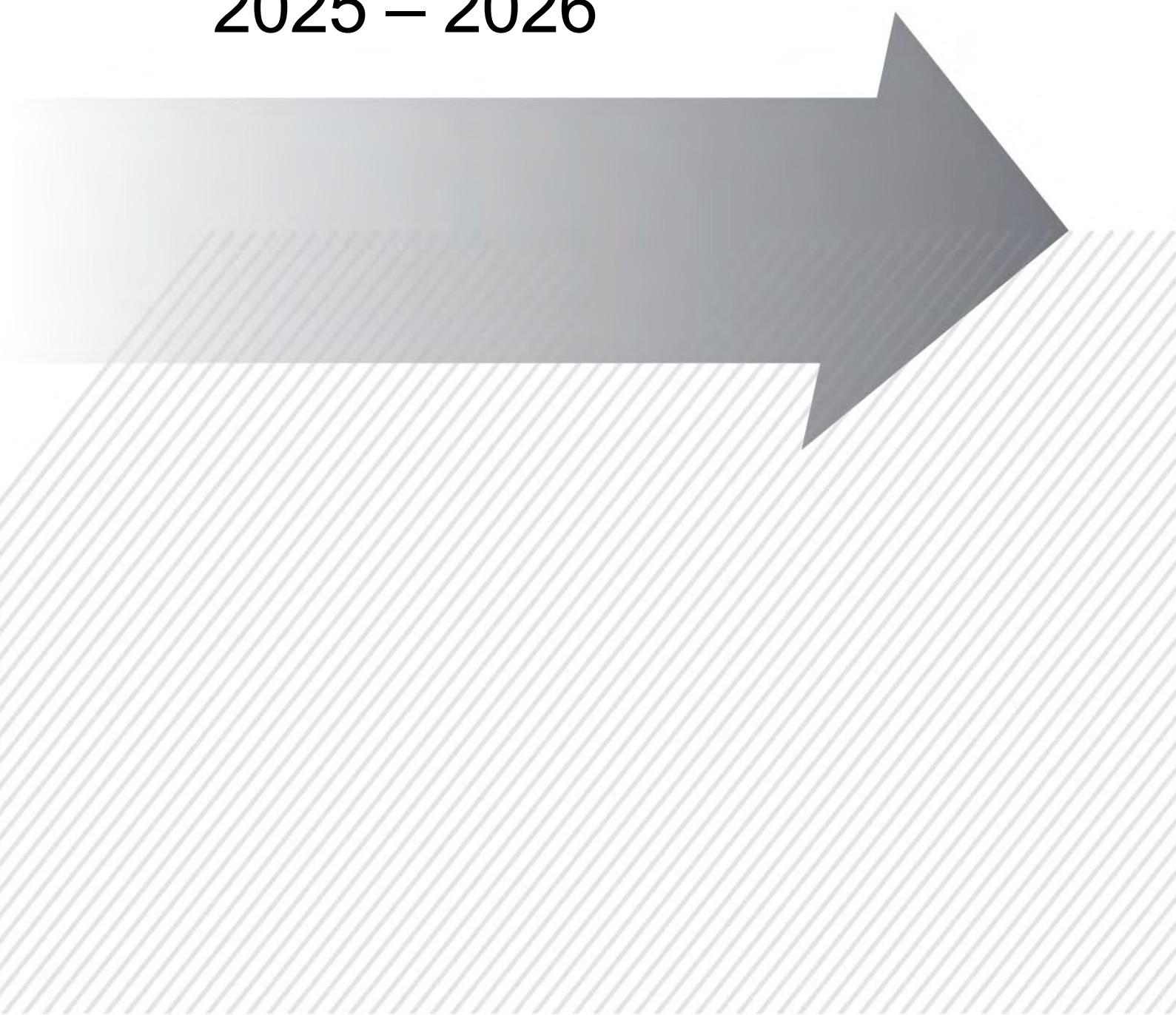


Queensland Family and Child Commission

Annual Report

2025 – 2026



About this report

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (the Commission) is a statutory body of the Queensland Government. Its purpose is to influence change that improves the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families. This annual report describes the progress made in 2024–2025 toward achieving the strategic objectives. These objectives are published in the Queensland Family and Child Commission Strategic Plan 2022–26. It sets out our financial position and compliance with legislative requirements. Production costs of this report have been minimised. An electronic copy is available at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/annual-report.

