



Media release

Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family & Child Commission
Cheryl Vardon

Disease the leading cause of deaths of Queensland children in 2014-15: report

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) has today released its annual report analysing the deaths of 445 children and young people in Queensland, which is one less than the previous year.

The latest report, titled *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people, Queensland, 2014-15* includes information from the Queensland Child Death Register which is maintained by the QFCC. Diseases and morbid conditions accounted for almost 70 per cent of deaths (309), while external non-natural causes accounted for just over 20 per cent (90 deaths).

Principal Commissioner of the QFCC, Cheryl Vardon, extended her condolences to the families and friends of the children and young people whose deaths were included in the report.

“Every death is a heavy loss for families, friends and communities,” Ms Vardon said.

“Every death from a preventable cause leaves regret, heartache and grief.

“By collecting and sharing information on child deaths, our goal is to see awareness of possible risks heightened and child death prevention activities better formulated and targeted.”

Overall, suicide was the leading external cause of death (28 deaths) followed by transport incidents (25 deaths).

Sixteen children drowned during the period, with five children drowning in private pools and another five in rural water hazards, such as dams.

Fourteen children died of fatal assault and neglect, which was an 11-year high. This number was due, in part, to a single incident involving multiple fatalities.

Nine children were victims of domestic homicide, four deaths were fatal child abuse and one death was due to neonaticide.

Ms Vardon said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children accounted for more than 16 per cent of all child deaths.

“Indigenous children are over-represented in infant deaths from diseases and morbid conditions, suicide deaths and sudden unexpected deaths in infancy,” she said.

“Closing the gap in outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must remain a priority for government at all levels.”

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Ms Vardon encouraged agencies and stakeholders to access and use the report's data to guide future child death and injury prevention activities.

"Collectively we need to learn from these findings, including looking to other jurisdictions and countries to see what programs prove effective in preventing deaths. We must remain vigilant in identifying emerging risks.

"This year's report again demonstrates the need for continued efforts to reduce child deaths." Access to the comprehensive child death data is available at no cost to support prevention research, policy or program initiatives.

Ms Vardon said she welcomed actions that had been taken in the past year to increase awareness and reduce preventable deaths of Queensland's children and young people.

One such example was the introduction of tougher pool safety laws that came into effect on 1 December, requiring improved pool fencing safety standards, CPR signage and registering of pools.

"We support the Queensland Government's decision to introduce tougher pool safety standards and hope that this will help reduce the number of child drownings across the state," she said.

The QFCC has four key areas of focus including oversight and evaluation; promotion and advocacy; capacity and culture; and research.

"We take our research role very seriously and hope this data paves the way for improved prevention initiatives in Queensland and across Australia, so we might avoid unnecessary child deaths and injuries in the future," Ms Vardon said.

The Child Death Register is the only dataset of all deaths of children and young people in Queensland and this year's report is the 11th in the series of annual publications.

A copy of the annual report is available at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au or a hard copy can be requested by emailing child.death@qfcc.qld.gov.au.

Counselling for children and young people is available from Lifeline on 13 11 14 (cost of a local call) and Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 (freecall).

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Media contact: media@qfcc.qld.gov.au or call (07) 3900 6008



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About the Queensland Family and Child Commission

Every day the Queensland Family and Child Commission works to improve the child protection and family support system. We are funded to oversee the system, engage and collaborate with our stakeholders and champion the needs of all children, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission was formed in July 2014 based on a recommendation of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. Our vision is to see that Queensland children and young people are safe and well, supported by capable families and communities.

Research is one of the key focus areas of the QFCC, with the agency having the responsibility of maintaining the Child Death Register and reporting on it, with the aim of advancing prevention initiatives to make Queensland a safer place for children and young people.