

2019–2020
ANNUAL
REPORT





Communication objective

This annual report describes the Queensland Family and Child Commission's (QFCC's) progress during 2019–20 towards achieving our long-term objectives, as published in our *Strategic Plan 2019–2023*.

In particular, the report focuses on our performance in relation to our strategic objectives, our financial position and our compliance with legislative requirements. It explains how we are helping to address some of the main challenges affecting Queensland children and families. It also provides information on our forward plans.

To contain production costs, only in-house resources have been used to develop the report. Limited hard copies of the annual report have been produced.

An electronic copy of this report is available on our website at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/annual-report.

Contact for enquiries

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ISSN 2205-6939 (Print)
ISSN 2205-6947 (Online)

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Queensland
Government

Queensland
**Family & Child
Commission**

Telephone: 07 3900 6000
Reference: CS-F19/1042 – D20/18087

31 August 2020

The Honourable Yvette D’Ath MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Leader of the House
1 William Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Attorney-General

I am pleased to submit for presentation to the Parliament the Annual Report 2019–20 and financial statements for the Queensland Family and Child Commission.

I certify that this Annual Report complies with:

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

A checklist outlining the annual reporting requirements is included in the appendices of this report.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Vardon
**Chief Executive Officer and Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission**

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Principal Commissioner's report

During 2019–20, COVID-19 set the context for operations of the QFCC, as it did globally. It challenged our ability to continue our good work of monitoring and checking to keep children safe, well and heard. It also demanded that we look for new ways to achieve these important goals.

Further to the COVID-19 response and recovery focus, this annual report also acknowledges the ongoing work across the QFCC throughout the past year. The QFCC had significant success with its 2020 *Growing Up in Queensland* review, even more so considering pandemic restrictions changed it from a face-to-face to an online-only exercise at short notice. More than 7000 young Queenslanders contributed to the survey, making it a historic record of their views on living in the state during the pandemic.

The QFCC continued and expanded its oversight function during COVID-19, working with key partners including the Department of Education and the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women to confirm the steps they were taking to maintain visibility of vulnerable children and young people. One of the high points for the function came in June with the completion of the QFCC *Oversight Strategy 2020–2022*. This outlines the priorities of the QFCC over the next two years, with a focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by ensuring the child protection system operates in a way that is culturally respectful and responsive. It also prioritises effective collaborations—both within government and between the government and non-government sector—and supporting young people in out-of-home care regarding their education. The QFCC continued its system review work to the end of the financial year.

On 1 July 2020, the QFCC will take on the additional function of reviewing the deaths of all children who were known to the child protection system. As a result, my role will expand to include being the independent Chair of the Child Death Review Board. Much of the second half of the financial year was spent preparing for this significant reform, working with sector partners to develop board governance arrangements and to formally establishing the board as a separate body.

Throughout the year, the QFCC continued to promote and advocate for the responsibility of families and communities to protect and care for children and young people. The QFCC's *Talking Families* initiative, in its first full year of operating in Queensland schools, now provides more than 100 schools and services with advice and services. Its *Families are First* program, a strengths-based approach exploring positive parenting practices among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, captured stories from around Queensland.

Through the financial year, the QFCC's Workforce Futures program worked with the sector to identify what was needed to support a sustainable workforce, identify opportunities to redress structural and systemic bias facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and influence education and training arrangements to improve system capacity.

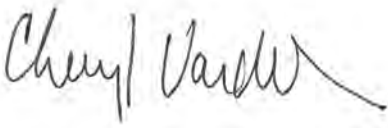
The financial year saw two other significant changes in the QFCC. In June, Natalie Lewis joined the QFCC as Commissioner, providing support to the Principal Commissioner in the leadership of the organisation. Ms Lewis, a Gamilaraay woman, is a highly regarded leader with a career in youth justice, child and family services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs.

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The second significant change saw the QFCC relocate from its home in Albert Street to George Street. The relocation was managed while QFCC staff were working from home due to pandemic arrangements, which posed additional logistical challenges.

This is just a brief highlight of the QFCC's work in the 2019–20 financial year. The annual report provides a full overview of what we have achieved.

I want to thank all staff who worked for the QFCC during the financial year. It was a year unlike any other. Staff had to adjust to a significantly different working environment due to COVID-19, while continuing to ensure the child protection system did not lose touch with the state's vulnerable children and young people. They rose to the task magnificently. The 2020–21 financial year promises to build on the work we have done to ensure the QFCC continues to be a contemporary, influential agency.



Cheryl Vardon
Chief Executive Officer and **Principal Commissioner**
Queensland **Family and Child** Commission



About us

Our role



Children, young people and their families are at the heart of everything we do.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) is dedicated to improving the child protection and family support system.

To deliver on this, we:

- **review systems and build evidence** by:
 - monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the performance and outcomes of the child protection and family support system
 - undertaking system reviews to provide evidence of the effectiveness of the child protection and family support system
 - enhancing the capture and reporting of data to support the Queensland Child Death Register
- **connect with young Queenslanders** by:
 - collecting, reporting on and responding to the views of children on their experiences growing up in Queensland
 - consulting with children and young people on QFCC work and the matters that are important to them
 - establishing programs that address internet-facilitated child abuse and harm
- **influence the sector and engage communities** by:
 - using a strengths-based approach to change the conversation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
 - providing evidence to inform policy and practice improvements
 - promoting and advocating for children's rights
 - working with sector leaders to plan for a workforce skilled for the future
 - promoting and advocating the responsibility of families and communities to protect and care for young Queenslanders.

We achieve this role by partnering with government and non-government organisations.

Our legislation



The QFCC was established on 1 July 2014. The *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* (the Act) established the QFCC as a statutory body 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.

The Act also prescribes that two commissioners be appointed by the Governor in Council—one as the principal commissioner and chief executive. At least one commissioner must be an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander.

Our strategic plan

Our vision

Young Queenslanders grow up in safe and inclusive communities where they are valued and supported to reach their potential.

Our purpose

To respect, advocate for and protect young Queenslanders' rights, wellbeing and safety and drive continuous improvement of the services that support them.

Our opportunities





- Statewide promotion of the inherent values, beliefs and behaviours that make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families strong
- Expand engagement with young Queenslanders from all backgrounds and geographical locations to further inform decisions impacting their lives
- Actively celebrate and promote the achievements of young Queenslanders and the contributions they make to society
- Engage with non-government service providers to enhance our oversight of the child and family support system.

Our risks

- Failure to include the voices of young Queenslanders in our decisions will diminish our ability to influence change
- Ineffective partnering with stakeholders will limit opportunities to facilitate sustainable system change
- Inadequate monitoring of governance mechanisms may result in non-compliance with legislative and regulatory obligations.

Our commitment

The QFCC contributes to several of the priorities in the government's *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities* plan for the community:

-  **Give all our children a great start.** We do this by sharing the themes and issues identified through *Growing Up in Queensland* surveys, with government and decision-makers, to inform policy and practice improvements.
-  **Keep communities safe.** We contribute to this by providing ongoing education about internet-facilitated child abuse and harm, so communities can reduce the risk and have the skills and knowledge to respond to risk or harm if it does occur.
-  **Be a responsive government.** We do this by providing access to more than 55,000 Queensland family and community services through the *oneplace* Community Services Directory.
-  **Keep Queenslanders healthy.** We do this by advising on how to prevent child death and significant harm and by providing researchers and government agencies with detailed child death data (including on youth suicide) from the *Queensland Child Death Register*.

In all of this, we focus strongly on representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.



Connect with young Queenslanders

Influence the sector and engage communities

Review systems and build evidence

Objectives



Incorporate young Queenslanders' perspectives and lived experiences into all of our work

Change the conversation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through a strengths-based approach

Implement an oversight strategy to monitor the child and family support system

Collect, report on and respond to the views of children and young people on their experiences growing up in Queensland

Deliver a workforce futures strategy for the child and family services sector

Evaluate outcomes achieved by reforms to the child and family support system

Establish programs addressing internet-facilitated child abuse and harm

Promote and advocate the responsibility of families and communities to protect and care for young Queenslanders

Undertake reviews to provide evidence of the effectiveness of the child and family support system

Provide evidence to inform policy and practice improvements

Enhance the capture and reporting of data to support the Queensland child death register

Strategies

Level of engagement and involvement by young Queenslanders in QFCC initiatives

Access by families and communities to the services and support available to help them protect and care for children and young people

Implementation of recommendations made by the QFCC result in an improved child and family support system

Indicators

Agencies and professionals consider the QFCC is making a positive impact

Data shared with researchers and organisations contributes to child death prevention activities

Ongoing involvement with partners creates systemwide change

Aligned with



Our performance

In the service delivery statements of the Queensland State Budget 2019–20, the QFCC had one service area objective. This was to promote the safety and well-being of children and young people and the role of families and communities in protecting and caring for them. This is measured through the following service standard.

QFCC service standard	Notes	2019–20 target	2019–20 actual
Percentage increase in searches on the <i>oneplace</i> Community Services Directory	1,2	5%	12%

Notes:

1. This service standard reports on the number of searches undertaken by people accessing the *oneplace* Community Services Directory. This is an easily accessible directory of community services to help all Queensland families to get to the right service at the right time. In doing so, it addresses several of QFCC's statutory obligations, such as supporting families in taking responsibility and caring for children and informing and educating the community about services.
2. This new service standard has been introduced to highlight the number of searches, rather than number of site visits (which was the focus of the previous measure, which has been discontinued). The number of searches is a more valid representation of the value of the site to the community. A community member or professional who visits the site and searches for a service has presumably benefited more from the site than a community member who visits the site but does not search for a service.

Our operating environment


The QFCC operates in a complex environment influenced by multiple reform agendas and industry initiatives at the state and national level. We are actively involved in a number of these initiatives, including several related to child protection reform and youth justice.

We partner with the agencies responsible for leading the initiatives, and lead and participate in oversighting, governance and advisory groups to help create sustainable change across the child protection and family support sector. Our partnerships with both the government and non-government sector, support a responsive, sustainable service system that benefits children and families.

In promoting the safety, welfare and best interests of children and young people, the QFCC plays a critical role in reforming both child protection and youth justice.

Child protection reform

The QFCC has acted on all recommendations it received from the 2013 *Taking Responsibility: A Road Map for Queensland Child Protection* report. Appendix D provides details on Queensland's progress towards achieving state goals.



Through its representation on the Stakeholder Advisory Group (which provides advice on child and family reform policy and programs) and the Interdepartmental Committee (which leads government policy direction on this, as well as on youth justice and family violence reforms), the QFCC is supporting the delivery of the Queensland Government's *Supporting Families Changing Futures* child protection reform agenda including:

- *Supporting Families Changing Futures* program which focuses on delivering the right services at the right time to support families and keep children safe at home
- *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037* which addresses the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people within the statutory child protection system.

Working Together Changing the Story: Youth Justice Strategy 2019–2023

Queensland's first youth justice strategy was released by the government in December 2018.

It provides an evidence-based framework that will deliver initiatives proven to reduce offending and re-offending and to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the youth justice system.

The QFCC *Changing the sentence: Youth Justice* project is reviewing the early implementation of youth justice reforms. This review will focus on pillars two and three (keeping children out of court; keeping children out of custody) of the strategy and examine investment options for the future. We expect to complete the project by the end of 2020.

The remaining chapters of this annual report address the strategic objectives and strategies outlined in the QFCC's *Strategic Plan 2019–2023*.

Review systems and build evidence

Systems oversight

The Queensland Family and Child Commission's (QFCC) oversight role focuses on monitoring, reviewing and reporting on Queensland's child protection system. For example, the QFCC conducts reviews into systemic issues affecting the performance of the child protection and family support system.

QFCC Oversight Strategy 2020–2022

In 2020 the QFCC released its *Oversight Strategy 2020–2022*. The strategy establishes the QFCC's approach to monitoring system performance by focusing on children, families and system outcomes across three impact areas: system reliability, productivity and sustainability.

It considers how well the child and family support system upholds and protects children's rights, well-being and safety and how well it generates positive outcomes.

The strategy defines headline indicators and evidentiary sources for monitoring performance of the child and family support system.

The QFCC reports annually on the performance of the child and family support system (see Appendix D).

In 2019–20, we concluded two major reviews:

Post-implementation review of When a child is missing: Remembering Tiahleigh—A report into Queensland's children missing from out-of-home care

Once all 29 recommendations of this 2016 review were implemented, the QFCC completed a review (in September 2019) to see whether the changes and policies were operating as intended and assess whether cultural change was occurring. The review also agreed on how to collaboratively address areas for improvement.

The review was undertaken collaboratively with the Queensland Police Service, the Office of the Public Guardian, Queensland Health, the Department of Education and the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women.

This review found the recommendations of the report had generally been implemented by the responsible agencies, particularly with regard to policy and procedural changes. However, the response had not yet been embedded into daily practice.

The review did not find evidence of improved outcomes for children. It did however identify a range of additional policy and procedural changes to strengthen the response and better meet the intended outcomes of the recommendations in the report. These opportunities were communicated directly to the respective agencies for their consideration, and a final report on implementation was published on the QFCC website.



Seeing they are safe: responsiveness to notifications of child harm in Queensland

During 2019–20, the QFCC examined the responsiveness of the statutory child protection system to notifications of harm to a child.¹ This review:

- assessed the business processes supporting Child Safety’s investigation and assessment function by examining different approaches operating in three locations in Queensland
- continued building the evidence base on effective investigation and assessment system models, structures and approaches for responding to child safety notifications in a timely manner
- determined whether recent changes to Child Safety policy, have had an influence on timeliness for 5 day and 10 day responses to notifications
- identified opportunities to improve response timeliness for 5 day and 10 day notifications.

This review examined the differing contexts in which the investigation and assessment function is delivered, and the complexities and challenges facing the Child Safety front line workforce.

Two rounds of consultation were undertaken in three Child Safety Service Centre catchments (Maroochydore, Bundaberg and the Western Downs Intake and Assessment Child Safety Service Centres) to improve the QFCC’s understanding of the differing approaches used to deliver the investigation and assessment function.

The review found that Child Safety Service Centres have considerable autonomy and display innovation in their investigation and assessment approaches. It also found that as a result of policy changes, there have been some improvements in response timeliness—specifically in the number of 5 day and 10 notifications commenced and completed within the set timeframes.

However, the data showed that when an investigation and assessment process is commenced on the basis of information gathered, there is an unacceptable two to six week delay before a child safety officer sights (physically sees) the child.

The review also highlighted the value of partnerships in supporting timely and high-quality investigation and assessment responses. This was particularly true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, where partnerships with community controlled organisations support increased participation of families in decisions that affect the safety and well-being of their children.

In addition to these oversight reviews, the QFCC has undertaken or participated in several other oversight initiatives. Some of these are:

Oversighting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection

Significant commitments have been made in Queensland to implement systemic reforms (in legislation, policy, programs, processes and practice) that give practical effect to each of the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection). The Child Placement Principle recognises the importance of connections to family, community, culture and country.

¹ A notification is recorded where there is a reasonable suspicion that a child has been or is being significantly harmed, or is at risk of it, and does not have a parent able and willing to protect them. Significant harm includes serious harm and severe harm. Notifications are responded to based on urgency. There are three response timeframes: 24 hours, within 5 days and within 10 days.—Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2020, *Child Safety Practice Manual: Glossary*, <https://cspm.csyw.qld.gov.au/glossary#N>.

While the intent is clear and not in question, implementation to date has been inconsistent. The QFCC is exercising its statutory oversight functions to support continuous improvement so the reforms will:

- significantly reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system
- improve the safety and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

In 2019–20, the QFCC developed a monitoring framework to oversee Queensland Government’s implementation of the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

The framework highlights the key variables that make a difference to over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system. Unsurprisingly, higher entry rates, longer duration in the system and lower rates of exit all result in increased disproportionate representation.

The monitoring framework will let the QFCC analyse and identify trends and examples of emerging best practice and areas requiring significant improvement. This analysis will be used to develop a program of evaluation and reviews to promote accountability and continual improvement. These reviews will commence in 2020–21.

Systems reviews following the death of children

In 2019–20, the QFCC began three whole-of-system reviews following the deaths of children known to Child Safety. These are ongoing.

A new independent Child Death Review Board, hosted by the QFCC, will commence on 1 July 2020. It will be the main mechanism for future multi-agency system reviews following the deaths of children known to the child protection system.

Major child protection related oversight groups in which the QFCC participates are:

QFCC Reviews Strategic Oversight Group

The Reviews Strategic Oversight Group meets quarterly and is chaired by the QFCC Executive Director, Oversight and Indigenous Outcomes.

Membership includes representatives from all government departments with responsibility for implementing recommendations from *Keeping Queensland’s children more than safe: Review of the foster care system and Recommendation 28 Supplementary Review: A report on information sharing to enhance the safety of children in regulated home-based services* (the supplementary review).

This group provides strategic advice to the QFCC Principal Commissioner about ongoing implementation of the government’s response to the recommendations and subsequent changes in the child protection system.

During 2019–20, members of the group reported to the Principal Commissioner when the recommendations from the supplementary review were fully implemented. During 2019–20, the Strategic Cross-Agency Oversight Group collaborated on a children and complaints project.



Strategic Cross-Agency Oversight Group

The Principal Commissioner chairs the Strategic Cross-Agency Oversight Group, which meets quarterly. Its purpose is to discuss sector-wide trends and issues with a focus on systemic and cross-agency oversight.

Following the release of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (national principles) in February 2019, members of this group worked on a children and complaints project.

The national principles aim to provide a consistent approach to creating organisational cultures that foster child safety and well-being across all sectors in Australia. Principle 6 sets out the need for organisations to have clear, consistent and child-focussed processes for responding to complaints.

The project identified systemic issues, developed a response to improve children's awareness of the complaints processes within Queensland and provided an opportunity for the members of the Strategic Cross-Agency Oversight Group to assess their various agencies' complaints processes. The QFCC Youth Advisory Council was also involved, assessing complaints processes from a young person's perspective. Members of the Youth Advisory Council reviewed and critiqued the information about complaints contained on the websites of members of the Strategic Cross-Agency Oversight Group. They then provided a report on the language used, the ease of finding the complaints information and their perspective on whether they would use the complaints process. This was a vital input as many of the members reported that this feedback was invaluable and had resulted in changes to their websites and complaints processes.

The Strategic Cross-Agency Oversight Group is made up of representatives from the following agencies:

- QFCC
- Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
- Queensland Human Rights Commission
- Crime and Corruption Commission
- Queensland Mental Health Commission
- Office of the Health Ombudsman
- Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- Children's Court Brisbane
- Coroners Court of Queensland
- Office of the Public Guardian.

Performance of the Queensland child protection system



Section 40 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* requires the QFCC to report on:

- the performance of Queensland's child protection system in achieving state and national goals
- Queensland's child protection system's performance over time in comparison to the 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.

The *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* outlines national goals for Australia's child protection systems, with the overarching goal being Australia's children and young people are safe and well.

Six supporting outcomes (see Appendix D) are used to highlight progress towards this goal. Of these, the QFCC has assessed Queensland's performance against the other Australian jurisdictions to be:

- 'strong' on the measure of number of children aged 0–17 years accessing intensive family support services
- 'satisfactory' on children's early development and on the proportionate recurrent expenditure on all child protection services
- 'needs improvement' for the measures of:
 - finalised child protection investigations that were proven to be substantiated
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in a home-based placement
 - children in care who were the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect.

As at 30 June 2020, 115 of the 121 recommendations (95 percent) from the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry 2014 have been completed and work is underway to addressing the remaining six.

Some progress has been made in improving outcomes for and reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system, most notably in areas such as increased school enrolments. However, there remains considerable room for improvement with regards to this in the child protection and youth justice systems.

More detailed information on Queensland's performance is available at Appendix D.

Evaluation

The QFCC has legislative responsibility for analysing and evaluating, at a systems level, the:

- policies and practices relevant to the child protection system
- performance of relevant agencies in delivering services.

The QFCC conducts annual data collection activities to support evaluation work, including:

- surveys of the community and frontline child protection and family support sector workforce
- place-based studies examining systemic issues in local contexts.

It also designs and conducts system-level evaluations.

The QFCC has lead responsibility for evaluating the child protection reforms being implemented in response to the recommendations of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry report. It has done or will do this at three milestones over the reform program.

These evaluations assess how well the reform program has been implemented and its outcomes and impacts. They also assist relevant agencies to evaluate how well their programs are working.

The QFCC seeks regular updates from departments with child protection responsibilities about their own planned evaluation activities.



Evaluation of the implementation of the reform program

The QFCC evaluated the implementation of the child protection reform program during the first three years of implementation (1 July 2014 to 30 June 2017). This identified factors facilitating or impeding implementation and early indicators of progress towards outcomes.

The QFCC published its final report on this—*Queensland Child Protection Reform Program (2014–2024) Implementation Evaluation*—in October 2019, after government consideration.

The evaluation found that progress was at a level expected after three years of reform implementation, and that benefits of the changes were starting to be observed, particularly regarding the increased availability of services to support families. It also found areas requiring additional attention, such as the increasingly disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the system, and persistent issues with information sharing and collaboration.

This evaluation has contributed to refinement of how the reforms are being managed and has set a baseline for subsequent evaluations. It has provided early indicators of success and information/data gaps for the outcomes evaluation of the child protection reform program.

Outcomes evaluation

This evaluation is examining the first five years of the reforms in the sector and will focus on how the outcomes of the reform program are being achieved. The outcomes relate to the strategic directions of the *Supporting Families Changing Futures* reform program.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are a focus across the evaluation and disaggregated data will be reported (where available). The evaluation will consider whether progress for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families is consistent with outcomes being achieved for non-Indigenous families, and the potential causes of any differences.

The QFCC expects to complete this evaluation by the end of 2020.

Workforce survey

The workforce survey measures the perspectives of front line workers and service providers in the child protection and family support sector on a variety of issues.

The survey, promoted through the QFCC's established networks, was conducted online in 2019 using the Queensland Government's *Get Involved* platform. It gathered the views of 283 Queensland government and non-government employees working in the child protection and family support sector across Queensland.

The 29 survey questions explored a range of topics such as: information about services, referral pathways, information sharing, collaboration, meeting families' needs, awareness of the reform program, legislation, and policy.

Overall, the survey respondents' perceptions about their role and organisations were generally more positive than their perceptions about the broader child protection and family support system.

Survey respondents working for non-government organisations were often found to be more positive than those from government agencies. Compared with government respondents, non-government respondents were more likely to agree that:

- their organisation supported and provided access to quality learning and development opportunities
- they were able to spend enough time with clients to do their job well, and consider their caseload/workload to be manageable
- clients were able to work with the same staff member (for continuity)
- they felt supported by their organisation when making decisions, and that their organisation has a positive workplace culture.

The *Workforce Survey 2019–Final Research Report*, prepared by Market & Communications Research on behalf of the QFCC, was published in October 2019 and is available on the QFCC website.

Data collection for the 2020 workforce survey is complete, with 761 responses received. The report describing the findings is due by the end of 2020.

Community perspectives survey

The community perspectives survey measures the community's confidence in the Queensland child protection sector and in its ability to keep children safe. It also measures the community's awareness of the child protection system and how it operates.

The *QFCC Community Perceptions Survey 2019–Research Report*, prepared by Market & Communications Research on behalf of the QFCC, describes the views of 2,503 Queensland adults who contributed through an online self-completion survey or a computer-assisted telephone interview.


The report was published in July 2019 and its detailed findings can be accessed on the QFCC website.

Data collection for the 2020 community perspectives survey is complete, with 2,530 responses received. The report on the findings is due by the end of 2020.

Place-based studies

Place-based studies examine selected aspects of the child protection system in specific Queensland locations. They provide comprehensive insights into the location-specific progress of key aspects of the child protection sector reforms. Previous place-based studies have been undertaken in Thursday Island (October 2017), Roma and Rockhampton (February 2018), Cloncurry (March 2018) and Redlands-Wynnum (April 2018).

In 2019–20, the QFCC carried out two place-based studies within the Caboolture and Sunshine Coast Child Safety Service Centre catchment areas. The Caboolture study examined the capability of the workforce in responding to the complex needs of clients. The Sunshine Coast study explored services for young people transitioning from out-of-home care into independent living. Both studies are available on the QFCC website.



Important findings from the Caboolture study were:

- frontline practice is client-centred, flexible and non-judgemental
- the local area offers a broad range of services, such as early intervention services that benefit vulnerable families
- programs, supports and personal development opportunities are proactively provided to staff to assist them in undertaking their work
- services work collaboratively to facilitate holistic support for families
- most services were operating ‘at capacity’, meaning some having clients on waiting lists.

Important findings from the Sunshine Coast place-based study were:

- services leave the door open for young people who are not yet ready to engage
- consistency and continuity of support networks enable positive outcomes
- outreach, co-location and mobile services improve service access for young people
- multi-sector collaboration and linkages exist at all levels, with the common goal of improving outcomes for young people
- some gaps exist in the local provision of youth services (such as specialist mental health services and disability and domestic violence services)
- there is some lack of awareness, particularly among young people, about the types of local services and supports available.

Our place-based study reports are delivered to the local Regional Child, Youth and Family Committees,² as these groups are best placed to consider the findings and identify opportunities to collaborate on any potential actions. Reports are also published on the QFCC website.

² Regional Child, Youth and Family Committees determine regional priorities for implementing the *Supporting Families Changing Futures* reform program and the domestic and family violence reform agenda. Nine committees with representatives from government and non-government agencies have been established across the state. Membership varies depending on regional needs and priorities.

Child death prevention

The QFCC maintains the Queensland Child Death Register. The QFCC analyses information from the register and produces an annual report on the deaths of all children in Queensland. This helps to improve understanding of risk factors and supports the development of new policies and practices to reduce child deaths.

The register currently contains records of over 7,300 children whose deaths were registered with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages between 1 January 2004 and 30 June 2020.

It provides a valuable evidence base that is used to:

- develop activities for safety and the prevention of injury
- monitor the effectiveness of prevention activities
- provide detailed child death data to researchers and government agencies.

Supporting efforts to prevent child deaths

One way the QFCC contributes to the prevention of child death and injury is to make data held in the register available for research, public education, policy development and program design. Access to the comprehensive dataset is available at no cost to genuine researchers.³

In 2019–20, the QFCC responded to 24 requests from researchers and government agencies for detailed data from the register.

The QFCC has continued to monitor and support prevention of suicide deaths of children and young people by promoting mental well-being tips through QFCC social media channels.

Participation in state and national advisory groups

The QFCC's child death prevention staff participated on several advisory bodies such as the:

- Consumer Product Injury Research Advisory Group
- Queensland Government Births and Deaths Working Group
- Suicide Prevention Plan Cross-Agency Working Group
- Queensland Paediatric Quality Council Steering Committee
- Infant Mortality sub-committee
- Road Safety Research Network.

The annual Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group meeting for 2019–20 did not proceed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Activities to improve collection of child death information

The QFCC has continued with its project to upgrade the Queensland Child Death Register, with roll-out of a replacement database system scheduled to occur by the end of 2020.

³ 'Genuine research' is defined as research relating to childhood mortality or morbidity with a view to increasing knowledge of incidence, causes and risk factors. Genuine research includes policy and program initiatives to reduce child death or injury.



Annual report on child deaths in Queensland

The QFCC's *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people, Queensland 2018–19* was tabled in the Queensland Parliament on 15 January 2020. The report found there has been a gradual decline in child mortality rates over the past five years. This overall trend is driven by decreases in child mortality from explained diseases and morbid conditions (natural causes).

Deaths from diseases and morbid conditions still accounted for most child deaths (261 deaths or 68 percent) while external (non-natural) causes of death accounted for 90 deaths (or 23 percent), of which 37 were attributed to suicide.

For a summary of main findings, refer to the *Child deaths in Queensland* fact sheet, which is available on the QFCC website.

The annual reports on child deaths, 15-year data tables and the latest child death statistics for Australian states and territories and New Zealand are also available on the QFCC website.

QFCC publications on child deaths

In 2019–20, the QFCC produced fact sheets with important findings and prevention messages.

The *Children known to the child protection system 2018–19* fact sheet shows that in 2018–19, 58 of the total 386 child deaths were of children known to the child protection system.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child mortality 2018–19* fact sheet shows that, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child mortality decreased over the past 15 years, the Indigenous mortality rate is still twice the rate for non-Indigenous children.

The fact sheets are both available on the QFCC website.

