Chapter 9 — Child death prevention activities

Sections 26 and 28 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* set out the functions of the QFCC to help reduce the likelihood of child deaths. These functions include to:

- allow genuine researchers to access information in the register to undertake research to help reduce the likelihood of child deaths
- conduct research, alone or in cooperation with other entities
- identify areas for further research
- make recommendations, arising from keeping the register and conducting research, about laws, policies, practices and services.

The QFCC continues to concentrate its efforts on maintaining the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the child death information in the register and meeting the legislated requirement to report annually. Collecting, analysing and publishing information on the causes of child deaths is an important step in preventing child deaths and serious injuries.

This year the QFCC’s prevention activities included:

- research summaries and community education fact sheets
- the Seconds Count water safety campaign
- research summaries and community education fact sheet
- two submissions in relation to national safety standards for quad bikes
- a research forum in relation to youth suicide
- providing child death data to 27 stakeholders
- projects to improve the QFCC child death register database
- collaborating with the State Coroner, the Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Paediatric Quality Council to improve information collection and sharing
- participating in a water safety roundtable.
Activities to improve collection of child death information

During 2017–18 the QFCC undertook a project to move historical child death data into the current database, with the project expected to be completed by the end of 2018. It will result in improved data quality and efficiencies in reporting on child deaths and responding to researcher requests, and will lead into a major project to upgrade the current database to a contemporary, high performing system.

The QFCC also collaborated with the Queensland Paediatric Quality Council to improve data collection and processes relating to sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI). This work is being progressed through a working group being established by the Office of the State Coroner and the Queensland Police Service. As an outcome of the collaboration, from April 2018, all child death scene investigations will be led by a senior sergeant from the Queensland Police Service’s Child Protection Investigation Unit.

For the purpose of child death prevention and to maintain the child death register, the QFCC has written to relevant government departments on 28 occasions. These included:

- 26 letters to the Department of Education, including 25 providing a suicide notification to alert them to the need to provide postvention support to affected young people and one seeking information
- one letter to the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women to seek information
- one letter to the Department of Health to seek information.

A number of initiatives were also implemented to inform research and prevention activities, particularly in relation to youth suicide. These include:

- advocating for the establishment of the working group mentioned above which aims to improve the use, collection and sharing of information relating to child deaths
- seeking additional information when a young person has recently received mental health services or where school behavioural or engagement issues are identified
- arranging to receive systems and practice review reports, chronologies and Child Death Case Review Panel reports from Child Safety
- participating in a multidisciplinary analysis of suspected suicides.

Child death prevention resources

In addition to the Annual Report: Deaths of Children and young people, Queensland 2016–17, the QFCC published a number of information resources on its website relating to:

- child deaths in Queensland
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child mortality
- youth suicide in Queensland
- recorded deaths of children known to the child protection system
- preventing the main causes of child deaths
- child drowning facts and figures
- water safety tips
- child drowning in Queensland – research summary.

In 2017–18, the QFCC coordinated and published Australian and New Zealand child death statistics 2015, with the assistance of the other members of the Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group.
Seconds Count Campaign

The QFCC uses information from the child death register to highlight risk factors and causes of death, and to promote prevention messages to the community. In 2017–18, the QFCC developed the Seconds Count water safety and child drowning prevention campaign. The campaign targeted pool owners and parents of children under five years of age. Mitch Larkin, Olympic Games swimmer and Commonwealth Games gold medallist, featured in short videos. These were promoted through social media channels during the summer and again over the 2018 Easter school holiday period.

Research in the Round

In February 2018, the QFCC hosted a Research in the Round focused on youth suicide. The forum involved presentations by three leading researchers and included an interactive panel discussion to explore ways to reduce youth suicide and more effectively incorporate youth suicide prevention into government policy and practice.

Researcher access to child death data

The Queensland Child Death Register may be accessed at no cost by organisations or individuals conducting genuine research. Stakeholders wishing to access the register to support their research, policy or program initiatives can email their request to child_death_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au.

During 2017–18, the QFCC responded to 27 requests for access to the child death register from external stakeholders. Table 9.1 provides an overview of the type of data requested in 2017–18 and the purpose for which it was used.

Table 9.1: Purpose of data request by type of data requested 2017–18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of data requested</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Public education/reporting</th>
<th>Policy/program development</th>
<th>Total n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drowning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product-related injury</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-intentional injury</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatal assault and neglect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All deaths</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstate residents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known to the child safety system</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: QFCC Register of child death data requests (2017–18)

Examples of the projects provided with information include the following:

- data on fatal assault and neglect cases provided to the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council (the Council), which formed the baseline dataset for the Council’s review of imposed penalties for offences arising from the death of a child
- data on child drowning provided on a regular basis to the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia, to support national reporting and a number of research projects
- data on fatal child injuries relating to mandatory toy standards, and on child drownings involving portable or wading pools, provided to the Office of Fair Trading to support their work in relation to product safety