Accessibility



The Commission is committed to providing accessible information and services to Queenslanders from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds. To talk to someone about this Annual Report in your preferred language call Smart Services Queensland (SSQ) on 1800 512 451.

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Acknowledgement

The Commission acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians across the lands, seas and skies on which we walk, live and work. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as two unique peoples, with their own rich and distinct cultures, strengths and knowledge. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across Queensland and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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31 August 2026

The Honourable Deb Frecklington MP
Attorney-General
Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity
Department of Justice

Via email: attorney.general@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Attorney-General

I am pleased to submit for presentation to the Parliament the Annual Report 2025–2026 and financial statements for the Queensland Family and Child Commission.

I certify that this Annual Report complies with:

- the prescribed requirements of the *Financial Accountability Act 2009* and the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*, and
- the detailed requirements set out in the *Annual report requirements for Queensland Government agencies*.

A checklist outlining the annual reporting requirements is provided at Appendix B of this annual report.

Yours sincerely



Luke Twyford
Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission

31 August 2026

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Commissioner's introduction

The 2025–26 financial year was the most significant period of transformation in the history of the Queensland Family and Child Commission.

On 1 October 2025, the Commission became Queensland's regulator under the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024*. This represented a fundamental evolution in our role. For the first time, the Commission was entrusted not only with independently examining how systems protect children, but also with regulating the standards, practices and organisational cultures that help prevent abuse before it occurs. This was a profound shift in our responsibilities and an important milestone in Queensland's approach to child safeguarding. Becoming a regulator required more than new legislative powers—it required the Commission itself to evolve.

During the year we undertook the largest organisational expansion in our history, recruiting more than 25 specialist regulatory staff and significantly strengthening our organisational capability. We procured the multi-million dollar Lighthouse case management, expanded our engagement with communities and regulated organisations across Queensland, strengthened our governance and business systems, and established the operational capability needed to administer Queensland's new child safe organisations framework and Reportable Conduct Scheme. We established dedicated regulatory teams, recruited specialist staff, implemented operational systems and finalised the policies, procedures and practice frameworks that underpin the Child Safe Organisation system's day-to-day operation. These arrangements provide the foundation for intake, assessment, compliance monitoring, engagement, information management and regulatory decision-making. These investments have created a stronger, more capable and more mature Commission, ready to meet both our current responsibilities and those that lie ahead.

Importantly, this period of extraordinary growth did not come at the expense of our independent oversight role. Throughout the year, the Commission continued to monitor the performance of Queensland's child protection, youth justice and family support systems, review the deaths of children, undertake research, advise government and communicate evidence that informed public policy and public debate. We published significant oversight reports examining school disciplinary absences, expenditure and market forces in residential care (*Buyer Beware*), the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system (*Principal Focus*), and the realisation of children's rights in Queensland.

This work was undertaken in the context of the Queensland Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection, which brought significant scrutiny to the child protection system while placing substantial demands on the Commission itself. We responded to five Notices to Produce, provided 11 formal submissions, prepared three witness statements and appeared before the Inquiry to assist its deliberations. While the Inquiry necessarily became the primary mechanism for examining many aspects of Queensland's child protection system, the Commission continued to provide independent analysis, evidence and advice across the broader child safeguarding landscape.

Our commitment to high-quality, independent oversight was perhaps best reflected in the completion and release of *In Plain Sight: Review into Queensland's system response to child sexual abuse*, one of the most significant reviews in the Commission's history. The review demonstrated that child sexual abuse remains one of the most significant threats facing Queensland's children and challenged governments and institutions to move beyond responding to abuse after it occurs. It identified practical reforms to strengthen prevention, improve intelligence and information sharing, and build organisational cultures where children are safe by design. The Queensland Government's response accepted the need for substantial reform, announcing the establishment of the future Queensland Protection Commission and a new, integrated approach to child safeguarding. Few oversight reviews have had such immediate influence on the future direction of child safeguarding in Queensland.