In 2019–20, a research summary on the topic of reducing drowning among children 0–17 years, showed that children aged 0–4 years of age are most at risk of unintentional drowning. In Queensland 252 children aged 0–17 years have drowned over the last 17 years (2002–03 to 2018–19).

Findings from the Queensland Child Death Register 2004–2019

In February 2020, the QFCC began a review of 16 years of data held within the Queensland Child Death Register. This project will deliver an overview report describing trends and patterns in child mortality since the register began in 2004. It will include:

- changes in the rates of child death in Queensland over time
- patterns identified in deaths from natural, external and unexplained causes
- changing risk patterns across the course of childhood
- geographic and socio-economic factors influencing child mortality rates
- vulnerabilities identified among children who have died in Queensland
- findings relating to the deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- findings relating to children known to the child protection system.

The project is expected to identify a range of areas for further investigation, to be progressed in partnership with key government and research partners.

Red Flags project

The QFCC is exploring the concept of using ‘red flags’ to help identify where children may be at risk. The idea for the project came from a review into a child death.

The aim is to develop a sector definition of red flags⁴ for vulnerable children and a framework of research and data analysis that agencies in the child and family support system can use and share to identify and respond to red flags for vulnerable infants, children and families.

The project will be completed in 2020–21.

Child Death Review Board

In March 2017, the QFCC provided a report to government—*A systems review of individual agency findings following the death of a child*.

This report detailed the QFCC’s analysis and findings after consideration of individual agency reviews following the death of a child. The report made one recommendation, which was that:

the Queensland Government considers a revised external and independent model for reviewing the deaths of children known to the child protection system.

The QFCC worked with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and nominated agencies to identify a new model for reviewing deaths of children known to the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women.

Subsequently, the legislation underpinning the new model, the *Child Death Review Legislation Amendment Act 2020*, was introduced into the Queensland Parliament in September 2019. It was proclaimed on 11 June 2020, with a commencement date of 1 July 2020.

The legislation introduced requirements for certain government agencies to undertake reviews following the death or serious physical injury of a child known to the child protection system, and for the Child Death Review Board (the Board) to be hosted by the QFCC. The functions of the Board will be independent from the QFCC and government departments.

In preparation for the start of government agency reviews under the new legislation, the QFCC led:

- a cross-agency working group in developing operational guidelines to provide guidance for and consistency in conducting reviews
- the preliminary work to establish the Board, including the recruitment of non-government Board members, and the development of procedural guidelines, an evaluation framework, information sharing protocols and educational resources.

⁴ The QFCC working definition of a ‘red flag’ is an act or intention that is likely to adversely affect a child’s immediate safety, such as injury, threats of harm or death; or an accumulation of risk factors that, when considered together, may adversely affect a child’s immediate safety.



The year ahead

In 2020–21, we will:

- complete the outcomes evaluation of the reform program
- complete the systems review of the implementation of youth justice reforms
- finish three system reviews following the deaths of children known to Child Safety
- finalise the monitoring framework and develop a program to oversee the Queensland Governments' work in addressing the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle
- implement proactive system reviews as outlined in the *QFCC Oversight Strategy 2020–2022*
- provide information on system performance through a series of snapshot reports
- publish the *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people, Queensland 2019–20*
- continue to respond to data requests about deceased children and to support government and non-government agencies in developing responses to reduce the number of children and young people who die in Queensland each year
- publish findings from the QFCC review of 16 years of the data held in the Queensland Child Death Register
- finish upgrading the database system that contains the Child Death Register
- complete the red flags initiative
- provide administrative support to the Child Death Review Board.

Connecting with children and young people

Under the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, the QFCC is responsible for engaging with, and taking account of, the views of children, young people and their families.

Under Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to be heard and have their best interests considered by decision-makers in areas such as budget, policy and law.

The QFCC's main mechanisms for engaging with and hearing the voices of children and young people during 2019–20 were the:

- *Growing Up in Queensland* project
- QFCC Youth Advisory Council
- *Real Skills for Real Life* survey.

Growing Up in Queensland 2020

The *Growing Up in Queensland* project gives children and young people the opportunity to share their views about their community, their hopes and dreams and the issues most important to them.

The project offers young Queenslanders aged 4 to 18 years a broad range of opportunities to communicate directly with government.

The 2018 project findings are detailed in a report—*This place I call home: The views of children and young people on growing up in Queensland*, which is available on the QFCC's website. The report shaped changes in the way government and non-government agencies support children and young people. It also raised awareness of the importance of youth participation and how it can strengthen decision-making for the whole community.


In 2019–20, the QFCC undertook a deeper analysis of themes (for example, volunteering opportunities and life skills) that were raised in the *Growing Up in Queensland 2018* report.

In April 2020, the *Growing Up in Queensland 2020* project was launched.⁵ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, instead of conducting face-to-face focus groups, the project team created a range of innovative online activities. These included a youth survey (for young people aged 13–18 years), a junior survey (for children aged 8–12 years), digital postcards (for children aged 6–18 years), and an art activity (for children aged 4–7 years).

The team also created a comprehensive communication strategy to promote the project to children, families and stakeholders. This was delivered in collaboration with the project's key partners: the Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) Queensland and the State Library of Queensland.

The PCYC supported the promotion of the project through extensive communication channels, including newsletters, community programs (such as out of school hours care programs) and sporting activities. Crucially, the PCYC's promotion of the project extended to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities, boosting participation by children and young people in these areas.

⁵ Queensland Family and Child Commission 2020, *Listening to children & young people*, <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/kids/listening>



As the QFCC is committed to amplifying the voices Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, Indigenous engagement was a priority for the project. When travel to Indigenous communities became unavailable, the project innovatively partnered with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (CCOs) in Mount Isa and Townsville, Brisbane and Cape York. Through this partnership, the CCOs were able to host a range of community events and engagement opportunities to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to have their voices heard through *Growing Up in Queensland 2020*.

The State Library of Queensland also promoted the project through extensive communication channels and will be preserving examples (or ‘artefacts’) from all iterations of the project in the Queensland Memory collection. Preservation of artefacts from 2020 will establish a record of children’s and young people’s thoughts and experiences of growing up during a pandemic.

Preliminary survey findings were reported in early May when 4000 responses had been received. COVID-19 featured often in the responses with survey participants expressing concern about the effect of COVID-19 on education and future employment opportunities. Other non COVID-19 related concerns that were identified related to mental health and the environment. Most encouragingly, the interim survey findings paint a picture of resilient young people who are optimistic and insightful.

A quote from a 17-year-old survey participant exemplifies the importance of youth engagement to young Queenslanders:

I would like adults to ask me about my opinion. Youth are often labelled as feisty or uneducated, I believe that it’s passion and courageousness. I would like adults to take into consideration my feelings, my opinions and just to listen with an open mind. Even if our thoughts don’t get taken into consideration, I’d be happy that they took the time out of their day to listen to someone else.

By participating in the project, Queensland children and young people are assisting in developing our understanding of what they need and what they want adults to do differently (see text box).

Leaders should listen to the younger generations. We offer a fresh perspective. At a time like this, we need to be heard. There are movements and protests all over the world. We are trying to change the world for the better and it would be a lot easier if people in power would take the time to listen to us. (18-year old’s response to QFCC’s *Growing Up in Queensland 2020* survey).

Through the *Growing Up in Queensland* project, by 30 June 2020, more than 7000 children and young had their voices heard—which was more than the number of young Queenslanders who engaged with the project in 2018.

The findings from this project are expected to be published in February 2021.

Queensland youth volunteering

One of the findings from the 2018 QFCC survey—*This place I call home: the views of children and young people on growing up in Queensland*—was that children and young people believe volunteering is a good way to gain useful skills to improve future employability and to give back to the community. However, they also said they were often prevented from volunteering because of their age.

To address these concerns, the QFCC worked with Volunteering Queensland to speak to organisations across Queensland that use volunteers about ways to increase and support youth volunteering. The findings are in our *Young people volunteering: Removing the barriers: Growing Up in Queensland issues paper*.

Gulu Ngayang Bulmba

In February 2020, the Principal Commissioner released the report *Gulu Ngayang Bulmba: The views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people on growing up in Queensland*. This report, which is available on the QFCC website, presents the thoughts, views and opinions of 480 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people who took part in *Growing Up in Queensland* in 2018.

The findings highlighted that the hopes and dreams of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people do not differ significantly from those of non-Indigenous youth in Queensland. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people try to balance the complex world around them with important cultural responsibilities, such as caring for others.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants expressed concern about discrimination, conflict, physical health and mental health. Their perspectives also revealed a strong sense of pride, optimism, tenacity and resilience.

Youth Participation Strategy

The *Youth Participation Strategy* aims to make sure children and young people have genuine opportunities to participate in, and inform the design and delivery of, the QFCC's work.


In 2019, young people helped to create a framework to measure how successfully QFCC is involving children. This, the *Youth Participation Plan*, will be reviewed annually with young people.⁶

The success of the strategy has seen youth participation become business as usual at the QFCC. The Youth Advisory Council is now routinely consulted and involved in QFCC initiatives.

Real skills for real life survey

During Queensland Youth Week in 2019, the QFCC's *Real Skills for Real Life* survey asked young people aged 13–25 about the skills they needed for adulthood. The survey was published on the Queensland Government's youth engagement website e-Hub, and 246 young people took part.

⁶ Queensland Family and Child Commission 2020, *Youth Participation Strategy and Plan*, <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/kids/listening>.



In July 2019, the findings were released on the QFCC’s website. Young people identified that they needed skills and knowledge about money, employment, moving out of home, health care, daily living, and confidence in interacting with adults.

Some young people said they wanted to learn about civic participation and rights, and want to develop personality traits such as determination, impulse control and discipline.

While most young people are currently learning life skills from parents, many were also keen to learn life skills in school.

While online information was reported to be sometimes confusing and difficult to access, it is a common place for young people to seek information. In particular, YouTube was found to be a particularly popular source of ‘how to’ instructions for young people.

Online safety—*Out of the Dark: Protecting kids from the dangers online*⁷

In 2019, the QFCC shifted the focus for its *Out of the Dark* online safety initiative from awareness-raising to behavioural change. It collaborated with the Queensland Police Service Task Force Argos, the Department of Education, the Queensland Government Chief Information Officer, the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, yourtown and Bravehearts to develop the #doiknowu initiative.⁸

This initiative helps children, young people and adults to prevent, recognise and respond to online child sexual exploitation.

On 3 November 2019, the state-wide #doiknowu initiative was launched via an online advertising campaign and distributed through schools. The initiative includes a suite of resources, which are available on the QFCC’s website, including:

- a video featuring text from real-life police transcripts of online predators’ attempts to trap children into sharing sexually explicit images of themselves
- resources for children, teachers and parents that provide information about how children can avoid and escape the traps set for them by online predators.

The QFCC proudly supports online safety and promotes a range of resources from our *Out of the Dark* partners that contribute to a safer online environment for children and young people.⁹

Online safety resources and tips can be found on the QFCC website.

***Young, Black and Proud* scholarships**

The QFCC continues to celebrate the talents and strengths of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who exhibit outstanding promise, who may need further support and resources to fulfil their potential.

In partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service Brisbane, the QFCC funded the *Young, Black and Proud* scholarships. The program offered several scholarships of \$1,000 and \$2,000 for Queenslanders of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent aged 25 years or younger.

⁷ Queensland Family and Child Commission 2020, *Out of the Dark: Protecting kids from the dangers online*, <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/kids/protecting-kids-online>.

⁸ Queensland Family and Child Commission 2019–2020, *#doiknowu: Do you really know your online friends?* <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/doiknowu>

⁹ Ibid.

In September 2019, 60 scholarships were awarded in the categories of education and training (primary, secondary, tertiary), the arts and sports. More than 450 applications were received.

Other QFCC youth engagements

In April 2020, the QFCC's Youth Advisory Council was invited by the Queensland Mental Health Commission to participate in a consultation on the renewal of Queensland's Alcohol and Other Drugs strategy. This project was being conducted under the Queensland Government's *Shifting minds: Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategic Plan 2018–2023*.

Youth Champions (members of the Council) were invited to share their perspectives, and those of young people in their networks, to ensure the opinions of young Queenslanders were considered. The Youth Advisory Council and individual Youth Champions will continue to collaborate with the Queensland Mental Health Commission on emerging youth mental health issues, as they arise.

In 2019–20, the QFCC also:

- continued to involve QFCC Youth Champions in developing and delivering the QFCC's activities and projects
- initiated the networking of youth advisory groups
- continued to develop initiatives that respond to what children and young people shared in *Growing Up in Queensland* surveys
- advocated for improvements to child safety standards, the youth justice system, and online safety for children and young people
- celebrated children and young people by championing their voices and diverse stories through social media and the *Growing Up in Queensland* initiative
- arranged multiple direct engagement experiences between the commissioners and children and young people.



Partnerships



It is everyone's responsibility to help Queensland children thrive and reach their full potential.

To improve outcomes for children and families, we need Queensland's child and family support system to be the best it can be. We need to:

- know what works well (and not so well)
- recognise the challenges faced by children, families, communities and organisations
- be responsive and accountable to the children, families and communities that we serve
- work collaboratively to influence change.

To help achieve this, to affect meaningful system-wide change and to foster stronger community connections, the QFCC develops and maintains partnerships with a broad range of peak bodies, industry partners, communities, advisory groups, academics, and government and non-government organisations.

In 2019–20, QFCC worked with partners in many ways, including the following:

- the QFCC Advisory Council and Youth Advisory Council
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service Brisbane (on *Young, Black and Proud* scholarship sponsorship)
- the Australia and New Zealand Children's Commissioners' and Guardians
- Family and Child Connect (FaCC) and the Department of Education (a partnership on the *Talking Families* school initiative)
- the Office for Youth (on Queensland Youth week)
- the Australian Institute of Family Studies
- the Queensland Child Protection Week Committee
- the Strategic Cross-Agency Oversight Group and QFCC Reviews Strategic Oversight Group
- the Interdepartmental Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Group
- Family Matters and the Queensland First Children and Families Board
- the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (partnering on *Our Way and Changing Tracks* initiatives)
- Children's Rights Queensland (partnering to collaboratively deliver programs advocating for the rights of children)
- the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Team system.

Advisory Council

Under Part 4 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, the Principal Commissioner has established an Advisory Council to:

- help promote the shared responsibility all Queenslanders have in 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.

The Advisory Council met three times in 2019–20. The membership is currently made up of:

Cheryl Vardon	Chief Executive Officer and Principal Commissioner, QFCC (Chair)
Natalie Lewis	Commissioner, QFCC (from June 2020)
Kay Ganley	Former owner and Chief Executive Officer, Charlton Brown
Assistant Commissioner Cameron Harsley APM	Strategy and Capability Command, Queensland Police Service
Anne Hollonds	Director, Australian Institute of Family Studies
Hetty Johnston AM	Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Bravehearts Inc
Zoe Rathus AO	Senior Lecturer in Law, Griffith Law School
Heather Watson	Director and Principal Lawyer, Watson Advisory & Consulting Pty Ltd
Dr James Scott	Associate Professor, Conjoint Associate Professor, SOM Central—Psychiatry—RBWH, Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences
Dr Gerald Featherstone	Chief Executive Officer, Kummara Association
Merrilyn Strohfeldt	Chief Executive Officer, Darling Downs and West Moreton Primary Health Network

Youth Advisory Council

The QFCC’s Youth Advisory Council champions the voices of children and young people and provides youth perspectives and leadership to the QFCC.

The Council meets regularly and provides advice to the commissioners and the QFCC on what is important to children and young people in Queensland. It works with other young people to identify the important issues, then it designs and implements a response to address these issues.

It is currently made up of 16 young people aged between 14 and 25. Members, known as Youth Champions, have diverse backgrounds and represent regional and metropolitan areas. In 2019–20, they provided advice on a range of QFCC initiatives, such as *Growing Up in Queensland*, policy submissions, system reviews and *Amplify*, a youth blogging platform.

This blogging platform showcases the stories and perspectives of young Queenslanders on topics such as:

- the importance of cultural education
- the arts
- staying connected during the coronavirus pandemic
- adapting to online study
- how children and young people are adapting to the pandemic (see text box).

***Amplify – Let’s Connect* virtual youth forum**

The Youth Advisory Council hosted the *Amplify – Let’s Connect* virtual youth forum on Monday 29 June. The forum was the first opportunity for youth advisory groups from across Queensland to connect and discuss the future of youth participation in Queensland.

Thirty representatives from across the state attended the forum and developed ideas to encourage youth participation and engagement.

In recognition of the value of their contributions, the QFCC facilitates Youth Champion participation in conferences, stakeholder events and media opportunities. The Youth Champions also receive ongoing professional development and guidance during their tenure, particularly in relation to communication and advocacy skills.

The Council membership is currently:

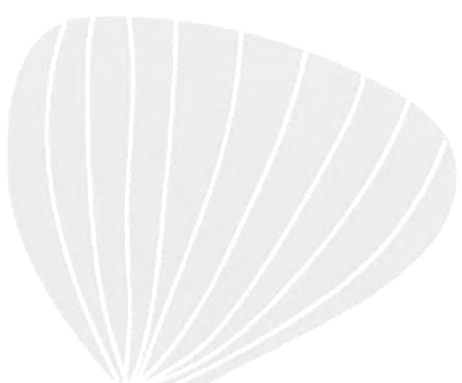
Annika	<p>Annika is a proud Torres Strait Islander from Iama (Yam) Island (central Torres Strait). She uses her cultural authority and leadership to give a voice to Torres Strait Islander young people through her personal and professional networks.</p> <p>Annika is studying a Bachelor of Psychological Sciences (Hons). She also sits on the Premier’s Advisory committee to help the Queensland Government act on the 29 recommendations from the Queensland Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce report.</p>
Caroline	<p>Caroline is studying for a Bachelor of Human Services and a Bachelor of Criminology and Criminal Justice. She has a deep interest in the family and child support system. Caroline is a strong advocate for children and young people living in out-of-home care, having worked with the CREATE Foundation¹⁰ to promote systemic change in the sector.</p>
Chantel	<p>Chantel is studying for a Bachelor of Education and works part time as a legal receptionist. She is a member of the government’s Queensland Youth Engagement Panel.</p> <p>She was a member of the Queensland Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce and attended the Youth Parliament Community Consult¹¹ with the QFCC.</p>
Rosie	<p>Rosie has been the Junior Ambassador for Queensland Children’s Week for the past four years. In this role, she promotes the importance of children’s and young person’s rights through various media channels and speaking events.</p> <p>Rosie is a strong advocate for the rights of young people—especially those who are marginalised or excluded.</p>
Tom	<p>Tom works for a domestic violence prevention program, R4Respect. In this role, he creates social media content for young people, with messages about warning signs, controlling attitudes and how to form non-violent, respectful relationships.</p> <p>He has formed his perspectives based on interactions he has with young people online and with his peers.</p>
Kathryn	<p>Kathryn is a practising solicitor and an advocate for equality and inclusion. She is a current member of Pride in Law, the only LGBTIQ+ legal network in Australia. She is also a member of the executive committee of the YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament, as mentor to the Child Safety, Youth and Women committee.</p> <p>As the former convener of the Bond Sony Foundation Children’s Holiday Camp, Kathryn is experienced in helping young people who require special assistance.</p>
Madison	<p>Madison is the 2019 Queensland Youth Volunteer of the Year and was a recipient of the International Diana Award for being an inspiring and exceptional volunteer, mentor and change-maker. Madison was recently shortlisted for 2019 Queensland Young Australian of the Year and was a finalist for the Australian Human Rights Commission Young People’s Human Rights medal.</p> <p>Madison is studying for a Bachelor of Business.</p>

¹⁰ A national consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience.

¹¹ The YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament provides young people with an opportunity to be a voice for their electorate, advising politicians and decision-makers across the state. Through the program they are immersed in unique educational opportunities, experience parliamentary operation firsthand, mingle with members of the government and opposition, and have their say through debates on topical issues.



Ben	<p>Ben is studying for a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Global Studies. He was a recipient of the Australian Future Leaders' Justice and Equity Award and the Peter Dutton Public Speaking Award.</p> <p>Ben has previously worked as a Youth Ambassador for Save the Children Australia, where he delivered the Youth Manifesto for change to the Australian Government.</p>
Dominic	<p>Dominic is a student at Central Queensland University, studying for a Bachelor of Business (Management). He has studied in both Vietnam and New Caledonia through the New Colombo Plan.</p> <p>He has been awarded the Mackay Regional Council Arts and Culture Award and the Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre Jack Sturgeon Bursary for his achievements in ballet and the arts.</p>
Ameya	<p>Ameya is a high school student, a United Nations Youth Student Ambassador, a 2019 United Nations Voice of the Youth state finalist and has been awarded a Rostrum public speaking award.</p> <p>As a proud second-generation Australian, Ameya enjoys a diversity of experience and tradition through her heritage and appreciates learning about other cultures, their beliefs and traditions.</p>
Gillian	<p>Gillian is studying for a Bachelor of Human Services and has previously completed a Diploma of Community Services. She is a member of headspace¹² Taringa's Youth Reference Group, where she advocates for the importance of youth mental health through functions and events.</p>
Remington	<p>Remington is studying for a Bachelor of Nursing and Bachelor of Paramedic Science. He works as a University Student Ambassador and a lifeguard. Over the past five years, he has been actively engaged in water safety awareness and drowning prevention as a volunteer surf life saver. Remington is also a member of Towards Rural and Outback Health Professionals in Queensland.</p>
Aimee	<p>Aimee is a proud Worimi woman and works at the CREATE Foundation as a Youth Facilitator.</p> <p>She is a strong advocate for issues such as youth justice, homelessness, housing, disability, minorities and disadvantaged people.</p>
Li Xuan	<p>Li Xuan is studying for a Bachelor of Economics and recently completed a student internship in an education start-up in China. Li Xuan volunteers with United Nations Youth Queensland, facilitating insightful conversations about critical global issues with high school students.</p>
Destiny	<p>Destiny is a proud Kullilli woman from Cherbourg. She is studying business management and loves spending time with her two young children. Destiny brings a unique rural perspective to the Council. She is passionate about encouraging youth from rural communities to get involved and have their say.</p>
Tamika	<p>Tamika is a proud Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea woman, currently studying for a Bachelor of Environmental and Marine Science. Tamika is passionate about climate change, education, human rights and health.</p>



¹² A non-profit organisation providing youth mental health services for Australians aged 12–25.





The year ahead

In 2020–21, we will:

- identify key themes from the *Growing Up in Queensland 2020* project and undertake deeper analyses of these to further elevate the voice of young people to sector leaders and policy makers
- through initiatives based on the *Growing Up in Queensland* project, continue to give children and young people the opportunity to share their views about their communities, their hopes and dreams, and the most important issues to them
- support ongoing Youth Advisory Council meetings and projects
- develop and maintain partnerships to advocate for and support youth engagement
- create opportunities, such as the *Amplify* blog, for children and young people to be heard on matters that affect them
- undertake recruitment to expand the Youth Advisory Council from 16 to 25 members
- partner with Children’s Rights Queensland to develop and deliver initiatives to empower young leaders to advocate for children’s rights.

Influence the sector and engage communities

Community education

The education initiatives of the QFCC promote well-being and educate the public about the child and family support system.

They are specifically designed to encourage people to seek help early through peer and family support networks and early intervention support services.

The QFCC's ongoing community education work aligns with the government's commitment to Queenslanders to keep children more than safe. This includes:

Families are First

In June 2019, the QFCC launched *Families are First* at Parliament House. The objective of the *Families are First* initiative is to promote the strength of families and culture and assist to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system through:

- exploring strengths (such as culture, connection and attitudes) used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to raise thriving children over the past 60,000 years
- celebrating families' positive stories (for example, through a story-telling approach)
- sharing these stories throughout the community (the general public, media and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities) to show the value of support and supportive networks in child development and well-being.


The engagement approach used by *Families are First* aligns with the *Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan*, which recognises failed policies of the past, and the ongoing impact of those policies. It requires sensitive but open dialogue.

Since August 2019, the program has engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and service providers in North (Townsville and Palm Island), Far North (Cairns, Mossman, Yarrabah), North West (Mt Isa, Cloncurry) and South East Queensland.

The engagement approach that the program has used acknowledges the importance of building relationships with families and service providers to assure potential participants it is culturally safe and appropriate to take part. This sense of safety and connection has been critical to *Families are First* participants encouraging other community members to also take part and help build this initiative.

Engagement with the Townsville community led to the Garbutt Community Centre's Tidda's Yarning Circle proactively developing a set of 'Yarn Up' cards with inspirational statements and quotes. These are designed as conversation starters in men's and women's groups to get people to share their stories or reflect upon their life and family. The QFCC provided a small financial contribution to have the cards designed and produced.

To date, the program has collected more than 30 stories with a small number released on the QFCC website. These were shared through QFCC social media platforms and promoted online and through community radio.



In partnership with the Yarrabah Indigenous Knowledge Centre, *Families are First* also piloted a storytelling project for children in January 2020. Known as ‘Everyday Hero’, this program provides an avenue for children and young people to share their stories about the important people in their lives. The pilot was supported by members of the Yarrabah community and resulted in a collection of children’s stories. The QFCC intends to expand the pilot program into schools in South East Queensland in the second half of 2020.

The *Families are First* engagement approach allows participants to feel confident that their story and how they want to tell it will be respected and honoured. When and where a story is told is determined by the participant’s work and family commitments and the places where they feel comfortable ... the stories belong to the storytellers. Storytellers control the story content and how the story is told, whether this is on film, as an audio or written story or artistic piece.

Talking Families

The QFCC continued with *Talking Families*, a community education initiative designed to reduce stigma and instil confidence in parents about seeking and accepting support with the stresses of parenting. *Talking Families* empowers parents to seek information and support early, before problems escalate.

There were two major undertakings within the *Talking Families* initiative this year:

- the *Talking Families* place-based delivery model
- a review and re-brand of the *Talking Families* initiative.

Talking Families place-based delivery

The *Talking Families* place-based delivery model is a community-led model that works with schools and early childhood services across Queensland to support parents, carers and families through challenging times. The initiative encourages them to seek support so they can find the right information at the right time to reduce the pressures on families.

It reminds parents that they are not alone and gives them confidence to seek timely help from family and friends, the school community or one of the community services available in their local area—before issues escalate.

Schools and services are supported by their local Family and Child Connect (FaCC)¹³ service as part of a partnership between the QFCC and the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women’s Family and Child Connect services. This partnership provides schools and services with a local touch-point for conversations or engagement when supporting families.

Since the launch of the model in 2018, the QFCC has been working in partnership with several FaCC service providers and the Department of Education to extend this program to additional schools and services. At the conclusion of June 2020, there were 105 schools and services across Queensland actively delivering the *Talking Families* place-based delivery model.

Review and re-brand of the *Talking Families* initiative

In 2019–20, the QFCC re-branded the *Talking Families* initiative to better address emerging research about talking to parents and effecting genuine action and behaviour change in parenting practices.

¹³ Family and Child Connect is a funded, community-based service that helps families to care for and protect their children at home, by connecting them to the right services at the right time.

This research found that messages suggesting parenting is hard resonated with parents but did not necessarily prompt action. Instead, using messages that aligned to a child's development and needs both resonated with and motivated parents.

In this light, the QFCC conducted a review of the core messages and brand of *Talking Families*. Combining existing research with market testing, a new tagline was found for the initiative: *Let's parent together. Support your kids by getting the support you need.*

A new brand identity for *Talking Families* was completed and delivered through the QFCC website, communication materials and designs.

The review considered the findings of the QFCC review of communication and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (First Nations), to ensure this important audience engaged with the initiative.

Review of communication and engagement with First Nations peoples

The QFCC commissioned a report to underpin all future QFCC communication, programs of work and engagement activities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The report combines years of findings from the research agency who wrote the report and market insights from the QFCC and other government and non-government agencies. It provides an effective methodology for communication and engagement when working with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This report reinforces the need for consultative approaches with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences to co-create content that has purpose and meaning for them. The principles within the research underpin the ongoing work of the QFCC.

***oneplace* Community Services Directory**

The *oneplace* website¹⁴ provides a single point of access to more than 55,000 community services across Queensland. It was developed to help children, families and professionals find the right service in their local area.

In 2019–20, 204,565 *oneplace* searches were conducted— an 11.97 percent increase over the previous year. During this period, more than 2,500 community and government organisations added their services to the directory. The increasing use of *oneplace* is a positive sign that Queenslanders are seeking support for challenges, before problems escalate.

