with 56 per cent of respondents indicating they agreed (48 per cent agreed and eight per cent strongly agreed). This is a 6.67 percent points decrease from the survey results in 2022.

While the average caseload of a child safety officer in Queensland has decreased, the child protection and family support workforce are feeling strained. On average, caseloads have decreased to 15.8 per officer for the year ending 31 March 2023^{8xxvii,xxviii} however, the results from QFCC's 2023 survey of frontline workers indicates that workload demands have worsened year-on-year. Only 46.6 per cent agreed their workload was manageable (compared to 57 per cent in our 2022 survey); 48.5 per cent agreed they received the right amount of professional supervision to do their job well (down from 63 per cent in 2022); and 74.6 per cent agreed they received support from their colleagues/peers to do their job well (down from 87 per cent).^{xxx} As part of our study of the workforce, Department of Child Safety staff told us that reasons for the increased workload include the increased complexity of family situations, and implementation of new processes and systems.^{xxx} The Child Death Review

8 Note: From 30 June 2021 onward the caseload calculation methodology changed to reflect the updated Workload Management Policy for child safety officers working with children and young people receiving ongoing support. As such data is not comparable to previous years data.

Board Annual Report 2021–22 made findings about the need for workforce reform in Queensland. It observed that agencies and services are competing for staff and the issue is compounded by disparities in remuneration, incentives and leave provisions across government and non-government sectors. This results in some sectors consistently losing trained staff to other areas. In many cases, the Board and agencies attributed oversights or critical practice errors to workforce and resourcing challenges. Specifically, the cycle of high workloads and staff vacancies impacted quality of services, information-sharing, and timeliness and consistency of interventions. These issues were amplified in First Nations, rural and remote communities due to additional geographic and contextual barriers and reliance on service models unsuited to local needs. The Board made two recommendations on the workforce issue for government consideration.

There is visible tension in the system between the need to close cases and appropriately sighting and safeguarding children during investigations. In 2021-22, 2,619 investigations were finalised with an investigation outcome of ‘other’, a 325.85 per cent increase from 2020-21 in which 615 investigations were closed with an outcome of ‘other’. This increase follows the introduction of a process in October 2021 (revised in October 2022) allowing pending investigations to be closed after 100 days if no new or significant information had been received. In these cases, the child is not sighted. While there was variation across Queensland regions, on average it was taking between two and nine weeks to sight a child when a notification was commenced by information only.^{xxxI} At 31 March 2023, almost half (45 per cent) of notifications were commenced by information gathering.^{xxxII} In these cases, the child is not sighted.

Fewer children and young people in out-of-home care have current case plans. The rate of children and young people with a case plan that is current has declined from 90.4 per cent in 2017-18 to 85 per cent in 2021-22.^{xxxIII} In our review of Permanent Care Orders we received advice that the lack of current case plans was contributing to long court delays that impacted on stability and certainty for children in care.

Too many families are cycling through the child protection system and the number of children in care continues to grow. There are a higher number of children and young people entering the out-of-home care system each year than exiting, resulting in the total number of children living in out-of-home care increasing by 17.4 per cent between 2017-18 and 2021-22. Since 2017–18, there has been an increase in the number and the rate of children and young people in out-of-home care.^{xxxIV} Additionally, of the 39,626 Queensland children and young people that received a child protection service in 2021–22, 26,621 (67.2 per cent) had received a service in a prior year.^{xxxV}

Theme 3

Are Queensland's out-of-home care and youth justice systems upholding the rights of the children and young people they serve?

This theme relates to the following state and national goals:

State goal 4:

Improving care and post-care for Queensland children and young people.

National goal 4:

Strengthening the child and family sector and workforce capability.

* Children and young people who have experienced abuse and/or neglect, including children in out-of-home care and young people leaving out-of-home care and transitioning to adulthood, are a priority group for the National Framework.

When children are not able to remain safely at home, placing them in home-based care is considered to be in their best interests.^{xxxvi} Out-of-home care that is safe and stable can help children and young people recover from experiences of maltreatment. Many young people with experience in care go on to complete higher education, start families and have successful careers. Overall, however, children and young people in care are more likely to experience homelessness, criminal justice interventions, unemployment, worse physical and mental health, and educational outcomes, compared to children and young people without a care experience.^{xxxvii, xxxviii, xxxix, xl}

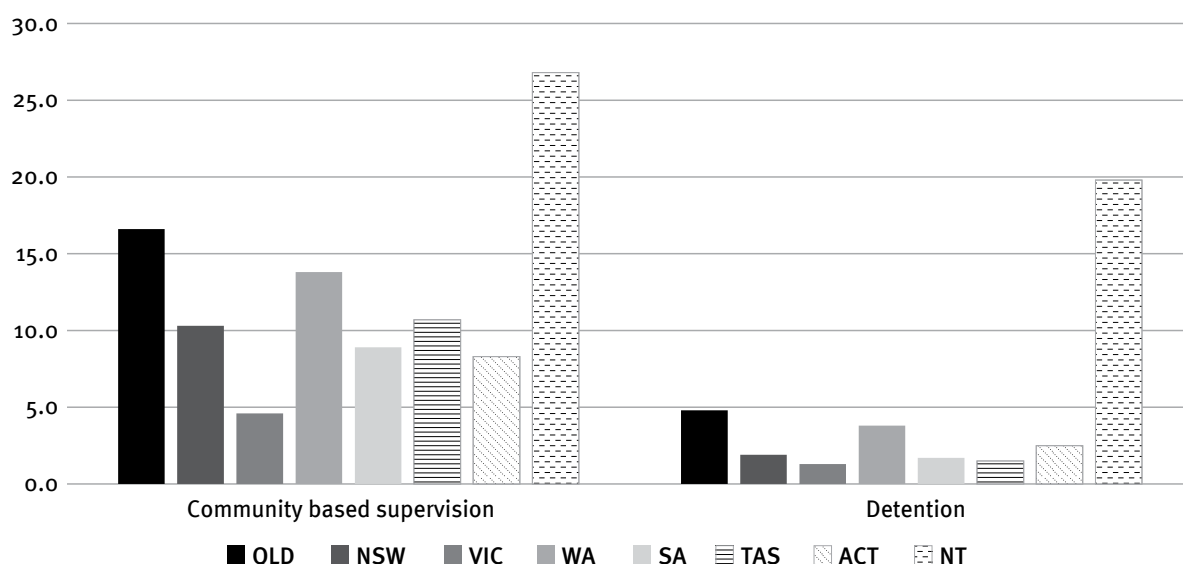
Likewise, when a child engages in criminal behaviour the youth justice system is intended to keep the community safe while addressing the underlying causes of the behaviour to prevent future reoffending. The youth justice system is designed to uphold and protect community safety by responding to the behaviours in young people that are anti-social and criminal. It spans from early intervention to detention. The *Youth Justice Act 1992* recognises the importance of the provision of services designed to rehabilitate and reintegrate children and young people who commit offences. Young people exposed to the youth justice system are too often treated as individuals, yet we know that unaddressed, significant family adversity remains a precursor to youth justice exposure. Consequently, in our work we also consider the families that are exposed to the youth justice system.

How does Queensland compare?

Queensland locks up more children than any other State and leads the nation for nights spent in custody. During 2021–22, Queensland had the second highest rate of young people in youth justice custody on an average day (4.8 per 10,000) and the second highest rate of young people under community-based supervision on an average day (16.6 per 10,000) behind the Northern Territory (Figure 6).^{xli} On an average day in 2022, 267 Queensland young people aged 10–17 years were in youth justice custody, 256 were in a youth detention centre and 227 spent time in a youth detention centre on unsentenced detention.^{xlii}

OBJECTIVE ONE

Figure 6: A comparison across Australian jurisdictions of the rate of young people aged 10–17 per 10,000 in community-based supervision and youth justice detention (2021–22).



Source: Productivity Commission, 2023 Table 17A.1^{XLIII}

During 2021–22, Queensland children spent the most nights in custody (100,425 total), followed by 68,172 total custody nights in New South Wales and 44,129 total custody nights in Victoria. As such, more than a third of the national nights in custody were served by Queensland children.^{XLIV} In June 2021, 88 per cent of children and young people in Queensland detention centres were unsentenced. This is 16 per cent higher than the national average rate.^{XLV} In 2022, the number of young people in unsentenced custody in Queensland increased by 4.1 per cent from the year prior and increased by 27.5 per cent since 2018 (see Table 7).^{XLVI} Of the young people completing a period of unsentenced custody in 2021–22, 60 per cent completed a period of 30 nights or longer (62.0 per cent for First Nations young people and 56 per cent for non-Indigenous young people).^{XLVII}

Table 7: Number (and rate per 10,000) of children and young people within the Queensland youth justice system on an average day (2018–2022).

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Change since 2018	Change since 2021
Community-based supervision	1278 (24.7)	1187 (22.4)	949 (17.6)	913 (16.5)	877 (15.9)	31.4% decrease	3.9% decrease
Youth justice custody	224 (4.3)	212 (4.0)	185 (3.5)	253 (4.6)	267 (4.8)	5.4% increase	5.5% increase
Youth detention centre	209 (4.0)	185 (3.5)	182 (3.4)	249 (4.5)	256 (4.6)	22.5% increase	2.8% increase
Youth detention centre on unsentenced detention	178 (3.4)	155 (2.9)	163 (3.0)	218 (3.9)	227 (4.1)	27.5% increase	4.1% increase

Source: Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training^{XLVIII}

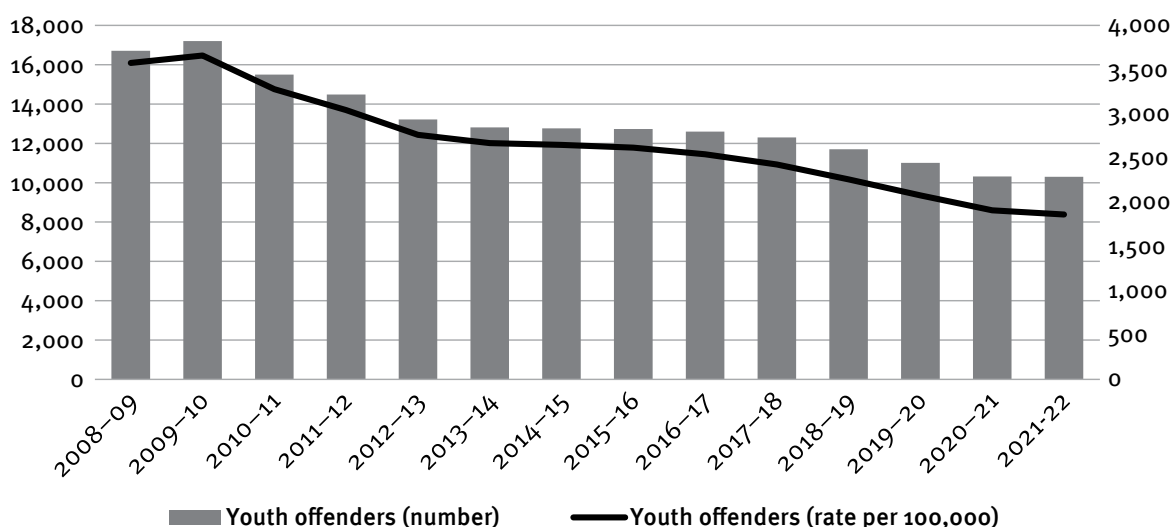
Queensland children and young people in out-of-home care experience more placements than children in many other states. In 2021–22, across all Australian jurisdictions, Queensland had the fourth lowest percentage of children and young people on a child protection order and exiting care after 12 months or more in care with only one or two placements (49.3 per cent). The Australian Capital Territory had the greatest proportion of children and young people on a care and protection order and exiting care after 12 months or more in care with only one or two placements (64.9 per cent).^{XLIX}

What is working well or improving?

Queensland has a higher rate of children exiting out-of-home care successfully to a permanency arrangement compared to most other jurisdictions. In 2020–21, rates of children living in out-of-home care who exited on a permanent arrangement and did not return within 12 months were highest for Victoria (35.4 per cent), followed by South Australia (14.5 per cent) and Queensland (12.1 per cent).^L

The rate of youth offending in Queensland has been steadily decreasing since 2008. Between 2008–09 and 2021–22, the number of young offenders proceeded against by police aged 10–17 years decreased from 16,709 to 10,304. The rate per 100,000 persons aged 10–17 years dropped from 3,575.8 to 1,863 (see Figure 7).^{LI}

Figure 7: A comparison of the number of youth offenders aged 10–17 years and the rate per 100,000 persons aged 10–17 years (FY2008–2021).



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022^{LII}

While the use of diversionary practices in Queensland has increased, the use of detention is increasing at higher rate. Over the past five years, there has been an increase in the number and rate of children and young people subject to youth justice custody, and a decrease in community-based supervision. Between 2017–18 and 2021–22, the rate of young people in youth justice custody on an average day increased from 4.3 to 4.8 per 10,000 young people aged 10–17.^{LIII} The rate of young people subject to community-based supervision fell from 24.7 to 15.9 per 10,000 young people aged 10–17.^{LIV}

Between 2018–19 and 2021–22, the number of cautions administered increased from 12,442 to 14,589 (the number was higher in 2019–20 at 15,428 cautions) and restorative justice conferences for young offenders increased from 1,866 to 2,249.^{LV} This comes as the Queensland Government announced it is providing increased funding of \$29.4 million over four years and \$7.4 million per annum ongoing to provide location specific diversionary responses to youth crime and young people engaging in anti-social behaviour. The government has also allocated:

- \$64 million over three years for policing responses including high visibility patrols and specialist youth crime rapid response squads
- \$15 million over two years to empower communities to develop local solutions to youth crime issues
- \$1.2 million over three years to deliver a fast-track sentencing pilot in four locations for 18 months to address delays in court proceedings through proactive case management of matters.

Most children and young people reported they feel cared for, safe and secure and happy living in out-of-home care. 78 per cent of children and young people feel people where they live now care about them, 88 per cent feel safe and secure, 94 per cent have someone in their life they trust, and 70 per cent feel happy in care.^{LVI}

The My Life in Care Survey highlights the voices and lived experiences of hundreds of young people in care in Queensland. The significant majority of respondents to the survey (69.9%) indicated they are in kinship or foster care placements, and that while they had felt sad (55.1%) or scared (57.1%) coming into care, they now felt more relaxed (54.8%), safe (64%) and happy (69.9%). Of those who were told what to expect coming into care (29%), almost all (91%) had found it helpful in preparing themselves. This demonstration of adaptability indicates that equipping young people with direct, clear and age-appropriate guidance can be a powerful resource for tackling substantial challenges.

Services are in place to support children and young people in out-of-home care who raise concerns and Queensland had the second lowest rate of children in care who were the subject of a substantiation of abuse. In 2021–22, Queensland reported a rate of 1.2 per cent of children in care who were subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect; only behind Tasmania at 0.8 per cent. New South Wales had the greatest proportion of children in care who were the subject of a substantiation of abuse (4.8 per cent).^{LVII} Between 2017–18 and 2021–22, the proportion of children and young people with substantiated harm reports remained around two per cent. In 2021–22, 167 children and young people in out-of-home care experienced harm.^{LVIII} Since November 2018, the Queensland Government has been a participating institution in the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme). In June 2022, the Commonwealth Government, who lead the Scheme, confirmed it had provided payments to applicants totalling more than \$748 million through the Scheme for historical institutional child sexual abuse. In the same period, the Queensland Government had linked 156 people, who had accepted an offer of redress through the Commonwealth, with access to counselling and psychological care services.^{LIX} In 2021–22, the Office of the Public Guardian conducted 30,992 visits to 10,622 children and young people. They raised 15,159 issues on behalf of children and young people at visitable locations and provided child advocate support to 266 children and young people.^{LX} In October 2022, new provisions commenced in the Act to make it mandatory for foster and kinship carers to report to Child Safety if they reasonably suspect a child in care has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse.^{LXI} The majority of frontline workers who responded to our 2023 workforce survey^{LXII} agreed that within their organisation:

- the views of children and young people are listened to and valued (69.9 per cent)
- decisions are made in children's and young people's best interests (73.9 per cent).