In 2025, the Commission was honoured to receive the Queensland Child Protection Week Award for Child Safety in recognition of the impact of our Youth Summit. The Youth Summit is our flagship annual initiative for amplifying the voices of Queensland children and young people. Held during Youth Week, it brings together young people from diverse backgrounds to share their experiences, identify emerging issues affecting children and young people, and contribute directly to the Commission's policy, advocacy and oversight work. The award recognises our commitment to ensuring that the perspectives of children and young people are not only heard, but actively inform the decisions and reforms that affect their lives.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the professionalism, expertise and commitment of our people. Throughout a year of unprecedented organisational change, our staff embraced new responsibilities while continuing to deliver high-quality oversight and regulation with integrity, commitment and an unwavering focus on improving outcomes for children. The Commission concludes the 2025–26 financial year as a fundamentally different organisation from the one that began it. We have successfully transitioned into Queensland's Child Safe Organisations regulator, strengthened our workforce, modernised our systems and built the operational capability required to deliver complex regulatory functions.

The progress achieved during 2025–26 gives me every confidence that we have the expertise, commitment and determination to meet the challenges ahead. While our organisation will continue to evolve, our purpose remains constant: improving the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children and families through influential oversight, effective regulation and evidence-informed reform.



Luke Twyford
Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission

About us

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (the Commission) is a statutory body charged with responsibility to review and improve the systems that protect and safeguard our children.

The *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* (FCC Act) requires us to:

- promote the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people (s9)
- promote and advocate for the responsibility of families and communities to protect and care for children and young people (s9)
- improve the child protection system by providing oversight (s9)
- maintain a register of child deaths in Queensland and report on them annually to identify trends and inform prevention strategies (s25) and,
- host the Board and support systemic reviews following the death of a child connected to the child protection system (s29F).

The *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (CSO Act) requires us to:

- promote the safety of children (s13)
- promote the prevention of child abuse (s13)
- promote the proper response to allegations of child abuse (s13)
- monitor the implementation and enforce compliance with the Child Safe Standards and Universal Principle (s13)
- administer, monitor and enforce compliance with the reportable conduct scheme (s40).

To fulfill these functions the Commission:

- collects, monitors, analyses and reports on the performance of government systems
- conducts system reviews and evaluations
- publishes findings and recommendations
- monitors progress against government strategies and past recommendations
- publicly reports on issues and presents facts to the community, the media and the Parliament
- reports to the responsible Minister on our work and findings
- makes submissions to decision-making bodies promoting evidence and amplifying lived experiences
- promotes awareness and accountability by raising understanding of obligations for harm prevention
- supports sector capability to empower organisations to implement child safe practices and cultural safety
- provides clear guidance to help organisations meet the obligations of our regulatory approach

Our strategies and activities support the government's objectives for the community, including:

- Safety where you live (strategic priorities one through six)
- Health services when you need them (strategic priorities one through five)
- A better lifestyle through a stronger economy (strategic priority one)
- A plan for Queensland's future (strategic priorities one through six).

Our strategic plan

Vision:
Every Queensland child is loved, respected and has their rights upheld.

Purpose:

To influence change that improves the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families.

Strategic priorities

1. We shape system performance in the best interests of children and their families by producing rigorous analysis and evidence-based advice.
2. We advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children by collaborating with organisations, entities and individuals.
3. We increase opportunities for children and families to influence decisions that affect their lives.
4. We support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to grow up strong in their identity, culture, and community, free from systemic racism and discrimination.
5. We ensure Queensland organisations meet their obligations to safeguard children and prevent abuse through the strategic use of our regulatory powers.
6. We exhibit excellence in governance, performance and organisational culture.

Commitments

We are committed to:

- being a child safe organisation
- ensuring the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are adequately and appropriately represented
- advancing the rights of children and their families.

Values

- Collaborative and engaged
- Respectful and inclusive
- Objective and courageous
- Excellence

Our context

We are a Commission focused on Queensland's most precious resources – its children and families. Currently, there are more than 5.7 million people living in Queensland.¹² In the 2021 Census, there were approximately 1.33 million families living in Queensland, including 468,727 families that are two-parent families³ and 153,159 that are single parent families. In the past 12 months, the number of Queensland children and young people aged 0–24 years has increased approximately 1.7 per cent to an estimated 1.7 million.⁴

Approximately 29.8 per cent of Queenslanders are under the age of 25.⁵ We know that of the 1.7 million young Queenslanders, approximately:

- 21 per cent speak a language other than English⁶
- 11 per cent have a disability⁷ and 101,933 are active NDIS participants⁸
- 8.3 per cent identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples⁹
- 16 per cent identify as a person with a mental health condition¹⁰
- 25.4 per cent are developmentally vulnerable¹¹
- 11,800 are educated via home education¹²
- 23,229 received specialist homelessness services¹³
- more than 13,500 are in out-of-home care (OOHC)¹⁴
- 300 were in detention¹⁵ and 16.8 were held in a police watch house on an average day¹⁶