In December 2019, the QFCC released data from *oneplace* highlighting the significant spike in people searching for 'food relief', 'counselling' and 'housing support'. To coincide with this spike in demand and to support the awareness of *oneplace*, media partners across Queensland ran promotions of the directory over the Christmas 2019 and New Year 2020 period.

Promotion of *oneplace* ran across Queensland regional centres and towns, such as Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Mackay, Toowoomba, Ipswich, Cairns and Townsville, and throughout South East Queensland.

¹⁴ Queensland Government 2020, *oneplace* Community Services Directory, <http://www.oneplace.org.au>



Local NAIDOC celebrations

QFCC staff participated during the National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week (7–14 July 2019) at events in the greater Brisbane area (Inala, Ipswich, Logan, Acacia Ridge and Zillmere) and regionally (Cairns).

This provided the QFCC with an opportunity to promote several of its initiatives, such as *Talking Families*, *Families are First*, and *Growing Up in Queensland*.

Spark Their Future

The QFCC has been collaborating with the Department of Education on their *Spark Their Future* campaign, which helps parents of disengaged young people navigate conversations on education, transition to adulthood and general communication.

The QFCC Principal Commissioner participated as a guest contributor to one of their blogs: *The turnaround power of education in changing children's lives for the better*.

Strengthening the child and family support sector



Under the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, the QFCC:

- supports sector-wide strategic workforce development strategies for the child and family support sector workforce
- increases collaboration and capacity building across different sectors to improve service delivery to children, young people and families.

Sector workforce development is a key part of important government reform agendas, such as:

- *Supporting Families Changing Futures*
- *Advancing Queensland*
- the *Our Way generational strategy 2017–37* and the *Changing Tracks Action Plans*
- *Partnering for the future: advancing Queensland's community services industry 2017–25*.

In 2019–20, the QFCC completed the second and final action plan of *Strengthening our sector: A strategy for working together for a responsive and sustainable service system across the child and family support sector*.

Supporting sector workforce development

Following a series of workshops held with the child and family support sector in early 2019, the QFCC led interviews with more than 30 critical stakeholders. This was to seek feedback on a whole-of-sector response to the workshop discussion paper in order to shape future workforce priorities. The consultation focused on:

- testing priority agendas that were identified in the discussion paper and mapping existing alignment of workforce development activity with the potential priorities
- gauging where best to concentrate opportunities uncovered through the discussion paper and interview processes
- identifying partnership opportunities in the delivery of the future program of work.

The sector identified the following six priority areas for future sector development:

1. Strengthen the sector's understanding of the workforce to inform emerging strategic workforce priorities.
2. Develop a series of shared and plausible future scenarios to establish a 10-year vision of the sector.
3. Explore the leadership actions needed to redress structural and systemic bias for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
4. Identify emerging capability and revise the career and capability framework with a cultural lens and sector capability shifts and enhancements.
5. Leverage existing education and training systems to broaden education pathways to enhance workforce supply.
6. Influence and connect stakeholders to enhance qualification quality, to reflect future industry needs.

Research

The QFCC is responsible for translating research into easily usable information for policy makers and practitioners, to assist them in helping vulnerable Queensland children and families.

Some typical research activities are:

- conducting research forums, where researchers present to influential stakeholders on their research and the implication of their findings for policy and practice
- producing and distributing regular research scans
- maintaining the Knowledge and Resource Hub on the QFCC's website, which provides easy access to important research papers and reports
- maintaining an ongoing research agenda.

Research in the Round forums and Regional Speaker Series

The QFCC hosts Research in the Round forums to showcase the work of Australians whose research focus is on vulnerable children and families.

The forums present relevant research findings to audiences of high-level policy makers, practitioners, other stakeholders and community members who can affect or influence change. Presentations are followed by facilitated panel discussions to explore the implications of the research evidence for policy development and child safety practices.

The Regional Speaker Series brings respected speakers to the regions to make expert knowledge more accessible to policy makers, practitioners and service providers in these locations.

The QFCC Regional Speakers Series event on *Young People: From Surviving to Thriving* was held in Mount Isa on 17 October 2019. The keynote speaker at this event was the highly regarded clinical psychologist, researcher and author, Andrew Fuller.

Research scans

The QFCC's family and child research scans provide short summaries and links to a selection of research papers designed to inform child protection policy and practice. These are made available on the QFCC website. In 2019–20, the QFCC produced six family and child research scans.



Online Knowledge and Resource Hub

The QFCC's online Knowledge and Resource Hub contains research summaries, research scans and links to research papers, reports and data. It provides access to the latest research information to assist policy makers and practitioners in improving the quality of outcomes for children, young people and families.

It is publicly available on the QFCC website.

Research Agenda 2019–22

The QFCC's Research Agenda 2019–22 identifies opportunities and priorities to expand the evidence base on matters that are relevant to Queensland children, young people and families, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups.

The Research Agenda will be used to identify priority areas of focus for QFCC's projects and programs and translate research to inform policy and practice.

It is also intended for use by academics, students and practitioners, to suggest areas of research focus that could inform policy or practice and increase the evidence base around children, young people and their families.

The Research Agenda covers six main topics, each of which is made up of multiple areas of research interest. The topics are:

1. Understanding the importance of the early years
2. Recognising the strengths of Indigenous families and communities
3. Supporting young people vulnerable to disengaging from education
4. Creating opportunities for young people leaving care
5. Improving youth mental health
6. Leading in changing times.

Policy and advocacy for children and young people



The QFCC promotes and advocates for the rights, well-being and safety of all children and young people. It does this in a variety of ways, by:

- developing submissions to inform reviews and inquiries
- making recommendations about relevant laws, policies, practices and services
- preparing information papers to influence policy or to advocate for change
- actively participating in national and state reference and working groups
- building and maintaining strong partnerships with government and non-government agencies, such as by being a participating member of the:
 - Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Child Guardians and the associated Policy Officers' Network
 - Family Matters Policy Working Group (national)
 - CREATE Foundation G-Force committee
 - Queensland Child Protection Advocates Group
- consulting with children, young people, and their families and communities.

QFCC submissions

During 2019–20, the QFCC contributed to public submissions with recommendations to improve child safety and well-being and increase safety measures for children. Examples of papers, reviews and inquiries to which the QFCC contributed submissions are:

- *Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women – Rethinking rights and regulation: Options for Legislative change to the Child Protection Act 1999*
- *Australian Human Rights Commission – Free + Equal: An Australian Conversation on Human Rights (Issues paper)*
- *Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs – Inquiry into effective approaches to prevention, diagnosis and support for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder*
- *Education Council – Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training*
- *Commonwealth Treasury Consultation – Improving the effectiveness of the consumer product safety system*
- *Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee – Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019*
- *Department of Housing and Public Works – A better renting future: Safety, security and certainty: Review of the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 (Discussion paper)*
- *Department of Communications and the Arts – Online safety legislative reform (Discussion paper)*
- *The Senate Select Committee on Autism – Inquiry into the services, support and life outcomes for autistic people in Australia and the associated need for a National Autism Strategy*
- *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.*

These submissions are available on the QFCC website.

Examples of the forums and projects through which the QFCC contributes to policy and advocacy for children and young people are:

Australia and New Zealand Children’s Commissioners’ and Guardians meeting

The Australia and New Zealand Children’s Commissioners’ and Guardians (ANZCCG):

- promotes the rights of children and young people, such as their right to participate in decisions relating to them, as articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ensures the best interests of children are considered in the development of policies and programs
- gives voice to the views of, and encourages direct consultation with, children and young people on matters that affect them
- encourages systemic improvement, informed by evidence-based research into the rights, interests and well-being of children and young people.

The QFCC hosted a two-day ANZCCG meeting on 11–12 November 2019 in Brisbane.

Key meeting outcomes were that the ANZCCG:

- reaffirmed its commitment to advocate for the appointment of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori commissioners for children and young people in all jurisdictions
- recommended the age of criminal responsibility should be raised to at least 14 years (from the current 10 years), in line with the United Nations recommendation¹⁵

¹⁵ Australian Human Rights Commission 2019, *Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility*, <https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/raising-age-criminal-responsibility>

- will continue to monitor progress in implementing the recommendations of the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*, such as work to implement nationally consistent child safe standards and reportable conduct schemes
- will continue its advocacy to seek solutions to child poverty across Australia and New Zealand, which contributes to the ANZCCG work to support the rights, safety and well-being of children and young people.

Child rights impact assessment

The Queensland Child Rights Impact Assessment (QCRIA) project will provide a tool for guidance on how policy officers and drafters of legislation can assess and consider the impacts of new or amended laws, policies and practices on children’s rights and well-being.

The QFCC is leading the development of the QCRIA for use by Queensland government and non-government agencies.

The QFCC has recently completed an in-depth trial phase of the QCRIA tool with several Queensland government entities. Our trial partners have found the QCRIA tool provides a helpful framework to:

- support staff in making sure the impact on children is considered throughout any work the agency undertakes
- deliver more critical insights on impacts that specific projects or outcomes may have on children
- make sure the impacts on children’s rights and interests are accurately documented.

Children’s Rights Queensland

In 2019, the QFCC began a partnership with the Children’s Week Association Inc (trading as Children’s Rights Queensland) to establish and deliver a range of programs to educate the Queensland community about children’s rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These programs will harness the power of a network of grass-roots organisations to advocate for children’s rights. As part of this:

- the Ambassador Program, led by the Principal Commissioner in her role as the Children’s Rights Queensland State Ambassador, will create a group of leaders and high-profile personalities who will advocate for children’s rights
- the Affiliate Membership Program¹⁶ will engage individuals and organisations in the child and family support sector to advocate for children’s rights and will support organisations to align with the messages of Children’s Rights Queensland
- Children’s Week will continue to encourage community organisations and the wider public to learn about children’s rights and host youth-friendly events and activities to celebrate and promote childhood.

Protecting children online module

The QFCC continued this year to host the Protecting children online module on its website.¹⁷ The online educational module page was accessed 9,343 times. A survey of participants showed they found it to be informative, relevant and useful.

¹⁶ Queensland Children’s Week Association 2020, Affiliate Membership, <https://childrensweekqld.org.au/affiliate-membership/>.

¹⁷ Queensland Family and Child Commission 2020, *Protecting children online module*, <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sector/information-kits-practice-resources/protecting-children-online-module>.

The year ahead

In 2020–21, we will:

- maintain the commissioners' public engagements to strategically strengthen opportunities between the QFCC and children, young people and their families
- continue to advocate for the rights, interests and perspectives of children, young people and their families, particularly those in the child protection or youth justice systems
- provide expert advice about laws, policies, systems and practices
- continue promoting the *oneplace* directory as a help-seeking tool for Queensland families
- continue the *Families are First* movement to hear and promote the stories and strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parenting in Queensland
- continue to roll out the *Talking Families* schools initiative across the state in partnership with Family and Child Connect and schools
- continue to promote practical advice and messaging on the prevention of child death and injury
- make research accessible through the use of research scans and research summaries
- strengthen the oversight focus on issues that disproportionately and adversely impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Queensland
- maintain and update the QFCC online Knowledge and Resource Hub.





Governance

Our executive

There were six permanent members of the Executive Group as at 30 June 2020.¹⁸

Cheryl Vardon

*Chief Executive Officer and
Principal Commissioner*

Cheryl has had a distinguished career as an educator and is recognised for her leadership in the protection of vulnerable children and young people.

She was awarded an honorary doctorate (Doctor of the University) from Griffith University.

Since 2016, Cheryl has led a series of reviews for the Queensland Government leading to practical systems reform measures to keep vulnerable children more than safe.

She is an experienced reviewer of systems, using case studies and stories to influence policy and establish reforms.

Cheryl's work in Indigenous education and services for Indigenous children and young people has received a Prime Minister's Reconciliation Award.

She has held many leadership, board and statutory roles, as a Director-General, Chief Executive, Commissioner and Adjunct Professor, in private, public and not-for-profit organisations, such as education departments, children's services departments, consumer affairs, a national charity, universities and tribunals.

Cheryl is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Managers and Leaders, a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators, a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a member of the Women's Leadership Institute Australia.

Cheryl is an experienced public speaker, having delivered a number of keynotes across Australia and internationally throughout her career.

Cheryl has held the office of Chief Executive Officer and Principal Commissioner of the QFCC since October 2015.

Natalie Lewis

Commissioner

Natalie Lewis was appointed Commissioner and commenced in June 2020. A Gamilaraay woman, Natalie brings with her a wealth of experience and knowledge in youth justice, child and family services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs.

Natalie brings a strong and renewed focus on the systemic and structural issues disproportionately affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

She joined the QFCC from the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP), where she held the position of Chief Executive Officer.

Prior to that role, Natalie held officer and director level roles in the Department of Communities and in the United States.

Natalie is currently a member of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care national executive and Co-Chair of the Family Matters Board, as well as a member of the Council of Australian Governments' Joint Council on Closing the Gap and the National Forum contributing to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children.

She is a member of the Australian Child Rights Task Force and a member of the Queensland First Children and Families Board, established to guide the implementation of the Queensland Government's *Our Way* strategy. She is also Adjunct Research Fellow at Griffith University.

¹⁸ Dr Leanne Gill was a member of the executive group until April 2020 but was on secondment to the Department of Youth Justice at 30 June 2020.



Dr Leanne Geppert

Deputy Commissioner

Dr Leanne Geppert is the QFCC Deputy Commissioner. Prior to this, Leanne was the Executive Director at the Queensland Mental Health Commission. She brings a wealth of knowledge and experience across a variety of areas, such as child and youth mental health, criminal justice, clinical policy and strategy, behaviour change, system reforms and the health service delivery sector.

Leanne has held senior executive leadership positions across a range of program areas, such as mental health, alcohol and other drug services, prison health services, state-wide research and training in mental health, and state-wide mental health planning and strategy. She joined us in January 2020.

Natalie Conner

Executive Director, Corporate and Communications

Natalie has worked as a senior executive in the Queensland public service for over a decade and has broad experience in regional and head office environments. Her industry experience includes working with sectors as diverse as transport, parks, sport and racing.

Prior to coming to the QFCC, Natalie worked in the social policy team responsible for child protection and domestic and family violence prevention in the Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Natalie leads the Corporate Services and Communications areas and chairs the Major Projects Board. She began working with the QFCC in October 2016.

Jaime Blackburn

Executive Director, Research and Child Death Prevention

Jaime is a senior executive and qualified accountant with extensive experience in both the public and private sector. She spent a significant period of her career delivering professional services within a 'Big 4' environment in Queensland and in the United Kingdom.

Jaime previously worked for the Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet and held roles in corporate governance, risk management and internal audit services. Jaime also acted as a risk management advisor to the Audit and Risk Management committee of the Queensland Art Gallery.

Jaime currently manages the Child Death Prevention and Family and Child Research teams and oversees the QFCC child death reviews. She joined the QFCC in October 2018.

Penny Creamer

Executive Director, Oversight and Indigenous Outcomes

Penny has extensive experience working in Indigenous education, setting up early childhood programs in remote areas of Queensland, such as Cape York, the Torres Strait Islands and the Gulf of Carpentaria. Further to this work, Penny led the implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family centres across 10 Queensland communities.

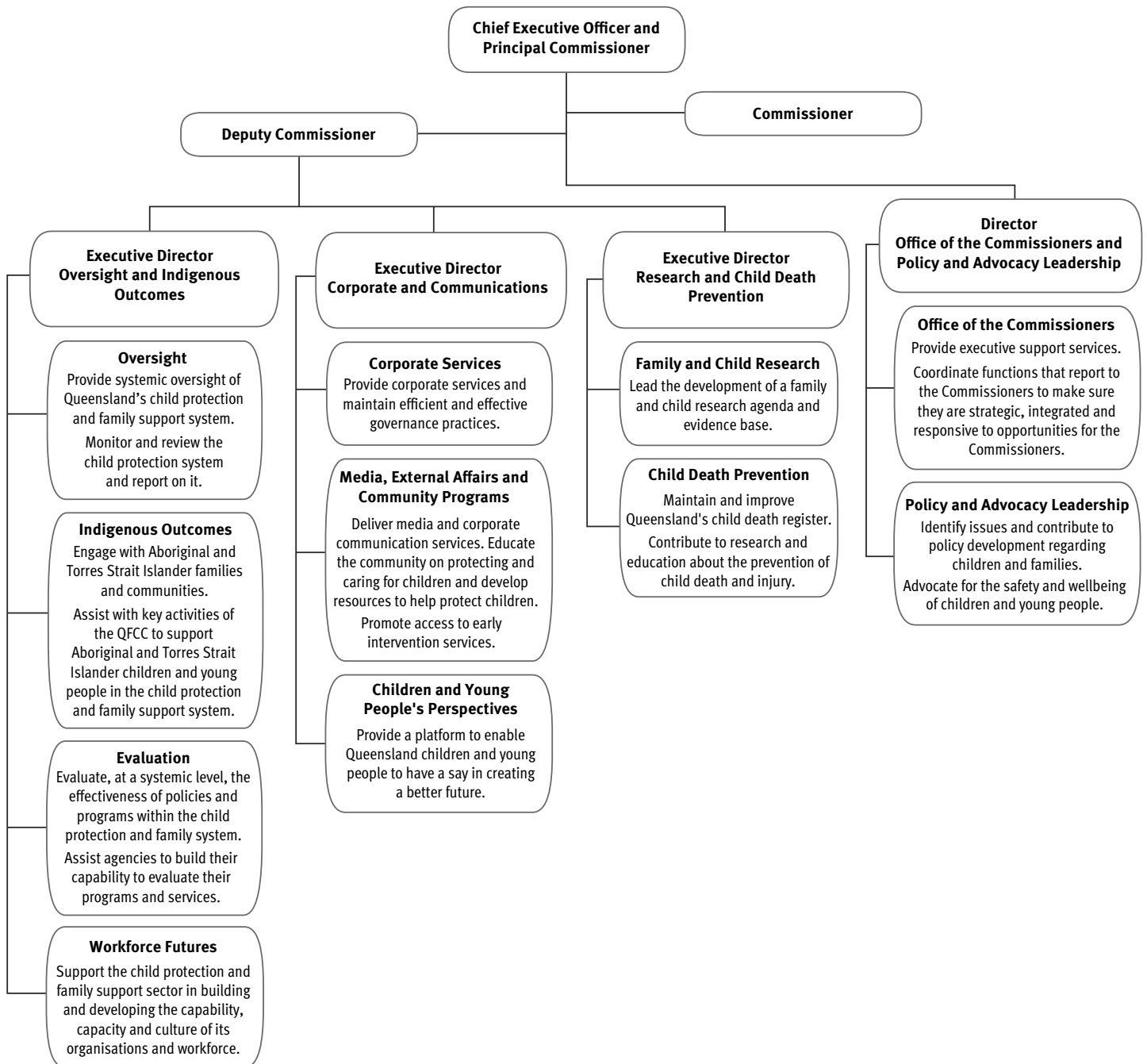
Working both internationally and here in Queensland, Penny has led a variety of youth programs, such as her work in the foundational *Bullying. No Way!* campaign that provides information and ideas for students, parents and teachers to combat bullying. She joined the QFCC in June 2018.



Our structure

The QFCC operates out of level 8, 63 George Street, Brisbane. It delivers services through the structure outlined in the following organisational chart.

The QFCC organisational structure at 30 June 2020



Queensland public service values

The QFCC has embraced the following five Queensland public service values. These values guide our staff behaviour and the way we do business.



Customers first



Ideas into action



Unleash potential



Be courageous



Empower people

Customers first

• *Know your customers* • *Deliver what matters* • *Make decisions with empathy*

Ideas into action

• *Challenge the norm and suggest solutions* • *Encourage and embrace new ideas* • *Work across boundaries*

Unleash potential

• *Expect greatness* • *Lead and set clear expectations* • *Seek, provide and act on feedback*

Be courageous

• *Own your actions, successes and mistakes* • *Take calculated risks* • *Act with transparency*

Empower people

• *Lead, empower and trust* • *Play to everyone's strengths* • *Develop yourself and those around you*

Governance framework

The QFCC operates several internal committees to help maintain effective governance.

The *Executive Group* meets fortnightly and is made up of the QFCC executives. This group oversees our performance relative to our strategic plan, financial performance and high-level risk. It also addresses stakeholder engagement and partnership opportunities.

The *Executive Operations Group* performs a range of operational governance functions, such as developing, implementing, maintaining and monitoring QFCC operational plans, QFCC performance and risk management plans; overseeing QFCC project and program governance; and overseeing the effective integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives across the QFCC.

The *Leader Group* is made up of the QFCC executive, directors and managers. Meeting monthly, members discuss strategic issues, provide updates on the progress of our initiatives, identify opportunities to leverage off other projects or upcoming stakeholder interactions, and seek peer input into potential initiatives.

The *Major Projects Board* provides governance of business performance. It oversees the QFCC's major projects, initiatives and finances and provides advice to the Executive Group.

The *Staff Advisory Insights Committee* is made up of the Principal Commissioner, Commissioner and staff representatives. Meeting monthly, this group focuses on providing a safe, positive and professional working environment within the QFCC. An important role of the forum is to facilitate communication between the executive and the staff about whole-of-QFCC matters.

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.

Remuneration for external members is \$500 (chair) and \$300 (deputy chair) per meeting. The audit committee has due regard to the Queensland Treasury's *Audit Committee Guidelines*.

The purpose of the committee 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.

Key responsibilities of the committee are overseeing risk management, financial management, compliance and internal controls, and internal and external audit.

Some of the committee's responsibilities and achievements for 2019–20 were the:

- review and ongoing monitoring of the corporate and operational risk registers
- monitoring of risk mitigation controls of QFCC major projects
- monitoring of the register of previous audit recommendations
- review and endorsement of audit plans for the upcoming financial year.

At 30 June 2020, there were four standing members and three regular observers of the Audit and Risk Management committee. The committee met four times in 2019–20. It operated within the Queensland Treasury's *Audit Committee Guidelines* and observed the terms of its charter.

Standing members

Heather Watson	Director and Principal Lawyer, Watson Advisory & Consulting Pty Ltd, (Chair)
Peter Dowling (AM)	Accountant and experienced company director (Deputy Chair)
Jaime Blackburn	Executive Director, Research and Child Death Prevention, QFCC
Mark Strong	Director, Office of the Commissioners, QFCC

Regular Observers

Melissa Fletcher	Director, Queensland Audit Office
Martin Linnane	Manager, Audit Services, Corporate Administration Agency
Lyle Gerbich	Director, Corporate Services, QFCC

Risk management

Overseen by the Audit and Risk Management Committee, the QFCC strategic and operational risk registers are reviewed biannually, with teams providing operational updates to Corporate Services.

Corporate Services completed a mapping exercise in early 2020 to make sure the two-year internal audit plan addressed the highest risks identified in the strategic risk register.

Self-assessments against findings from two Queensland Audit Office reports—*Managing cyber security risks* and *Queensland state government entities: 2018–19 results of financial audits*—were also undertaken. The assessments identified compliance with many findings and some opportunities for improvement, which are being progressively addressed. The findings were presented to the Audit and Risk Management committee.

Corporate Services maintained the QFCC Strategic and Operational Risk Registers and updated both registers to address the COVID-19 pandemic risk.

Internal audit

Internal audit assessments of the QFCC were undertaken in 2019–20 by the Corporate Administration Agency. Audits on record keeping practices, leave and timesheets, and the QFCC *Financial Management Practices Manual* found no issues or necessary process improvements. All audit reports were presented to the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Human Rights Act 2019

In response to the recently commenced Queensland *Human Rights Act 2019*, the QFCC has developed and implemented protocols to protect and promote human rights in the QFCC's work and to ensure compliance with our obligations. Examples are:

- a Human Rights Compliance policy to inform QFCC staff about:
 - the importance of human rights in Queensland
 - how to document their consideration of human rights in decision-making and project planning through a Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA)
 - their obligations under the *Human Rights Act 2019* and how human rights complaints are to be managed
- a HRIA tool to guide QFCC staff in considering human rights in their decision-making and in documenting this
- a supplementary policy to the QFCC's Complaints Management System, which details how complaints made to or about the QFCC under the *Human Rights Act 2019* are to be managed.

The QFCC has also conducted staff training on the implementation. In addition, QFCC staff are required to undertake mandatory online training on human rights for public sector employees.

Due to COVID-19, the QFCC's attempts to further the objectives of the *Human Rights Act 2019* and review the compatibility of its internal policies and procedures with human rights have been slowed. However, in terms of policies and procedures, the QFCC's COVID safe resources policy work included a review for its compatibility with the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

The QFCC received no complaints under the *Human Rights Act 2019* in 2019–20.



External scrutiny

The parliamentary Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee held a public hearing on 25 February 2019 as part of its statutory role in overseeing the QFCC. The committee tabled its Report No. 42, 56th Parliament, Oversight of the Office of the Queensland Family and Child Commission, on 4 July 2019. The report congratulated the QFCC and its staff on their overall performance during the preceding financial year, especially given the challenging issues being examined by the QFCC.

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 QFCC activities in accordance to the Queensland Government Records Governance Policy.

The QFCC uses a Hewlett-Packard Content Management application to meet its record-keeping governance obligations. The system was upgraded this year.

Financial performance



The QFCC is a statutory body under the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* and for the purposes of the:

- *Financial Accountability Act 2009*
- Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019
- *Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982*.

Financial summary 2019–20

This summary provides an overview of the QFCC's financial performance for 2019–20 and a comparison with 2018–19.

A detailed view of the financial performance for 2019–20 is provided in the financial statements included in this annual report.

We are committed to maintaining fiscal responsibility while meeting our objectives.

Financial results

Queensland Family and Child Commission	Actual 2019–20 \$'000	Actual 2018–19 \$'000
Income from continuing operations		
Grants and other contributions	12,692	11,879
Other revenue	67	72
Total income from continuing operations	12,759	11,951
Expenses from continuing operations		
Employee expenses	8,881	7,885
Supplies and services	3,866	3,411
Depreciation and amortisation	256	279
Other expenses	367	109
Total expenses from continuing operations	13,370	11,684
Operating result from continuing operations	(611)	267

In 2019–20, the QFCC received total revenue of \$12,759 million in comparison to \$11,951 million in 2018–19. The QFCC maintained a sound net asset position in the 2019–20 financial year.

Financial position

Queensland Family and Child Commission	Actual 2019–20 \$'000	Actual 2018–19 \$'000
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	3,394	3,224
Receivables	220	267
Prepayments	169	37
Total current assets	3,783	3,528
Non-current assets		
Plant and equipment	21	288
Intangible assets	91	303
Total non-current assets	112	591
Total assets	3,895	4,119
Current liabilities		
Payables	938	626
Accrued employee benefits	410	335
Total liabilities	1,348	961
Net assets	2,547	3,158
Equity		
Contributed equity	2,427	2,427
Accumulated surplus	120	731
Total equity	2,547	3,158

Further information

Information relating to overseas travel and consultancies engaged by the QFCC in 2019–20 is published online through the government's Open Data website.



Our workforce

The QFCC's workforce is employed under the *Public Service Act 2008*, except for the Principal Commissioner and Commissioner, who are employed under the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*.

Workforce profile

As at 30 June 2020, the QFCC employed 65 full-time equivalent staff, with total employee expenses for the year of \$8.881 million, representing 66 percent of the QFCC's operating expenditure.

Our staff profile was 78 percent female and 22 percent male, with:

- 9 percent identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 3 percent identifying as having a disability.

Separation rate

In 2019–20, our permanent separation rate was 6.48 percent.¹⁹ No redundancy packages were paid during the period.

Strategic Workforce Plan

The QFCC's *Strategic Workforce Plan* is regularly reviewed to make sure our workforce strategies and initiatives remain relevant and consider the needs of the staff and the organisation.

In 2019–20, the focus areas were:

- developing and implementing internal and external development programs and support tools that use whole-of-government initiatives to build leadership capabilities
- implementing a range of health and well-being initiatives to support staff needs
- continuing to improve our information and communication technology to support an agile and mobile workforce in working off-site when required
- enhancing information sharing and working collaboratively across the QFCC
- incorporating findings from the 2019 *Working for Queensland Employee Opinion Survey*.

We have continued to fine-tune our organisational structure and governance arrangements to best support our strategic direction and work priorities.

¹⁹ Data supplied by Public Service Commission.