Support to children and young people leaving out-of-home care has been extended. The government has announced it will support the children and young people who exit care each year for longer, recognising their continuing responsibility to care for children who have been removed from their parents. Approximately 600 young people leaving care each year will be supported in their transition to adulthood through a range of new measures commencing in 2023–24, including continuing the carers allowance for 19–21-year-olds remaining at home and providing financial support and mentoring for young people aged 18–21 leaving non-family-based care.^{LXIII}

Young people leaving out-of-home care are finding employment. Rates of young people who enter employment after school are similar among those living in out-of-home care (29.7 per cent) and the wider Queensland population (30 per cent). However, fewer young people living in out-of-home care (29.7 per cent) are entering further study than the wider population (60.6 per cent).^{LXIV}

The number of children and young people in care receiving NDIS support is increasing. Many children and young people in contact with Child Safety receive NDIS support. As at 30 June 2022, 2,798 Queensland children and young people in out-of-home care had a disability (29.0 per cent).^{LXV} In addition, 2,262 children and young people subject to ongoing intervention (either a child protection order or intervention with parental agreement) had an NDIS support plan.^{LXVI}

What needs further improvement?

The number of children and young people on child protection orders living in residential care almost doubled. More than 15 per cent of all children in care are living in residential care. This form of care is the least preferred of all care types – particularly because it does not provide a strong home like environment. Between 2017–18 and 2021–22 there has been a 94.3 per cent increase (from 814 to 1,582 children and young people) living in residential care.^{LXVII} Over the last five years since 2022, the number of 0 to 4-year-olds in residential care has increased 88.9 per cent and the number of 5 to 9-year-olds increased by 67.9 per cent. The number of 0 to 9-year-olds has increased by 20.9 per cent over the 12 months ending 2021–22.

The QFCC is now overseeing a Departmental review of the Residential Care system.

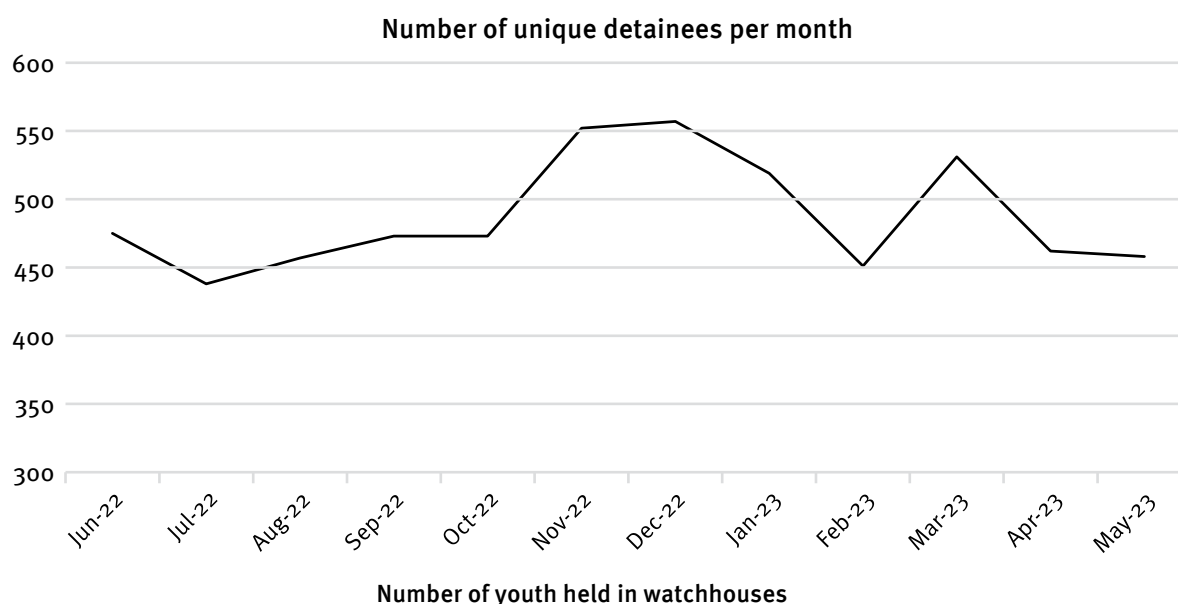
Queensland has a lower percentage of children and young people in out-of-home care meeting national reading standards compared to other reporting jurisdictions. Of the three jurisdictions that provided data in 2021, the percentage of year five children subject to guardianship/custody orders who achieved at or above the national minimum standard for reading were highest for Western Australia (79.8 per cent), followed by South Australia (74.5 per cent) and Queensland (72.3 per cent).^{LXVIII} The percentage of children and young people with a current education support plan had increased from 55.6 per cent in 2016–17 to 80.9 per cent in 2020–21, but has decreased to 72.8 per cent in 2021–22.^{LXIX}

Our model of youth detention is not effectively rehabilitating offenders. 56.8 per cent of young people, aged 10–16 years at the time of release from sentenced supervision, returned to sentenced supervision within 12 months.^{LXX} Within Queensland's small group of young offenders, young people categorised as serious repeat offenders accounted for 17 per cent of young people convicted and 48 per cent of the charges.^{LXXI} These young people are having a significant impact on their community and multiple experiences of detention does not appear to be an effective solution. Data released in 2022 indicates that for the 12-month period ending 30 June 2021, 585 distinct young people completed a detention period in Brisbane Youth Detention Centre (BYDC). Of those young people, 92 per cent were alleged to have committed another offence in the 12 months following their release.^{LXXII} For the 12-month period ending 30 June 2021, 19 distinct young people completed a detention period in West Moreton Youth Detention Centre (WMYDC). Of those, 84 per cent were alleged to have committed another offence in the 12 months following their release. For the 12-month period ending 30 June 2021, 310 distinct young people completed a detention period in Cleveland Youth Detention Centre (CYDC). Of those, 96 per cent were alleged to have committed another offence in the 12 months following their release.^{LXXIII}

Less than half of parents surveyed felt recognised and treated fairly by Child Safety. The Charter of Rights for parents was implemented in June 2022, developed with the insight of parents and kin through their lived experience. The QFCC collaborated with the Family Inclusion Network to survey parents about their experiences of the child protection system. The survey revealed that only 34 per cent of parents of children in out-of-home care were aware of the Charter.^{LXXIV} The survey also indicated that 45 per cent of respondents agreed (30 per cent agreed, and 15 per cent strongly agreed) that they felt recognised and respected by the child protection system, and 47 per cent of respondents agreed (30 per cent agreed, and 17 per cent strongly agreed) that they were treated fairly by the child protection system. The survey is the first of its kind conducted in Queensland and there is no national comparison. The 2023 results provide a baseline for further improvement.

More children and young people are being held in watchhouses for longer periods. During 2021-22, there were 7,001 admissions of children to watch houses, with 1,356 admissions resulting in children spending more than one day in the watch house.^{LXXV} Comparatively, in 2017-18, there were 1,267 admissions to a watch house with 515 children spending more than one day in a watch house.^{LXXVI} Over this period, total admissions to watch houses increased by 452 per cent and children being held in a watch house for more than one day increased by 163 per cent. The longest period of time a juvenile was held in a watch house in the last 12 months was 39 days (936 hours).^{LXXVII}

Figure 8: Monthly unique count of juveniles held in Queensland watchhouses, June 2022 to May 2023.



Source: Queensland Parliament, 2023^{LXXVIII}

School suspension rates are markedly higher for children and young people living in out-of-home care. The rate of student disciplinary absences in 2022 was 7.3 per cent among children and young people not in care, whereas the rate was 24.5 per cent among children and young people living in out-of-home care.^{LXXIX} Furthermore, in 2022, in every year level, students in out-of-home care were less likely to be meeting national standards than other Queensland students. The difference for out-of-home care students was greatest in writing—national standards were met by only 81.2 per cent of year three students, 61.4 per cent of year five students, 53.3 per cent of year seven students, and 44.6 per cent of year nine students.^{LXXX}

Unaddressed adversity remains a precursor to youth justice exposure. In 2021–22, 10 to 17-year-olds from the lowest socio-economic areas were five times more likely to be under youth justice supervision than those from the highest socio-economic areas.^{LXXXI} In 2022, a total of 1,605 young offenders were surveyed in the Youth Justice Census. Of these, it is estimated that:

- 45 per cent had disengaged from education, training or employment
- 53 per cent had experienced or been impacted by domestic and family violence
- 30 per cent had been living in unstable and/or unsuitable accommodation
- 27 per cent had at least one parent who spent time in adult custody
- 19 per cent had an active child protection order
- 27 per cent had a disability (diagnosed or suspected), including 17 per cent who had a cognitive or intellectual disability
- 33 per cent had at least one mental health and/or behavioural disorder (diagnosed or suspected).^{LXXXII}

Frontline child safety workers express concern that the system is not meeting the needs of children and young people. Across all QFCC surveys of frontline workers, the majority of respondents consistently disagreed with the notion that the child protection and family support system met the needs of children, young people, and families. This trend has continued in our most recent survey in 2023, with 64.7 per cent disagreeing, compared with 14.4 per cent agreeing.^{LXXXIII}

Theme 4

Are Queensland's out-of-home care and youth justice systems meeting the needs and upholding the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and communities?

This theme relates to the following state and national goals:

State goal 5:

Meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and communities.

National goal 5:

Addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems.

The theme also examines Queensland's progress in reducing the number of, and improving the outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system.

First Nations children, young people and families continue to be disproportionately represented in statutory child protection and youth justice systems in Queensland and across Australia. We are committed to identifying and highlighting the dynamics and drivers of this over-representation, and helping others understand and address the causes.

How does Queensland compare?

Over the past three years, the extent to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are over-represented in out-of-home care has worsened in Queensland and every Australian state, with the exception of the territories.^{LXXXIV} The disproportionality ratio⁹ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland was 5.6 in 2021–22. This means there were 5.6 times more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care than would be expected given the proportion of First Nations children and young people in the state's population. Table 8 shows that Queensland's disproportionality ratio was higher than Tasmania (3.6) and the Northern Territory (2.2) but lower than all other states and the ACT. In every state, the disproportionality ratio has increased since 2017–18, while in the Northern Territory it has remained consistent, and in the Australian Capital Territory it has marginally dropped¹⁰.

Table 8: Disproportionality ratios for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care across Australian jurisdictions (FY2017–2021).

	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT
2021-22	6.8	16.0	5.6	8.7	7.8	3.6	10.0	2.2
2020-21	6.7	16.0	5.5	8.6	7.6	3.6	9.4	2.2
2019-20	6.5	15.8	5.4	8.5	7.6	3.4	10.0	2.1
2018-19	6.3	15.0	5.4	8.1	7.3	3.3	9.4	2.2
2017-18	6.2	14.5	5.1	8.2	6.9	3.0	10.3	2.2

Source: Productivity Commission, 2023 Table 16A.9^{LXXXV}

⁹ Disproportionality refers to when representation of a particular group is higher than it should be by statistical standards. If the cohort's representation is proportionate to their representation in the target population, the disproportionality ratio will equal 1.0.

¹⁰ From 2018–19 the scope of out-of-home care changed. This means that in some jurisdictions, disproportionality ratios for out-of-home care from 2018–19 are not comparable with data for previous years.

Disproportionate representation does not occur in isolation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people's experiences within the child protection system are also affected by their interactions with other systems and services. Australia's National Agreement on Closing the Gap outlines targets to reduce inequality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a target date of 2031.^{LXXXVI} Reducing disproportionate representation in child protection is one of the agreement's 17 socio-economic outcome areas. Other targets relate to early childhood, schooling, health, economic participation, housing, safe communities, and disproportionate representation in youth justice.^{LXXXVII}

What is working well or improving?

More first nations children are being placed permanently with their kin and the legal definition of kin has been amended. The change allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to be placed with people regarded as kin if they have a legitimate cultural connection to the child.^{LXXXVIII} In 2021–22, there was a marked increase in the use of Permanent Care Orders (PCOs) for First Nations children and young people—rising from three in 2018–19 to 28 in 2021–22. The QFCC recently reviewed the use of PCOs for First Nations children and young people. The results indicated that 100 per cent of PCOs for First Nations children and young people were made to kin in 2021–22 and 26 of the 28 PCOs were made to First Nations kin. We found that the majority of children and young people (85 per cent) lived with their guardians for over two years prior to the order being made and a quarter lived with their guardian for over five years. PCOs in these cases provided continuation of relational and placement stability for the child. Almost 50 per cent of PCOs in 2021–22 were finalised within three months, a significant achievement for reaching timely permanency for children and young people with kin and stopping statutory involvement as quickly as possible. However, the data showed there were significant delays in some courts finalising PCOs and regional variations.

There has been an increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people living in out-of-home care who are placed with kin. It is now more likely that an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child will be placed with kin or with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers. As at 30 June 2022, 2,332 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care were placed in kinship care (45.6 per cent), 2,079 in foster care (40.6 per cent) and 704 in residential care (13.8 per cent). Our Principle Focus snapshots identified that the number of children and young people being placed with kin increased by more than seven per cent during 2021–2. This may be attributed to the establishment of dedicated Kinship Care teams in most regions, although regions have identified difficulty engaging kinship carers due to a fear of Child Safety and complicated processes, such as blue card applications.

When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are reunified with their families, it is almost always successful. While the numbers of reunifications are low, it has been consistent over time—166 in 2017–18, 177 in 2018–19, 142 in 2019–20 and 172 in 2020–21.^{LXXXIX} In 2021–22, 214 Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people were reunified with their families and 193 (90.2 per cent) did not return to care within 12 months.^{XC}

We spoke with regional Child Safety staff and community-controlled organisations across two communities in the Sunshine Coast and Central Queensland region who are seeing significant improvements in the number of children and young people safely reunified with their families. This region accounts for 20 per cent (48 children) of all children and young people reunified with their families in Queensland.

There have been improvements in infant mortality, readiness for school, housing and use of police diversions. According to the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), between 2009 and 2021 the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland who were developmentally on track to start school had risen from 21.5 per cent to 33.8 per cent. In 2021, this compared with 53.2 per cent of non-Indigenous children in Queensland. This gap has remained consistent across the past five AEDC censuses.^{XCI} The annual rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infant deaths has been decreasing, on average, by 4.0 per cent per year since 2009 compared with 2.3 per cent reduction for non-

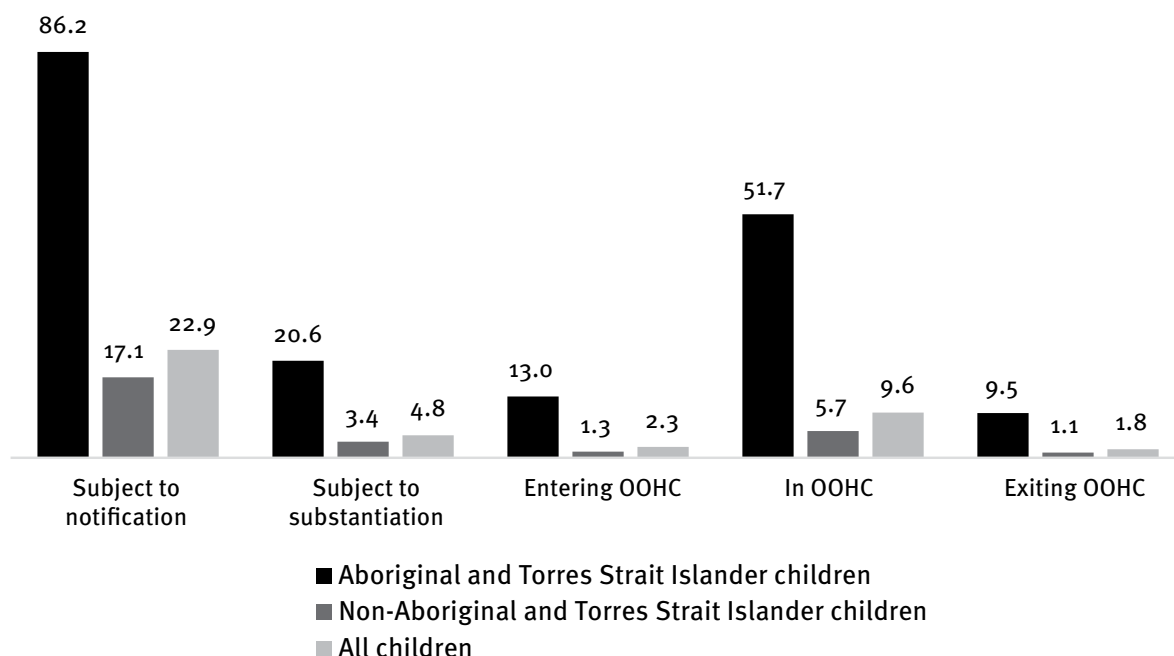
Indigenous infants,^{XCII} however, the infant mortality rate in 2021–22 in Queensland remains significantly higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants than non-Indigenous infants (6.5 compared with 3.6 per 1,000 births).