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66 Genuine research is defined as research relating to childhood mortality or morbidity with a view to increasing knowledge of incidence, causes and risk factors relating to same. Genuine research includes policy and program initiatives to reduce child death or injury.
• twenty-five Suspected Suicide Notifications provided to the Queensland Department of Education to support suicide postvention in Queensland state schools
• suicide data provided to the Queensland Health project, Multi-incident analysis of suspected suicides. The findings of the project will be used to form recommendations on clinical system improvement at a Hospital and Health Service level as well as state-wide
• regional suicide data provided to the Public Service Commission for the Townsville Community Champion and the Community forum, to support community driven solutions to help reduce the rate of youth crime in Townsville
• infant mortality data provided to the Queensland Paediatric Quality Council (QPQC) to support an expert panel review of infant deaths in Queensland. The findings of the review will be used to develop recommendations on the prevention of SUDI deaths, including reviewing service provision, updating Queensland Health Safe Sleep Guidelines and Education packages and examining the impact of the Pēpi-Pods Program on infant mortality in Queensland
• data on SUDI deaths provided for a joint project with other Australian states and territories and New Zealand, to improve consistent classification of SUDI cases and assist with identifying aspects of these cases that are modifiable so that prevention efforts can be targeted
• data on deaths of interstate residents provided to agencies responsible for reporting on child deaths in other Australian states and territories.

Research findings supported through child death data
Data provided from QFCC’s child death register has supported research in a number of fields of child death and injury prevention, leading to the following published findings:

Drowning-related research
• Royal Life Saving national drowning report 2018.

Homicide-related research

SUDI-related research
Policy submissions

During 2017–18, the QFCC used information in the Queensland child death register to provide advice and recommendations in two submissions to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission’s (ACCC) review of national standards for quad bikes and side-by-side vehicles.

The QFCC was supportive of the ACCC-proposed Option 5, which was considered to offer the highest level of protections and incorporate a mandatory safety standard in relation to general use quad bikes and side-by-side vehicles. The QFCC recommended or supported:

- requiring all general use quad bikes to have an Operator Protection Device (OPD), designed to protect the operator in the event of a rollover
- minimum performance requirements for static stability, mechanical suspension and dynamic handling
- adopting the labelling requirements within the US standard
- introducing an evidence-based safety star rating system in relation to static stability, dynamic handling and rollover crashworthiness
- national data collection in relation to injuries on youth-sized quad bikes to inform consideration of whether design changes may be needed in the future.

The QFCC noted the general consensus that children should not ride or be passengers on adult-sized quad bikes, and recommended that Australian state and territory governments investigate the feasibility and impact of introducing bans on children under 16 years operating or riding adult-sized quad bikes.

Advisory bodies

In 2017–18, the QFCC participated in the ministerial water safety roundtable, which was chaired by the Honourable Grace Grace, Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations. The purpose of the roundtable was to explore options with key stakeholders for improving swimming and water safety skills for all Queensland children. At the second roundtable, the QFCC presented research on child drowning risk and prevention approaches, and outlined the QFCC’s Seconds Count water safety campaign.

The QFCC also participated in the following advisory bodies:

- **Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group (ANZCDR&PG):** ANZCDR&PG aims to identify, address and potentially decrease the number of infant, child and youth deaths by sharing information on issues in the review and reporting of child deaths. The group is working towards achieving national standardised reporting. At the 2018 two day annual meeting of the group, the QFCC presented on the suicide classification model used in Queensland. In 2017–18 the QFCC coordinated and published *Australian and New Zealand death statistics 2015,* with the assistance of the other members of the group.

- **Consumer Product Injury Research Advisory Group:** This group provides an evidence base to support product safety policy decisions which may include: recommending new mandatory standards or Australian Standards be developed; recommending certain unsafe products be banned; developing consumer or business education campaigns; and supporting research opportunities. This group also provides advice to relevant government, private and community agencies; media; and the larger community on product safety issues either proactively or as requested.

- **Queensland Suicide Prevention Reference Group:** This group supports the implementation of the Queensland Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2015–17 and provides leadership, oversight and coordination of suicide prevention and risk-reduction activities undertaken across the state.

- **Expert Panel of the Queensland Health study – A multi-incident analysis of suspected suicides:** The expert panels were convened to gain input from a broad range of expertise to assist with identifying health service vulnerabilities and formulating recommendations that represent the multi-disciplinary perspectives needed to drive systemic and localised suicide prevention reform.
• **Queensland Advisory Group on Suicide Information and Data:** This group provides expertise on systemic issues and data and other relevant evidence.

• **Queensland Government Births and Deaths Working Group:** The Queensland Government Births and Deaths Working Group is a forum for discussing statistical and other issues around Queensland births and deaths registrations and assists in improving the quality and reliability of Queensland population statistics.

• **Queensland Implementation and Engagement Group:** Two national initiatives supporting education, health and social service professionals in fostering child and youth mental health. This group has been established to assist professionals and organisations who work with children and/or families to have the skills to identify, assess and support children at risk of mental health conditions.

• **Road Safety Research Network:** The network supports road safety research projects and activities that advocate road safety policy development and the evaluation of road safety initiatives.