Attraction and retention

The QFCC has implemented several initiatives to attract and retain an inclusive, diverse and capable workforce, such as:

- further strengthening our ability to attract and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees by using strategies and initiatives from our *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy*
- effectively engaging with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and stakeholders to ensure their perspectives are considered and represented in our work
- seeking opportunities to partner with and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in delivering community-led initiatives and services that respond to community need.

Performance management framework

We implemented several initiatives to support staff performance and development during 2019–20, such as:

- completing annual performance development plans to identify individual and organisational learning and development initiatives
- participating in LEAD4QLD, a development program providing insights into individual leadership strengths, development areas and the behaviours that underpin leadership roles
- providing study assistance to three staff whose field of study was highly relevant and beneficial to their QFCC role
- providing mandatory online training on code of conduct, information privacy, right to information, bullying, domestic and family violence, and cultural capability
- encouraging our leaders to take up development opportunities offered by the Public Service Commission.

Supporting staff well-being

The QFCC offered several health and well-being initiatives to staff, such as:

- a flu vaccination program
- the development and implementation of an integrated employee support program to help staff in dealing with sensitive child-related information
- ongoing access to, and promotion of, an employee assistance program, which provides professional, confidential counselling, coaching and support to employees and their immediate family on a broad range of work and life issues
- a range of seminars to help staff build financial security
- a range of physical and mental initiatives to promote employee health and well-being.

Flexible working arrangements

The QFCC provides flexible employment options to assist staff to effectively blend work, family and life responsibilities. Many opportunities are available to staff and are regularly promoted.



COVID-19—flexible working arrangements

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the QFCC staff worked remotely from home from the end of March 2020. An internal survey of QFCC staff on the effects of working from home revealed that overall:

- the experience of working from home was positive for most QFCC staff
- staff were interested in continuing with some form of working from home arrangements after the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Code of conduct

QFCC staff are covered by the single 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. Staff are required to complete mandatory online code of conduct training, and the QFCC performance and development framework and processes also address the code of conduct expectations.

QFCC staff are encouraged to raise any workplace issues with their line manager. Local resolution is the preferred option.

The year ahead

In 2020–21, as part of our governance responsibilities, the QFCC will:

- continue to offer a diverse range of workforce and health and well-being initiatives to support and develop our staff
- implement a revised procurement process including a forward plan, refresher training and reporting to the executive group
- undertake a review of its information and communication technology managed services requirements
- assess the implications for QFCC operations of the recommendations from the Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission *Operation Impala* report on misuse of confidential information in the Queensland public sector.

Appendix A—Glossary of acronyms and initialisms

AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ANZCCG	Australia and New Zealand Children’s Commissioners’ and Guardians
ATSICHS	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CREATE	CREATE Foundation
CSIA	Community Services Industry Alliance
FaCC	Family and Child Connect
IFS	Intensive Family Support
NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
PCYC	Police Citizens Youth Club
QATSICPP	Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak
QCPCI	Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry
QFCC	Queensland Family and Child Commission
SNAICC	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
T2A	Transition to Adulthood

Appendix B—Annual report compliance checklist

Appendix B—Annual report compliance checklist

Summary of requirement		Basis for requirement	Annual report reference
Letter of compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A letter of compliance from the accountable officer or statutory body to the relevant minister/s 	ARRs—section 7	p. 3
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table of contents Glossary 	ARRs—section 9.1	p. 5 p. 55
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public availability 	ARRs—section 9.2	p. 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpreter service statement 	<i>Queensland Government Language Services Policy</i> ARRs—section 9.3	N/A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copyright notice 	<i>Copyright Act 1968</i> ARRs—section 9.4	p. 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information licensing 	<i>QGEA—Information Licensing</i> ARRs—section 9.5	p. 2
General information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introductory information 	ARRs—section 10.1	pp. 6–12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Machinery of government changes 	ARRs—section 10.2, 31 and 32	N/A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency role and main functions 	ARRs—section 10.2	p. 8
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating environment 	ARRs—section 10.3	p. 11
Non-financial performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government’s objectives for the community 	ARRs—section 11.1	p. 9
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other whole-of-government plans/specific initiatives 	ARRs—section 11.2	pp. 11–12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency objectives and performance indicators 	ARRs—section 11.3	p. 10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency service areas and service standards 	ARRs—section 11.4	p. 11
Financial performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of financial performance 	ARRs—section 12.1	pp. 50–51
Governance—management and structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational structure 	ARRs—section 13.1	p. 46
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive management 	ARRs—section 13.2	pp. 44–45
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government bodies (statutory bodies and other entities) 	ARRs—section 13.3	N/A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector ethics 	<i>Public Sector Ethics Act 1994</i> ARRs—section 13.4	p. 54
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human rights 	<i>Human Rights Act 2019</i> ARRs—section 13.5	p. 49
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland public service values 	ARRs—section 13.6	p. 47

Summary of requirement		Basis for requirement	Annual report reference
Governance— risk management and accountability	• Risk management	ARRs—section 14.1	p. 49
	• Audit committee	ARRs—section 14.2	p. 48
	• Internal audit	ARRs—section 14.3	p. 49
	• External scrutiny	ARRs—section 14.4	p. 50
	• Information systems and recordkeeping	ARRs—section 14.5	p. 50
Governance— human resources	• Strategic workforce planning and performance	ARRs—section 15.1	pp. 52–54
	• Early retirement, redundancy and retrenchment	Directive No.04/18 <i>Early Retirement, Redundancy and Retrenchment</i> ARRs—section 15.2	p. 52
Open Data	• Statement advising publication of information	ARRs—section 16	p. 51
	• Consultancies	ARRs—section 33.1	N/A
	• Overseas travel	ARRs—section 33.2	N/A
	• Queensland Language Services Policy	ARRs—section 33.3	N/A
Financial statements	• Certification of financial statements	FAA—section 62 FPMS—sections 38, 39 and 46 ARRs—section 17.1	pp. 58–91
	• Independent auditor’s report	FAA—section 62 FPMS—section 46 ARRs—section 17.2	pp. 92–94

FAA *Financial Accountability Act 2009*

FPMS *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*

ARRs *Annual report requirements for Queensland Government agencies*

Queensland Family and Child Commission

Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2020

Queensland Family and Child Commission Financial Statements 2019-20

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Queensland Family and Child Commission

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

for the year ended 30 June 2020

	Notes	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000
Income from Continuing Operations			
Grants and other contributions	3.	12,692	11,879
Other revenue		67	72
Total Income from Continuing Operations		12,759	11,951
Expenses from Continuing Operations			
Employee expenses	4.	8,881	7,885
Supplies and services	5.	3,866	3,411
Depreciation and amortisation	6.	256	279
Other expenses	7.	367	109
Total Expenses from Continuing Operations		13,370	11,684
Operating Result from Continuing Operations		(611)	267
Total Comprehensive Income		(611)	267

The accompanying notes form part of these statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION as at 30 June 2020

	Notes	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents		3,394	3,224
Receivables	8.	220	267
Prepayments		169	37
Total Current Assets		3,783	3,528
Non Current Assets			
Plant and equipment	9.	21	288
Intangible assets	10.	91	303
Total Non Current Assets		112	591
Total Assets		3,895	4,119
Current Liabilities			
Payables	11.	938	626
Accrued employee benefits	12.	410	335
Total Current Liabilities		1,348	961
Total Liabilities		1,348	961
Net Assets		2,547	3,158
Equity			
Contributed equity		2,427	2,427
Accumulated surplus		120	731
Total Equity		2,547	3,158

The accompanying notes form part of these statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY
for the year ended 30 June 2020**

	Accumulated Surplus \$'000	Contributed Equity \$'000	TOTAL \$'000
Balance as at 1 July 2018	464	1,627	2,091
Operating Result from Continuing Operations	267	-	267
Transactions with Owners as Owners:			
• Non-Appropriated Equity Injections	-	800	800
Balance as at 30 June 2019	731	2,427	3,158
Balance as at 1 July 2019	731	2,427	3,158
Operating Result from Continuing Operations	(611)	-	(611)
Balance as at 30 June 2020	120	2,427	2,547

The accompanying notes form part of these statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

for the year ended 30 June 2020

	2020	2019
	\$'000	\$'000
Cash flows from operating activities		
<i>Inflows:</i>		
Grants and other contributions	12,835	11,879
GST input tax credits from ATO	352	495
GST collected from customers	6	5
Interest receipts	61	71
Other revenue	6	1
<i>Outflows:</i>		
Employee expenses	(8,695)	(7,888)
Supplies and services	(3,936)	(3,731)
GST paid to suppliers	(412)	(431)
GST remitted to ATO	(5)	(5)
Other	(26)	(109)
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	186	287
Cash flows from investing activities		
<i>Outflows:</i>		
Payments for plant and equipment	(16)	-
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities	(16)	-
Cash flows from financing activities		
<i>Inflows:</i>		
Equity Injections	-	800
Net cash provided by (used in) financing activities	-	800
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	170	1,087
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	3,224	2,137
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	3,394	3,224

The accompanying notes form part of these statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS for the year ended 30 June 2020

NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF CASH FLOW

Reconciliation of Operating Result to Net Cash provided by Operating Activities

	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000
Operating surplus/(deficit)	(611)	267
Depreciation and amortisation expense	256	279
Loss on disposal of property, plant & equipment	239	-
<i>Changes in assets and liabilities:</i>		
(Increase)/decrease in receivables	106	(26)
(Increase)/decrease in GST input tax credits receivable	(59)	64
(Increase)/decrease in prepayments	(132)	75
Increase/(decrease) in accounts payable	312	(395)
Increase/(decrease) in accrued employee benefits	75	23
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	186	287

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

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: Employee Expenses

Note 5: Supplies and Services

Note 6: Depreciation and Amortisation

Note 7: Other Expenses

Section 3: Notes about our Financial Position

Note 8: Receivables

Note 9: Plant and Equipment

Note 10: Intangible Assets

Note 11: Payables

Note 12: Accrued Employee Benefits

Section 4: Notes about Risks and Other Accounting Uncertainties

Note 13: Commitments

Note 14: Contingencies

Note 15: Financial Risk Disclosures

Note 16: Events Occurring After Balance Date

Note 17: Future Impact of Accounting Standards Not Yet Effective

Section 5: Notes on our Performance compared to Budget

Note 18: Budgetary Reporting Disclosures and Significant Financial Impacts from COVID-19

Section 6: Other Information

Note 19: Key Management Personnel (KMP) and Related Party Disclosures

Note 20: Taxation

Note 21: Insurance

Note 22: Accounting Estimates and Judgements

Note 23: First Year Application of New Accounting Standards or Change in Accounting Policy

Note 24: Climate Risk Disclosures

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

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 provides oversight of Queensland's child protection system to ensure government and non-government agencies are delivering best practice services for the families and children of Queensland.

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 2019.

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 23.

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 2018-19 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 2019-20

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.

The Reporting Entity

The financial statements include the value of all income, expenses, assets, liabilities and equity of the QFCC.

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 received but not banked as at 30 June.

Implementation of the Shared Service Initiative

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
- Internal Audit Services.

Authorisation of Financial Statements for Issue

The financial statements are authorised for issue by the Deputy Commissioner and the Chief Executive Officer & Principal Commissioner at the date of signing the Management Certificate.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

2. Objectives of the QFCC

The QFCC has the following objectives:

- Review systems and build evidence by:
 - monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the performance and outcomes of the child protection and family support system
 - undertaking system reviews to provide evidence of the effectiveness of the child protection and family support system
 - enhancing the capture and reporting of data to support the Queensland child death register
- Connect with young Queenslanders by:
 - collecting, reporting on and responding to the views of children on their experiences growing up in Queensland
 - consulting with children and young people on QFCC work and the matters that are important to them
 - establishing programs that address internet-facilitated child abuse and harm.
- Influence the sector and engage communities by:
 - using a strengths-based approach to change the conversation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
 - providing evidence to inform policy and practice improvements
 - promoting and advocating for children's rights
 - working with sector leaders to plan for a workforce skilled for the future
 - promoting and advocating the responsibility of families and communities to protect and care for young Queenslanders.

	2020	2019
	\$'000	\$'000
3. Grants and Contributions		
Grants received from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General	12,692	11,879
Total	12,692	11,879

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

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 for Not-for-Profit Entities*, whereby revenue is recognised upon receipt of the grant funding.

The QFCC received grant funding from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General during the 2019-20 financial year. The funding has been recognised as revenue on receipt under AASB 1058 as the QFCC's obligations are not sufficiently specific.

	2020	2019
	\$'000	\$'000
4. Employee Expenses		
Employee Benefits		
Wages and salaries *	6,606	5,903
Employer superannuation contributions	845	778
Annual leave levy	665	589
Long service leave levy	159	132
Employee Related Expenses		
Payroll tax	394	344
Fringe Benefit Tax	29	20
Workers' compensation premium	38	32
Other employee related expenses	145	87
Total	8,881	7,885

* Wages and salaries includes \$70,525 of \$1,250 one-off, pro-rata payments for 57 full-time equivalent employees (announced in September 2019).

	2020	2019
Full-Time Equivalent Employees	65	58

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

4. Employee Expenses (cont'd)

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

The Queensland Government's Annual Leave Central Scheme (ALCS) became operational on 30 June 2008 for departments, commercialised business units and shared service providers. Under this scheme, 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 QSuper defined benefit plan 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 enterprise bargaining agreement (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.

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.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

4. Employee Expenses (cont'd)

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.

	2020	2019
	\$'000	\$'000
5. Supplies and Services		
Building services *	1,017	1,021
Administration costs	100	120
Contractors and consultants	1,440	1,197
Corporate services provider costs	567	526
Telecommunications	57	54
Advertising and promotions	79	75
Travel	90	103
Minor plant and equipment	266	94
Repairs and maintenance	2	2
Professional services	35	21
Other supplies and services	213	198
Total	3,866	3,411

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 Housing and Public Works (DHPW), who has substantive substitution rights over the assets used within these schemes. Payments are expensed as incurred and categorised within building services line items.

* Building Services includes office rental payments to DHPW of \$889k (2019 - \$893k) 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 2019-20

	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000
6. Depreciation and Amortisation		
Depreciation and amortisation were incurred in respect of:		
Depreciation Expense - Plant and Equipment	44	54
Amortisation Expense	212	225
Total	256	279

Depreciation Expense

Depreciation on plant and equipment is calculated on a straight-line basis so as to allocate the net cost of each depreciable asset progressively over its estimated useful life to the QFCC.

The following depreciation rate was used:

Class	Rate
Plant and equipment	10-33%

Amortisation Expense

All intangible assets of the QFCC have finite useful lives and are amortised on a straight line basis over their estimated useful life to the QFCC. Straight line amortisation is used reflecting the expected consumption of economic benefits on a progressive basis over the intangible's useful life. The residual value of all the QFCC's intangible assets is zero.

For each class of intangible assets the following amortisation rates were used:

Class	Rate
Intangibles:	
Software internally generated	14%
Software purchased	14%

7. Other Expenses

Insurance premiums (QGIF)	4	4
External audit fees *	23	23
Loss on disposal of assets	239	-
Sponsorships paid	101	82
Total	367	109

* Total audit fees quoted in the Queensland Audit Office's plan for 2019-20 is \$22,500 (2018-19: \$22,500).

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000
8. Receivables		
Trade debtors	5	-
GST receivable	155	96
Annual leave reimbursements	53	136
Long service leave reimbursement	7	35
Total	220	267

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 the date the invoice is received.

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.

The QFCC's other receivables are from Queensland Government agencies or Australian Government agencies. No loss allowance is recorded for these receivables.

No impairment losses have been recognised for receivables in 2019-20.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

	2020	2019
	\$'000	\$'000
9. Plant and Equipment		
Plant and Equipment: at cost	45	501
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(24)	(213)
Carrying amount at 30 June	21	288

Reconciliation of carrying amount:

Plant and Equipment

Carrying amount at 1 July	288	342
Acquisitions	16	-
Disposals	(239)	-
Depreciation Expense	(44)	(54)
Carrying amount at 30 June	21	288

Recognition and Acquisition

Accounting Policy - Recognition

Basis of capitalisation and recognition thresholds

Expenditure on plant and equipment is capitalised to the extent that future economic benefits will flow to the entity and the asset can be reliably separated and measured.

In addition, expenditure is only capitalised if it increases the service potential or useful life of the existing asset. Maintenance expenditure that merely restores original service potential (arising from ordinary wear and tear etc.) is expensed.

Items with a total value of less than \$5,000 are treated as an expense in the year of acquisition.

Accounting Policy - Cost of Acquisition

Historical cost is used for the initial recording of all plant and equipment acquisitions. Historical cost is determined as the value given as consideration plus costs incidental to the acquisition, including all other costs incurred in getting the assets ready for use, including architectural fees and engineering design fees.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

9. Plant and Equipment (cont'd)

Measurement using Historical Cost

Accounting Policy

Plant and equipment is measured at historical cost in accordance with Queensland Treasury's Non-Current Asset Policies for the Queensland Public Sector. The carrying amounts for such plant and equipment is not materially different from their fair value.

Impairment

Accounting Policy

All non-current physical assets are assessed for indicators of impairment on an annual basis. No significant indicators of impairment were present at reporting date.

10. Intangible Assets	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000
Software Purchased: At cost		
Gross	433	433
Less: Accumulated amortisation	(342)	(281)
	91	152
Software Internally Generated: At cost		
Gross	1,146	1,146
Less: Accumulated amortisation	(1,146)	(996)
	-	151
Carrying amount at 30 June	91	303

Intangible Assets - Balances and Reconciliation of Carrying Amounts

	Software Purchased		Software Internally Generated		Total	
	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000
Carrying amount at 1 July	152	214	151	314	303	528
Amortisation expense	(61)	(62)	(151)	(163)	(212)	(225)
Carrying amount at 30 June	91	152	-	151	91	303

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

10. Intangible Assets (cont'd)

Recognition and Measurement

Accounting Policy

Intangible assets of the QFCC comprise of purchased and internally generated software. Intangible assets with a historical cost or other value equal to or greater than \$100,000 are recognised in the financial statements. Items with a lesser value are expensed. Any training costs are expensed as incurred.

There is no active market for the QFCC's intangible assets. As such the assets are recognised and carried at historical cost less accumulated amortisation and accumulated impairment losses.

Expenditure on research activities relating to internally generated intangible assets is recognised as an expense in the period in which it is incurred. Research and development expensed during the period is included in 'supplies and services expenses'.

Costs associated with internal development of computer software are capitalised and amortised under the amortisation policy below.

No intangible assets have been classified as held for sale or form part of a disposal group held for sale.

Impairment

Accounting Policy

All intangible assets are assessed for indicators of impairment on an annual basis. No significant indicators of impairment were present at reporting date.

	2020	2019
	\$'000	\$'000
11. Payables		
Trade creditors	690	568
Other payables	248	58
Total	938	626

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.

12. Accrued Employee Benefits

Current

Salaries and wages outstanding	213	133
Annual leave levy payable	152	167
Long service leave levy payable	45	35
Total	410	335

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

12. 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*.

13. Commitments	2020	2019
	\$'000	\$'000
<i>(a) Non-Cancellable Operating Lease</i>		
Commitments under operating leases at reporting date (inclusive of non-recoverable GST input tax credits) are payable as follows:		
Not later than one year	-	1,003
Later than one year and not later than five years	-	1,601
Total	-	2,604

2018-19 commitments reflected the lease for office accommodation. The Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW) 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 DHPW has substantive substitution rights over the assets. The related service expenses are included in Note 5.

(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:

Not later than one year	1,595	607
Later than one year and not later than five years	3,854	586
Total	5,449	1,193

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

14. Contingencies

There were no other known contingent assets or liabilities at 30 June 2020.

15. 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	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000
Financial Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents		3,394	3,224
Financial assets at amortised cost:			
Receivables	8.	220	267
Total financial assets		3,614	3,491
Financial Liabilities			
Financial liabilities at amortised cost:			
Payables	11.	938	626
Total financial liabilities at amortised cost		938	626

Financial risk management

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

16. Events Occurring After Balance Date

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

17. Future Impact of Accounting Standards Not Yet Effective

At the date of authorisation of the financial report, the expected impacts of new or amended Australian Accounting Standards issued but with future effective dates are set out below:

AASB 1059 Service Concession Arrangement: Grantors

AASB 1059 will first apply to the QFCC's financial statements in 2020-21. This standard defines service concession arrangements and applies a new control concept to the recognition of service concession assets and related liabilities. Upon review, the QFCC does not currently have any arrangements that would fall within the scope of AASB 1059.

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

18. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures and Significant Financial Impacts from COVID-19

This section contains explanations of major variances between the QFCC's actual 2019-20 financial results and the original budget presented to Parliament.

Budget to Actual Comparison - Statement of Comprehensive Income

	Variance Notes	Original Budget 2020 \$'000	Actual 2020 \$'000	Variance \$'000	Variance % of Budget
Income from Continuing Operations					
Grants and other contributions		12,837	12,692	(145)	(1%)
Other revenue		42	67	25	59%
Total Income from Continuing Operations		12,879	12,759	(120)	(1%)
Expenses from Continuing Operations					
Employee expenses		8,842	8,881	39	0%
Supplies and services	1.	3,617	3,866	249	7%
Depreciation and amortisation	2.	378	256	(122)	(32%)
Other expenses	3.	42	367	325	774%
Total Expenses from Continuing Operations		12,879	13,370	491	4%
Total Comprehensive Income		-	(611)	(611)	100%

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

18. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures and Significant Financial Impacts from COVID-19 (cont'd)

Budget to Actual Comparison - Statement of Financial Position

	Variance	Original	Actual	Variance	Variance
	Notes	Budget	2020	\$'000	% of Budget
		2020	\$'000		
Current Assets					
Cash and cash equivalents	4.	1,997	3,394	1,397	70%
Receivables		79	220	141	178%
Other	5.	-	169	169	100%
Total Current Assets		2,076	3,783	1,707	82%
Non-Current Assets					
Plant and equipment	6.	238	21	(217)	(91%)
Intangible assets	4.	775	91	(684)	(88%)
Total Non-Current Assets		1,013	112	(901)	(89%)
Total Assets		3,089	3,895	806	26%
Current Liabilities					
Payables	7.	193	938	745	386%
Accrued employee benefits		265	410	145	55%
Total Current Liabilities		458	1,348	890	194%
Total Liabilities		458	1,348	890	194%
Net Assets		2,631	2,547	(84)	(3%)
Equity					
Contributed equity		2,426	2,427	1	0%
Accumulated surplus		205	120	(85)	(42%)
Total Equity		2,631	2,547	(84)	(3%)

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

18. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures and Significant Financial Impacts from COVID-19 (cont'd)

Budget to Actual Comparison - Statement of Cash Flows

	Variance Notes	Original Budget 2020 \$'000	Actual 2020 \$'000	Variance \$'000	Variance % of Budget
Cash flows from operating activities					
<i>Inflows:</i>					
Grants and other contributions		12,837	12,835	(2)	(0%)
GST input tax credits from ATO		231	352	121	52%
GST collected from customers		-	6	6	100%
Interest receipts		42	61	19	45%
Other		-	6	6	100%
<i>Outflows:</i>					
Employee expenses	8.	(8,879)	(8,695)	184	2%
Supplies and services		(3,943)	(3,936)	7	0%
GST paid to suppliers	9.	-	(412)	(412)	(100%)
GST remitted to ATO		-	(5)	(5)	(100%)
Other		(45)	(26)	19	42%
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities		243	186	(57)	(23%)
Cash flows from investing activities					
<i>Outflows:</i>					
Payments for non-financial assets	10.	(800)	-	800	100%
Payments for plant and equipment		-	(16)	(16)	(100%)
Payments for intangibles		-	-	-	(100%)
Payment for WIP		-	-	-	(100%)
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities		(800)	(16)	784	(98%)
Net increase in cash held		(557)	170	727	(130%)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year		2,554	3,224	670	(74%)
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year		1,997	3,394	1,397	70%

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

18. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures and Significant Financial Impacts from COVID-19 (cont'd)

Explanations of Major Variances

Statement of Comprehensive Income

1. Supplies and Services vary each year as projects are dependant on available grant funding, the program of work to be undertaken and expertise available internally. The increase in Supplies and Services is primarily due to expenses associated with the office relocation from Albert St to George St (\$285,000) offset by unspent project costs (\$35,000).
2. Depreciation and Amortisation has decreased due to the delay of the replacement of the Child Death Register software development (\$114,000) as well as reduced depreciation due to disposal of assets (\$8,000).
3. An increase in other expenses primarily reflects the loss on disposal of assets due to previous building fitout assets not being able to be relocated to the new office in George Street (\$239,000) and the funding agreement with Children's Rights Queensland (\$80,000).

Statement of Financial Position

4. An increase in Cash assets is due to the receipt of funds (\$800,000) for the Child Death Register software development still to be undertaken and the timing of operational expenses recognised but not paid (\$597,000) as at 30 June 2019.
5. The increase in Other Current Assets primarily reflects prepayments for annual maintenance and hosting of One Place Website (\$98,000), subscriptions and memberships (\$25,000) and expenses associated with the relocation (\$40,000).
6. Plant and Equipment have reduced primarily due to assets disposals (\$239,000), reduced depreciation (\$8,000) and additional equipment purchased as part of the office relocation (\$17,000).
7. Payables increase reflects timing of payments and accrued expenses as at 30 June 2020 (\$602,000).

Statement of Cash Flows

8. Variances between budget and actual expenditure for Employee Costs is due to timing of payments.
9. The variance in GST paid to suppliers is primarily due to incorrect budget allocation against supplies and services.
10. The decrease in cash outflows for non-financial assets resulted from the delay of the Child Death Register software development as outlined in the explanations of major variances for the Statement of Comprehensive Income.

Significant Financial Impacts - COVID-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic did not have any material financial impact for the QFCC during the 2019-20 financial year.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

19. 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 2019-20 and 2018-19.

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 family and child 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. Maintaining the rights of children in all situations continues to drive the work of the agency.</p>
Commissioner	<p>The role supports the Principal Commissioner to provide strategic direction and leadership to develop and deliver integrated strategies designed to build capability and capacity and improve the culture of 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>
Deputy Commissioner	<p>The role is responsible for supporting the Commissioners and is responsible for leading and maintaining the QFCC's strategic and operational frameworks.</p> <p>This is achieved through a broad range of activities, projects and services to support children, families and communities across the State.</p>
Executive Director, Corporate and Communications	<p>The role leads the agency corporate services, communications and children and young people's perspectives functions. It is responsible for making sure the QFCC has the appropriate controls, administrative, legal and corporate governance arrangements, media and corporate communications, reporting procedures, and people oriented systems in place to effectively support the operations of the QFCC in line with key legislative and policy obligations.</p>
Executive Director, Research and Child Death Prevention	<p>The role leads the QFCC's research and child death prevention functions and during 2019-20 was responsible for the transition of the Child Death Review Board (CDRB) secretariat functions from the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women.</p> <p>The role oversees the QFCC maintaining a register on all child deaths in Queensland to inform prevention activities and make available better information on risk factors and causes of death.</p>

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

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

Details of Key Management Personnel (cont'd)

Position	Position Responsibility
Executive Director, Oversight and Indigenous Outcomes	<p>The role strategically leads the oversight and Indigenous outcomes function of the QFCC.</p> <p>The role provides leadership to the systemic oversight of Queensland's child protection and family support systems to assess whether the systems are reliable, sustainable and productive. The role also drives activities to influence policy and practice to address the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection and family support systems.</p>
Executive Director, Evaluation and Workforce Futures	<p>The role strategically leads the evaluation and workforce futures functions of the QFCC.</p> <p>The role provides leadership in evaluating, at a systemic level, the effectiveness of policies and programs within the child protection system and works with the child protection and family support sector to develop a sustainable workforce to meet the emerging needs of families and children experiencing vulnerability.</p>
Director to the Principal Commissioner	<p>The role provides strategic and operational support to the Commissioners and provides detailed briefings to the Commissioners on policy and program initiatives to support the achievement of strategic objectives.</p>

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

19. 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.
- 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 2019-20

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

KMP Remuneration Expense

1 July 2019 - 30 June 2020

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	287	4	7	26	-	324
Commissioner (to 25 September 2019)	47	2	1	6	-	56
Commissioner (from 1 June 2020)	18	-	1	2	-	21
Deputy Commissioner (from 13 January 2020)	99	1	3	11	-	114
Executive Director, Research and Child Death Prevention	188	5	4	20	-	217
Executive Director, Oversight and Indigenous Outcomes (from 29 July 2019)	177	4	4	19	-	204
Executive Director, Evaluation and Workforce Futures	183	5	4	19	-	211
Executive Director, Corporate and Communications	205	2	5	22	-	234
Director to the Principal Commissioner (to 8 October 2019)	47	3	1	5	-	56
Director to the Principal Commissioner (from 18 February 2020)	54	1	2	7	-	64
Total Remuneration	1,305	27	32	137	-	1,501

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

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

KMP Remuneration Expense

1 July 2018 - 30 June 2019

Position	Short Term Employee Expenses		Long Term Employee Expenses	Post-Employment Expenses	Termination Benefits	Total Expenses
	Monetary Expenses	Non-Monetary Benefits				
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Principal Commissioner	269	4	6	27	-	306
Commissioner	200	2	4	22	-	228
Deputy Commissioner, Corporate and Communications	111	5	2	12	-	130
Deputy Commissioner, Research and Child Death Prevention (ceased 4 January 2019)	104	7	2	12	-	125
Deputy Commissioner, Programs	201	1	4	22	-	228
Director, Office of the Commissioners	139	1	3	18	-	161
Chief Operating Officer (from 15 October 2018)	126	0	3	13	-	142
Total Remuneration	1,150	20	24	126	-	1,320

In the 2019-20 year, the following KMP position titles have changed

2018-19 (former)	2019-20 (current)
Principal Commissioner	Chief Executive Officer & Principal Commissioner
Deputy Commissioner, Corporate and Communications	Executive Director, Corporate and Communications
Chief Operating Officer	Executive Director, Research and Child Death Prevention
Deputy Commissioner, Programs	Executive Director, Evaluation and Workforce Futures
Director, Office of the Commissioners	Director to the Principal Commissioner

- The position, Commissioner, was vacant from September 2019 to the end of May 2020.
- The position, Deputy Commissioner, is a newly created role and was filled in January 2020.
- The position, Executive Director, Oversight and Indigenous Outcomes is a newly created role and was filled in July 2019.
- The position, Director to the Principal Commissioner was vacant from 8 October 2019 to 18 February 2020.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

19. 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 \$216k and has an operating lease from DHPW for commercial office accommodation (Note 5) totalling \$889k.