Investment in Family Support and Child Protection Reforms are increasing. The government is providing increased funding of \$167.2 million over four years and \$20 million per annum ongoing to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system. The funding will build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services sector to meet the needs of children, young people and families and safely reunify children and young people with their families. A further \$14 million over four years and \$1.5 million per annum ongoing will be met internally by the Queensland Government.

What needs further improvement?

There is clear evidence of continuing disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the Queensland child protection system. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people account for around 8.2 per cent of all children in Queensland but they constitute approximately 47 per cent of all children in care.^{XCIII} Figure 9 demonstrates the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people at various stages of the child protection system.

Figure 9: Rates per 1,000 children and young people at various stages of the Queensland child protection statutory system, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status (FY2021–22).



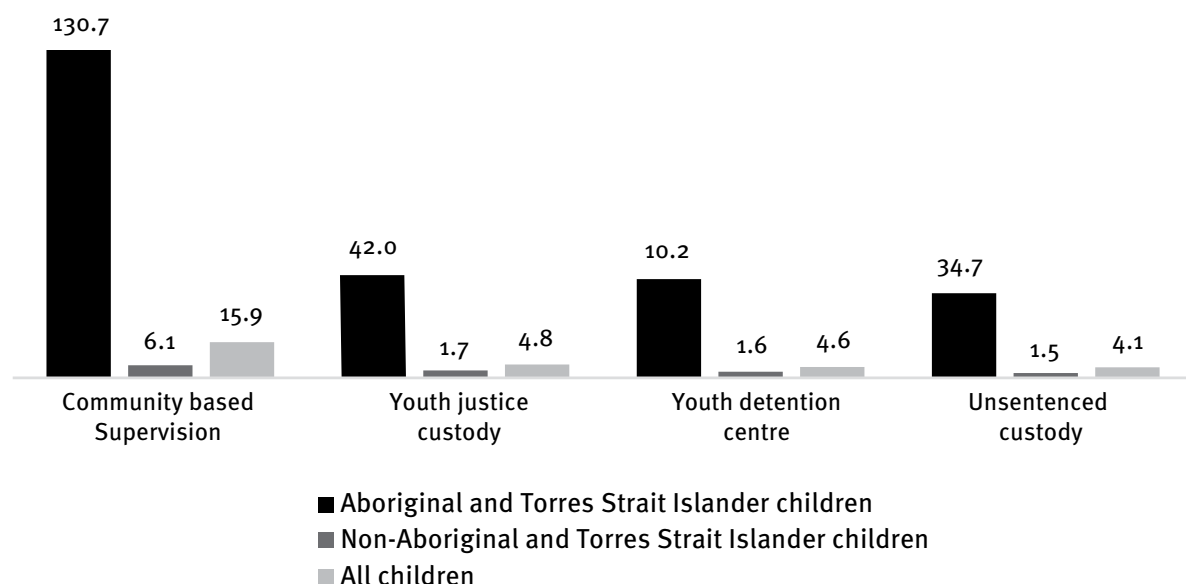
Source: Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, 2023^{XCIV}

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering care continues to exceed the number exiting. Between 2017–18 and 2021–22, the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering out-of-home care increased by 36.1 per cent from 948 to 1,290^{XCV} whereas the number exiting out-of-home care increased by just 27.4 per cent from 741 to 944.^{XCVI} For every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child or young person who exited out-of-home care in 2021–22, 1.4 children and young people entered.^{XCVII}

Residential care placements continue to increase rapidly across the state for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. As at 30 June 2022, there were 704 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people placed in residential care, making up 44.6 per cent of all children and young people in residential care. This is an increase from 587 children and young people in 2021–22. Placements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in residential care increased 46 per cent between June 2020 and June 2022. Currently residential care interventions make up 14 per cent of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander out-of-home care placements. More than 90 per cent were placed in non-Indigenous facilities.^{xcviii} In late 2022, the QFCC released the report *The decision to place an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child or young person in residential care*. The report examined the implementation of the child placement principle to a standard of active efforts when deciding to place an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child or young person in residential care. The report highlighted the concern that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged under five years make up 80 per cent of all children under five placed in residential care.

The disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the Queensland youth justice system is ongoing. Despite comprising only around 8.2 per cent of all children and young people aged 10–17 years in Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children accounted for 50.1 per cent of all child defendants who had a charge finalised in a Queensland court in 2021–22.^{xcix} Figure 10 shows the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within the Queensland youth justice system.

Figure 10: Rates per 10,000 young people involved with the Queensland youth justice system on an average day, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status (2022).



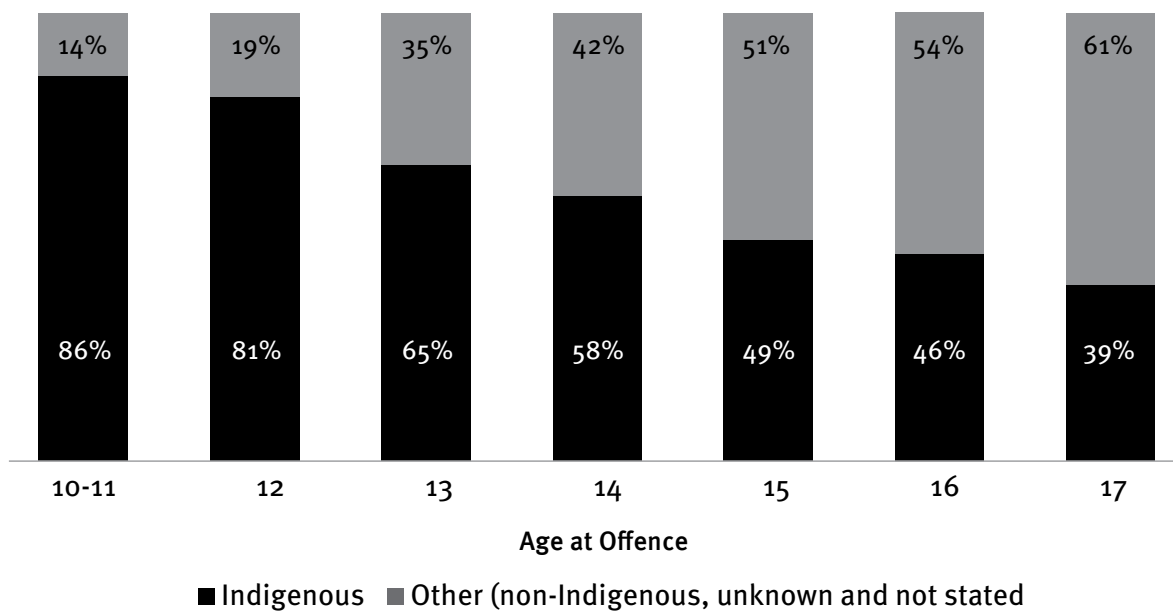
Source: Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training, 2023^c

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are less likely to be diverted from the youth justice system and disproportionate representation is highest for younger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defendants. Where appropriate, children and young people in conflict with the law should be dealt with, without judicial intervention.^{ci} Police can deal with offenders using court action (laying charges that must be answered in court) or non-court actions (such as cautions, conferencing or issuing fines). The rate of proceedings by police using court action against young people dropped between 2018–19 and 2021–22 for both First Nations and non-Indigenous young people, and the court action rate is still significantly higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (71.9 per cent of proceedings in 2021–22 compared with 46.3 per cent for non-Indigenous young people).^{cii}

OBJECTIVE ONE

In 2021–22, 86.0 per cent of 10 and 11-year-old defendants, 81.0 per cent of 12-year-old defendants and 65.0 per cent of 13-year-old defendants were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (see Figure 11).^{ciii} In comparison with non-Indigenous children, 10 to 13-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are nearly 50 times more likely to be under community-based supervision and 38 times more likely to be in detention.^{civ} Of children who spent time in detention, on average, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were detained for 178.8 nights versus 96.2 nights for non-Indigenous children.^{cv}

Figure 11: A comparison of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status of distinct child defendants, by age at offence (2021–2022).



Source: Children's Court of Queensland, 2022^{cvi}

Theme 5

Is the Queensland child protection and family support system a collaborative and accountable system?

This theme relates to the following state and national goals:

State goal 1:

Sharing responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of Queensland children.

National goal 3:

Improved information sharing, data development and analysis.

State goal 7:

Building and maintaining an accountable, transparent, and cost-effective system.

Successful implementation of reforms and overall system improvement requires broad cooperation, and shared responsibility and governance.^{CVII} This is noted in the Supporting Families Changing Futures 2019–23 strategy, which states, ‘Together with our sector and community partners, all relevant government agencies are working together to continuously improve connected services and systems to better support families through the Interdepartmental Committee.’^{CVIII} It also stresses the importance of building and maintaining an accountable, transparent and cost-effective system.

How does Queensland compare?

Queensland has a strong child and family support sector. There are many organisations operating to provide advocacy and frontline support to children and their families. Queensland led the Australian move towards collective impact through its delivery of the Logan Together model, and it is now continuing to demonstrate strong collaborative practice through emerging models, such as the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP). TQKP is a cross-sectoral ‘coalition of the willing’ made up of tertiary, not-for-profit, government and philanthropic bodies committed to making a difference.

Consistent with other Australian jurisdictions, Queensland is upgrading its data collection and information sharing capabilities. In Queensland, Child Safety is currently updating its Integrated Client Management System with a new client-centric system that will improve information sharing and collaboration across Queensland government agencies.^{CIX}

What is working well or improving?

There is increasing transparency about the performance of the statutory child safety system. The Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services has recently published data from a survey of children and young people living in out-of-home care about their experiences of the child protection system and the Minister for Child Safety has agreed to conduct this survey annually. This is in addition to the Our Performance website, providing data visualisations for several administrative data points, including the average caseload of child safety officers.^{CX}

Delegated Authority arrangements have helped to restore and recognise the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to autonomy and self-governance. Under the arrangements, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO) make certain decisions regarding children in their communities.^{CXI} The Queensland Government started trialling Delegated Authority arrangements in June 2022, in partnership with ACCOs, REFOCUS and Central Queensland Indigenous Development. The QFCC's 2021–22 over-representation snapshots highlighted that the Sunshine Coast and Central Queensland region has achieved an increase in kinship placements by eight per cent and reunified 48 children with their family, making up a quarter of all reunifications across Queensland (193 state-wide). This may be attributed to the collaborative family led approaches implemented in the region across the two Delegated Authority communities.

Queensland is seen as a leader in many areas of child safety practice. Notable national institutions focused on the safety and wellbeing of children are based in Queensland and our organisations are effective at delivering national change. The Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation is based in Brisbane and brings together a world-leading approach, incorporating key stakeholders and partners, and driving a collective effort to counter the epidemic of child exploitation. Likewise the Daniel Morcombe Foundation is recognised as a national leader in the creation of child sexual abuse prevention curriculum and training, and Brisbane University's and researchers were involved in, and played a leadership role in the ground-breaking Australian Child Maltreatment Study – which was officially launched in Brisbane on 4 April 2023. Brisbane was also the host of the International Congress on Evidence Based Parenting, and the Queensland Family and Child Commission also plays a national leadership role in the best interests of children including through:

- facilitating and chairing the Australia and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians group
- hosting the Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group conference;
- publishing the Annual Australian Child Death Statistics Report.

There has been concerted effort to improve cross-portfolio coordination for individual children and young people. This includes several governance groups that have been tasked with leading and coordinating components of the child and family sector agenda:

- The youth justice taskforce led by the Queensland Police Service is focused on building intensive multiagency case management of high-risk repeat youth offenders.^{CXII}
- The QFCC's Child Death Review Board conducts systemic reviews following the death of a child connected to the child protection system.^{CXIII}
- Domestic violence high risk teams, led by the Attorney-General's department, enhance responses to domestic and family violence through time-critical information sharing, safety management for victims and increased line of sight of high-risk perpetrators.^{CXIV}
- The Queensland First Children and Families Board, consisting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders from across the state and supported by Child Safety, continues to provide strategic guidance and oversight of the implementation of the Our Way strategy.^{CXV}
- The Our Way Interagency Strategic Partnership group, led by Child Safety, including Deputy Directors-General from relevant government agencies, continues to foster cross-government action to eliminate the disparity of First Nations children, young people, and families in child protection.

Queensland's child protection and family support sector is committed to information sharing and collaboration. There are many examples of effective collaboration and local level leadership within the Queensland child protection and family support sector. The QFCC's 2023 survey of frontline workers found 77.9 per cent of respondents agreed that their workplace has a culture that supports collaboration with other organisations to achieve client outcomes.^{CXVI}

There has been an increase in multiagency collaborative responses. The Queensland Government has implemented a number of integrated responses to provide support to young people who are in the youth justice and child protection systems. These include:

- Multiagency collaborative panels (MACPs) for Government and non-government agencies to provide intensive case management and holistic support for those young people identified as high risk or requiring a collaborative response through a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approach. These panels coordinate access for young people to services such as mental health, drug and alcohol programs, reconnecting with school and school engagement support, cultural connections, and connecting with doctors and allied health providers.
- Expansion of Youth Co-responder teams including dedicated teams of police and youth justice workers providing a rapid response to target young people at risk of offending and young people on bail. Already operational in many parts of Queensland, this initiative has completed 40,000 engagements with young people including to check their compliance with bail conditions and follow up to ensure they are accessing the right services. This service is being expanded into Toowoomba, Hervey Bay, Mount Isa, Ipswich, and South Brisbane.
- Expansion of the Stronger Communities initiative/ Early Action Group to bring together Police and other key Government representatives to provide intensive coordination of services to young people aged 8- 16 years who are at risk of entering the youth justice system, and their families. Early Action Groups have been rolled out in Townsville, Mount Isa and Cairns.
- The Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services has legislative responsibility for the establishment of a Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) system. The purpose of the SCAN team system is to enable a coordinated response to the protection needs of children. Core members of the SCAN team system are Child Safety, the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health and the Department of Education.
- High risk teams (HRTs) as a core component of Queensland's integrated service response approach. HRTs are coordinated, multi-agency teams that collaborate to provide integrated, holistic, culturally appropriate safety responses for victims and their children who are at high risk of serious harm or lethality. HRTs consist of officers from agencies with a role in keeping victims safe and holding perpetrators to account, including specialist DFV services, police, health, corrections, housing, courts, child safety and youth justice.

What needs further improvement?

There are opportunities for Queensland to become more involved with cross-government and national data linkage initiatives. Better sharing and linking of data across different levels of government and with non-government organisations can improve our understanding of children and young people's experience of child protection and other service systems and of the service design and models that are required. For example, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare collates national data about children and their experiences of childhood.^{CXVII} Any implementation of linked data sets about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples must apply data sovereignty principles aligned to the Closing the Gap priority reforms.

Better cross-agency visibility and coordination is needed, within and between government and non-government services, to ensure positive outcomes for all children and young people in Queensland. For example, our recent study of a sample of cases reviewed by the Child Death Review Board found that all school-aged children and young people in the sample were disengaging or disengaged from school. Each child who died by suicide had disengaged from education and learning.

The review also showed that children engaged with ECEC services had greater consistency of support services over time and had fewer periods of service interruption or disengagement. Children enrolled with an ECEC service were more visible to services, and families were linked with assistance through the primary and secondary support networks.

The *CDRB Annual Report 2021–22* highlighted the difficulties experienced by families residing in regional Queensland where service delivery is affected by distance, resourcing, and staff attrition. Our review found that children and young people residing within 50 kilometres of a major city were linked with more services and had more direct contact touchpoints than children and young people residing further from metropolitan areas. Children and young people residing in remote and very remote regions, including a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, had fewer engagements with secondary services.

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. Our advice is used to influence legislation, policies and practices. We also use various forums and channels to raise community awareness and influence change across Queensland.

Raising awareness through media and digital platforms

Between May 2022 and April 2023, the QFCC featured in 607 media reports (including syndicated coverage), generated through proactive opportunities, reactive media enquiries, or passing mentions. This is less than 879 the previous year, attributed to a corresponding reduction in specific and high-profile cases of children involved with the child protection system and fewer passing mentions of the QFCC.

We analyse our media coverage each year to evaluate our public reputation and measure the impact of our messages among our target audiences. Overall, 89 per cent of coverage was positive or very positive in tone, a significant increase from 66 per cent the previous year. This indicated that our media coverage was higher quality, with greater focus on our campaigns and events, despite the decreased volume. Analysis shows that our key messages resonate with our audiences. These messages align with our strategic plan and centre around advocating for children, supporting the child protection and family support sector and its workforce, our oversight of the Queensland child protection system, our commitment to listening to children and young people, and our advocacy for the rights of children and young people.

