



INTRODUCTION

It is my great pleasure as Acting Principal Commissioner to present to you the Queensland Family and Child Commission's (QFCC) inaugural Annual Report.

Queensland has had a children's commission since 1996. The shape and form of the various commissions' functions have been moulded over time to reflect the changing focus of governments as they respond to evidence and insights from formal inquiries, service system monitoring, ongoing engagement with communities and families and, importantly, the views of children and young people.

The most recent changes, stemming from the 2013 Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry (QCPCOI), have effectively created an entirely new Commission.

The QFCC commenced operation on 1 July 2014 with a broad objective, and functions requiring my staff and I to work in collaboration with the child protection and family support services sector, including providing leadership and evidence informed advice about system level performance and the impacts and benefits of laws, policies and service delivery models on families and children. We are also required to apply significant efforts to educate Queensland families and communities about their role in keeping children and young people safe and well.

Despite being a new agency, the QFCC continues to embody the importance placed upon child rights and wellbeing in Queensland that has remained uninterrupted since 1996. Our main objective is that Queensland children and young people are safe and well, supported by capable families and communities.

A key theme for the hardworking and dedicated staff of the QFCC in 2014-15 has been change. Establishing a new and small agency has necessitated a lean and agile approach to running the day-to-day business of the QFCC. Additionally, while some staff have been recruited during the year, existing staff of the predecessor Commission have largely been called upon to develop and expand their skills and areas of speciality to respond to new functions and approaches.

Given that context, I am very proud of our efforts to date, which have included:

- developing and implementing a Strategic Plan 2014-18 to create an initial focus of the expected work effort stemming from the QFCC's new Act (the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*) and the QCPCOI's final report - *Taking Responsibility: A Roadmap for Queensland Child Protection* (the QCPCOI Report)
- delivering the initial phase of the Talking Families social marketing campaign, to both raise community awareness, and encourage positive shifts in attitude and behaviour around the role of families and communities in providing the best care and protection for children
- developing and gaining agreement for an evaluation framework and, in consultation with the responsible agencies, working towards mapping the planned evaluation they will undertake over the first five years of the QCPCOI reforms
- partnering with key stakeholders in the design of a customer-focused Community Services Directory, to help create public awareness of, and enhanced access to, family support services

- publishing the *Annual Report: Deaths of Queensland Children 2013-14*, which identified that in the reporting period the research, public education and policy development work of 50 stakeholders had been supported by detailed child death data, and
- partnering with Griffith University, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DCCSDS) and the Department of Education and Training to trial in 2016 a computer application called *Creature Quest*, which assesses child social and emotional wellbeing, for its potential as an outcome measure for assessing the effectiveness of family support services.

In the year ahead we will:

- welcome the appointment of our first Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Commissioner and commence implementation of our Reconciliation Action Plan
- hold our inaugural Advisory Council meeting under Part 4 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* as a formal means for the Principal Commissioner and Commissioner to seek advice from partners on matters relating to the QFCC's functions
- deliver further phases of the Talking Families social marketing campaign, which will focus on addressing stigma and barriers parents experience in asking for and accessing support services, and supporting professionals working in the child and family support system
- finalise development of and deploy the Community Services Directory (in partnership with the DCCSDS)
- implement a three year rolling research strategy to contribute to the understanding and practice of child protection
- develop key resources and information for children and families to assist their understanding of the child protection system and their rights, and
- progress the development of strategies designed to build the capacity and workforce capability of the sector.

I am very grateful for the support and encouragement of the QFCC's stakeholders in this important transition year and offer my sincere thanks. I am also very appreciative of the dedication and application of my staff during this first year of QFCC operations. We are uniquely placed to fulfil an exciting new role in Queensland's child protection and family support systems and I look forward to sharing the journey with you.

Steve Armitage
Acting Principal Commissioner