20. 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.

21. 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.

22. 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.

Estimates and assumptions that have a potential significant effect are outlined in Note 6 - Depreciation and Amortisation.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

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

Accounting standards applied for the first time

Three new accounting standards with material impact were applied for the first time in 2019-20:

- AASB 15 *Revenue from Contracts with Customers*
- AASB 1058 *Income of Not-for-Profit Entities*
- AASB 16 *Leases*

The effect of adopting these new standards are detailed below. No other accounting standards or interpretations that apply to the QFCC for the first time in 2019-20 have any material impact on the financial statements.

Accounting Standards Early Adopted

No Australian Accounting Standards have been early adopted for 2019-20.

AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers and AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities

The QFCC applied AASB 15 *Revenue from Contracts with Customers* and AASB 1058 *Income of Not-for-Profit Entities* for the first time in 2019-20. The nature and effect of changes resulting from the adoption of both Accounting Standards are described below.

AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers

The QFCC has considered the impact of applying AASB 15 *Revenue from Contracts with Customers* and determined that there is no material impact.

The QFCC receives the majority of its revenue in the form of a grant from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. The grant received supports the broad objectives of the QFCC and as it does not contain sufficiently specific performance obligations as required by AASB 15, it will therefore be recognised as revenue under AASB 1058.

AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities

AASB 1058 applies to transactions when the QFCC acquires an asset for significantly less than fair value principally to enable it to further its objectives.

The QFCC applied the modified retrospective transition method and has not restated comparative information for 2018-19. They continue to be reported under relevant standards applicable in 2018-19, such as AASB 1004.

Revenue recognition for the QFCC's contributions will not change under AASB 1058, as compared to AASB 1004. Revenue will continue to be recognised when the QFCC gains control of the asset (e.g. cash or receivable) in most instances.

AASB 16 Leases

The QFCC applied AASB 16 *Leases* for the first time in 2019-20. The QFCC applied the modified retrospective transition method and has not restated comparative information for 2018-19, which continue to be reported under AASB 117 *Leases* and related interpretations.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019-20

23. First Year Application of New Accounting Standards or Change in Accounting Policy (cont'd)

AASB 16 Leases (cont'd)

The nature and effect of changes resulting from the adoption of AASB 16 are described below.

1. Definition of a lease

AASB 16 introduced new guidance on the definition of a lease.

For leases and lease-like arrangements existing at 30 June 2019, the QFCC elected to apply the practical expedient to grandfather the previous assessments made under AASB 117 and Interpretation 4 *Determining whether an Arrangement contains a Lease* about whether those contracts contained leases. However, arrangements were reassessed under AASB 16 where no formal assessment had been done in the past or where lease agreements were modified on 1 July 2019.

Amendments to former operating leases for office accommodation

In 2018-19, the QFCC held operating leases under AASB 117 from the Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW) for non-specialised commercial office accommodation through the Queensland Government Accommodation Office (QGAO) program.

Effective 1 July 2019, the framework agreements that govern QGAO were amended with the result that these arrangements would not meet the definition of a lease under AASB 16 and therefore are exempt from lease accounting.

From 2019-20 onwards, the costs for these services are expensed as supplies and services expenses when incurred. The new accounting treatment is due to a change in the contractual arrangements rather than a change in accounting policy.

2. Changes to lessee accounting

Previously, the QFCC classified its leases as operating or finance leases based on whether the lease transferred significantly all of the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the asset to the lessee.

This distinction between operating and finance leases no longer exist for lessee accounting under AASB 16. From 1 July 2019, all leases, other than short-term leases and leases of low value assets, are now recognised on balance sheet as lease liabilities and right-of-use assets.

24. Climate Risk Disclosures

The QFCC has not identified any material climate related risks relevant to the financial report at reporting date, however constantly monitors the emergence of such risks under the Queensland Government's Climate Transition Strategy.

**Queensland Family and Child Commission
Management Certificate
for the year ended 30 June 2020**

These general purpose financial statements have been prepared pursuant to s.62(1) of the *Financial Accountability Act 2009* (the Act), s.46 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 2020 and of the financial position of the office at the end of that year; and

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.

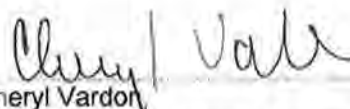


Leanne Geppert

Deputy Commissioner

Queensland Family and Child Commission

Date: 20/8/2020



Cheryl Vardon

Chief Executive Officer & Principal
Commissioner

Queensland Family and Child Commission

Date: 20/8/2020

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Principal Commissioner of the 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 2020, 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 2020, 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 summaries of significant accounting policies and other explanatory 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 expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal controls, but allows me to express an opinion on compliance with prescribed requirements.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies 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 Accountable Officer 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.

Report on other legal and regulatory requirements

In accordance with s.40 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, for the year ended 30 June 2020:

- 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.



Melissa Fletcher
as delegate of the Auditor-General

20 August 2020

Queensland Audit Office
Brisbane

Appendix D—Performance of the Queensland child protection system

In accordance with Section 40 of the *Queensland Family and Child Commission Act 2014*²⁰ (the Act) the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) includes the following information in its annual report:

- Queensland’s performance in relation to achieving state and national goals relating to the child protection system [(s 40)(1)(a)(i)]
- Queensland’s performance over time in comparison to other jurisdictions [(s 40)(1)(a)(ii)]
- 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 [(s 40)(1)(a)(iii)].

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, and includes preventative and support services to strengthen and support families and prevent harm to children and young people.

Using this broad definition, this report discusses system performance from the point of prevention and early intervention through to protective intervention with children who are at risk or have been subjected to significant harm.

National goals are derived from the *Fourth Action Plan 2018–2020: National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020*.

State goals align with the seven strategic directions of *Supporting Families, Changing Futures (2019–2023)*, Queensland’s Child Protection Reform Program.


As 2020 marks the end point of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020* (the national framework), the QFCC drew upon statistical data demonstrating change over the 10-year period, where possible. The national framework is also used as the basis for comparing Queensland’s progress with other Australian jurisdictions.

Queensland’s progress towards achieving state goals is assessed according to the strategic directions and objectives of the Queensland Child Protection Reform Program (the child protection reform program). The QFCC’s assessment also incorporates findings from the *Child Protection Reform Program Implementation Evaluation* it completed in 2017–2018.

In reporting on Queensland’s performance in improving outcomes for and reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system, the QFCC has used indicators from a range of sectors and disciplines. They include child protection, youth justice, health and disability services.

Performance measures were identified for each national and state goal through a scan of agencies’ reports and datasets, and through consultation with agencies to determine the suitability, availability and limitations of the data.

²⁰ *Queensland Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/2014-07-01/act-2014-027>.



Where possible, existing measures were used. Where these were not available, the QFCC identified performance measures relevant to the objectives and actions associated with each goal.

The most current data sets available to the QFCC have been used. Reporting dates for data sets range from 2009–10 through to 30 June 2020. All data is referenced according to the date of release.

Data is disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status where possible.

Queensland's performance towards achieving national goals

The national framework outlines goals for Australia's child protection systems.²¹ The overarching goal is that Australia's children and young people are safe and well.

Six supporting outcomes are used to demonstrate progress towards this goal. As 2020 marks the end of the national framework's lifespan (2009–2020), it is timely to assess progress over this period.

The national framework has had four action plans over the 10-year period of its operation. The latest, the *Fourth Action Plan 2018–2020*, was endorsed by federal, state and territory ministers in December 2018.²² Its goals, which form the basis for this report, are:

1. improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems
2. improving prevention and early intervention through joint service planning and investment
3. improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care²³ by enhancing placement stability through reunification and other permanent care options
4. improving organisations' and governments' ability to keep children and young people safe from abuse.

National goal 1: improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems

The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are safe and well and cared for by their parents and family. However, when families are unable to care for their children, their communities and the child and family support system need to intervene.

There are different ways to view the concept of 'improved outcomes' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems. First and foremost, it is about avoiding unnecessary contact with statutory systems²⁴ such as the child protection system and youth justice system. For children and families who are struggling, this means having available supports and services to reduce their risk of entering the child protection or youth justice system.

²¹ Commonwealth of Australia 2009, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's children 2009–2020*, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/child_protection_framework.pdf.

²² Commonwealth of Australia 2018, *Fourth Action Plan 2018–2020: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020*, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2019/dss-fourth-action-plan-v6-web-final.pdf.

²³ In some circumstances Child Safety needs to remove a child from their home to ensure their safety. A child may be removed from their home during the investigation and assessment phase or during ongoing intervention. If a child is placed in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive (Director-General) of Child Safety, Child Safety must find an appropriate placement for the child. There are various placement services for the children in Child Safety's care including home-based care (foster, kinship and provisionally approved carers) and residential care services. Children may also live in youth detention centres, mental health facilities, hospitals or have independent living arrangements.

²⁴ A statutory system is established by legislation. It intervenes when people are found to be in breach of established laws such as the *Child Protection Act 1999* or the *Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019*. Children and families' involvement in statutory systems is compulsory once they meet the threshold or criteria for involvement, meaning they cannot choose not to engage with a statutory service.

Despite a decade of efforts to reduce over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system, the issue remains as unmanageable as it was in 2009. As Figure 1 shows, more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are known to the system now than in 2009 – 10.²⁵

This rise coincides with a period of national action and reform. For example, one of the the six supporting outcomes of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020* was to reduce over-representation by supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and keeping them safe in strong, thriving families and communities.

While there are some encouraging new policy commitments and early stage reforms in Queensland, more effort is required to produce measurable results from implementing the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (Child Placement Principle).

As has been recognised in New South Wales’ *Family is Culture* report (2019):

The ACPP [Child Placement Principle] was recognised in the primary child protection statute by our democratically elected legislators as a commitment to keeping Aboriginal children with family. Yet this Review has found it is poorly implemented and misunderstood.

In the Queensland context, little in the way of independent oversight of implementation of the Child Placement Principle has occurred. The *QFCC Oversight Strategy 2020–2022* sets out a commitment to reviewing governments’ efforts to implement the five elements of the Child Placement Principle in line with the intent to safeguard the rights, safety and well-being of Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of or in contact with statutory child protection systems.

The strategy will align with the national priority agreed upon by Community Services ministers nationally.

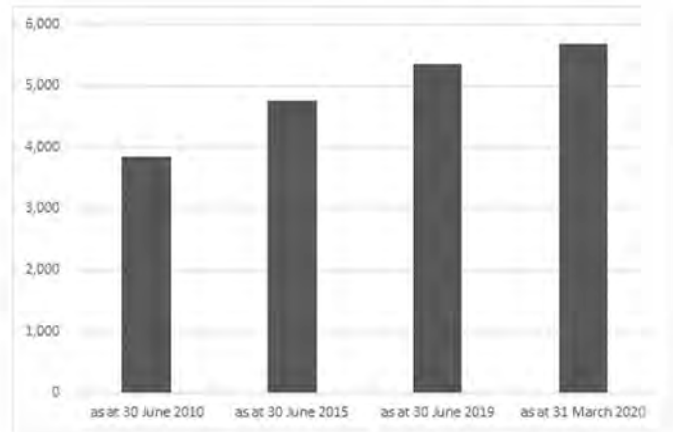
Three measures have been selected to show progress towards this goal:

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people subject to ongoing intervention, by intervention type

Queensland Child Safety data captured over the life of the national framework shows an increase in the number of children subject to ongoing intervention. As evident in Figure 2, the proportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children differs by the type of ongoing intervention (intervention with parental agreement and child protection orders).

According to the latest Child Safety data (as at 31 March 2020) the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to interventions with parental agreement²⁶ has risen steadily since 2010, although it has slightly decreased since 2019.

Figure 1: Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to ongoing intervention in Queensland (Source: Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2020)

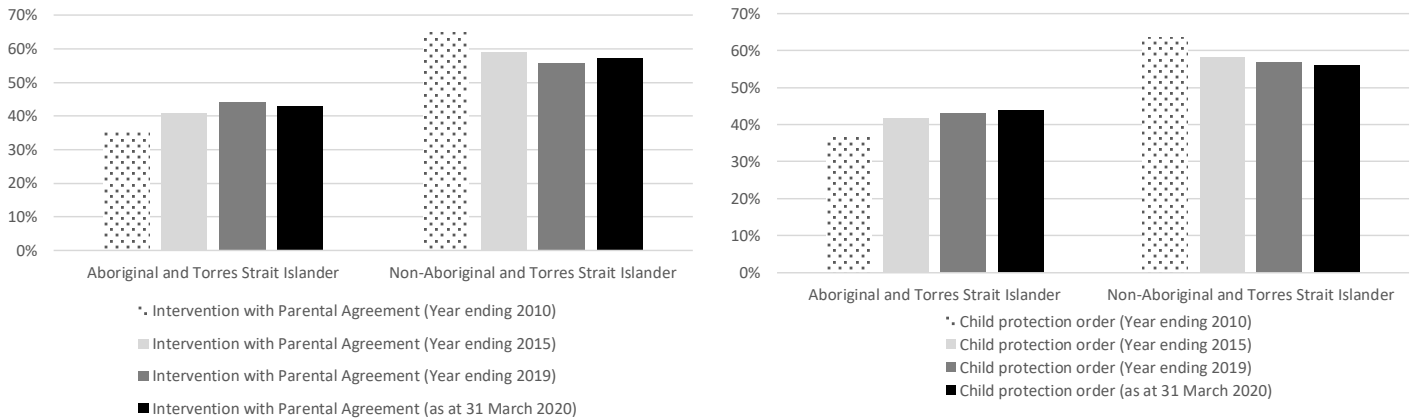


²⁵ Ongoing intervention by Child Safety is required when it is determined that a child is in need of protection.

²⁶ This type of intervention by Child Safety focuses on the needs of a child who is in need of protection, without the need for a court order. The child’s parents agree to work cooperatively with Child Safety.

However, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to child protection orders (imposed by the Childrens Court) continues to rise, with a corresponding decrease in the proportion of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to child protection orders.

Figure 2: Proportion of children subject to Intervention with Parental Agreement and child protection orders, by Indigenous status (Years ending 2010, 2015, 2019 and as at 31 March 2020) (Source: Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2020)



2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care placed with kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers or with residential care services

As Figure 3 illustrates, the *number* of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who are placed with kin (relatives or family) or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander carers has steadily increased since 2010, but so has the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children *not* placed with kin. The *proportion* placed with kin has slightly decreased since 2015, although it remains higher than it was in 2010.

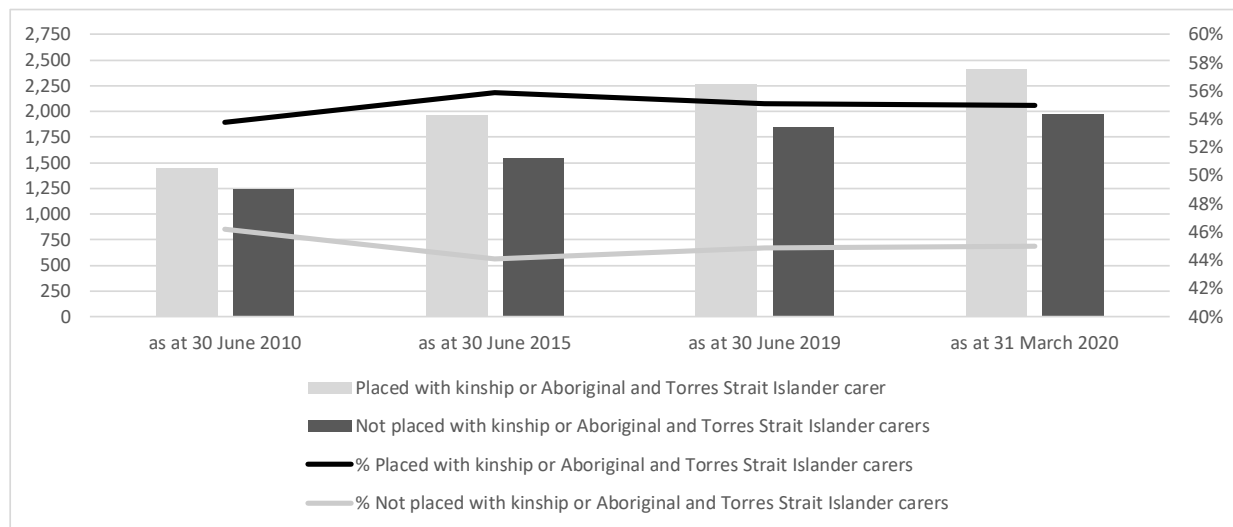
Under the Child Placement Principle, placement of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child in out-of-home care is prioritised in the following way:

1. with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander relatives or extended family members, or other relatives or extended family members, or
2. with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander members of the child’s community, or
3. with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander family-based carers.
4. If the above preferred options are not available, as a last resort, the child may be placed with:
5. a non-Indigenous carer or in a residential setting.

Current reporting practice in Queensland continues to report on data that combines tiers 1, 2 and 3 of the placement hierarchy of the Child Placement Principle.

These reporting practices aggregate data across the placement hierarchy do not reflect the enduring responsibility for practitioners to actively seek out placements within the child’s family and community during their time in out-of-home care. As part of the QFCC’s monitoring framework (to oversee Queensland Government’s implementation of the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle), information will be sought that disaggregates placement data to more clearly align with the intent of the placement hierarchy.

Figure 3: Number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who were placed with kinship or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers (Years ending 2010, 2015, 2019 and as at 31 March 2020) (Source: Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2020)



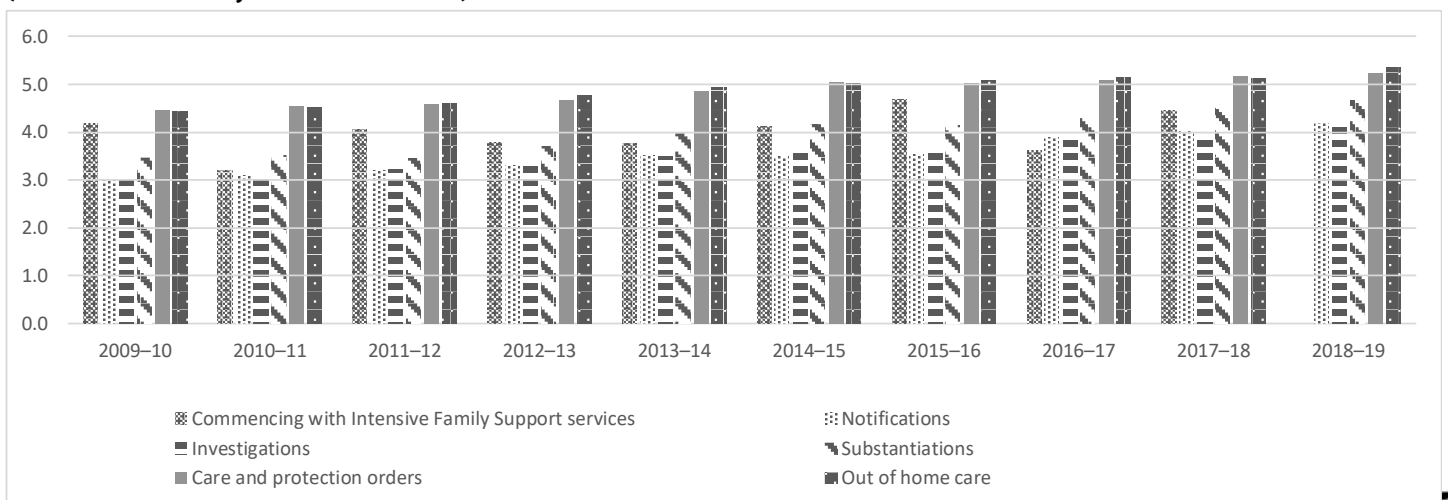
3. Disproportionality ratios for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Disproportionality is fundamentally about inequity. Disproportionality ratios demonstrate how proportionate the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (the target group) in the child protection system is to their representation in the total population of children aged 0–17 years (the target population).²⁷

If the target group’s representation is proportionate to their representation in the target population, the disproportionality ratio will be equal to 1. A number higher than 1 indicates disproportionality, and the higher the number, the greater the extent to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented in the population of children aged 0–17 years.²⁸


Figure 4 provides disproportionality ratios for Child Safety notifications (reports of significant harm that meet the threshold for investigation), investigations, substantiations (when notifications of harm are proven), children commencing intensive family support services (IFS—funded by Child Safety to provide support to families), children in out-of-home care, and children under care and protection orders.

Figure 4: Disproportionality ratios for Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years (Source: Productivity Commission 2020)



²⁷ Australian Government Productivity Commission 2020, *Report on Government Services 2020: Child Protection*.

²⁸ For a detailed explanation of disproportionality ratios, see Australian Government Productivity Commission 2020, *Report on Government Services 2020: Child Protection*.



As this figure illustrates, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are represented in the child protection system at least three times (and in some parts of the system, over five times) more than they are represented in the total population of Queensland children aged 0–17 years.

While this does not measure ‘improved outcomes’ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, it shows that, year after year, there are more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for whom we need to improve outcomes once they have entered the child protection system—at much higher rates than their non-Indigenous counterparts.

National goal 2: Improving prevention and early intervention through joint service planning and investment

The importance of prevention and early intervention is recognised across service systems as a critical factor in ensuring the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families. All children deserve to grow up in thriving families and communities and develop into healthy, connected, nurturing and productive adults and parents.

Significant investment has been made in recent years to establish a range of services to support Queensland families earlier. Since 2014, there has been a strong focus on cross-agency partnerships, with considerable effort going towards collaborating at different levels of the child protection and family support system.²⁹ New partnerships have been established and existing ones strengthened with a common purpose of keeping children and young people safe.

Four measures have been selected to show progress towards this goal.

1. Government expenditure on early intervention and prevention services

Figure 5 shows most of the investment in the child and family support system is directed at protective intervention (intake, investigation and assessment and ongoing intervention) and care services (that is, out-of-home care and other supported placements). These services are costly, and because they are directed towards children and families with complex needs, they are intensive and tend to be longer term.

Figure 5 also shows an incremental increase in expenditure across the child and family support system since 2009–10.³⁰ The increase is particularly pronounced from 2016–17. This coincides with the establishment of a range of non-government family support services across Queensland.

²⁹ Queensland Family and Child Commission 2018, *Queensland Child Protection Reform Program Implementation Evaluation 2014–17*, <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/keeping-kids-more-safe/monitoring-reviewing-systems-protect-children/evaluating-child-protection#block-evaluation-reports>.

³⁰ In 2016–17, Queensland revised its cost allocation. This methodology was applied from 2015–16 financial data onwards.

Figure 5: Queensland Government total expenditure (\$ '000) on services, by service type (2009–10 to 2018–19)
(Source: Productivity Commission 2020)

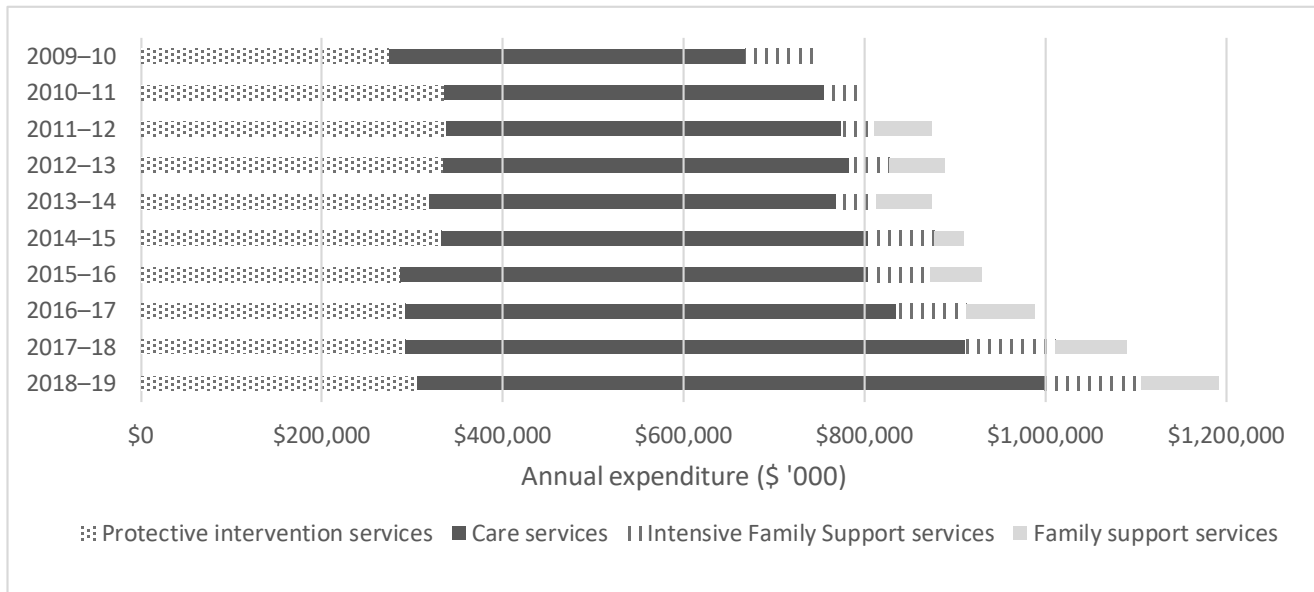
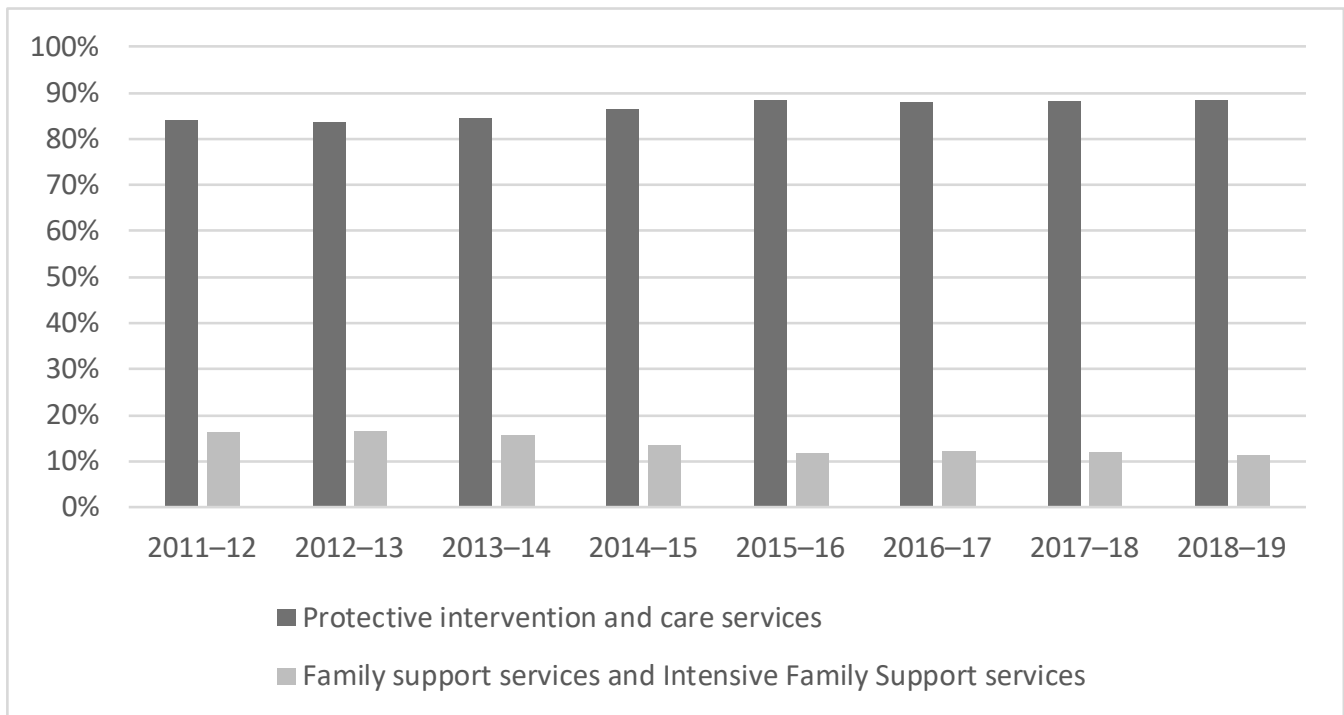


Figure 6 shows the proportion of expenditure spent on protective intervention and care services and family support and intensive family support services. The bulk of expenditure remains on protective intervention and care services. This is despite a near doubling of expenditure on intensive family support services in Queensland from 2014–15 to 2018–19 (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Proportion of total expenditure on services, by service type, Queensland (2011–12 to 2018–19)
(Source: Productivity Commission 2020)



2. Enquiries and active engagements by Family and Child Connect

Family and Child Connect (FaCC) is a state-wide non-government service established to provide information, advice and referrals to family support services to address concerns about the well-being of children, young people and families. A network of 17 FaCC services around the state help families navigate local service systems and increases their access to help and support.