The topics that attracted greatest media coverage and interest in 2022–23 included:

- our report into the deaths of Queensland children *Seeking Safety: Keeping children safe when they remain at home during Child Safety Investigations*: Summary report and our related report about the use of Interventions with Parental Agreement
- detention of children for extended periods in Queensland watchhouses and our subsequent announcement about our review into watch houses
- release of our 2021–22 Child Death and Child Death Review Board annual reports
- our recruitment drive in Cairns to expand our Youth Advocate Network
- our *Swimming pool immersions of young people in Queensland, 2011–2021* paper, which received cross-platform coverage on multiple outlets across regional Queensland.

Our website and social media channels also demonstrated positive reach over the last 12 months. Our website received more than 135,000 views since it was relaunched with our new user-centric design. We also recorded positive shifts in our social media engagement and performance on Facebook and Instagram (more than 10 per cent engagement rate) and on LinkedIn (with a 373 per cent increase in our follower count and more than 10,000 clicks on our posts).

Our performance is attributed to a strengthened digital communication strategy, which has generated more content centred around our community awareness campaigns, more video content and youth-generated content. In 2022–23, our most successful posts promoted:

- Queensland Youth Week
- mental health posts developed in partnership with the Queensland Mental Health Commission
- QFCC Youth Advisory Council activities
- Safe Spaces project, which promoted youth perspectives gathered through our Growing Up in Queensland survey
- recruitment to expand our Youth Advocate network.

We share content with over 1,200 sector and community partners through our quarterly newsletters, with information on our focus areas and deliverables and key activities being led by Youth Advocates and our partners. Our messages resonate with audiences, with metrics demonstrating high engagement with our content.

Advocating on social policy issues

We contribute evidence-based advice and solutions to government and other stakeholders on a broad range of policy and legislative issues impacting the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and families. In 2022–23, we contributed 25 written submissions with recommendations and advice to state and national reviews and inquiries as outlined in Table 9.

Table 9: Policy submissions 2022–23

State
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Justice and Attorney-General—Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 • Community Support and Services Committee—Inquiry into Decriminalisation of Certain Public Offences and Health and Welfare Responses • Legal Affairs and Safety Committee—Domestic and Family Violence (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 • Community Support and Services Committee—Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 • Office for Youth—Queensland Youth Strategy • Economics and Governance Committee—Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 • Legal Affairs and Safety Committee—Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Bill 2022 • Legal Affairs and Safety Committee—Monitoring of Places of Detention (Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture) Bill 2022 • Economics and Governance Committee—Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023 • Community Support and Services Committee—Path to Treaty Bill 2023 • Department of Justice and Attorney-General—Legislative Review of the Family and Child Commission Act 2014 • Legal Affairs and Safety Committee—Inquiry into support for victims of crime • Health and Environment Committee—Inquiry into vaping: Reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland • Legal Affairs and Safety Committee—Criminal Code (Serious Vilification and Hate Crimes) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 • Queensland Ombudsman and Inspector of Detention Services—Development of Inspection Standards • Vardon Consulting—Non-State Schools Accreditation Framework Review.
National
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Association of National Advertisers—Children’s Advertising Code Review • Australian Competition and Consumer Commission—Infant Sleep Products • Attorney-General’s Department—National Principles to Address Coercive Control • Australian Competition and Consumer Commission—Australian Competition and Consumer Commission priority areas • Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee—Senate Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women • Workforce Australia Committee—Workforce Australia Employment Services Inquiry • Australian Treasury—Access to Offenders’ Superannuation for Victims and Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse • Attorney-General’s Department—Exposure Draft of the Family Law Amendment Bill 2023 • Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights—Inquiry into Australia’s Human Rights Framework.

Our submissions were referenced in public reports or cited in Parliamentary speeches and contributed to the development or revision of legislation and policies. We responded to requests for information and advice from government stakeholders on a range of issues, including youth justice and youth detention, education, domestic and family violence, and prevention of child sexual abuse.

Hearings and inquiries

We lend our voice at public hearings and inquiries to champion the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and influence positive changes in legislation, policies and practices. In 2022–23, we provided evidence at the following Parliamentary hearings:

- **Legal Affairs and Safety Committee – Inquiry into the Working with Children (Indigenous Communities) Amendment Bill 2021:** On 10 October 2022, Commissioner Lewis gave evidence in support of the Bill’s intent, but raised concerns about its operation and the need to further explore options to overcome limitations in the blue card system. We outlined the barriers experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples engaging with the blue card system.
- **Legal Affairs and Safety Committee – Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combative Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022:** On 7 November 2022, Commissioner Twyford gave evidence in support of the Bill. We highlighted that the Bill recognises that domestic and family violence need not include physical contact, and that a pattern of behaviour over time can be as harmful and wrong as a single incident. We also raised the important consideration of the impact of violence on children and families, including the negative long-term impact of growing up in fear.
- **Legal Affairs and Safety Committee – Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Bill 2022:** On 24 January 2023, Commissioner Twyford shared the views and experiences of Youth Advocates on the importance of legally recognising the identity of trans and gender diverse people. Our submission raised concern about the fear of prejudice, violence and bias and lack of privacy experienced by young people.
- **Economic and Governance Committee – Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023:** On 28 February 2023, Commissioner Twyford asserted the importance of understanding and addressing the underlying drivers of offending behaviours and circumstances that lead young people to offend. Our evidence reiterated the dual purposes of the youth justice system—to keep the community safe and change the behaviour of young people—and advocated for evidence-based solutions to prevent offending and reoffending.
- **Health and Environment Committee – Inquiry into reducing e-cigarette use in Queensland:** On 31 May 2023, Commissioner Twyford shared the views and perspectives of Youth Advocates on e-cigarette use and voiced concerns about the lack of Queensland data. We raised concern about the dangers of the toxins and chemicals, including nicotine, found in e-cigarettes and called for vigilance in addressing their use among children and young people.

In 2022–23, we also provided evidence and advice at the following inquests and hearings:

- **Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability – Public Hearing 33:** The hearing examined the nature and extent of government agencies’ actions to prevent violence, abuse and neglect. On 9 May 2023, Commissioner Twyford gave evidence about the QFCC’s legislative powers and role in undertaking systemic reviews and the strategic connections for delivering on a rights-based agenda.
- **Coronial inquest into the deaths of an adult and children:** On 16 June 2023, Commissioner Twyford provided evidence about systemic issues and potential solutions to risks to children and families who experience complex or adverse circumstances. Commissioner Twyford’s evidence and insights will assist the Coroner to determine whether recommendations are needed to prevent similar deaths.

Advocacy and issues papers

The QFCC is committed to helping the sector respond to issues affecting children, young people and families. Our advocacy and issues papers draw on data, research and insights from young people to raise issues and identify potential solutions. In 2022–23, we published the following papers:

- September 2022 – *Designing a better response to youth offending–Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility*. In this paper, we continued to advocate for an evidence-based response to youth offending and for the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Queensland to be increased to 14. We described how a supportive, restorative justice approach is more effective than a criminal response for reducing youth crime. We outlined evidence showing that criminal justice responses were not working and can do more harm than good. We consider that an effective youth justice system should provide targeted trauma-informed responses to children that take account of the factors that contribute to their behaviour. A child who is not yet in high school does not belong in a prison setting or a watchhouse.
- October 2022 – *Growing Up in Queensland 2022: Safe Spaces*. Our paper advocated for measures to help young people feel safer in public spaces in their communities. It was informed by the views of young people in the Growing Up in Queensland survey and in three focus group discussions held in regional locations. The paper was shared with stakeholders (such as local councils and the Queensland Police Service) who were best placed to make changes based on its findings.
- January 2023 – *Barriers to Accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Regional and Remote Queensland for Children with Cognitive Disabilities and Their Families*. Our paper outlined barriers experienced by children with cognitive disabilities when accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme, with a particular focus on the experiences of First Nations children and families and those living in regional and remote areas.
- February 2023 – *Non-systemic barriers to young people's use of mental health services*. Mental health concerns are common among young people, but many do not seek formal support due to systemic and non-systemic barriers. Our paper brought attention to two specific non-systemic barriers to seeking help: stigma regarding mental health concerns and lack of knowledge about mental health services.

Advancing child rights through dialogue

Our work is underpinned by advocating for, and promoting, the rights of children and young people. We work with stakeholders to increase awareness of the rights of children, and the responsibilities of everyone to protect those rights. In 2022–23, we advocated the benefits of a child-rights approach in media engagements and in consultations with stakeholders. We worked with partners to collect data and insights about how policies and practices in Queensland were upholding and promoting child rights, which will be captured in our inaugural Child Rights Report.

On 21 June 2023, we hosted the QFCC's first Child Rights Dialogue, which explored child rights decision-making involving children and young people in conflict with the law. The event provided an opportunity for stakeholders and experts to discuss how international human rights instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, can be applied to decisions that affect children and young people in justice settings. The event forms part of a series exploring the value and practical application of the UN Convention in different settings.

OBJECTIVE THREE

Empower children, young people and their families to influence decisions that affect their lives

Empowering children and families to share their stories is a critical part of our work. We amplify the voices of Queensland children and their families, particularly those with lived experience of inequity, vulnerability or marginalisation. We highlight the voices, experiences and stories of children and families and First Nations children and families throughout our work. Our Child and Youth Participation Framework outlines how we give children and young people genuine opportunities to participate in decision-making.

Children and young people have a significant role to play in shaping Queensland's future economic, social and cultural success. They have a right to participate in decision-making that affects them and successful outcomes are more likely when decisions about children involve them and people significant to them (such as parents, siblings, carers, extended family and friends).

Amplifying the voices of children and young people

Youth Advocates

We employ young people, referred to as Youth Advocates, to share their thoughts, views and experiences. Youth Advocates bring valuable insights, creative solutions and understanding of the challenges and aspirations of their generation. Their involvement in the formation of government policies and initiatives helps to ensure that these are relevant, effective and sustainable.

We pay our Youth Advocates for their participation in our work. In 2022–23, we funded almost 500 hours or approximately \$31,000 of youth participation. This financial and practical support empowers Youth Advocates to participate in shaping policies, projects and initiatives that directly impact their lives and communities. In 2022–23, Youth Advocates:

- engaged in the Brisbane 2032 Legacy Forum with members of the 2023 Olympic and Paralympic Games Board and key stakeholders
- contributed stories to the Right to Learn campaign to raise awareness about the right for all children to access education
- engaged in workshops to support the implementation of the *Achieving Balance: The Queensland Mental Health Commission's Alcohol and Other Drugs Plan 2022–2027*

- met with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to discuss what topics and issues should be included in the 2026 Australian census
- advised on the development of a pilot program for young people with a disability in the youth justice system
- attended the Queensland Young Achiever Awards.

Case studies of Youth Advocate achievements

Towards Ending Homelessness for Young Queenslanders 2022–2027

In October 2022, one of our Youth Advocates courageously shared their story of homelessness as part of the media launch of the Queensland Government's policy '*Towards ending homelessness for young Queenslanders 2022–2027*'. Since the launch of the strategy, the Youth Advocate continues to promote the housing needs of young people and has since joined the Queensland Government ministerial roundtable as a youth representative.

National Child Protection Forum

In December 2022, a Youth Advocate presented at the National Child Protection Forum in Perth, attended by over 150 representatives of government and non-government organisations, services and advocacy groups. They spoke to the importance of including young people's voices and perspectives in projects, policies and programs that impact them and shared recommendations for how organisations can increase youth participation. They chaired the final day and provided closing remarks for the forum.

Home Stretch campaign

In 2022–23, a Youth Advocate advocated to Queensland ministers (through QFCC Youth Advisory Council meetings and letters co-written with Commissioner Twyford) for options to extend support and housing for children in care. In June 2023, the Youth Advocate presented the closing speech at the Home Stretch Symposium in Melbourne (involving state, territory and national government representatives, out-of-home care service providers, academics and researchers and peak bodies) where they advocated for the extended care model and urged governments to ensure that no young person is left behind. Drawing on their own lived experience, they emphasised the importance of inclusivity in extended care support plans.

Youth Advocates helped to shape the QFCC's work by:

- co-designing the dedicated youth space on the QFCC website
- co-designing the QFCC's 2023 Youth Engagement Model, to support delivery of our Child and Youth Participation Framework
- sharing insights and perspectives to inform *Growing Up in Queensland 2022: Safe Spaces*, child rights monitoring and policy submissions to Parliament, and government inquiries relating to family law, e-cigarettes, mental health and gender awareness
- writing blogs and social media content on topics including domestic and family violence, mental health and discrimination
- travelling with QFCC staff to regional locations to meet young people and other stakeholders to promote Youth Advocate recruitment
- participating in Youth Week events and a two-week social media campaign showcasing the achievements and contributions of young people in Queensland.

Celebrating the achievements of children, young people and families

Young, Black and Proud scholarships

In 2022–23, we celebrated the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (under the age of 25) by sponsoring Young Black and Proud scholarships in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service Brisbane. Among the 16 scholarship recipients were young people with diverse talents and passions, with aspirations in music and theatre, science, visual arts, technology, dancing, public health, filmmaking, history and sport. We are continuing our sponsorships in 2023–24 to help the next recipients of the Young, Black and Proud scholarships to pursue their aspirations.

Youth Week

During Youth Week, our Commissioners, staff and Youth Advocates travelled around Queensland meeting with children, families and organisations and supporting local events to celebrate young people and the positive contributions they make to Queensland. We presented a prize for youth participation at the Youth Research Grants Online Showcase for the project *No Dramas: participatory action research using applied theatre in regional Queensland to enable youth-led communication on health and justice priorities*. We provided support to embed findings across the Queensland Government.

Children's Week

In October 2022, we supported and engaged in activities across Queensland to celebrate the rights of children. This year, the national theme was based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children Article 27, 'all children have the right to a standard of living that supports their wellbeing and healthy development'. We partnered with Children's Rights Queensland to provide grants to community organisations across Queensland to run events during Children's Week. We promoted the week's events and information through our social media channels.

Youth-led responses to e-cigarettes

In May 2023, we encouraged the use of youth-led educational messages to discourage the uptake and use of e-cigarettes. The following month, we provided funding to a young person to produce a short film for young people that dispels myths around e-cigarette use and highlights the impacts of addiction.

Celebrating Queensland families

In September 2022, we launched our new video series *Queensland Families Say* on our website and across our social media channels. The videos celebrate the diversity of Queensland families, with candid observations from parents and carers about the highs and lows of being a parent or carer. To complement the series, we teamed up with Parentline to produce a webinar series to help Queensland parents and carers tackle the challenges of parenthood.

Young Entrepreneurs Summit

We attended the Young Entrepreneurs Summit with over 300 high-school students from across the Western Downs. The event included inspiring keynote speakers and provided students the opportunity to pitch creative solutions to a panel, including Commissioner Twyford, to address problems they identified within their local communities and globally.

Voices of children, families, communities and sector on youth justice experiences

In September 2022, we presented the *Yarning for Change: Listen to my voice* final report to the Attorney-General. It delivered on the Queensland Government's election commitment to undertake culturally appropriate conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people about their interactions with the justice system. The project team used yarning and yarning circles to gather culturally appropriate stories from children, young people and young adults who were at risk of engaging with (or had contact with or were currently in) the youth justice system. We captured the voices of 101 children and young people across Queensland with 86 identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. The report shares their stories and lived experiences of the system and emphasises the issues that mattered to them.

Voices of parents on child protection experiences

In June 2023, we launched our first survey of parents to understand their experiences of Child Safety processes and the Queensland Charter of Rights for Parents. The findings and insights shared by 324 parents provide critical evidence on system successes and areas for improvement. We will finalise and share survey outcomes in 2023–24.

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. Government and non-government stakeholders must work collaboratively to ensure legislation, policy, funding and service delivery benefits Queensland's children and families. The QFCC is uniquely positioned to bring together diverse voices on 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. We also provide leadership and expert advice on state and national committees and advisory groups. A collaborative approach maximises our impact and helps others achieve common goals.