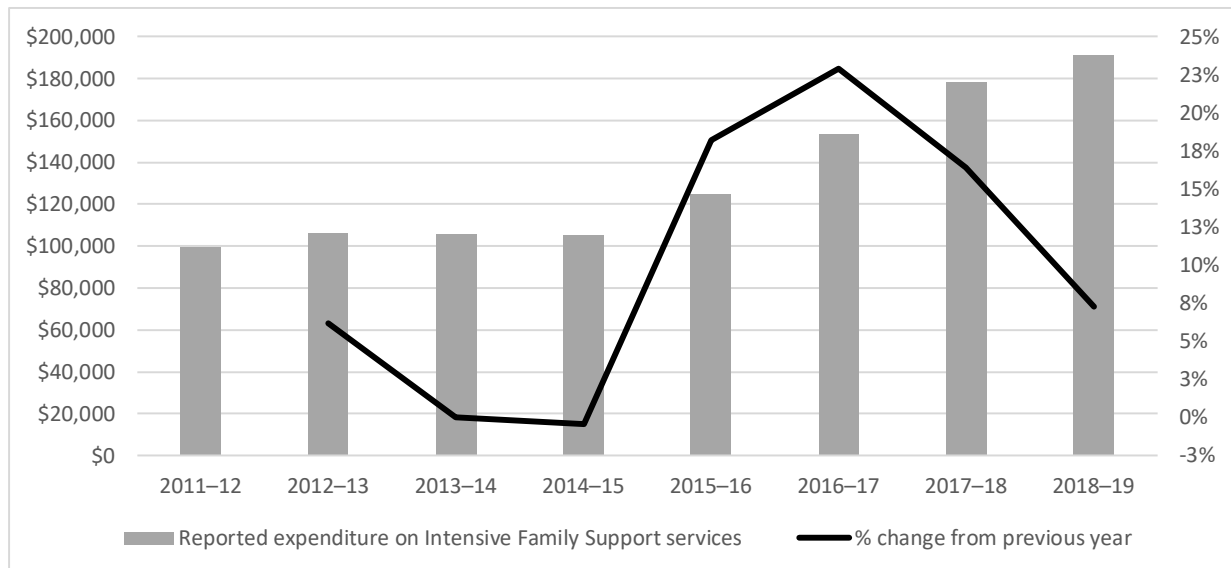
The number of referrals and active engagements with referred families has been relatively steady since the establishment of FaCC services in 2015. The latest data available (as at March 2020) shows 18,547 active engagements of clients (that is, children, young people and their families) with FaCC—slightly down from the 18,556 active engagements reported in December 2019.

3. Investment in intensive family support services and family support services

The Queensland Government has allocated significant resources to increasing service system capacity to respond to increased demand from families for voluntary support services, some of which are generated from FaCC referrals.

Figure 7 shows the increase in expenditure on intensive family support services in Queensland. The most notable growth (in terms of percentage change from previous years) occurs between 2014 and 2016, which coincides with the first two years of implementing the recommendations of the child protection reform program.

Figure 7: Queensland’s annual expenditure (\$ ‘000) on family support services (including Intensive Family Support services) and proportional increase in expenditure from previous year (2011–12 to 2018–19)
(Source: Productivity Commission 2020)



4. Families’ access to family support services

In addition to the 17 FaCC services established since 2016, the Queensland Government has rolled out 44 Intensive Family Support services and 33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Well-being services across Queensland. Intensive family support services are designed to help families before their complex needs escalate to the point of Child Safety intervention, while the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Well-being Services are expected to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the child protection system.³¹

³¹ Queensland Government 2019, *Supporting Families, Changing Futures*.

Figure 8 shows the number of people engaging with intensive family support and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Well-being Services between July 2017 to March 2020. No information is available about the proportion of referrals that go on to actively engage with these services.

Another state-wide service, Assessment and Service Connect, was established in 2017 to work with families—alongside Child Safety—once their child (or children) becomes the subject of a notification of child harm.³² Sixteen non-government services are funded to ‘co-respond’ with Child Safety Services, where appropriate, to assess the level of risk to the child and to provide an appropriate response to decrease the likelihood of the child entering care and increase the safety of the child.

Quarterly service data across the 16 Assessment and Service Connect locations suggests uptake of this service has been slow sporadic. Some locations appear to use the service more readily than others.

As Table 1 shows, Assessment and Service Connect was used most heavily during the July to December 2019 period, but these figures have since decreased.

Figure 8: Number of people accessing Intensive Family Support and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services, by Indigenous status (Source: Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2020)

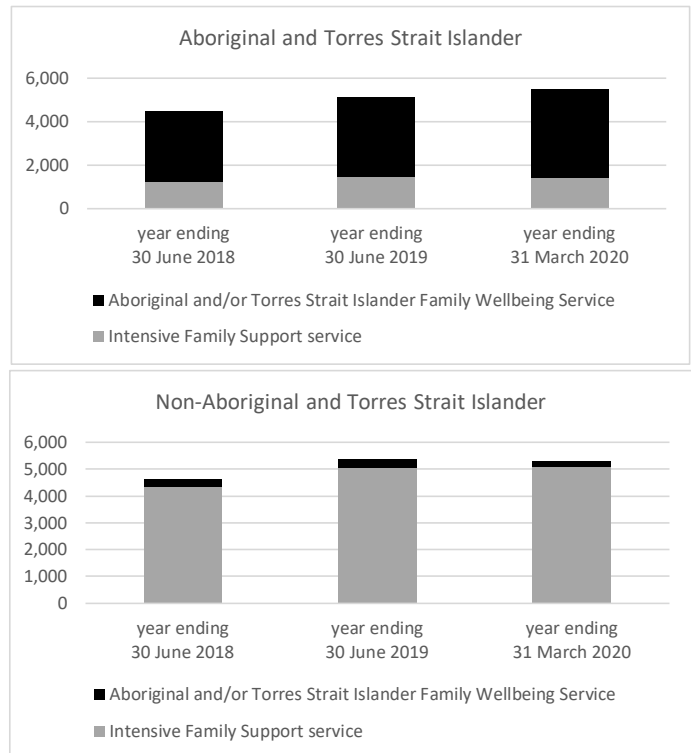


Table 1: Number of Assessment and Service Connect co-responses completed, October 2018 to March 2020 (Source: Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2020)

Oct–Dec 2018	Jan–March 2018	April–Jun 2019	July–Sept 2019	Oct–Dec 2019	Jan–March 2020
198	198	202	220	216	192

A recent QFCC systemic review³³ suggests that, if the partnership between Child Safety and the non-government Assessment and Service Connect service provider is strong, the co-response is beneficial for families and well regarded by local stakeholders.

The review found that Assessment and Service Connect did not necessarily divert families from the child protection system as intended, rather it often identified sufficient information during the process to warrant the substantiation of a notification.

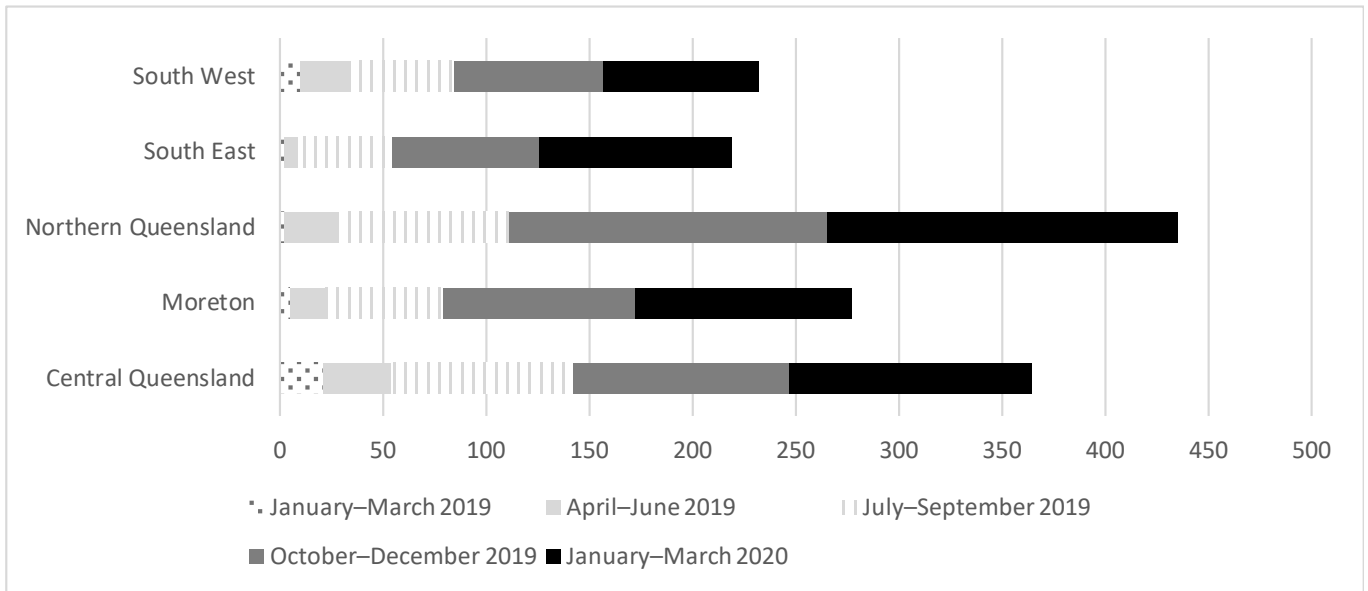
The Family Participation Program is designed to improve the participation in child protection decision-making of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who have come into contact with the child protection system. It gives authority to parents, families and children to solve problems and make decisions in a culturally safe space from the point at which Child Safety begins an investigation and through the process of ongoing intervention.

³² A notification is recorded where there is a reasonable suspicion that a child is in need of protection, that is, a child has been significantly harmed, is being significantly harmed, or is at risk of significant harm, and does not have a parent able and willing to protect them.

³³ The *Seeing They are Safe* review focused on response timeliness for notifications of child harm.

Figure 9 shows the number of referrals made to the Family Participation Program since its inception. Across each period, the proportion referred to the program by Child Safety is approximately 82 percent, with the remaining 18 percent being self-referrals.

Figure 9: Number of accepted Child Safety referrals and self-referrals to Family Participation Program, January 2019 to March 2020 (Source: Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2020)



National goal 3: Improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care by enhancing placement stability through reunification and other permanent options

All children have the right to grow up feeling stable and safe. Researchers have identified that a sense of security, stability and permanency are strong predictors of better outcomes for young people after they leave care.³⁴ Attachment to a responsive adult caregiver promotes a range of healthy social, emotional and physical well-being outcomes for children.

Placement instability, however, can be common for many children in out-of-home care.

This national goal focuses on safety and stability for children and young people in out-of-home care. This is to be achieved in a timely manner that supports lifelong relationships and a sense of belonging, identity and connection.

Five measures have been selected to show progress towards this goal. It is also important to note the Queensland Government has recently taken measures to increase placement permanency through legislation by amending the *Child Protection Act 1999* to favour long-term placements.

1. Children and young people in out-of-home care placed with kin and/or siblings

Child Safety data (see Figure 10) shows that approximately three in four siblings in out-of-home care are placed with at least one sibling, although the percentage of children in out-of-home care who are placed with at least one of their siblings (as at 31 March 2020) has decreased by 3.6 percentage points since 30 June 2010.

³⁴ Commonwealth of Australia 2018, *Fourth Action Plan 2018–2020: National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020*, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2019/dss-fourth-action-plan-v6-web-final.pdf.

Figure 10: Number and percentage of children and young people in out of home care placed with siblings (Source: Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2020)

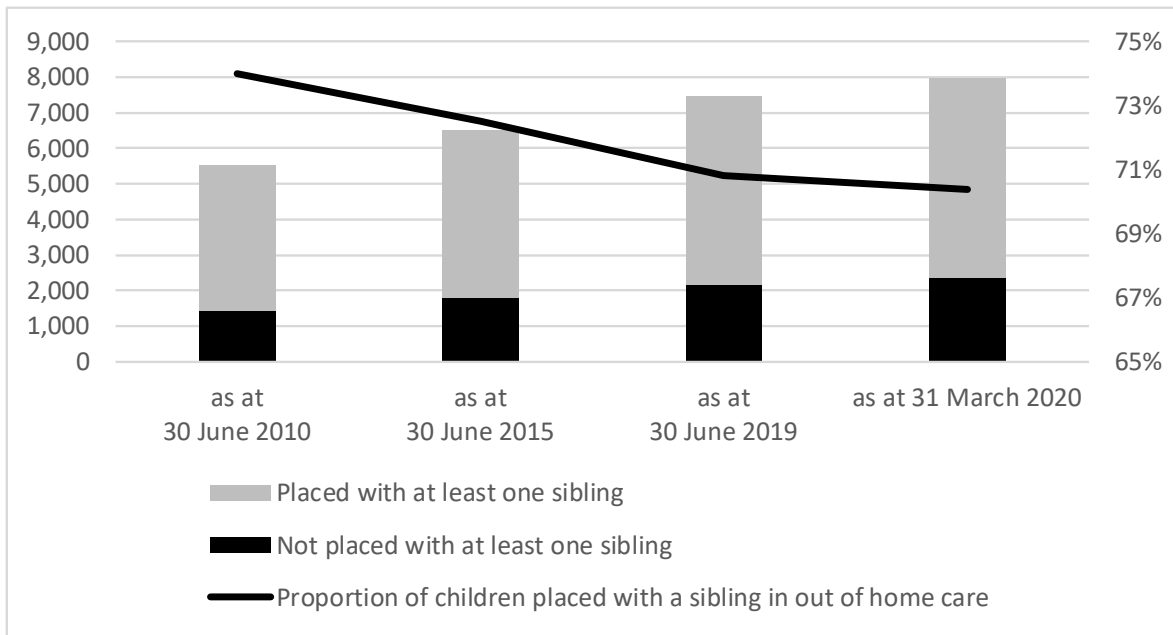


Figure 11 shows the percentages of children in home-based care who have been placed in kinship care and foster care since 2010. This data shows a consistent and pronounced increase in kinship care placements for all children, particularly non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were (proportionally) placed with kin nearly 50 percent more in March 2020 than they were in 2010. There has also been a 34 percent increase in kinship care placements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children during this period. These are positive results as children should, wherever possible, be placed with extended family (kinship carers) in order to maintain family connections.

In contrast, the percentage of children in home-based care placed with foster carers has steadily fallen for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children since 2010. However, a higher percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were placed with foster carers than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at each time point.

The QFCC notes an action outlined in the *Supporting Families, Changing Futures 2019–2023* child and family support system reform strategy is to ‘invest in care connected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kin, community and culture to increase the proportion of children and young people placed with Aboriginal kin’.

As highlighted in the earlier section (National goal 1 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care placed with kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers or with residential care services), under the Child Placement Principle the placement of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child in out-of-home care is prioritised in the following tiered way:

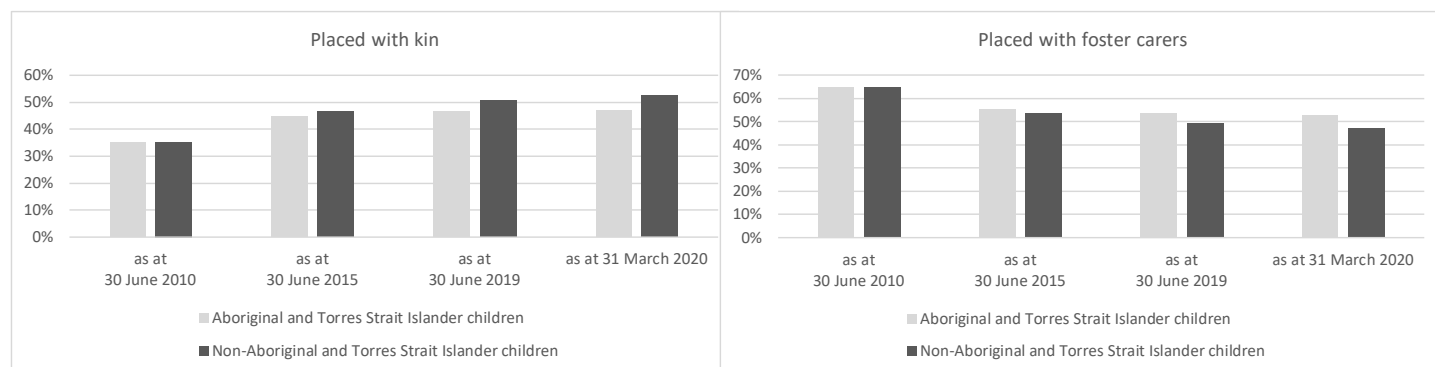
1. with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander relatives or extended family members, or other relatives or extended family members, or
2. with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander members of the child’s community, or
3. with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander family-based carers.

If the above preferred options are not available, as a last resort, the child may be placed with:

4. a non-Indigenous carer or in a residential setting.

The QFCC intends to monitor implementation of this *Supporting Families, Changing Futures 2019–2023* action to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are placed with their kin as a priority. The QFCC will also continue to highlight the impact that the current counting rules (which combine placements for tiers 1– 3 of the Child Placement Principle) have on assessing the true placement outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland.

Figure 11: Percentage of children in home-based care placed with kin and foster carers, by Indigenous status (Years ending 2010, 2015, 2019 and as at 31 March 2020) (Source: Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2020)



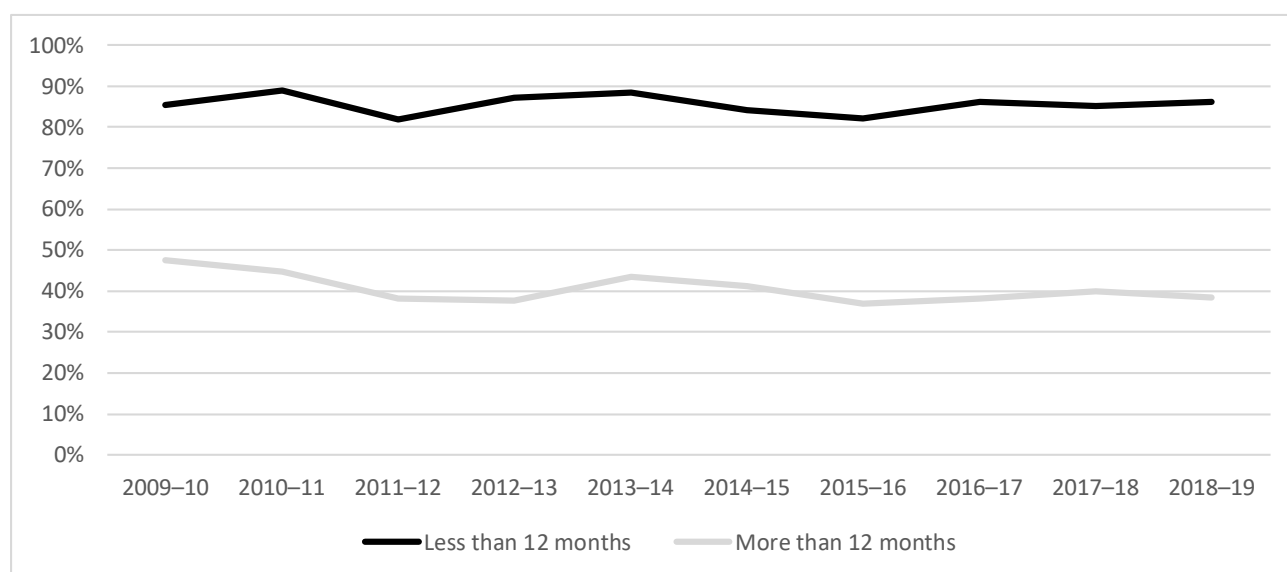
2. Children aged 0–17 years on a care and protection order and exiting care during the year, by number of placements and by the length of time in care

Data from the Australian Productivity Commission reveals that 86.1 percent of Queensland children on a care and protection order, who exited care after less than 12 months, had only one or two placements.³⁵

However, this figure is markedly reduced to 38.5 percent for children on a care and protection order who exited care after more than 12 months.³⁶ Placement instability increases the longer a child is in care. There are a range of reasons why a child may have several placements, such as improving carer-child compatibility.

As evident in Figure 12, children in care for longer periods of time are more likely to experience placement instability.

Figure 12: Proportion of children on a care and protection order with 1–2 placements, exiting out-of-home care, by length of time in care (Source: Productivity Commission 2020)



³⁵ Australian Government Productivity Commission (2020). *Report on Government Services 2020: Child Protection*. Analysis based on information in Table 16A.15.

³⁶ Ibid.

In 2018–19, of all the children on care and protection orders aged 0–17 who exited out-of-home care (1608), 13.4 percent (215) had between six and 10 placements, while four percent of children (64) had 11 or more placements.³⁷

While these statistics tend to relate to children who have been in care for longer periods of time, they are of very concern because the body of research indicates placement instability is a strong indicator of poor health, well-being and social outcomes. These figures show that 279 children had, at a minimum, more than six places to call ‘home’ and in many cases more. They are likely to be conservative.

3. Children aged 8–17 years in care who report they have an existing connection with at least one family member which they expect to maintain

Research has indicated several placement characteristics associated with stability. Placements are known to be more stable if children are placed with kin rather than foster carers.³⁸ Connections with siblings can also serve as a protective factor for children, particularly those who have been removed from their homes.³⁹

If this isn’t possible, children require stability in their placements to let them grow healthy attachments to the adult caregivers in their lives. Research also shows healthy attachments reduce issues such as stress, behaviour problems and mental health issues.⁴⁰

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s (AIHW) *National survey of children in out-of-home care* provides some insights into children’s perceptions of stability and connection with their families.

In 2018, 92.9 percent (368) of Queensland children in care who responded to this survey question reported feeling close to either the family they lived with, the family they didn’t live with, or both. While this may seem positive, this is 1.3 percentage points lower than the national rate. It is also down 3.3 percentage points from the 2015 survey, in which 96.2 percent (395) of Queensland children in care who responded to this survey question reported feeling connections to either the family they lived with, the family they didn’t live with, or both.

4. Children and young people in out-of-home care who report feeling safe and secure in their current placement

AIHW data from the 2018 national survey reveals 90.3 percent of Queensland children aged 8–17 years in care who responded to this survey question reported feeling safe and secure in their current placement.⁴¹ This is comparable to the 2015 survey results for Queensland’s children in care who responded to this survey question (91 percent of whom reported feeling safe and secure in their current placement).

In 2018, a small proportion of survey respondents reported feeling ‘safe but not settled’ (3.2 percent), ‘settled but not safe’ (2.2 percent) or ‘neither safe nor settled’ (4.3 percent). When combined, this reveals that 9.7 percent of Queensland’s survey respondents—36 children—had concerns about their current placement.

³⁷ Australian Government Productivity Commission 2020, *Report on Government Services 2020: Child Protection*.

³⁸ Queensland Family and Child Commission 2017, *Research Summary: Placement stability*, <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/For%20professionals/research/research-summaries/research-summary-placement-stability.pdf>.

³⁹ Children’s Bureau 2019, ‘Sibling Issues in Foster Care and Adoption’, *Child welfare information gateway*, USA, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/siblingissues.pdf>.

⁴⁰ UC Davis Extension Center for Human Services 2008, *Placement stability in child welfare services: Issues, concerns, outcomes and future directions—Literature review*. Davis, CA: Extension Center for Human Services.

⁴¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019, *National survey of children in out-of-home care 2018*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/about-our-data/our-data-collections/national-survey-children-out-of-home-care-2015-1>.

5. Children and young people with transition to adulthood plans who participated in the planning process

When a young person in out-of-home care who is subject to a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the Chief Executive (of the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women) reaches the age of 15, a planning process is expected to start to prepare them for living independently as an adult. This is known as transition to adulthood (T2A) and is part of the ongoing case work and review process with a young person.

It provides an opportunity for young people to identify their future goals and needs and work towards meeting them with the support of Child Safety Services and the community. The T2A process is mandated in child protection legislation⁴² and Child Safety policy outlines the expectation that the young person participates in this process.

Figure 13 shows the T2A planning process occurred more in 2020 than it did in 2010, but has decreased since 2015 for nearly all cohorts of young people in care (except those aged 16 years, for whom it increased by 0.2 percent since 2019).

The occurrence of the T2A planning process increases as the young person ages, does not occur for all young people under the guardianship of the chief executive.

Figure 13: Percentage of young people aged 15, 16 and 17 years, where the T2A planning process occurred, and percentage of this cohort who participated in the process (Source: Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2020)



As evident in Figure 13, not all young people have a say in their T2A planning process. It is not clear why nearly 10 percent of young people aged 17 years who are transitioning from care did not participate in their T2A process.

In a child-centred system the young person would be involved in the T2A planning process every time unless the child chooses not to participate, as the planning process is based on their goals and aspirations.

⁴² Child Protection Act 1999, section 7(e), section 75, schedule 1(k). <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/2018-07-23/act-1999-010>.

National goal 4: Improving organisations' and governments' ability to keep children and young people safe from abuse

The child and family support system is complex and made up of a broad range of actors from multiple disciplines and sectors. Each year, thousands of hours go towards providing prevention, early intervention and protective intervention and support for children, young people and families.

The Queensland Government has undertaken a range of initiatives designed to strengthen the system, from improving organisations' ability to work better with children and families to increasing access to appropriate family support services so people can avoid child protection intervention.

Partnerships exist across the state from the community level to senior executives from agencies with child protection responsibilities. Governance and accountability mechanisms are in place to monitor the system, learn from the data and research and make improvements based on these learnings.

Six measures have been selected to show progress towards this goal. They illustrate some of the initiatives and mechanisms set in place to strengthen responses and keep children and young people safe.

1. Instances in which service information was provided to organisations and families

When people are seeking help, they need to know where to find it. The QFCC established the *oneplace* Community Services Directory (the *oneplace* directory) in January 2016, providing an easily accessible directory of community support services to help Queensland families get to the right service at the right time.

Since the *oneplace* directory was launched, the site has registered 531,890 public searches and sees an average of 10,565 searches per month. This average jumps to 15,790 (searches per month) if the time period is reduced to the past two years (July 2018–June 2020). This indicates the directory is becoming better known and is achieving its intended purpose.

For example, *oneplace* data taken one year prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that searches for 'Emergency relief' spiked 1,727 percent. Search figures for emergency relief returned to slightly lower levels in the April to June 2020 quarter (5216 searches); however, the increased number of searches for this indicates that families continue to struggle in the current pandemic environment.

2. Individuals and organisations registered with blue cards

Blue card screening involves assessing an individual's eligibility to work with children based on their known police or disciplinary information. Individuals are prevented from working with children if their past behaviour indicates they could be a risk to children and/or are unable to protect them from harm or promote their well-being. Blue Card Services acknowledges that each case is unique, and it takes measures to ensure natural justice for individuals who may have police or disciplinary history on their records.

The year-to-date figure for Blue Cards issued is 261,286 (as at May 2020), while 3,104 individuals were prohibited from working with children in regulated environments because their checks returned as 'high risk'.⁴³

⁴³ Blue Card Services 2020, *Blue card system statistics*, <https://www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/regulated-industries-and-licensing/blue-card/system/statistics>.

The Blue Card system also provides ongoing monitoring using police information for all Blue Card cardholders after they have been employed to work with children in regulated environments. As at 31 May 2020, 799,333 checks were made to monitor individuals applying for or holding Blue Cards. To date this year, 801 Blue Cards have been cancelled.⁴⁴

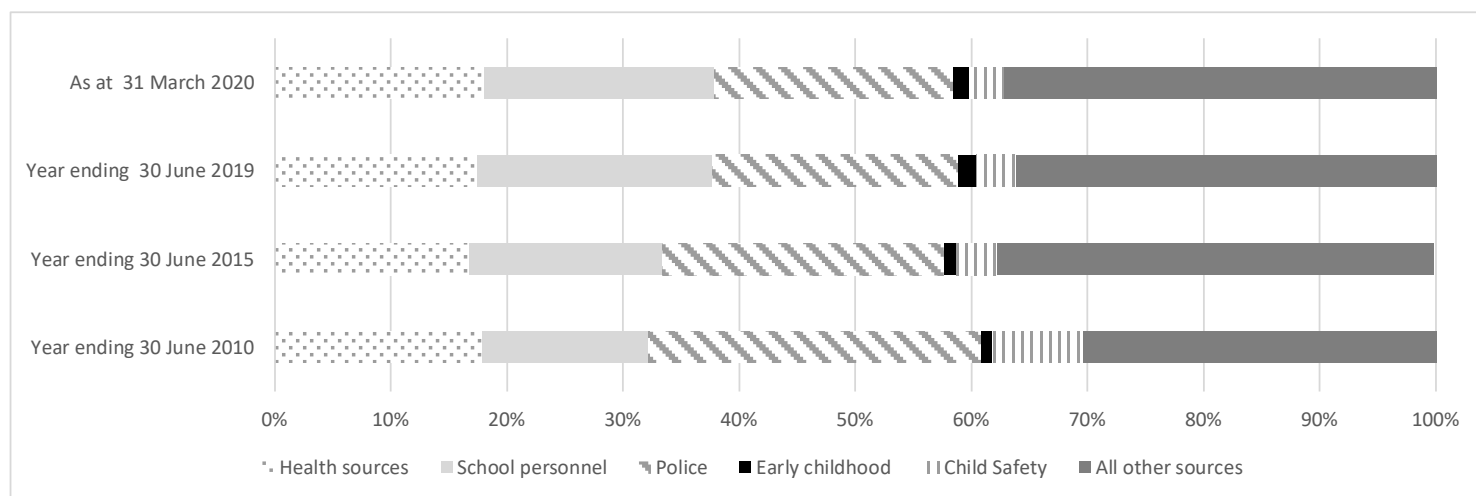
3. Notifications received, by primary source

A central theme of Queensland’s child protection reform program is sharing responsibility for keeping children safe. When someone becomes concerned about a child’s safety and suspects a child has suffered, is suffering or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm, they can notify Child Safety Services. Child Safety will then undertake an assessment of the child’s situation and if necessary, screen the case into the system as a notification.

As Figure 14 shows, reports come from many different parts of the community. However, the majority come from professionals, referred to as ‘mandatory reporters’, who have legal responsibility to report suspected child harm. They include health services professionals, police officers, school personnel, and early childhood and child safety professionals.

Mandatory reporters are collectively the source of approximately two-thirds of all notifications. The other reports are from family, friends and the broader community.

Figure 14: Percentage of total annual notifications recorded, by primary source (Years ending 2010, 2015, 2019 and as at 31 March 2020) (Source: Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2020)



4. Organisational uptake of the Business Maturity Scorecard

The QFCC partnered with the Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA) to develop and promote a Business Maturity Scorecard for community service organisations to assess and advance the maturity of their businesses. Organisations can participate by answering a range of questions, which generate a maturity ‘score’ across eight functional areas of their business (see Figure 15 for the list of domains). The process is intended to be iterative and used as a tool for continuous improvement.

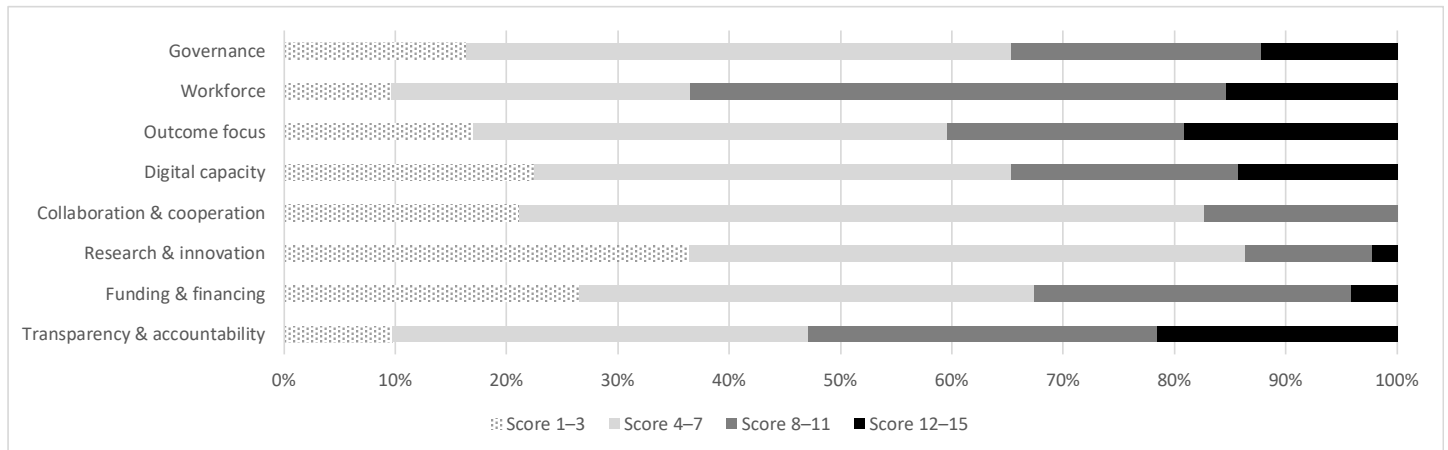
To date, 54 organisations have participated in the process. This figure is expected to climb following further promotion of the tool across the community services industry.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Figure 15 provides a snapshot of participating organisations' responses (54 in total),⁴⁵ showing the proportion of participants ranking their organisation's maturity as low, medium or high on a scale of one (low) to 15 (high).

These early results show that most participants find their organisations to be mature in the areas of *workforce* and *transparency and accountability*. *Research and innovation* and *collaboration and cooperation* appear to be areas for improvement.

Figure 15: Early results of CSIA/QFCC Business Maturity Scorecard across eight domains: proportion of total responses (54), by Business Maturity score (Source: CSIA 2020)



5. Child and family support system workers (survey respondents) reporting that the system: efficiently and effectively uses its resources to achieve outcomes; meets the needs of children, young people and families; is built on shared connections and commitment; and achieves return on investment

The QFCC's annual survey of child and family support workers (755 in total) provides insight into how the front line workforce perceives the system to be operating and achieving outcomes for children, young people and families.

The 2020 workforce survey revealed the following information about the system, based on the perceptions of those working at the front line who responded to the survey.

As evident in Table 2, it showed more respondents disagreed with the statements than agreed. The exception was when they were asked if the system is built on shared connections and commitment.

Table 2: QFCC 2020 Workforce Survey responses on system performance (Source: QFCC 2020)

Survey question	Total 'agree' ⁴⁶	Total 'disagree'
The system efficiently and effectively uses its resources to achieve outcomes	30%	42%
The system meets the needs of children, young people and families	26%	46%
The system is built on shared connections and commitment	42%	30%
The system achieves return on investment	21%	34%

⁴⁵ Note that not all participants responded to all questions, therefore the total number may be slightly lower across the domains. Accordingly, this data is provided for illustrative purposes only and should not be relied upon or referenced.

⁴⁶ Total 'agree' includes responses of 'strongly agree' and 'agree'. Total 'disagree' includes responses of 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree'. 'Neutral' and 'don't know' are excluded, provided for illustrative purposes only and should not be relied upon or referenced.

Table 3 shows the significant differences in agreement found between 2019 and 2020 for each statement included under this topic. This suggests the confidence of front line workers in the system's performance is improving. This is now being measured annually, which provides valuable data to objectively assess system performance as it is perceived by those at the front line.

Table 3: QFCC 2020 workforce survey, comparison of survey responses to selected survey questions, and percentage change from 2019 to 2020⁴⁷ (Source: QFCC 2020)

Survey question	2019	2020	% change
The system efficiently and effectively uses its resources to achieve outcomes	23%	30%	7% ↑
The system meets the needs of children, young people and families	19%	26%	7% ↑
The system is built on shared connections and commitment	33%	42%	9% ↑
The system achieves return on investment	13%	21%	9% ↑

6. Percentage of surveyed community members who have confidence and trust in the child protection system

The QFCC also conducts an annual survey of the general public (the community). This is used to gauge public perceptions and understanding of the child and family support system.

In our 2020 survey⁴⁸ 56 percent of respondents (1,876) agreed (or strongly agreed) with the statement 'Overall, I have confidence and trust in the Queensland child protection system.' A total of 44 percent disagreed).

Confidence and trust in the Queensland child protection system in 2020 (56 percent agree/strongly agree) was consistent with that recorded in previous surveys (55 percent in 2019, 55 percent in 2017).

⁴⁷ '% change' reflects the change in percentage points from 2019 to 2020.

⁴⁸ The total sample size achieved in 2020 was 2,530 Queensland adults (Online= 2,411, open from 20 March to 3 April 2020; Computer-assisted telephone interviewing survey = 119, from 31 March to 3 April 2020). Targets were set to ensure the sample was representative in terms of age, gender and geographic region. However, Queenslanders who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander were deliberately oversampled such that of the 2,530 Queenslanders surveyed, 195 (8%) identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Queensland's performance over time compared with other jurisdictions

The overarching goal of the national framework is that Australia's children and young people are safe and well. A set of indicators was developed to show progress towards achieving the supporting outcomes which, with the strategies articulated across four national action plans, were to focus efforts to reach the goal.

In this report, the QFCC has selected a few of these indicators to assess progress against each supporting outcome, comparing Queensland's performance with other Australian jurisdictions. The assessment ratings used to compare Queensland's performance with other Australian jurisdictions are as follows:

- **'strong'** means Queensland data was better than the national totals or the majority of states and territories
- **'satisfactory'** means Queensland data was on par with national totals or the majority of states and territories
- **'needs improvement'** means Queensland data was below par compared to national totals or the majority of states and territories.

National framework supporting outcome 1: Children live in safe and supportive families and communities

Indicator 1: Children's early development across five domains

QFCC Assessment: Satisfactory

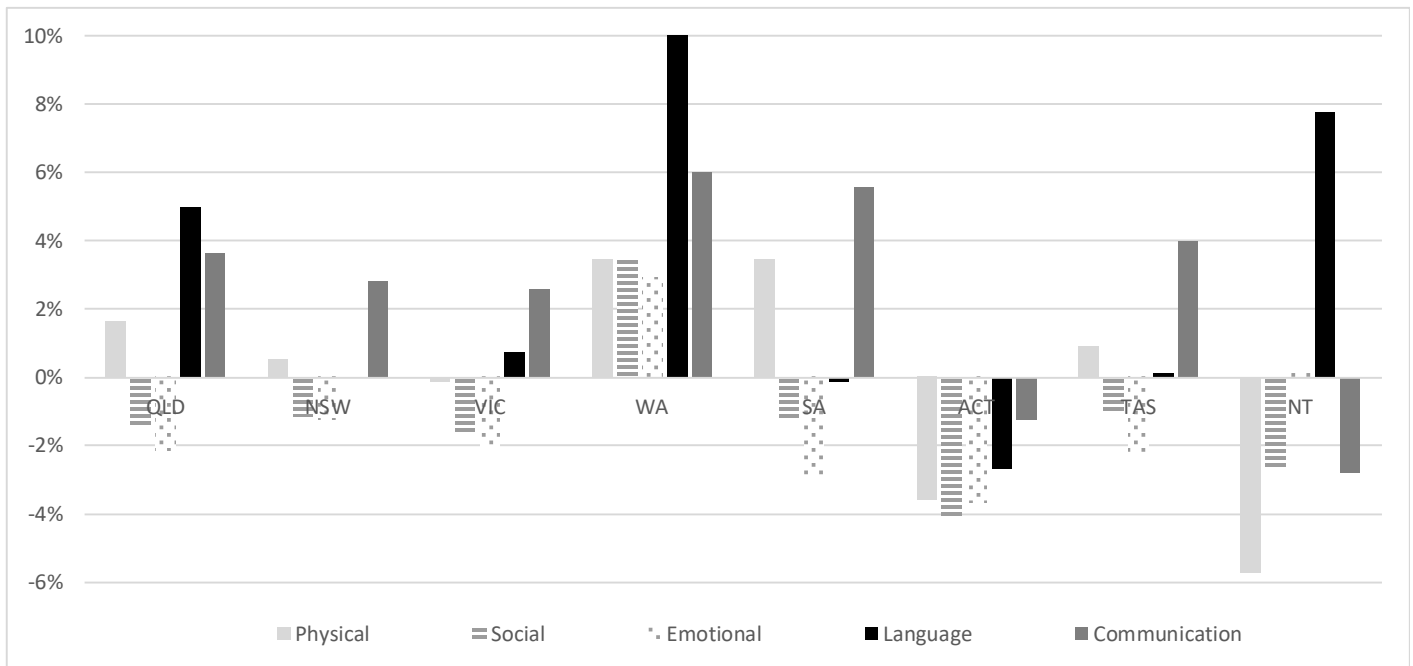
The Australian Early Developmental Census is a longitudinal data collection (a repeated collection of data about the same information) providing information about early childhood development outcomes at the time children start their first year of full-time school. This collection is held every three years, providing community level indicators for children's development and well-being.

As Figure 16 shows, Queensland children showed improvement across three domains: physical, language and communication. Since 2012, fewer Queensland children have been 'on track' in terms of social and emotional outcomes.⁴⁹

Queensland is one of only three jurisdictions showing improvement in at least three domains. The standout performer appears to be Western Australia, which shows improvement in developmental outcomes across all five domains.

⁴⁹ Australian Early Development Census 2019, *Data explorer*, <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data/data-explorer?id=135093>.

Figure 16: Percentage change from 2012 to 2018 in proportion of children who were developmentally ‘on track’, by developmental domain, by Australian jurisdiction (Source: Australian Early Developmental Census 2019)



National framework supporting outcome 2: Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early

Indicator 2: State and territory government real recurrent expenditure on all child protection services

QFCC Assessment: Satisfactory

The Australian Productivity Commission reports annually on real government expenditure, which provides a comparison of state spending on child protection and family support services. Increased expenditure on family support services increases service availability and subsequently families’ ability to access the services they need when they are struggling to cope.

Table 4 provides a comparison of each jurisdiction’s proportion of total expenditure on a) protective intervention and care services (which are the most intrusive and expensive services) and b) on earlier intervention services including family support services and intensive family support services.

Queensland has decreased its expenditure on protective intervention services since 2011–12, while increasing its expenditure on family supports (see Figure 7 in this report). This is consistent with Table 4 which shows Queensland has increased its proportionate expenditure in family support services (i.e. earlier intervention).

This table suggests that Queensland is making progress towards the goal of expanding the family support system, which is one of the central aims of the current child protection reform program focused on earlier intervention.

Table 4: Proportional analysis of real government expenditure on all child protection services, by Australian jurisdiction (2011–12, 2014–15, 2018–19)(Source: Productivity Commission 2020)

	Protective intervention/care services			Family support services and intensive family support services (i.e. earlier intervention)		
	2011–12	2014–15	2018–19	2011–12	2014–15	2018–19
QLD	88.6%	88.4%	83.9%	11.4%	11.6%	16.1%
NSW	73.9%	82.2%	86.6%	26.1%	17.8%	13.4%
VIC	77.3%	75.6%	74.8%	22.7%	24.4%	25.2%
WA	82.8%	89.3%	94.7%	17.2%	10.7%	5.3%
SA	95.4%	91.7%	91.3%	4.6%	8.3%	8.7%
TAS	84.6%	83.1%	87.2%	15.4%	16.9%	12.8%
ACT	90.3%	93.2%	88.0%	9.7%	6.8%	12.0%
NT	97.6%	76.5%	75.2%	2.4%	23.5%	24.8%

National framework supporting outcome 3: Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed

Indicator 3: Children aged 0–17 years commencing with Intensive Family Support service

QFCC Assessment: Strong

An intensive family support service is ‘intensive’ in name and nature. To qualify as intensive family support, a service must average at least four hours of client service per week for a specified term (generally less than six months).

In Queensland, any person can refer a family to an intensive family support service, provided the family meet the referral criteria.⁵⁰ Since 2016–17, these services have been delivered by non-government providers.

Table 5 shows there has been an increase in the number and proportion of the population aged 0–17 years commencing with intensive family support services in Queensland since 2012–13. The number commencing with services more than doubled (106 percent increase) from 2012–13 to 2017–18. This corresponds with the expansion of intensive family support services across the state.

Queensland is one of two jurisdictions with an increase of more than 100 percent during this time. The other was the Northern Territory, which saw a 282 percent increase in young people aged 0–17 accessing intensive family support services.

Victoria and the ACT saw modest increases of 83 percent and 48 percent, respectively, followed by New South Wales with a 23 percent increase in young people accessing Intensive Family Support services.

Approximately one-third of the young people commencing with the services in Queensland identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, statistics which are comparable to New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia.

⁵⁰ Prescribed entities under section 159M of the *Child Protection Act 1999* may refer a child or family to an Intensive Family Support service with or without the family’s consent though is recognised that families are more likely to engage with the service and receive the support they need if the consent of the family is gained. Community referrals should be made with the family’s consent.

Table 5: Number of young people aged 0–17 years who commenced with an intensive family support service, percentage of the total population aged 0–17 years this number represents, and proportion of this cohort who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, by Australian jurisdiction (2012–13, 2014–15 and 2017–18) (Source: Productivity Commission 2020)

	2017–2018 ⁵¹	% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	As % of total population aged 0–17	2014–2015	% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	As % of total population aged 0–17	2012–2013	% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	As % of total population aged 0–17
QLD	7,647	36.6%	0.7%	4,141	34.1%	0.4%	3,714	31.2%	0.3%
NSW	10,500	32.2%	0.6%	9,602	32.1%	0.5%	8,526	32.7%	0.5%
VIC	10,876	8.6%	0.8%	7,615	6.2%	0.5%	5,941	5.1%	0.4%
WA	670	32.5%	0.1%	856	27.6%	0.1%	838	50.6%	0.1%
SA	889	35.2%	0.2%	605	34.9%	0.2%	912	unknown	0.2%
TAS	1,654	unknown	1.5%	1,634	unknown	1.5%	1,831	unknown	1.6%
ACT	297	26.9%	0.3%	237	37.6%	0.3%	201	28.4%	0.2%
NT	585	78.1%	0.9%	unknown	unknown	unknown	153	60.1%	0.2%

National framework supporting outcome 4: Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and well-being

Indicator 4: Finalised child protection investigations that were substantiated

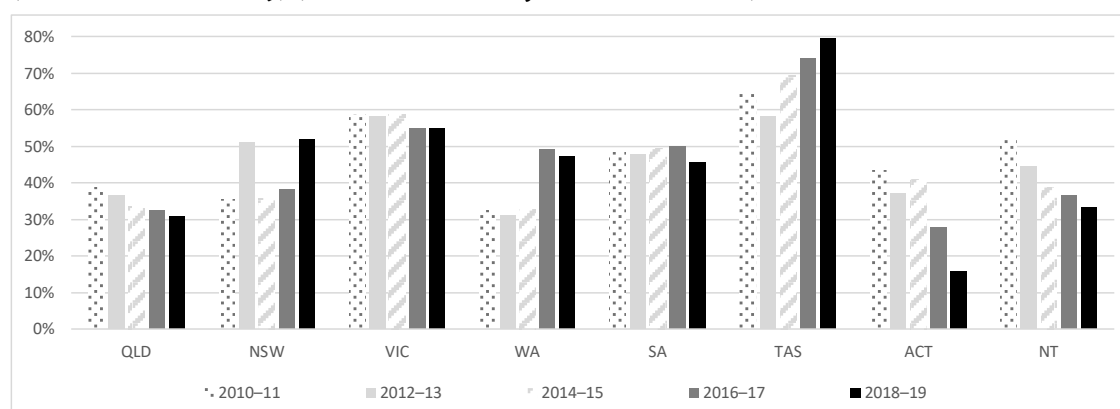
QFCC Assessment: Needs improvement

Figure 17 shows the proportion of finalised investigations substantiated nationally, by jurisdiction, from 2010-11 to 2018-19. A substantiated notification is an indication that the system is responding to a report of significant harm to a child.

Unsubstantiated cases can represent unwarranted intrusions into children’s and families’ lives. Figure 17 shows that Queensland consistently has low substantiation rates, with the proportion of finalised investigations that have been substantiated, decreasing over time.

While the Productivity Commission cautions against comparing jurisdictional performance on this data, it is worth noting that Tasmania enjoys the highest substantiation rates for finalised investigations in every reporting period. The reason for the discrepancy between jurisdictions is not clear, but may relate to technical, legal or policy factors.

Figure 17: Proportion of finalised investigations substantiated, by Australian jurisdiction (2010–11 to 2018–2019) (Source: Productivity Commission 2020)



⁵¹ Data regarding the number of children commencing with services in 2018–19 was not available due to Queensland working to improve the quality and completeness of child data provided by non-government service providers.

National framework supporting outcome 5: Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities

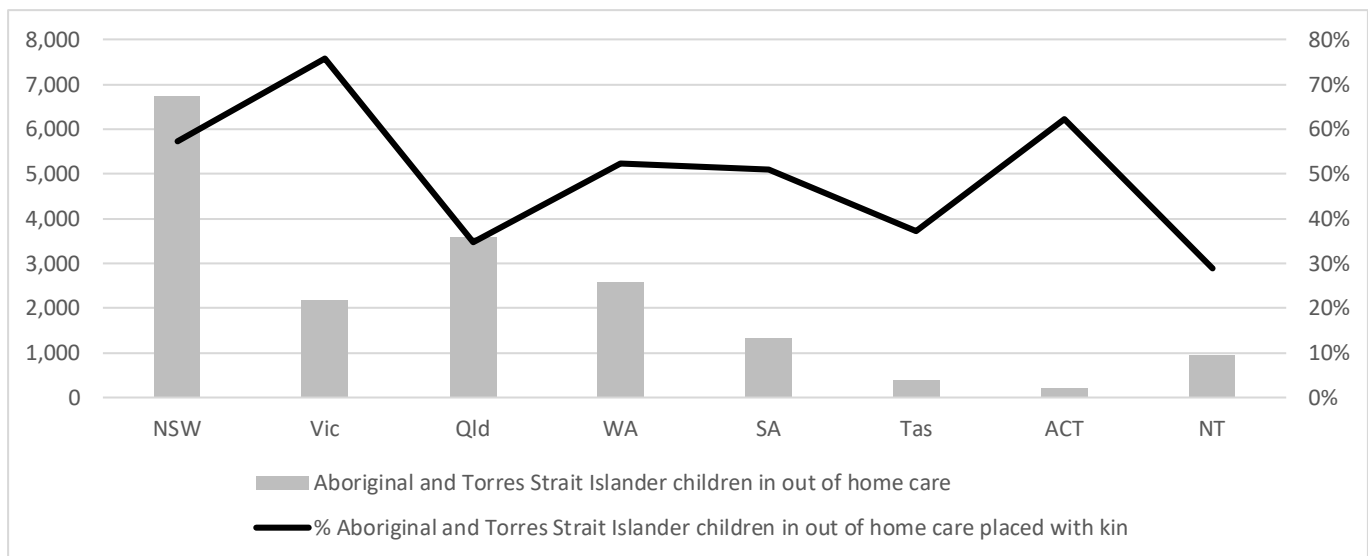
Indicator 5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in a home-based placement

QFCC Assessment: Needs improvement

Nationally, statistical data shows the vast majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in Queensland are placed in home-based care.⁵² Figure 18 shows the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and the proportion who are placed with kin. Some caution should be taken when comparing this data, as there are differences in the way jurisdictions report this data.

As at 30 June 2019, Queensland had the second highest number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, but the second-lowest proportion of kinship care placements across Australian jurisdictions. More must be done.

Figure 18: Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and proportion of this cohort who were placed with family/kin, by Australian jurisdiction (2018–19) (Source: Productivity Commission 2020)



National framework supporting outcome 6: Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented, and survivors receive adequate support

Indicator 6: Children in care who were the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect

QFCC Assessment: Needs improvement

Children in care deserve to be safe and protected, regardless of their placement type (for example, home-based care or residential care). As they are in the care and protection of the relevant state or territory authorities, it is the state/territory that is responsible for keeping them safe from harm and/or abuse.

⁵² Australian Government Productivity Commission 2020, *Report on Government Services 2020: Child Protection*. Table 16A.18.

Children in care deserve to be safe and protected, regardless of their placement type (for example, home-based care or residential care). As they are in the care and protection of the relevant state or territory authorities, it is the state/territory that is responsible for keeping them safe from harm and/or abuse. No further harm should be done to them.

However, as evident in Table 6, a small proportion of children in care across Australian jurisdictions do suffer further harm and/or abuse. To humanise these statistics, the actual numbers which relate to these percentages have been provided.

For example, in Queensland in 2018–19, 196 children in the care of the state experienced further harm and/or abuse. It is important to note that the data reflects reports made in the period in which the harm was reported, not necessarily when the harm occurred.

The diversity in these figures makes jurisdictional comparisons challenging. Queensland’s proportion is neither the highest nor the lowest. When averaged, it is on par with Western Australia.

South Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory have the highest proportions, while Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory have the lowest.

Table 6: Number and proportion of children in care who were the subject of a substantiated notification of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect (2012–13 to 2018–19) (Source: Productivity Commission 2020)

	2018–19		2016–17		2014–15		2012–13	
	% children in care	# children	% children in care	# children	% children in care	# children	% children in care	# children
QLD	1.7%	196	1.5%	165	1.7%	144	2.7%	237
NSW	2.3%	520	3.8%	785	unknown		unknown	
VIC*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WA	1.6%	88	1.7%	88	1.8%	87	0.9%	41
SA	6.5%	290	3.9%	156	3.7%	122	0.3%	8
TAS	0.7%	10	0.7%	9	0.6%	8	0.4%	5
ACT	1.2%	11	0.7%	7	1.3%	11	1.0%	8
NT	2.8%	36	5.8%	77	8.8%	108	1.1%	12

* Data were not available for Victoria, as the Victorian Child Protection Service does not record the required data for children who are in out of home care.

Child Safety data provides a breakdown of the types of harm suffered by children in care by the most serious abuse type that has been substantiated. For the year ending 30 June 2019, of the total substantiations of abuse and neglect, the following proportional breakdowns applied:

- 17.2 percent related to physical harm
- 5.6 percent related to sexual harm
- 44.7 percent related to emotional harm
- 32.5 percent related to neglect.⁵³

These are broadly consistent with previous years’ reporting.