Working in partnership

In 2022–23, we expanded and deepened our formal partnerships and developed new partnerships with government and non-government organisations, research bodies, peak bodies and industry. Our partnerships have enabled us to incorporate diverse perspectives on child-related issues, leverage our collective expertise to empower others to undertake meaningful work and offer expert and objective advice to sector leaders and service providers. In 2022–23, we:

- sponsored the International Congress on Evidence-based Parenting Support, bringing together 790 researchers, program developers, policy makers and service providers from 62 countries to share evidence and research and discuss best practice parenting and support for families
- continued to share information from our Child Death Register with the Department of Education to inform the development of student wellbeing policies and inform suicide postvention support in school communities (we have also explored opportunities with peak bodies to embed a similar system in non-state school communities)
- worked with the Office for Youth, including embedding a staff member, to help provide strategic and best practice guidance to improve Queensland Government responses to the needs of young people
- continued to work to share information and collaborate with the Office of the Public Guardian to address systemic issues relating to child protection (this responds to a recommendation from an independent review of the QFCC's performance to establish effective communication processes with this agency)

- co-designed a series of animated videos with the Queensland Mental Health Commission to help young people understand more about mental health services and how to access them (the videos are accessible on our website and youth-targeted social media channels)
- delivered a workshop with the Queensland Mental Health Commission, bringing together government and non-government stakeholders to discuss ways to support vulnerable children and young people who exhibit complex behaviours and needs and to inform the development of phase two of the Queensland Suicide Prevention Plan
- commenced a partnership with Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership to deliver on the *Core Story Initiative* and increase community understanding on the importance of early years and sharing informative resources with the sector. As part of this model, we have an ARACY-funded position embedded within our commission to engage and collaborate with Queensland organisations and practitioners.

Cross-sector conferences and panels

In 2022–23, we shared evidence and insights and connected with stakeholders by:

- presenting to the North Queensland Child Protection Symposium in September 2022 on contemporary challenges facing children and families
- facilitating a panel discussion at the Asia Pacific Coroners conference in November 2022 on how responders to sudden unexpected death in infancy can assist families with compassion while improving investigations
- connecting with the Queensland Equal and Together Alliance in February 2023 to identify collaborative actions to promote equality and prevent violence
- connecting with policy makers and researchers at the National Public Education Wellbeing Summit in February 2023 to discuss how education systems can better respond to the wellbeing needs of children
- addressing the Foster and Kinship Care conference in April 2023 as a keynote speaker, highlighting the value and efforts of foster carers and guardians
- engaging with children and young people, decision makers and practitioners at the Childhood Summit in June 2023 to discuss actions to protect children's health and wellbeing.

In 2022–23, Commissioner Lewis led an influential program of work to advocate for the rights of children, including:

- building awareness of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak's *Know Your Rights* cards through a panel discussion on 'Let's Talk' radio program in September 2022
- advocating for the age of criminal responsibility to be raised and child rights to be centred in system actions at the Queensland Council of Social Services Conference in September 2022
- advocating for implementation of the United Nation's Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture alongside other sector leaders at the National Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment symposium in September 2022
- advocating for the establishment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioners at the National Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership in March 2023
- advising on the structural and systemic issues contributing to the overuse of school disciplinary absences, focusing on the implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in March 2023
- presenting to the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Coordinators Conference in March 2023 on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and its implementation in Queensland

- presenting to the Swich Speaks Out Domestic and Family Violence summit in May 2023 about the importance of victim-survivor voices in an integrated service system
- advocating for the appointment of an independent national Aboriginal child protection commissioner and focus on self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the child protection system at AbSec's Healing Our Sector Conference in June 2023.

Seeking and sharing insights on child deaths

As custodian of the Child Death Register, we shared our data and expertise to learn from children's deaths and improve the safety and wellbeing of all Queensland children. Using data and insights from our register, we work with stakeholders and advisory groups to improve reporting systems and advocate for child death prevention activities. In 2022–23, we worked with the:

- Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group (ANZCDR&PG)
- Australian National Child Death Data Collection Working Group
- Consumer Product Injury Research Advisory Group
- Queensland Government Births and Deaths Working Group
- Queensland Suicide Prevention Network
- Queensland Paediatric Quality Council Steering Committee
- Queensland Paediatric Quality Council Infant Mortality Sub-committee
- Road Safety Research Network
- Suicide Prevention Oversight Group

We used data from the register to highlight concerns about product safety with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, including:

- calling for a review of Australian car seat standards, with the view to embedding safety measures that prevent heat stress injury and death
- raising suffocation hazard concerns about infant swaddle suits, relating to instances where an infant rolls from lying on their back to their front
- highlighting aerosol deodorants as the substance used in most volatile substance misuse deaths.

Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group

In May 2023, we hosted the 2023 Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group conference, involving specialist teams from across each jurisdiction responsible for child death reviews and registers. The conference focused on:

- data linkage and knowledge-sharing to deepen our understanding child deaths
- identifying and responding to accidental suffocation in sudden infant deaths
- issues for the future of analysis and reporting.

Following the conference, the QFCC hosted representatives from across Australia to share experiences, practices, barriers and priorities relating to child death review and prevention. Key focus areas for the group are the development of a national dataset to strengthen child death and injury prevention and research to inform practice and policy and the varying impacts of the Coronavirus disease. We published the *Australian Child Death Statistics 2020* report, with information on child mortality across all eight Australian states and jurisdictions to better understand and prevent child deaths.

Supplying data to support child death research

We provide access to the Child Death Register at no cost to researchers to facilitate learnings from child death statistics and exploration of child death preventative measures. In 2022–23, we responded to 20 requests from researchers and government agencies for detailed data from the register. Table 10 provides an overview of the key projects and agencies.

Table 10: Child death data requests by agency and purpose, 2022–23

Type of data	Requesting agency	Purpose
All deaths	Queensland Child Death Review Board	Provide background on frequency of sibling deaths to inform consideration of system responses to multiple child deaths in a family
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths	Queensland Government Statistician's Office	Presentation to ANZCDR&PG on the impact of census changes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations
Diseases and morbid conditions	Queensland Health	Investigation of the incidence of, and factors associated with, child deaths due to sepsis in Queensland (collaborative project with QFCC)
Drowning	Gold Coast City Council	Inform a review of pool fence compliance measures
	Royal Life Saving Society Australia	Inform the National Drowning Report and drowning prevention research and advocacy
Children known to the child protection system	Queensland Child Death Review Board	Provide child death and coronial information required to undertake case reviews
	ABC Tasmania	Inform a media story about the perceived failings of child protection systems nationwide
Interstate residents	Children and Young People Death Review Committee ACT	Australian Capital Territory reporting on deaths of residents in other jurisdictions
	Child Death Review and Prevention Committee NT	Northern Territory reporting on deaths of residents in other jurisdictions
	Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee SA	South Australian reporting on deaths of residents in other jurisdictions
	Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity VIC	Victorian reporting on deaths of residents in other jurisdictions
Non-intentional injury and sudden unexpected death in infancy	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	Inform content refresh of Keeping Baby Safe public awareness campaign and Your First Steps website

Type of data	Requesting agency	Purpose
Sudden unexpected death in infancy	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	Inform review of policy options to reduce the risk of death and injury associated with infant sleep products
	Queensland Paediatric Quality Council	Analysis to comprehensively identify the issues associated with infant deaths and make recommendations for future investigation
Suicide	Queensland Government Statistician's Office	Undertaking research to identify First Nations communities with comparatively lower rates of suicide (collaborative project with QFCC)
Transport	Queensland Health	Inform media article on ride-on mower injuries and safety
	Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads	Support public education and guidance for parents and carers on the need for, and appropriate use of, child restraints in vehicles

Note: Not all requests are shown.

Driving collaboration and coordination

In 2022–23, we supported and collaborated with key stakeholders to deliver important initiatives, including sponsorships and funding to the following:

- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service Brisbane to provide Young, Black and Proud scholarships to First Nations young people to pursue their academic, sporting and arts aspirations.
- Children's Rights Queensland to provide grants to community organisations and support initiatives across Queensland during Children's Week.
- Hymba Yumba Independent School to support the implementation of a school program and post school pathways.
- Parenting and Family Research Alliance to launch the International Congress on Evidence-based Parenting Support to advance research, policy and practice in parenting.
- ARACY Pty Ltd to deliver on the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership to increase community understanding on the importance of the early years and change behaviours.
- 54 Reasons to engage Frameworks Institute to undertake research on framing child rights.
- AGENTUR Pty Ltd to deliver the SNAICC National Conference.
- Awards Australia to sponsor Young Achiever Awards and Community Achievement Awards.
- PeakCare to undertake work to review family and kinship capacity in Queensland.

Collective advocacy

Our Commissioners provide leadership and expert advice on issues impacting Queensland children, young people and families through their membership on state and national committees and advisory groups.

Our active engagement and contribution to these groups extends our visibility and influence to shape child-related laws, policies, programs, practices and systems.

First Nations Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates

In January 2023, we hosted the inaugural meeting of Australian First Nations Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates Caucus. The caucus examined each jurisdiction's strengths and areas requiring greatest attention, identifying 11 priorities for collective advocacy and action for First Nations children and young people. These priorities span a range of issues disproportionately impacting First Nations children and families across Australia and align with shared commitments to self-determination in policies, legislation and service delivery. The caucus meets quarterly to track and report progress and discuss collective actions.

Australia and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians

We are a member (and current coordinator) of the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians group and the Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians sub-group. Members use their collective voices to promote the safety, wellbeing and rights of children and young people in Australia and New Zealand and advocate for systemic improvements.

The Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians convened in Brisbane in April 2023. The group added its voice and efforts to those of the First Nations Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates Caucus in advocating for the rights of First Nations children and young people by:

- promoting the 11 advocacy priorities developed by the First Nations Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates caucus
- supporting the full implementation of the Uluru Statement
- backing statements from First Nations leaders in support of the full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

Progressing Closing the Gap reforms

We actively participate in governance groups to progress Closing the Gap reforms. As a core member of the following groups, Commissioner Lewis connects with leaders and experts to design and advocate for initiatives that address systemic inequities and embed meaningful involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on policies, programs and services:

- Justice Policy Partnership, bringing together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts with representatives from the Coalition of Peaks and Australian, state and territory governments to take a joined-up approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice policy
- Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, bringing together governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to develop responses to improving the Closing the Gap early childhood outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group

Commissioner Lewis is a member of the Leadership Group who lead the design of the *Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026*. The national Leadership Group have established governance structure to support and monitor the implementation of actions.

Queensland Police Service Domestic and Family Violence Advisory Group

Along with leading academics and community leaders, Commissioner Lewis is a member of the Queensland Police Service Domestic and Family Violence Advisory Group, providing advice to the Queensland Police Service on issues relating to its role in the prevention, disruption, response to and investigation of domestic and family violence.

Advocating for child rights

Through our engagement on the Australian Child Rights Taskforce, we work with partners to translate child rights principles into practice guidance and ensure child rights remain a focus of Australian governments.

Australian Child Maltreatment Study

In April 2023, the Australian Child Maltreatment Study published a paper on the scale and impact of child abuse and neglect in Australia, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and exposure to domestic violence. The study found that 62 per cent of the 8,503 Australians randomly surveyed had experienced some form of maltreatment as children, with associated impacts on their health and mental health. Commissioner Twyford is a special advisor to the study and engaged the researchers to share learnings and insights with the QFCC, the Child Death Review Board and the Australia and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians group.

OBJECTIVE FIVE

Build our capacity, capability and culture to achieve our vision

We aim to achieve operational excellence through a culture of continuous improvement to our performance, processes, governance and internal systems. We understand the importance of having a diverse and inclusive workplace culture, and the need to foster excellence and expertise in our staff. With our internal and external stakeholders, we lead by example and operate in accordance with the standards we expect of others.

The way we work

Organisational change

Over the last 12 months, we have undergone a process of transformation in response to the findings from an independent review of our performance undertaken by ACIL Allen. In November 2022, we published our response to this independent review on our website—sharing actions we had taken to implement the findings and optimise our operations. In our response, we outlined the changes to:

- work strategically across the sector by increasing purposeful engagement and communication with government and non-government partners and implementing our new Strategic Plan 2022–2026 to guide our work
- measure our performance and achievement of organisational objectives
- review our workforce planning and community education functions to ensure we are delivering activities that were effective and collaborative.

We also undertook a comprehensive internal review of our structure and operating model, regularly engaging staff input on our strategic priorities, purpose and structure. Through this process, we adopted a ‘value chain’ internal operating model, establishing clear responsibilities and connections across our portfolios of work, and embedded a revised organisational structure. This included the establishment of a clear portfolio for:

- delivering on our commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and children’s rights through a dedicated workforce reporting to Commissioner Lewis
- gathering and analysing data and evidence on system performance to support sound decision making and reporting on trends.

During our organisational realignment, we experienced a budget reduction. This required us to reduce our FTE staffing while maintaining our program of work.

Legislative review

Alongside our internal review, we examined how our legislative functions can remain contemporary and effective in a changing landscape. We provided advice and recommendations on the review of our Act (led by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General) to advocate for:

- establishment of a dedicated, independent, appropriately empowered and resourced Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- establishment of compatible powers for both Commissioners to exercise QFCC functions
- a more explicit role for the QFCC to promote the rights of children and young people
- a new objective to promote the rights, development, wellbeing and best interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- new functions to promote accountability for upholding the rights of children and young people and the participation of children and young people in decision-making
- the QFCC to provide leadership for e-safety within Queensland
- inclusion of a reportable conduct scheme and child safe standards in the QFCC's functions.

Structuring our workplan

We promote transparency in how we work by developing our frameworks and forward priorities collaboratively and publishing our plans of work. In 2022–23, we:

- finalised our *2023–2027 Oversight Framework* and *2023–24 Oversight Forward Workplan*, ensuring that our oversight methodology and program of work are clear and creating opportunities for the sector and the community to engage with our work
- finalised our *Information Communications Technology Roadmap 2023–25*, which outlines our strategic objectives, current environment and ICT priorities over the next three years
- launched our new website in July 2022 with an improved user-centric approach and refreshed branding to better connect with our audiences
- renewed our work planning and project governance documents with more streamlined reporting on projects and deliverables through internal Microsoft Teams channels
- published the first action plan under our *Safer Pathways Through Childhood Framework 2022–27* in July 2022 to guide our child death prevention activities and priorities for 2022–23.

Case example

Safer Pathways Through Childhood

Our *Safer Pathways Through Childhood Framework 2022–27* outlines how we collaborate with stakeholders to help keep all children safe. Each year, in consultation with stakeholders, we identify specific prevention activities to address priorities under an annual action plan. Emerging areas of interest include the definition of supervisory neglect, the use of restraints in fatal transport incidents and risk factors for sudden unexpected death in infancy over time. We will continue to work closely with stakeholders to deliver on these focus areas.

Governance

Our internal governance model is based on the below committees:

Executive Leadership Board: The QFCC's primary decision-making body, it comprises senior executives, senior officers and two staff representatives as advisors (appointed for four-month terms following an open invitation process). It oversees our performance against strategic objectives, financial performance, performance management, collaboration, risk management, innovation fostering, governance administration and organisational compliance.

Senior Executive Meeting: The senior executives work together to identify and respond to emergent issues as well as exchange knowledge and information about our operations.

Agency Consultative Committee: Chaired by the Executive Director Government Relations and Corporate Services, this committee provides a formal mechanism for staff to share their views on workplace matters and organisational performance, raise concerns and share information with leadership. It also provides formal input into our policies, procedures and templates.

People and Finance Sub-Committee: Oversees the effectiveness of our workforce, culture, governance and financial management. It briefs the Commissioners on changes to government policies and governance requirements.

QFCC Advisory Council

Under Part 4 of the Act, the Principal Commissioner convenes 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.¹¹

In early 2023, we amended the membership and meeting format of the Council to bring together more than 30 leaders in child and family policy and practice. Members meet quarterly to connect and collaborate on opportunities to advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and families. Since this change, the group has met twice and is scheduled to meet twice in the second half of 2023. The Advisory Council's current membership includes individual members and representatives from the agencies outlined in Table 11.

¹¹ Part 4 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* (Qld).

Table 11: Agencies represented on the QFCC Advisory Council

Non-government	Government
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service	Australian Federal Police
Australian Catholic University	Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
Brisbane Youth Service	Health and Wellbeing Queensland
Children's Rights Queensland	Office of the Public Guardian
Community Services Industry Alliance	Queensland Human Rights Commission
Daniel Morcombe Foundation	Queensland Mental Health Commission
Kummara	Queensland Police Service
Micah Projects	QFCC
National Association for Prevention of Child abuse and Neglect	
Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership	
PeakCare Queensland Inc.	
Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak	
Queensland Council of Social Service	
Queensland Foster and Kinship Care	
Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service	
Queensland University of Technology	
Yourtown	

Youth Advisory Council

Our Youth Advisory Council champions the voices of children and young people and provides youth perspectives and leadership to the QFCC. The council includes 25 young people aged between 14 and 25 years, with members representing diverse backgrounds and geographical locations, including rural, regional and metropolitan areas.