⁵³ Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2019, *Substantiations*, <https://www.csw.qld.gov.au/child-family/our-performance/investigation-assessment-phase/substantiations>.

Queensland's performance towards state goals

Queensland has been implementing a child protection reform program since 2014, following the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry (commission of inquiry). The commission of inquiry made 121 recommendations to strengthen the child protection system and bolster the system for early intervention.

These reforms were supported by record investment in the child and family service system, much of it dedicated to the front line workforce—including non-government organisations providing family support services. The intent was to increase families' access to preventative and early intervention services while decreasing pressure on the statutory child protection system.

As at 30 June 2020 (the latest date for which this information was available), 115 of the 121 QCPCI recommendations have been completed and 6 recommendations are in progress.





In 2019, the QFCC published its findings from the Queensland Child Protection Reform Program Implementation Evaluation, which assessed the first three years of reform program implementation at a system level. The evaluation found the reform implementation was generally on track and had resulted in significant systemic changes to policies, practice and services. It found:

- a considerable increase in support services available to children and families
- increases in the number of families referred to and using community-based services intended to provide help before the situation escalates to Child Safety Services
- improvements in the front line workforce's availability and capability to help families with the issues they are facing.

However, it also found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are increasingly over-represented across all stages of the child protection system. It flagged this as an area requiring urgent attention.

Table 7 provides an overview of implementation progress for the QCPCI recommendations.




Table 7: Overview of progress in implementing the child protection reform program, by reform program domain, as at 30 June 2020 (Sources: Status provided by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet 2020; Details that require referencing of source materials are listed individually; the remainder is QFCC commentary and analysis)

QCPCI reform domain	Description	Status	Details
Sharing responsibility for the safety and well-being of Queensland children	The QCPCI was clear: protecting children is everybody’s business. All Queenslanders—including parents, families and communities—have a role to play in keeping children safe. 11 recommendations	 11 ■ Completed	One of the three main causes of systemic failure identified by the QCPCI was ‘the tendency from all parts of society to shift responsibility onto Child Safety’. ⁵⁴ The Queensland Government has directed significant resources and effort to establishing an accessible and adequately resourced family support system. There are ongoing efforts across government, led by the QFCC, to ensure everyone involved in child welfare—starting with parents—takes responsibility for keeping children safe.
Supporting Queensland families earlier	Identifying and responding to root causes and risk factors for child harm, and intervening early, is the most effective way to prevent harm from occurring (or recurring). 16 recommendations	 16 ■ Completed	Since January 2015, 44 intensive family support services, 33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Well-being Services and 17 Family and Child Connect Services have been progressively established across Queensland to improve families’ access to help and support. ⁵⁵ The QCPCI theorised that expanding the family support system would reduce pressure on demand for costly protective intervention services and conserve governmental resources. However, Child Safety data shows that the demand on Child Safety has not been reduced since the reform program commenced.
Working better with Queensland families who are in contact with the child protection system	It is critical children and families in contact with the child protection system receive high-quality, child-centred and appropriate services to meet their needs. 18 recommendations	 3 15 ■ Completed ■ In progress	The QCPCI recommended a range of initiatives to improve service provision in the child protection system. The changes focused on strengthening casework, introducing child and family-centred practice and increasing cultural competency for front line workers. A range of mechanisms has been established to support high quality practice, such as quality assurance and ongoing monitoring processes.
Improving out-of-home care and post-care experiences for Queensland children and young people	Children who are unable to remain with their parents must have every opportunity to thrive in their out-of-home care placement. Their stability, well-being, security and ability to access opportunities are crucial. 18 recommendations	 18 ■ Completed	There are several placement options for children who are unable to remain with their parents or families. The preferred option is placement with kin. This way, the child remains connected to family, friends and culture. Child Safety data shows that more children are living away from home now than prior to reform program implementation and are staying in care for longer periods of time. The 2018 AIHW National survey of children in out-of-home care showed that 93% of Queensland children in care (answering this survey question) reported feeling close to the family they live with, the family they don’t live with or both, while 90.3 percent reported feeling safe and secure in their current placement (see page 66).

⁵⁴ Queensland Government 2014, *Taking responsibility: a Roadmap for Queensland Child Protection*, http://www.childprotectioninquiry.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/202625/qcpci-final-report-web-version.pdf.

⁵⁵ Queensland Government 2019, *Supporting families, changing futures 2019-2023*, <https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/resources/campaign/supporting-families/supporting-families-changing-futures-2019-2023.pdf>.



<p>Meeting the needs and requirements of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented in all parts of the child protection system. More work must be done to advance self-determination⁵⁶ and ensure children remain connected to their families and their culture.</p> <p>16 recommendations</p>	 <p>■ Completed</p>	<p>Since 2014, Queensland's child protection system has experienced improvements in legislation, policies and practice changes, supported by considerable investment, to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. However, the statistics suggest the child and family support system continues to fall short of meeting their needs and requirements. The QFCC will continue to monitor the performance of the system in responding to and meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in its role as an independent oversight body.</p>
<p>Delivering quality services to Queensland children and families through a capable, motivated workforce and client-focused organisations</p>	<p>The child and family support sector must have the necessary skills, abilities, knowledge, aptitude and attitude to keep children safe and support families.</p> <p>10 recommendations</p>	 <p>■ Completed</p>	<p>Child protection is challenging, demanding and complex work, and calls for capable and talented practitioners. Considerable effort has gone into building the capacity and capability of the child and family support sector workforce, supported by record investment in front line workers since 2015. However, there is a need for continued efforts to strengthen the ability of the front line to respond in a timely manner with high-quality service provision.</p>
<p>Building an accountable, transparent and cost-effective Queensland system</p>	<p>Agencies with child protection responsibilities must be accountable and transparent and operate as efficiently as possible while providing quality services for children, young people and their families.</p> <p>32 recommendations</p>	 <p>■ Completed ■ In progress</p>	<p>The child and family support system must be closely monitored to measure its performance and outcomes for children and young people. A strong and high functioning system will result in increased public confidence that Queensland's children are safe and protected.</p> <p>A range of initiatives have been undertaken to improve system performance, reliability, accountability, productivity and sustainability. The QFCC has a central role in overseeing the system.</p>

⁵⁶ Self-determination is the authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to participate in decisions that are about them and/or affect their lives. That is, the active participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the decision-making process that promotes the way of being and doing, in context for families and children. It is about active participation of the family in the decision-making process and preferencing their say. For more information, see www.snaicc.org.au.





Reducing the number of, and improving the outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system

Australia and Queensland have both committed to upholding the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Nationally, Australia is a member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and a signatory to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Through the establishment of its Human Rights Commission and the *Human Rights Act 2019*, Queensland has recognised that Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples are two distinct cultures that should be practiced and their connections to their communities upheld. Further, the Queensland Government has enshrined in legislation the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles thereby holding the child and family support system to account.

Numerous strategies focus on improving life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families and communities. National and state strategies are currently being reviewed or coming up for review in 2020, including *Closing the Gap*.⁵⁷ The *Closing the Gap* refresh will be guided by the principles of empowerment and self-determination and will deliver a community-led, strengths-based strategy to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to move beyond surviving to thriving.

Once the draft targets have been agreed on by all states and territories, this refresh will be released as the next generational strategy that will guide the Australian Government in how it includes and does business with its traditional custodians.

It is expected that the *Closing the Gap* refresh will see a greater focus on partnership between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This will provide a new way forward, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people share ownership, responsibility and accountability for driving progress for current and future generations. This is needed, as detrimental trends continue to disrupt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to experience high levels of disadvantage. The *Family Matters Report 2019* highlighted a national trend towards permanent placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children away from their families. Nationally, they are 37.3 percent of the total number of children in out-of-home care, but only 5.5 percent of the total population of children.⁵⁸ In 2018, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 10.2 times more likely to be removed from their families than non-Indigenous children.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Australian Government, *Closing the Gap*, <https://closingthegap.niaa.gov.au/about-closing-gap>.

⁵⁸ Family Matters 2019, *The Family Matters Report 2019*, <https://www.familymatters.org.au/the-family-matters-report-2019/>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Table 8 provides a breakdown of results, by Australian jurisdiction, of efforts towards achieving the four *Family Matters Roadmap* building blocks, which are:

- All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children.
- Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive.
- Governments and services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As Table 8 shows, Queensland is either improving or showing promising practice across the four building blocks. It is one of the stronger performers among Australian jurisdictions by these measures, although there remains room for improvement.

Table 8: Family Matters report card results comparison, by Australian jurisdiction (2017–2019) (Sources: The Family Matters Report 2017, 2018, and 2019)

	Universal and targeted services			Participation, control and self-determination			Culturally-safe and responsive systems			Accountability		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
QLD	**	***	***	***	****	****	**	**	***	***	***	***
NSW	**	**	**	**	*	*	***	**	*	*	*	*
VIC	**	**	**	***	****	****	***	***	***	****	****	****
WA	*	*	*	*	**	**	*	*	**	*	**	**
SA	*	*	**	*	*	*	*	**	**	**	**	**
TAS	**	***	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
ACT	**	**	*	*	**	**	*	*	**	*	**	***
NT	*	**	**	*	**	*	*	**	**	*	**	**

Family Matters Queensland, in partnership with the Queensland Government, released the *Changing Tracks Action Plan 2020–2022*, the second action plan of the *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037*.

The key priority will be implementing strategies to address systemic, social and policy barriers contributing to the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system.

The following sections break down the experience of Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across a range of sectors.

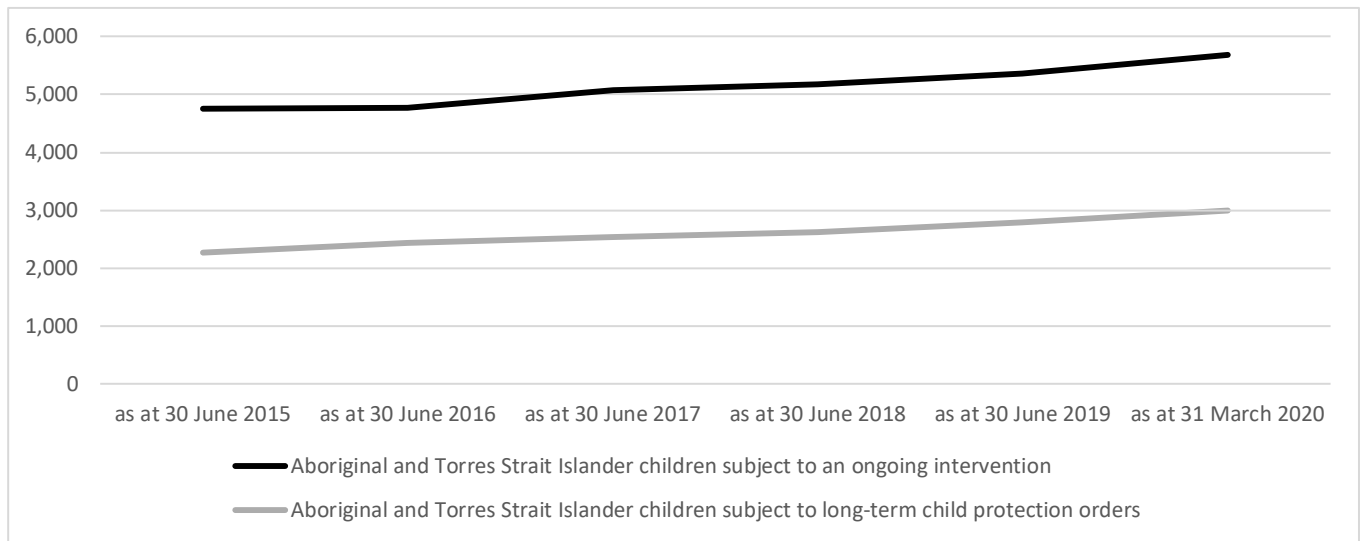
Child protection

In Queensland, the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care (intervention with parental agreement and child protection orders) continue to increase (see Figure 19). Queensland also continues to match the national trend of placing more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children onto long-term child protection orders.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2019, *Legal Permanency – Long-term child protection orders*, <https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/child-family/our-performance/ongoing-intervention-phase-permanency-planning/legal-permanency-long-term-child-protection-orders>.



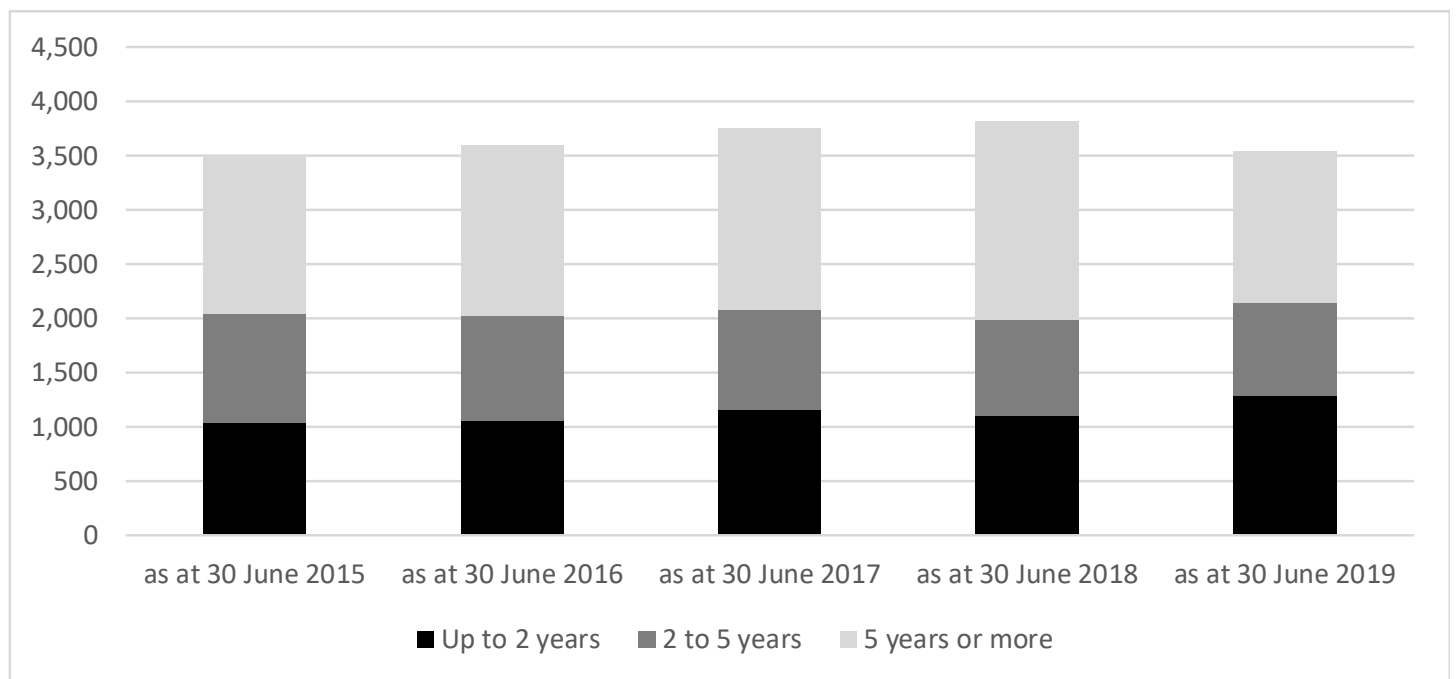
Figure 19: Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to an ongoing intervention with Child Safety and number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to long-term child protection orders, (2015–2020) (Source: Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women 2020)



The amount of time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are spending in care (that is, subject to ongoing intervention) is also on an upward trend. This is likely due to the introduction of legislation preferencing long-term orders (intended to improve placement stability for children).

As Figure 20 shows, since 2018, there has been an increase in the duration of time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children spend in the child protection system. This trajectory is concerning, as it can lead to a further increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remaining inside the child protection system, who are not being actively placed with family.

Figure 20: Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system, by duration of time in out-of-home care (2015–2019) (Source: Productivity Commission 2020)



Education and training

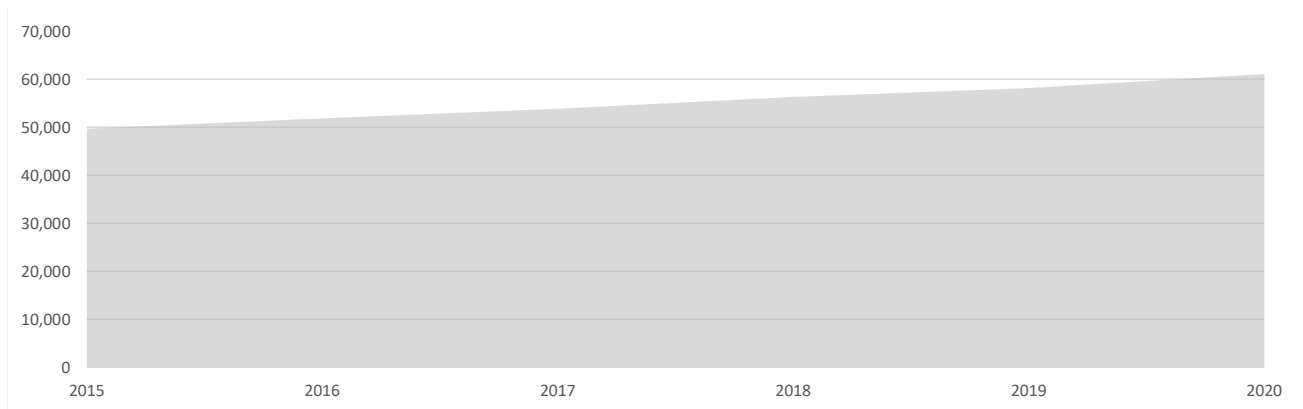
The *Every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student succeeding strategy*⁶¹ sets the direction for the Department of Education to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in state schools. Its priorities are:

- Connect to culture
- High expectations
- Meaningful pathways.

In 2019, 58,143 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in Queensland's state schools.⁶² This equates to 10 percent of state school students.

As Figure 21 shows, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments continue to increase in Queensland.⁶³

Figure 21: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school enrolments—Prep through Year 12 (2015–2020) (Source: Department of Education 2020)



Enrolments for Year 12 students have also been increasing each year, which, according to the *Closing the Gap* report 2020,⁶⁴ puts Queensland on track with all other states and territories.

Given the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders enrolled in school is around 10 percent, a disproportionate amount of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were subject to disciplinary absences in 2018.⁶⁵ As Figure 22 shows, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students represent 14 percent of Year 12 students, 21 percent of Year 10 students and 26 percent of Year 7 students with disciplinary school absences.

⁶¹ Department of Education 2020, *Every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student succeeding strategy*, <https://education.qld.gov.au/initiativesstrategies/Documents/atsie-student-succeeding-strategy.pdf>.

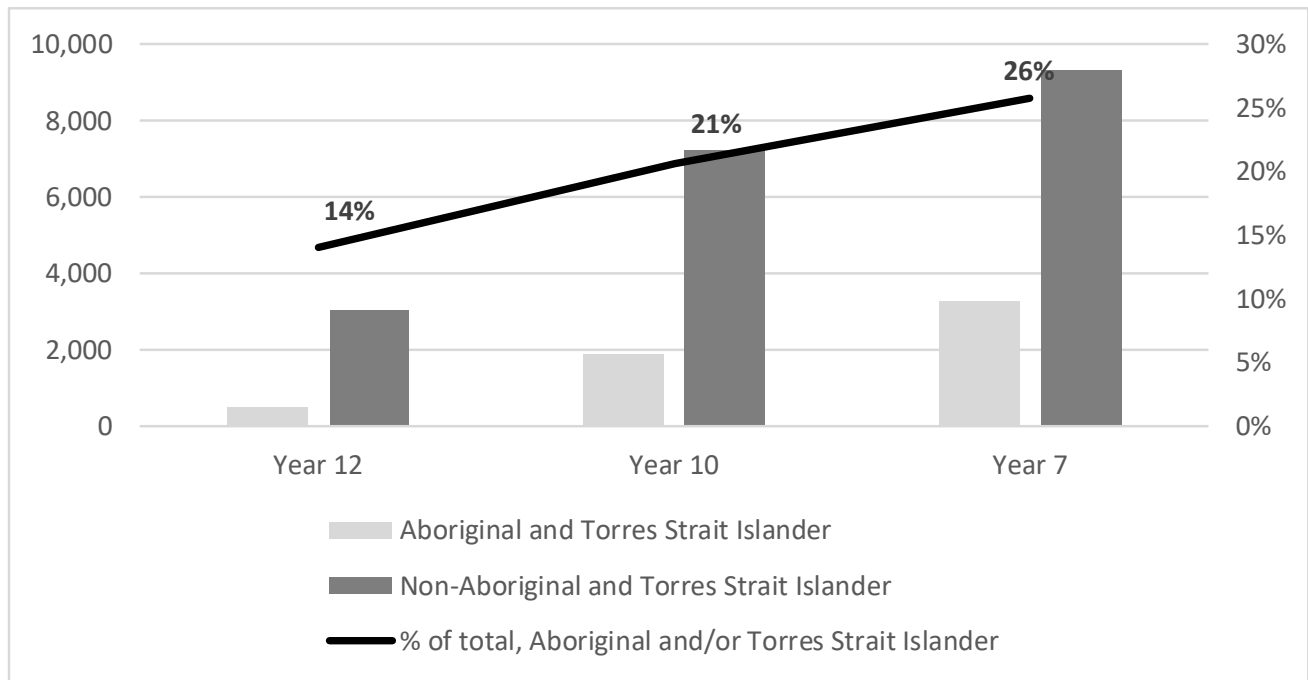
⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Department of Education 2020, *Students: State school enrolments, 2016-20*, <https://qed.qld.gov.au/det-publications/reports/earlyyears/Documents/enrolments-summary.pdf>.

⁶⁴ Australian Government 2020, *Closing the Gap Report 2020: Year 12 attainment*, <https://ctgreport.niaa.gov.au/year-12-attainment>.

⁶⁵ Department of Education 2019, *Statistics: Students: school disciplinary absences*, <https://qed.qld.gov.au/publications/reports/statistics/schooling/students>.

Figure 22: School disciplinary absences, by Indigenous status, and percentage of total school disciplinary absences relating to children who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (2018) (Source: Department of Education 2019)



There is an inverse link between school attendance and a trajectory into youth offending. According to the Department of Youth Justice, 53 percent of young people in Queensland’s youth justice system have disengaged from education, training or employment.⁶⁶

Youth justice

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are still disproportionately represented in the youth justice system in Queensland. In 2019, 59 percent of young people in the system identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.⁶⁷

Compared to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were:

- 9 times more likely to have a proven offence
- 17 times more likely to receive a supervised order ⁶⁸
- 28 times more likely to be held in custody
- 27 times more likely to be on remand on an average day.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Department of Youth Justice 2019, *Youth Justice Pocket Statistics 2018–2019*, <https://www.youthjustice.qld.gov.au/resources/youthjustice/resources/pocket-stats-18-19.pdf>.

⁶⁷ Department of Youth Justice 2019, *Youth Justice census summary*, <https://www.youthjustice.qld.gov.au/resources/youthjustice/resources/yj-census-summary-statewide.pdf>.

⁶⁸ If a court finds a child under the age of 13 years guilty of an offence, it may make an intensive supervision order. Usually this order is only made if your child has already been on other orders and they are now at risk of going to detention. A youth justice officer will supervise this child for the period of the intensive supervision order. The child must follow certain rules, participate in certain activities, and must frequently go and to see their youth justice officer.

⁶⁹ Department of Youth Justice 2019, *Youth Justice Pocket Statistics 2018–2019*, <https://www.youthjustice.qld.gov.au/resources/youthjustice/resources/pocket-stats-18-19.pdf>.

Health

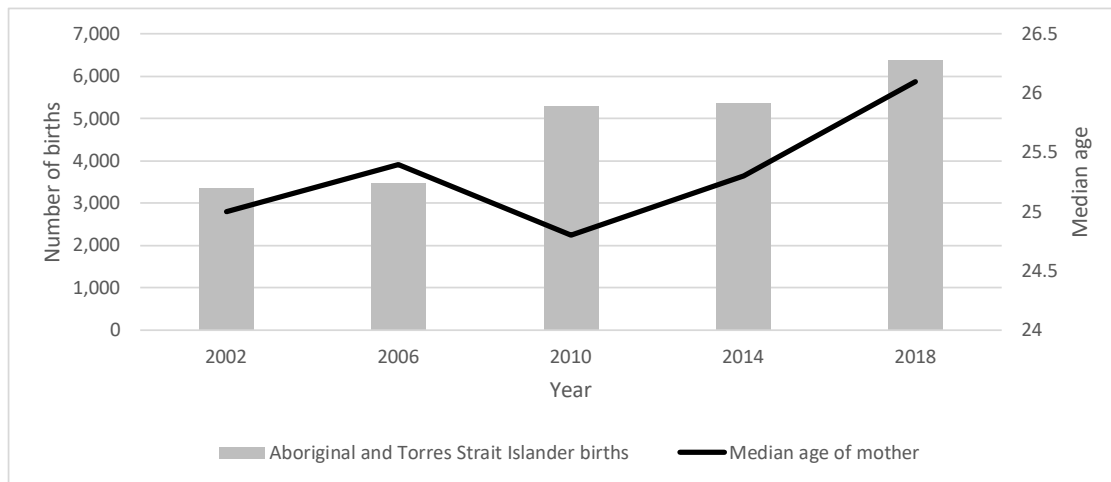
As evident in Figure 23, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies born in Queensland has increased by 91 percent since 2002. In 2018, 6,382 babies were born to women who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.⁷⁰ This figure also shows the median age for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers to be increasing over time. It is currently around 26 years.⁷¹

The registration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births is of significant concern to the QFCC. A 2018 report by Queensland’s Ombudsman identified that only 58 percent of children born to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander mothers were registered within 60 days of the birth. The likelihood of not registering a birth increases with remoteness.⁷²

There are several practical and legal disadvantages for children whose births are not registered, and the challenges grow as these children become adults. Registering for school or a sporting club, obtaining a driver’s license or receiving governmental benefits all require identification, which can be difficult to access without a birth certificate.

The Ombudsman’s investigation into this matter revealed a range of issues and challenges that must be addressed to remove this barrier to inclusion for so many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children.

Figure 23: Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births in Queensland and median age of mother (2002–2018) (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018)



According to the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2018–19*:


- 64.1 percent of Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 2–17 years were reported as being underweight or of normal weight
- 35.9 percent were reported as being overweight or obese.⁷³

⁷⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births and fertility*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3301.oMain%20Features62018?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3301.o&issue=2018&num=&view=>.

⁷¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births, summary, by state*, http://stat.data.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=BIRTHS_SUMMARY.

⁷² Queensland Ombudsman 2018, *The Indigenous birth registration report*, <https://www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au/improve-public-administration/reports-and-case-studies/investigative-reports/the-indigenous-birth-registration-report>.

⁷³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, 2018–19: Mental Health*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4715.oMain%20Features72018-19?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4715.o&issue=2018-19&num=&view=>.



This survey also yielded information about the consumption of fruits, vegetables and sugary drinks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 2–17 years, reporting:

- 96.2 percent of boys and 91.8 percent of girls have inadequate daily fruit and/or vegetable consumption (as per the 2013 Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council Guidelines)
- 60 percent of boys and 64.7 percent of girls usually consume sugar sweetened drinks.

While no data on the mental health of Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people was provided, the QFCC remains aware that the majority of mental health issues present before the age of 25 years, and for some, the risk of developing mental health issues increases due to their circumstances and experiences.⁷⁴

Child Safety data shows as at 31 March 2020 (the latest data available), in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households known to Child Safety:

- 46 percent reported domestic violence
- 67 percent reported drug and alcohol abuse
- 6 percent reported housing issues or homelessness.⁷⁵

Deeply distressing and traumatic events can have profound effects on children and young people. Thus, it is essential that they have access to early intervention support to prevent and reduce these impacts.

As Table 5 identified, approximately one-third of the young people commencing with intensive family support services in Queensland identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in 2017–18 (the earliest year for which this information is available). This is up from 31.2 percent in 2012–13, and is a positive sign that a larger proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are engaging with supports and services when they need help.

⁷⁴ Queensland Mental Health Commission 2019, *Shifting minds: Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategic Plan 2018–2023*, https://www.qmhc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/qmhc_2018_strategic_plan.pdf.

⁷⁵ Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (2020). *Our Performance. FP.4: Prevalence of family risk factors in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households, Queensland*.