The Council met quarterly, providing advice to QFCC staff and to our Commissioners on the significant topics for children and young people in Queensland. The Council's terms of reference and discussion items were co-designed with the Council members.

Our workforce

Our workforce is employed under the *Public Sector Act 2022*, except for the Principal Commissioner and Commissioner, who are employed under the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*.

As of 30 June 2023, the QFCC's workforce comprised 57.67 full time equivalent (FTE) staff with a total staff headcount of 65. We aim to employ a diverse, highly skilled and empowered team that reflects the community we serve. Our staff demographics are outlined in Table 12. In addition to our permanent staffing, we employ Youth Advocates with diverse backgrounds and experiences to share young people's views, thoughts and experiences to inform and influence the work of the QFCC. Our total employee expenses for 2022–23 was \$8.674 million.

Our workforce includes:

- 25.42 per cent corporate and 74.58 per cent frontline and frontline support (occupation type based on FTE)
- 61.05 per cent permanent, 30.52% temporary. 1.49% casual and 6.94% contract (appointment type based on FTE)
- 76.92 per cent fulltime, 15.38% part-time and 7.69% casual (employment status based on headcount).

Table 12: QFCC staff demographics as at 30 June 2023

	FTE	
Total FTE for Queensland Family and Child Commission	57.67	
Diversity Groups	Number (headcount)	Percentage of total workforce
Women	56	86.15%
Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples	5	7.69%
People with a disability	5	7.69%
Culturally and linguistically diverse – Speak a language at home other than English	< 5	
Gender	Number (headcount)	Percentage of total workforce
Male	9	13.85%
Female	56	86.15%
Non-binary	0	0.00%
Target data for women in leadership roles	Number (headcount)	Percentage of total workforce
Senior Officers (classified and s122 equivalent combined)	2	66.67%
Senior Executive Service and Chief Executives (classified and s122 equivalent combined)	3	75.00%

The QFCC Strategic Workforce Plan establishes the future workforce priorities to support the organisational objectives in our strategic plan. Our workforce planning is informed by our employee profile, the Working for Queensland Survey results and our organisational review.

In 2022–23, we worked to attract, develop and retain a diverse and inclusive workforce that is reflective of the community we serve, by:

- designing and implementing a new role description template and guide for applicants to emphasise our value proposition
- promoting opportunities through First Nations organisations and partners
- partnering with the public sector's Careers Pathways Service to improve career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, by providing culturally safe development opportunities, networking events, formal training and mentor support
- joining the Leading Women Network to promote the representation of women in all levels, including through professional development opportunities and networking events
- amended our recruitment processes and implemented new directives brought about by the *Public Sector Act 2022*.

We invested over \$125,000 in the development and upskilling of our staff, including through:

- People Matters Leadership Training for staff, facilitated by the Institute of Managers and Leaders Australia and New Zealand, with a focus on leadership, coaching and performance conversations
- customised leadership and coaching training for senior management to help them better understanding their leadership strengths and areas for development
- Career Pathway Service to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees access learning and development opportunities and progress into leadership and decision-making roles.

We also invested in initiatives that encouraged physical, mental and financial wellbeing, including by:

- delivering staff programs that provide practical strategies for building and maintaining resilience, such as managing vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue
- promoting wellbeing resources on our intranet
- participating in events that support inclusion, diversity and employee wellbeing
- delivering an effective health and safety management system that achieves a safe and incident-free workplace compliant with governing legislation.

Early retirement, redundancy and retrenchment

No redundancy, early retirement or retrenchment packages were paid in 2022–23.

Public Sector Ethics

Our staff are covered by the 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.

Public Service Values

In 2022–23, we 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.

Service Delivery Statement Performance

The QFCC had one service area objective in the Queensland State Budget 2022–23 service delivery statements, 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 two service standards outlined in Table 13.

Table 13: QFCC service standards and targets

QFCC service standard	Notes	2022–23 target	2022–23 actual
Percentage of surveyed stakeholders that feel the QFCC contributes to improving the child protection and youth justice systems	1	80%	63%
Queensland Family and Child Commission expenditure per young Queenslander (Efficiency measure)	2	<\$12	\$9.75

Notes:

- 63% of survey respondents agreed (agree or strongly agree) with the statement 'The Queensland Family and Child Commission contributes to improving the Queensland child protection and youth justice systems.'
- The variance between the 2022–23 target and 2022–23 actual is due to the cessation of limited life funding.

Risk management

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. Its 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 2022–23 included:

- reviewing and monitoring the strategic and operational risk registers
- monitoring risk mitigation controls of QFCC major projects
- monitoring the implementation 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.

The Committee met four times in 2022–23. In November 2022, Mr Peter Dowling departed our Audit and Risk Management Committee, having served as a member since 2019. Ms Laura Gilchrist replaces Mr Dowling as an independent member.

Standing members

Heather Watson	Director and Principal Lawyer, Watson Advisory and Consulting Pty Ltd (Chair)
Peter Dowling	Independent attendee (until November 2022)
Laura Gilchrist	Independent attendee (from May 2023)
Jaime Blackburn	Executive Director, Government Relations and Corporate Services, QFCC
Tony King	Executive Director, Operations, QFCC (until March 2023)

Regular observers

William Cunningham	Director, Queensland Audit Office
Linda Holm	Manager, Audit Services, Corporate Administration Agency
Lyle Gerbich	Director, Corporate Services, QFCC
Luke Twyford	QFCC Principal Commissioner

Risk Management

The QFCC strategic and operational risk registers are reviewed by the Audit and Risk Management Committee, with teams providing operational updates, and formally reviewed twice a year.

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 2022–23, the Corporate Administration Agency (CAA) completed internal audit assessments in accordance with the QFCC's internal audit plan. Audits of our staff training, development and performance planning, and contract management were completed and presented to senior management. A third audit on leave and timesheet functions and processes was undertaken in June 2023, with the final report expected in July 2023.

The staff training development and performance planning audit reviewed the adequacy and effectiveness of the policies, procedures and practices used for the training and development of staff, and to ensure that staff work performance is managed in accordance with Section 26 of the (then) *Public Service Act 2008*. The CAA auditor determined that QFCC policies and procedures were satisfactory.

The contract management audit reviewed the adequacy of the policies, procedures and practices in place for the effective management of contracts entered into by the QFCC. The CAA auditor sampled 15 contracts (including 145 documents) and made two recommendations, both of which were accepted by the QFCC.

External audit

Each year the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) performs an audit assessment of the design and implementation of QFCC internal controls, which includes an interim and final audit. The QAO's final 2022 audit focused on financial statements and transaction testing. No control deficiencies or other financial reporting issues were identified in the audit. The final audit report was presented to the Audit and Risk Management Committee at their August 2022 meeting. At the exit meeting, the QAO provided positive comments on the QFCC's working papers and reconciliations.

In August 2023, the QAO provided their 2023 audit report to the QFCC. The audit undertook substantive testing of expenditure, payroll and journals. The QAO determined the QFCC's internal control environment supports an audit strategy where they can rely upon the QFCC's controls. No unresolved internal control deficiencies or financial reporting issues were identified.

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.

In 2022–23, the Committee:

- Released a report in August 2022, outlining its findings from the QFCC’s performance from the previous financial year. In its report, the Committee commended the QFCC’s work in raising awareness of issues concerning Queensland children and families, advocating for improvements and ensuring system accountability through independent reviews and strategic alliances.
- Held an oversight hearing on 1 June 2023. At the hearing, the Commissioner Twyford and Commissioner Lewis briefed the Committee on the QFCC’s deliverables, influence and focus areas. They described our forward workplan, systemic reviews underway, emerging issues impacting children and families, and opportunities to enhance the QFCC’s role.

Human Rights Act 2019

The QFCC received no complaints under the *Human Rights Act 2019* in 2022–23. QFCC staff undertake annual mandatory online training on human rights for public sector employees and QFCC project and governance processes embed human rights impact assessments.

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.

We manage our information and communication technologies on a predominantly outsourced model, with most operating systems, computing support and application support provided by third party vendors. Our information technology systems infrastructure is primarily managed by Citec, with service management contracted to the CAA.

In June 2023, the Executive Leadership Board approved the *QFCC ICT Roadmap and Strategy 2023–25*, which includes our three-year ICT strategic plan and opportunities to enhance our capacity and capability during 2023–24.

Financial performance

Financial summary 2022–23

In 2022–23, the QFCC received total revenue of \$12.214 million, down \$1.9 million from the prior year. (\$14.110 million in 2021–22.) With a reduction in revenue, the QFCC managed its resources prudently, and rigorous management of recruitment, we contained employee expenses below our budget and Through FTE level. Our revised organisational structure, tight fiscal management, and improved financial reporting helped us to contain costs and achieve a 2.8 per cent budget surplus.

Despite our tightened fiscal environment, we were able to expand our regional presence and relationships, with 50 per cent more spent on travel than the prior year. Our approach allowed us to better support and collaborate with key stakeholders to deliver important initiatives, through a threefold increase to our sponsorships and funding. The implementation of our digital communication strategy aided an increase in our social media channels’ engagement rates, particularly on LinkedIn which saw a 373 per cent increase in our follower count and more than 10,000 clicks on our posts. This was achieved whilst managing a 35 per cent reduction in communication spend.

Financial results

Queensland Family and Child Commission	Actual 2022-23 \$'000	Actual 2021-22 \$'000
Income from continuing operations		
Grants and other contributions	12,031	14,073
Other revenue	183	37
Total income from continuing operations	12,214	14,110
Employee expenses	8,674	9,698
Supplies and services	2,645	3,459
Depreciation and amortisation	5	33
Other expenses	544	292
Total expenses from continuing operations	11,868	13,482
Operating result from continuing operations	346	628

Financial position

Queensland Family and Child Commission	Actual 2022-23 \$'000	Actual 2021-22 \$'000
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	4,279	3,654
Receivables	266	436
Prepayments	-	47
Total current assets	4,545	4,137
Non-current assets		
Plant and equipment	13	18
Intangible assets	-	-
Total non-current assets	13	18
Total assets	4,558	4,155

Queensland Family and Child Commission	Actual 2022–23 \$'000	Actual 2021–22 \$'000
Current liabilities		
Payables	599	533
Accrued employee benefits	251	260
Total liabilities	850	793
Net assets	3,708	3,362
Equity		
Contributed equity	2,427	2,427
Accumulated surplus	1,281	935
Total equity	3,708	3,362

Further information

As required by annual reporting guidelines, information relating to overseas travel expenditure in 2022–23 is published online through the government's Open Data website.

The QFCC engaged no consultancies in 2022–23.




Appendix A—Glossary of acronyms and initialisms

AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
CAA	Corporate Administration Agency
FAA	<i>Financial Accountability Act 2009</i>
FPMS	<i>Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019</i>
FTE	Full-time equivalent
NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
QAO	Queensland Audit Office
QFCC	Queensland Family and Child Commission
TQKP	Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership
UN	United Nations

Appendix B—Annual report compliance checklist

Summary of requirement		Basis for requirement	Annual report reference
Letter of compliance	A letter of compliance from the accountable officer or statutory body to the relevant minister/s	ARRs—section 7	p. III
Accessibility	Table of contents	ARRs—section 9.1	p. 1
	Glossary		p. 74
	Public availability	ARRs—section 9.2	p. II
	Interpreter service statement	Queensland Government Language Services Policy ARRs—section 9.3	p. II
	Copyright notice	Copyright Act 1968 ARRs—section 9.4	p. II
	Information licensing	Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture—Information Licensing ARRs—section 9.5	p. II
General information	Introductory information	ARRs—section 10	p. 2–12
Non-financial performance	Government’s objectives for the community and whole-of government plans/specific initiatives	ARRs—section 11.1	p. 4
	Agency objectives and performance indicators	ARRs—section 11.2	p. 4
	Agency service areas and service standards	ARRs—section 11.3	p. 68
Financial performance	Summary of financial performance	ARRs—section 12.1	p. 71–73



Summary of requirement		Basis for requirement	Annual report reference
Governance—management and structure	Organisational structure	ARRs—section 13.1	p. 6, 7 and 66
	Executive management	ARRs—section 13.2	p.6
	Government bodies (statutory bodies and other entities)	ARRs—section 13.3	N/A
	Public sector ethics	Public Sector Ethics Act 1994 ARRs—section 13.4	p. 67
	Human rights	Human Rights Act 2019 ARRs—section 13.5	p. 71
	Queensland public service values	ARRs—section 13.6	p. 67
Governance—risk management and accountability	Risk management	ARRs—section 14.1	p. 68–69
	Audit committee	ARRs—section 14.2	p. 68–69
	Internal audit	ARRs—section 14.3	p. 70
	External scrutiny	ARRs—section 14.4	p. 70
	Information systems and recordkeeping	ARRs—section 14.5	p. 71
	Information Security attestation	ARRs—section 14.6	N/A
Governance—human resources	Strategic workforce planning and performance	ARRs—section 15.1	p. 66
	Early retirement, redundancy and retrenchment	Directive No.04/18 Early Retirement, Redundancy and Retrenchment ARRs—section 15.2	p. 67

OBJECTIVE FIVE

Summary of requirement		Basis for requirement	Annual report reference
Open data	Statement advising publication of information	ARRs—section 16	p. 73
	Consultancies	ARRs—section 31.1	p. 73
	Overseas travel	ARRs—section 31.2	p. 73
	Queensland Language Services Policy	ARRs—section 31.3	N/A
Financial statements	Certification of financial statements	FAA—section 62 FPMS—sections 38, 39 and 46 ARRs—section 17.1	p. 78–108
	Independent auditor's report	FAA—section 62 FPMS—section 46 ARRs—section 17.2	p. 110–112

FAA Financial Accountability Act 2009

FPMS Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019

ARRs Annual report requirements for Queensland Government agencies



Appendix C—Financial Statements



Queensland Family and Child Commission

Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2023

Queensland Family and Child Commission Financial Statements 2022-23

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Independent Audit Report	110

Queensland Family and Child Commission

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

for the year ended 30 June 2023

	Notes	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Income from Continuing Operations			
Grants and other contributions	3.	12,031	14,073
Other revenue	4.	183	37
Total Income from Continuing Operations		12,214	14,110
Expenses from Continuing Operations			
Employee expenses	5.	8,674	9,698
Supplies and services	6.	2,645	3,459
Depreciation and amortisation		5	33
Other expenses	7.	544	292
Total Expenses from Continuing Operations		11,868	13,482
Operating Result from Continuing Operations		346	628
Total Comprehensive Income		346	628

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

as at 30 June 2023

	Notes	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents		4,279	3,654
Receivables	8.	266	436
Prepayments		-	47
Total Current Assets		4,545	4,137
Non Current Assets			
Plant and equipment		13	18
Total Non Current Assets		13	18
Total Assets		4,558	4,155
Current Liabilities			
Payables	9.	599	533
Accrued employee benefits	10.	251	260
Total Current Liabilities		850	793
Total Liabilities		850	793
Net Assets		3,708	3,362
Equity			
Contributed equity		2,427	2,427
Accumulated surplus		1,281	935
Total Equity		3,708	3,362

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

for the year ended 30 June 2023

	Accumulated Surplus \$'000	Contributed Equity \$'000	TOTAL \$'000
Balance as at 1 July 2021	307	2,427	2,734
Operating Result from Continuing Operations	628	-	628
Balance as at 30 June 2022	935	2,427	3,362
Balance as at 1 July 2022	935	2,427	3,362
Operating Result from Continuing Operations	346	-	346
Balance as at 30 June 2023	1,281	2,427	3,708

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

for the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
	\$'000	\$'000
Cash flows from operating activities		
<i>Inflows:</i>		
Grants and other contributions	12,031	13,989
GST input tax credits from ATO	342	358
GST collected from customers	5	7
Other revenue	183	37
<i>Outflows:</i>		
Employee expenses	(8,529)	(10,085)
Supplies and services	(2,512)	(3,218)
GST paid to suppliers	(324)	(382)
GST remitted to ATO	(5)	(6)
Other	(567)	(279)
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	625	421
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	625	421
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	3,654	3,233
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	4,279	3,654

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

for the year ended 30 June 2023

NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF CASH FLOW

Reconciliation of Operating Result to Net Cash provided by Operating Activities

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Operating surplus/(deficit)	346	628
Depreciation and amortisation expense	5	33
<i>Changes in assets and liabilities:</i>		
(Increase)/decrease in receivables	151	(155)
(Increase)/decrease in GST input tax credits receivable	19	(23)
(Increase)/decrease in prepayments	47	83
Increase/(decrease) in accounts payable	66	92
Increase/(decrease) in accrued employee benefits	(9)	(238)
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	625	421

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

Section 1: About the QFCC and this Financial Report

- Note 1: Basis of Financial Statement Preparation
- Note 2: Objectives of the QFCC

Section 2: Notes about our Financial Performance

- Note 3: Grants and Contributions
- Note 4: Other Revenue
- Note 5: Employee Expenses
- Note 6: Supplies and Services
- Note 7: Other Expenses

Section 3: Notes about our Financial Position

- Note 8: Receivables
- Note 9: Payables
- Note 10: Accrued Employee Benefits

Section 4: Notes about Risks and Other Accounting Uncertainties

- Note 11: Commitments
- Note 12: Contingencies
- Note 13: Financial Risk Disclosures
- Note 14: Events Occurring After Balance Date
- Note 15: Future Impact of Accounting Standards Not Yet Effective

Section 5: Notes on our Performance compared to Budget

- Note 16: Budgetary Reporting Disclosures

Section 6: Other Information

- Note 17: Key Management Personnel (KMP) and Related Party Disclosures
- Note 18: Taxation
- Note 19: Insurance
- Note 20: Accounting Estimates and Judgements
- Note 21: First Year Application of New Accounting Standards or Change in Accounting Policy
- Note 22: Climate Risk Disclosures

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

1. Basis of Financial Statement Preparation

General Information

This financial report covers the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC). It has no controlled entities.

The QFCC is a statutory body established on 1 July 2014 as part of the Queensland Government's response to the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry (Carmody Inquiry). The QFCC influences change that improves the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families. The QFCC reviews and improves the systems that protect and safeguard Queensland's children.

The head office and principal place of business of the QFCC is:

Level 8, 63 George Street, Brisbane.

A description of the nature of the QFCC's operations and its principal activities are included in the notes to the financial statements.

Compliance with Prescribed Requirements

The QFCC has prepared these financial statements in compliance with section 39 of the Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019. The financial statements comply with Queensland Treasury's Minimum Reporting Requirements for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 July 2022.

The QFCC is a not-for-profit entity and these general purpose financial statements are prepared on an accrual basis (except for the statement of cash flows which is prepared on a cash basis) in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations applicable to not-for-profit entities.

New accounting standards early adopted and/or applied for the first time in these financial statements are outlined in Note 21.

Presentation

Currency and Rounding

Amounts included in the financial statements are in Australian dollars and rounded to the nearest \$1,000 or, where that amount is \$500 or less, to zero, unless disclosure of the full amount is specifically required.

Comparatives

Comparative information reflects the audited 2021-22 financial statements.

Current / Non-Current Classification

Assets and liabilities are classified as either 'current' or 'non-current' in the Statement of Financial Position and associated notes.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

1. Basis of Financial Statement Preparation (cont'd)

Presentation (cont'd)

Current / Non-Current Classification (cont'd)

Assets are classified as 'current' where their carrying amount is expected to be realised within 12 months after the reporting date. Liabilities are classified as 'current' when they are due to be settled within 12 months after the reporting date, or the QFCC does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement to beyond 12 months after the reporting date. All other assets and liabilities are classified as non-current.

Basis of Measurement

Historical cost is used as the measurement basis in this report.

Under the historical cost, assets are recorded at the amount of cash or cash equivalents paid or the fair value of the consideration given to acquire assets at the time of acquisition. Liabilities are recorded at the amount of proceeds received in exchange for the obligation or at the amounts of cash or cash equivalents expected to be paid to satisfy the liability in the normal course of business.

Accounting Policy - Cash and Cash Equivalents

For the purposes of the statement of financial position and the statement of cash flows, cash assets include all cash and cheques receipted but not banked as at 30 June.

Shared Service Provider

The Corporate Administration Agency (CAA) provides the QFCC with corporate services under the Shared Services Provider model. The fees and terms of the services are agreed through a Service Level Agreement, negotiated annually and include:

- Financial Services
- Human Resources Recruitment and Payroll
- Information Systems and Support
- Procurement Services
- Internal Audit Services.

Authorisation of Financial Statements for Issue

The financial statements are authorised for issue by the Chief Executive Officer & Principal Commissioner and the Executive Director, Government Relations and Corporate Services at the date of signing the Management Certificate.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

2. Objectives of the QFCC

The QFCC has the following objectives:

- Ensuring systems are accountable for the impact they have on children and families.
- Raising awareness and advocate for children and their families.
- Empower Queensland children, young people and their families to influence decisions that affect their lives.
- Support, connect and collaborate with organisations that advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children.
- Build our capacity, capability and culture to achieve our vision.

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
3. Grants and Contributions		
Grants received from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General	12,028	14,073
Grants received from the Qld Mental Health Commission	3	-
Total	12,031	14,073

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

3. Grants and Contributions (cont'd)

Accounting Policy - Grants and Contributions

Grants, contributions and donations revenue arise from non-exchange transactions where the QFCC does not directly give approximately equal value to the grantor.

Where the grant agreement is enforceable and contains sufficiently specific performance obligations for the QFCC to transfer goods or services to a third-party on the grantor's behalf, the transaction is accounted for under AASB 15 *Revenue from Contracts with Customers*. In this case, revenue is initially deferred (as a contract liability) and recognised as or when the performance obligations are satisfied.

Otherwise, the grant is accounted for under AASB 1058 *Income of Not-for-Profit Entities*, whereby revenue is recognised upon receipt of the grant funding, except for special purpose capital grants received to construct non-financial assets to be controlled by the department. Special purpose capital grants are recognised as unearned revenue when received, and subsequently recognised progressively as revenue as the department satisfies its obligations under the grant through construction of the asset.

The QFCC received grant funding from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Mental Health Commission during the 2022-23 financial year. The funding has been recognised as revenue on receipt under AASB 1058 as the QFCC's obligations are not sufficiently specific.

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
4. Other Revenue		
Other operating revenue	4	5
Interest	179	32
Total	183	37

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
5. Employee Expenses		
Employee Benefits		
Wages and salaries	6,305	7,066
Employer superannuation contributions	865	953
Annual leave levy	671	753
Long service leave levy	166	186
Employee Related Expenses		
Payroll tax	377	436
Other employee related expenses	290	304
Total	8,674	9,698

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

5. Employee Expenses (cont'd)

	2023	2022
Full-Time Equivalent Employees *	58	63

* FTE data as at 30 June 2023 (based upon the fortnight ending 30 June 2023).

Accounting Policy - Wages and Salaries

Wages and salaries due but unpaid at reporting date are recognised in the Statement of Financial Position at the current salary rates. As the QFCC expects such liabilities to be wholly settled within 12 months of reporting date, the liabilities are recognised at undiscounted amounts.

Accounting Policy - Sick Leave

Prior history indicates that on average, sick leave taken each reporting period is less than the entitlement accrued. This is expected to continue in future periods. Accordingly, it is unlikely that existing accumulated entitlements will be used by employees and no liability for unused sick leave entitlements is recognised. As sick leave is non-vesting, an expense is recognised for this leave as it is taken.

Accounting Policy - Annual Leave

Under the Queensland Government's Annual Leave Central Scheme (ALCS), a levy is made on the QFCC to cover the cost of employees' annual leave (including leave loading and on-costs). The levies are expensed in the period in which they are payable. Amounts paid to employees for annual leave are claimed from the scheme quarterly in arrears.

Accounting Policy - Long Service Leave

Under the Queensland Government's Long Service Leave Scheme (LSLS), a levy is made on the QFCC to cover the cost of employees' long service leave. The levies are expensed in the period in which they are payable. Amounts paid to employees for long service leave are claimed from the scheme quarterly in arrears.

Accounting Policy - Superannuation

Post-employment benefits for superannuation are provided through defined contribution (accumulation) plans or the Queensland Government's defined benefit plan (the former QSuper defined benefit categories now administered by the Government Division of the Australian Retirement Trust) as determined by the employee's conditions of employment.

Defined Contribution Plans - Contributions are made to eligible complying superannuation funds based on the rates specified in the relevant EBA or other conditions of employment. Contributions are expensed when they are paid or become payable following completion of the employee's service each pay period.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

5. Employee Expenses (cont'd)

Accounting Policy - Superannuation (cont'd)

Defined Benefit Plan - The liability for defined benefits is held on a whole-of-Government basis and reported in those financial statements pursuant to *AASB 1049 Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting*. The amount of contributions for defined benefit plan obligations is based upon the rates determined on the advice of the State Actuary. Contributions are paid by the QFCC at the specified rate following completion of the employee's service each pay period. The QFCC's obligations are limited to those contributions paid.

Accounting Policy - Workers' Compensation Premiums

The QFCC pays premiums to WorkCover Queensland in respect of its obligations for employee compensation. Workers' compensation insurance is a consequence of employing employees, but is not counted in an employee's total remuneration package. It is not employee benefits and is recognised separately as employee related expenses.

Key management personnel and remuneration disclosures

Key management personnel and remuneration disclosures are detailed in Note 17.

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
6. Supplies and Services		
Building services *	895	949
Administration costs	124	164
Contractors and consultants	621	979
Corporate services provider costs	513	614
Advertising and promotions	101	218
Minor plant and equipment	72	130
Other supplies and services	319	405
Total	2,645	3,459

Office accommodation

* Payments for non-specialised commercial office accommodation under the Queensland Government Accommodation Office (QGAO) framework arise from non-lease arrangements with the Department of Energy and Public Works (DEPW), who has substantive substitution rights over the assets used within these schemes. Building Services includes office rental payments to DEPW of \$729,000 (2022: \$757,000) and these are expensed in the periods in which they are incurred.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
7. Other Expenses		
Insurance premiums (QGIF)	5	5
External audit fees *	28	23
Loss on disposal of assets	-	-
Sponsorships and Grants	484	127
Return of Grant	-	114
Trustee/Board Fees	27	23
Total	544	292

* Total audit fees quoted in the Queensland Audit Office's plan for 2022-23 is \$25,000. An additional \$3,000 external audit fees for the 2021-22 year was paid in the 2022-23 year. (2021-22: \$23,000).

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
8. Receivables		
Trade debtors	9	6
GST receivable	90	109
Annual leave reimbursements	131	206
Long service leave reimbursement	36	115
Total	266	436

Accounting Policy - Receivables

Receivables are measured at amortised cost which approximates their fair values at reporting date.

Trade debtors are recognised at the amounts due at the time of sale or service delivery (i.e. the agreed purchase/contract price). Settlement of these amounts is required within 30 days from invoice date.

Impairment of Receivables

Accounting Policy - Impairment of Receivables

The loss allowance for trade and other debtors reflect lifetime expected credit losses and incorporates reasonable supportable forward-looking information. Economic changes impacting the QFCC's debtors, and relevant industry data from part of the QFCC's impairment assessment.

No impairment losses have been recognised for receivables in 2022-23.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
9. Payables		
Trade creditors	516	434
Other payables	83	99
Total	599	533

Accounting Policy

Trade creditors are recognised upon receipt of the goods or services ordered and are measured at the agreed purchase/contract price, gross of applicable trade and other discounts. Amounts owing are unsecured and are generally settled on 30 day terms.

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
10. Accrued Employee Benefits		
<u>Current</u>		
Annual leave levy payable	208	200
Paid Parental Leave	-	7
Long service leave levy payable	43	53
Total	251	260

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

10. Accrued Employee Benefits (cont'd)

Accounting Policy

No provision for annual leave or long service leave is recognised in the QFCC's financial statements as the liability is held on a whole-of-Government basis and reported in those financial statements pursuant to AASB 1049 *Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting*.

11. Commitments

(a) Office Accommodation

The Department of Energy and Public Works (DEPW) provides the QFCC with access to office accommodation under government-wide frameworks. From 1 July 2019, these arrangements are now categorised as procurement of services rather than as leases because DEPW has substantive substitution rights over the assets. The related service expenses are included in Note 6.

(b) Other Expense Commitments

The other material expenditure commitments of the QFCC (inclusive of non-recoverable GST input tax credits) contracted for at reporting date but not recognised in the accounts are payable as follows:

	2023	2022
	\$'000	\$'000
Not later than one year	1,510	1,457
Later than one year and not later than five years	1,548	3,073
Total	3,058	4,530

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

12. Contingencies

There were no other known contingent assets or liabilities as at 30 June 2023.

13. Financial Risk Disclosures

Financial Instrument Categories

Financial assets and financial liabilities are recognised in the statement of financial position when the QFCC becomes party to the contractual provisions of the financial instrument. No financial assets and financial liabilities have been offset and presented net in the Statement of Financial Position.

The QFCC has no financial assets/liabilities recognised at fair value.

The QFCC has the following categories of financial assets and financial liabilities:

Category	Note	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Financial Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents		4,279	3,654
Financial assets at amortised cost:			
Receivables	8.	266	436
Total financial assets		4,545	4,090
Financial Liabilities			
Financial liabilities at amortised cost:			
Payables	9.	599	533
Total financial liabilities at amortised cost		599	533

Financial risk management

The activities undertaken by the QFCC do not expose it to any material credit, liquidity or market risk.

14. Events Occurring After Balance Date

No events have occurred after balance date that has a material effect on these financial statements.

15. Future Impact of Accounting Standards Not Yet Effective

At the date of authorisation of the financial report, there are no Australian accounting standards and interpretations with future effective dates that are applicable to the QFCC's activities or have no material impact on the QFCC.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

16. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures

This section contains explanations of major variances between the QFCC's actual 2022-23 financial results and the original budget presented to Parliament.

Budget to Actual Comparison - Statement of Comprehensive Income

		2023	2023	
	Variance	Actual	Original	Budget
	Notes	\$'000	budget	variance
		\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Income from Continuing Operations				
Grants and other contributions		12,031	12,023	8
Other revenue	1.	183	25	158
Total Income from Continuing Operations		12,214	12,048	166
Expenses from Continuing Operations				
Employee expenses	2.	8,674	9,443	(769)
Supplies and services	3.	2,645	2,392	253
Depreciation and amortisation	4.	5	109	(104)
Other expenses	5.	544	104	440
Total Expenses from Continuing Operations		11,868	12,048	(180)
Total Comprehensive Income		346	-	346

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

16. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures (cont'd)

Budget to Actual Comparison - Statement of Financial Position

		2023	2023	
	Variance	Actual	Original	Budget
	Notes	\$'000	Budget	Variance
		\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Current Assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	6.	4,279	3,488	(791)
Receivables	7.	266	357	91
Other		-	129	129
Total Current Assets		4,545	3,974	(571)
Non-Current Assets				
Plant and equipment		13	13	-
Intangible assets	8.	-	516	516
Total Non-Current Assets		13	529	516
Total Assets		4,558	4,503	(55)
Current Liabilities				
Payables	9.	599	111	(488)
Accrued employee benefits	10.	251	498	247
Other	11.	-	84	84
Total Current Liabilities		850	693	(157)
Total Liabilities		850	693	(157)
Net Assets		3,708	3,810	102

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

16. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures (cont'd)

Budget to Actual Comparison - Statement of Cash Flows

		2023	2023	
	Variance	Actual	Original	Budget
	Notes	\$'000	Budget	Variance
		\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Cash flows from operating activities				
<i>Inflows:</i>				
Grants and other contributions		12,031	12,023	8
GST input tax credits from ATO		342	-	342
GST collected from customers		5	-	5
Interest receipts	12.	179	25	154
Other	13.	4	150	(146)
<i>Outflows:</i>				
Employee expenses	14.	(8,529)	(9,443)	914
Supplies and services		(2,512)	(2,692)	180
GST paid to suppliers		(324)	-	(324)
GST remitted to ATO		(5)	-	(5)
Other	15.	(567)	(104)	(463)
Net cash (used in) operating activities		625	(41)	665
Net increase in cash held		625	(41)	665
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year		3,654	3,529	125
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year		4,279	3,488	790

16. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures (cont'd)

This section contains explanations of major variances between the QFCC's actual 2022-23 financial results and the original budget presented to Parliament.

Explanations of Major Variances

Statement of Comprehensive Income

1. The variance is primarily in interest received and is due to a combination of a higher cash balance being maintained during the year and higher interest rates.
2. Delays in filling vacant positions, staff on extended leave or secondment to other Government Agencies contributed to lower salary cost.
3. Supplies and services vary each year as projects are developed. Some contract labour used to cover for short term needs.
4. Amortisation expenses have decreased following the issuance of IFRIC's agenda decision on Configuration or Customisation Costs in a Cloud Computing Arrangement in April 2021. The QFCC changed its accounting policy in 2021-22 for certain cloud computing and software-as-a-service (SaaS) costs.
5. The increase in other expenses is primarily due to establishing funding agreements and sponsoring initiatives that strongly align to the QFCC strategic objectives.

Statement of Financial Position

6. The increase in Cash and cash equivalents is primarily due to a higher balance at the beginning of the financial year, coupled with underspends due to delays in filling vacant positions, staff on extended leave or secondment to other government agencies.
7. The variance in Receivables is mainly due to the budget being based on historical data for GST receivable, with a lower actual GST receivable at the end of June.
8. Following the issuance of IFRIC's agenda decision on Configuration or Customisation Costs in a Cloud Computing Arrangement in April 2021. The QFCC changed its accounting policy in 2021-22 for certain cloud computing and software-as-a-service (SaaS) costs, resulting in a decrease in intangible assets.
9. The increase in Accounts payable is mainly due to the timing of invoices received from suppliers and the final payment run in June.
10. The decrease in Accrued Employee Benefits is predominantly due to the timing of the pay period, with the budget based on historical data.
11. The decrease relates to the provision in the budget for the return of grant revenue following of the changes in the accounting policy for certain cloud computing and software-as-a-service (SaaS) costs, resulting in a decrease in amortisation cost.

Statement of Cash Flows

12. The variance is due to a combination of a higher cash balance being maintained during the year and higher interest rates.
13. The variance is due to receipts from the ATO treated as other revenue in the SDS.
14. Delays in filling vacant positions, staff on extended leave or secondment to other Government Agencies contributed to lower salary cost.
15. The increase in other expenses is primarily due to establishing funding agreements and sponsoring initiatives that strongly align to the QFCC strategic objectives.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

17. Key Management Personnel (KMP) and Related Party Disclosures

Details of Key Management Personnel

The following details for key management personnel include those positions that had authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of the QFCC during 2022-23 and 2021-22.

Position	Position Responsibility
Chief Executive Officer & Principal Commissioner	<p>As the Chief Executive Officer of the agency, the role provides strategic and cross-sectorial leadership and direction to government and non-government agencies to strengthen laws, policies, practices and services that improve the child protection and family support system.</p> <p>The role is responsible for providing expert advice on child protection practices, underpinned by research, to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.</p> <p>This role is also the Chair of the independent Child Death Review Board.</p>
Commissioner	<p>The Commissioner provides strategic and cross-sectorial leadership and direction to government and non-government agencies to strengthen laws, policies, practices and services that improve the child protection and family support system.</p> <p>The role has a strong focus on collaboration, partnerships and networks across the sector and improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.</p>
Senior Executive Director, Operations	<p>The Senior Executive Director, Operations, led the data intelligence, analysis, audit and review portfolios of the QFCC. The role translated the strategy set by the Commissioners into a multi-year oversight program – working across the business to influence all programs of work in an authoritative and collaborative manner. The role designed and managed a whole-of-commission strategic approach to the delivery of system monitoring and reviews and produces work and maintains relationships that are successful in driving impactful change to the systems that uphold the safety, rights and wellbeing of children and their families.</p> <p>The role directly supported and represented the Principal Commissioner to deliver state-wide system improvements whilst leading cross-Commission, cross-government, and cross-sector collaboration.</p> <p>Following the resignation of the Senior Executive Director, the position was re-designated and re-classified. A recruitment of the subsequent Executive Director position is expected to be finalised in early 2023-24.</p>

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

17. Key Management Personnel (KMP) and Related Party Disclosures (cont'd)

Details of Key Management Personnel (cont'd)

Position	Position Responsibility
Executive Director, Government Relations and Corporate Services	<p>The Executive Director Government Relations and Corporate Services ensures the Commission's governance, people and finance systems and decision making processes are robust and our compliance with State and Commonwealth laws.</p> <p>The role ensures Commission's parliamentary and cross-government engagement is impactful and targeted and that we are aware of, and have opportunity to be involved in, emerging issues, including government initiatives, reforms and legislation.</p> <p>The role ensures the integrity of Child Death Review Board Operations and leads the systemic process of reviewing government service delivery to children who have died whilst known to the child protection system to identify system improvements, and supports the Board to make impactful recommendations.</p> <p>The role maintains a comprehensive and contemporary child death register through which we actively facilitate research and promote information to support policy and legislation development that prevents further child deaths.</p>
Executive Director, First Nations and Child Rights Advocacy	<p>The Executive Director, First Nations and Child Rights Advocacy, leads the delivery of First Nations and child rights strategies, partnerships and functions within the QFCC.</p> <p>The role is accountable for building the capacity, capability and integrity of the Commission's delivery against its explicit commitments to child rights and First Nations children. The role manages complex delivery processes requiring a proven track record as a thought leader that draws on collaboration, strong networks, and the ability to foster a capable and collaborative workforce.</p>
Director, Corporate Services	<p>The Director, Corporate Services oversees the effective and quality delivery of the corporate services functions of the QFCC.</p> <p>These functions include finance, human resources, governance, business and facilities support services, information and communication technology and contracts and procurement. The role also leads and manages the development, implementation and monitoring of risk management, planning processes and provides integrated organisation performance advice to support the Executive Leadership Board in setting, steering and reviewing the Commission's strategic direction.</p>

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

17. Key Management Personnel (KMP) and Related Party Disclosures (cont'd)

Details of Key Management Personnel (cont'd)

Position	Position Responsibility
Director Advocacy, Media & Youth Participation	The Director Advocacy, Media & Youth Participation provides stewardship for the QFCC advocacy in collaboration with the broader QFCC and provides leadership and authoritative advice on media and public relations direction to the Commissioners and Executive Leadership Board. The role also provides leadership and authoritative advice on best practice youth participation and purposeful communication to QFCC stakeholders.
Director, System Reviews	The Director, System Reviews provides leadership and oversight of the System Review Team and functions. The role manages whole-of-system reviews and provides high-quality, expert advice to the Principal Commissioner. The role prepares and publish findings, reports and briefs on behalf of the QFCC and act as the leading analyst and writer on these publications and acts as the primary contact for enquiries and consult and negotiate effectively in a complex environment with competing stakeholder priorities.
Director, Government Relations and Performance	<p>The Director, Government Relations and Performance provides leadership and direction to ensure the Commission is delivering outputs that will influence positive change. The role manages the Commission's parliamentary and cross-government engagement to ensure our work is impactful and targeted and provides expert advice regarding current and emerging issues, including government initiatives and legislation.</p> <p>Following the resignation of the Director, Government Relations & Performance the position was abolished.</p>

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

17. Key Management Personnel (KMP) and Related Party Disclosures (cont'd)

Remuneration Policies

Remuneration for the Principal Commissioner and Commissioner are set by the Governor in Council in accordance with Division 3, *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*. The remuneration and other terms of employment for the other key executive management personnel are in accordance with directives issued under the *Public Service Act 2008* by the Public Service Commission Chief Executive or the Minister responsible for public sector industrial relations.

Remuneration expenses for those KMP comprise the following components:

- Short term employee expenses, including:
 - Salaries, allowances and leave entitlements earned and expensed for the entire year, or for that part of the year during which the employee occupied a KMP position.
 - Non-monetary benefits - consisting of provision of vehicle parking together with fringe benefits tax applicable to the benefit.
- Long term employee expenses including amounts expensed in respect of long service leave entitlements earned.
- Post-employment expenses including amounts expensed in respect of employer superannuation obligations.
- Termination benefits are in accordance with government industrial instruments and individual contract of employment arrangements.
- Performance bonuses are not paid.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

17. Key Management Personnel (KMP) and Related Party Disclosures (cont'd)

Remuneration Expense

The following disclosures focus on the expenses incurred by the QFCC attributable to non-Ministerial KMP during the respective reporting periods. The amounts disclosed are determined on the same basis as expenses recognised in the statement of comprehensive income.

1 July 2022 - 30 June 2023

Position	Short Term Employee Expenses		Long Term Employee Expenses	Post-Employment Expenses	Termination Benefits	Total Expenses
	Monetary Expenses \$'000	Non-Monetary Benefits \$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Chief Executive Officer & Principal Commissioner	312	7	8	36	-	363
Commissioner	224	7	6	24	-	261
Senior Executive Director, Operations (from 01/07/22 to 14/04/23)	164	7	3	17	-	191
Executive Director, Government Relations & Corporate Services	184	8	5	20	-	217
Executive Director, First Nations & Child Rights Advocacy	185	7	5	21	-	218
Director Corporate Services	154	-	4	20	-	178
Director Advocacy, Media & Youth Participation (from 01/07/22 to 12/02/23)	81	4	2	10	-	97
A/Director Advocacy, Media & Youth Participation (from 13/02/23 to 30/06/23)	59	1	1	7	-	68
Director System Review	160	6	4	20	-	190
Director, Government Relations & Performance (from 01/07/22 to 18/11/22)	59	3	1	7	-	70
Total Remuneration	1,582	50	39	182	-	1,853

- Following the resignation of the Senior Executive Director, the position was re-designated and re-classified. A recruitment of the subsequent Executive Director position is expected to be finalised in early 2023-24. Following the resignation of the Director, Government Relations & Performance the position was abolished.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

17. Key Management Personnel (KMP) and Related Party Disclosures (cont'd)

KMP Remuneration Expense (cont'd)

1 July 2021 - 30 June 2022

Position	Short Term Employee Expenses		Long Term Employee Expenses	Post-Employment Expenses	Termination Benefits	Total Expenses
	Monetary Expenses \$'000	Non-Monetary Benefits \$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Chief Executive Officer & Principal Commissioner (from 01/07/21 to 24/12/21)	151	3	4	13	-	171
Chief Executive Officer & Principal Commissioner (from 31/01/22 to 30/06/22)	127	-	3	15	-	145
Commissioner	201	6	5	21	-	233
Senior Executive Director	201	6	5	22	-	234
Executive Director, Child Death Prevention	170	6	4	18	-	198
Executive Director, Oversight	190	7	5	20	-	222
Director Oversight (from 01/07/21 to 17/06/22)	150	7	4	19	-	180
Director Corporate Services	168	1	4	20	-	193
Director Advocacy, Media & Engagement	140	4	3	17	-	164
Director Child Death Review Board Secretariat	152	4	4	18	-	178
Director, Research & Policy (from 07/02/22 to 30/06/22)	60	2	2	7	-	71
Total Remuneration	1,710	46	43	190	-	1,989

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

17. Key Management Personnel (KMP) and Related Party Disclosures (cont'd)

Related Party Transactions

Transactions with people/entities related to KMP

The QFCC did not enter into any transactions with people, or entities, related to Key Management Personnel during the audit period.

Transactions with other Queensland Government-controlled entities

The QFCC transacts with other Queensland Government controlled entities consistent with normal day-to-day business operations provided under normal commercial terms and conditions.

The QFCC's primary ongoing source of funding is grant funding provided in cash by Department of Justice and Attorney General (Note 3).

The QFCC received services from CAA (Note 1) totalling \$369,000 and has an operating lease from DEPW for commercial office accommodation (Note 6) totalling \$729,000.

18. Taxation

The QFCC is a state body as defined under the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936* and is exempt from Commonwealth taxation with the exception of Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) and Goods and Services Tax (GST). FBT and GST are the only Commonwealth taxes accounted for by the QFCC. GST credits receivable from, and GST payable to, the ATO are recognised under Note 8 - Receivables.

19. Insurance

The QFCC's non-current physical assets and other risks are insured through the Queensland Government Insurance Fund with premiums being paid on a risk assessment basis. In addition, the QFCC pays premiums to WorkCover Queensland in respect of its obligations for employee compensation.

20. Accounting Estimates and Judgements

The preparation of financial statements necessarily requires the determination and use of certain critical accounting estimates, assumptions, and management judgements that have the potential to cause a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year. Such estimates, judgements and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised and in future periods as relevant.

The QFCC has not recognised any balances that could potentially have a significant effect on these financial statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23

21. First Year Application of New Accounting Standards or Change in Accounting Policy

Accounting standards applied for the first time

No new accounting standards or interpretations that apply to the QFCC for the first time in 2022-23 had any material impact on the financial statements.

Accounting Standards Early Adopted

No Australian Accounting Standards have been early adopted for 2022-23.

22. Climate Risk Disclosures

Whole-of-Government climate-related reporting

The State of Queensland, as the ultimate parent of the QFCC, has published a wide range of information and resources on climate change risks, strategies and actions (<https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/climate/climate-change>) including the following key whole-of-Government publications:

- Climate Action Plan 2020-30 (<https://www.des.qld.gov.au/climateaction>)
- Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan (<https://www.epw.qld.gov.au/energyandjobsplan>)
- Climate Adaptation Strategy (<https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/climate/climate-change/adapting/strategy>)
- Queensland Sustainability Report (<https://www.treasury.qld.gov.au/programs-and-policies/esg/>)

No adjustments to the carrying value of assets were recognised during the financial year as a result of climate-related risks impacting current accounting estimates and judgements. No other transactions have been recognised during the financial year specifically due to climate-related risks impacting the QFCC.


The QFCC continues to monitor the emergence of material climate-related risks that may impact the financial statements of the QFCC, including those arising under the Queensland Government Climate Action Plan 2020-2030 and other Government publications or directives.

**Queensland Family and Child Commission
Management Certificate
for the year ended 30 June 2023**

These general purpose financial statements have been prepared pursuant to s.62(1) of the *Financial Accountability Act 2009* (the Act), s.39 of the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019* and other prescribed requirements. In accordance with s.62(1)(b) of the Act we certify that in our opinion:

- (i) the prescribed requirements for establishing and keeping the accounts have been complied with in all material respects; and
- (ii) the financial statements have been drawn up to present a true and fair view, in accordance with prescribed accounting standards, of the transactions of the Queensland Family and Child Commission for the financial year ended 30 June 2023 and of the financial position of the office at the end of that year.

We acknowledge responsibility under s.7 and s.11 of the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019* for the establishment and maintenance, in all material respects, of an appropriate and effective system of internal controls and risk management processes with respect to financial reporting throughout the reporting period.



.....
Luke Twyford
Chief Executive Officer & Principal
Commissioner

Queensland Family and Child Commission

Date: 15 August 2023



.....
Jaime Blackburn
Executive Director, Government Relations
and Corporate Services

Queensland Family and Child Commission

Date: 15 August 2023

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Principal Commissioner of Queensland Family and Child Commission

Report on the audit of the financial report

Opinion

I have audited the accompanying financial report of Queensland Family and Child Commission.

In my opinion, the financial report:

- a) gives a true and fair view of the entity's financial position as at 30 June 2023, and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended
- b) complies with the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*, the Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019 and Australian Accounting Standards.

The financial report comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes to the financial statements including material accounting policy information, and the management certificate.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with the *Auditor-General Auditing Standards*, which incorporate the Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of my report.

I am independent of the entity in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Australia. I have also fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code and the *Auditor-General Auditing Standards*.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Responsibilities of the entity for the financial report

The Principal Commissioner is responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*, the Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019 and Australian Accounting Standards, and for such internal control as the Principal Commissioner determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Principal Commissioner is also responsible for assessing the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless it is intended to abolish the entity or to otherwise cease operations.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances. This is not done for the purpose of forming an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal controls, but allows me to form an opinion on compliance with prescribed requirements.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of material accounting policy information used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the entity.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the entity's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. I base my conclusions on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Principal Commissioner regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Statement

In accordance with s.40 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, for the year ended 30 June 2023:

- a) I received all the information and explanations I required.
- b) I consider that, the prescribed requirements in relation to the establishment and keeping of accounts were complied with in all material respects.

Prescribed requirements scope

The prescribed requirements for the establishment and keeping of accounts are contained in the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*, any other Act and the Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019. The applicable requirements include those for keeping financial records that correctly record and explain the entity's transactions and account balances to enable the preparation of a true and fair financial report.



17 August 2023

William Cunningham
as delegate of the Auditor-General

Queensland Audit Office
Brisbane

Endnotes

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