The Commission defines a family as any household containing two or more generations connected by biological, legal, emotional, or social bonds, who provide mutual support, care and a sense of belonging to each other. The Commission prioritises the experiences of five groups in our work:

1. Families exposed to the child protection system
2. Children in OOHC and their carers
3. Families involved in the youth justice system
4. First Nations families
5. Families and children experiencing specific vulnerabilities including: parents or children living with a disability; parents or children experiencing poor mental health; parents or children experiencing domestic, sexual or family violence; parents or children experiencing housing instability or homelessness; parents and children experiencing poverty; parents or children with reduced access to services (including those living in rural and remote areas); and parents or children with problematic substance use.

A snapshot of 2025–26

We received **1118 enquiries** from members of the public and delivered **over 200 engagements to raise awareness of the CSO Act** with parents and carers, sector leads and peak and representative bodies, through conferences, trade shows, community events, and presentations.

We **commenced proactive compliance engagements with 28 organisations** under the Child Safe Organisations system.

Six oversight reviews were completed and provided significant insight into statutory child protection systems and opportunities to influence systemic change.

37 formal recommendations to government were made to improve systems for children and their families.

44 formal submissions were made to state and federal and international reviews and inquiries.

Commissioners appeared at **seven public parliamentary hearings**.

The details of **452 child deaths were recorded** in the Child Death Register.

We **reviewed the lives of 83 children known to child safety** so that the Board could consider the deaths of children known to the child protection system.

72 requests for information were made under sections 35 and 29A of our legislation.

Our work featured in **2364 media reports**.

Our website received **927,000 views** and our resources were **downloaded 139,826 times**.

We funded **\$1,260,420** to 15 partners to build the capacity and capability of Queensland organisations to meet their obligations under the CSO Act.

Our corporate performance

Service delivery statements (SDSs) provide budgeted financial and non-financial information for the Budget year. The Commission is required to report on two service area objectives:

- To influence change that improves the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families.
- To identify opportunities to help protect children and prevent deaths that may be avoidable through recommendations for system improvements.

The Commission met or exceeded all measures as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Commission's 2025–26 service standard statements

Commission's service standards	2025–26 target	2025–26 actual
<i>Effectiveness measure</i> Percentage of surveyed stakeholders that feel the Commission contributes to improving the child protection and youth justice systems	80%	80%
<i>Efficiency measure</i> Commission expenditure per young Queenslander	\$18.00	\$18.00
Child Death Review Board service standards	2025–26 target	2025–26 actual
<i>Effectiveness measure</i> Average time taken to review final internal agency review reports once received (months)	6	6
<i>Efficiency measure</i> Average cost per review of child death case received	\$25,000	\$20,000

1. The variance between the 2025-26 Target/Estimate and the 2025-26 Estimated Actual is attributed to the increase in the number of cases reviewed and finalised by the Board Secretariat as a result of increased process efficiencies and full complement of Secretariat staff for the majority of the reporting period.

Commission of Inquiry into the Child Safety System

The Commission of Inquiry into the Child Safety System (the Inquiry) commenced on 1 July 2025, marking a significant development in Queensland's child protection reform agenda. With a broad mandate to examine the effectiveness of the child safety system the Inquiry became a defining feature of the Commission's operating environment during 2025–26. Given the Inquiry's comprehensive examination of Queensland's child protection system, there was reduced strategic value in initiating major new child protection oversight projects. Instead, we focused on ensuring that the extensive body of evidence, analysis and recommendations we had developed over many years informed the Inquiry's work. Over the course of the Inquiry, we dedicated significant resources to supporting its work. This included responding to requests for information, facilitating access to evidence and providing documentation drawn from our oversight functions. During the reporting period, the Commission and the Board responded to five Notices to Produce issued by Commissioner Paul Anastassiou. Across five document bundles we provided 193 documents, totally over 2400 pages of evidence. Through these contributions, we supported the Inquiry to access a substantial body of independent evidence accumulated over many years of statutory oversight.

Further, Commissioner Twyford submitted three written statements to the Commission on: Our history in monitoring the outcomes of the Carmody Inquiry; the methodology used for *Buyer Beware*, the availability of placement options in Queensland; and the history of the Commission, our functions and powers, achievements and impact, and our future direction. Across these witness statements Commissioner Twyford presented the Inquiry with 193 attachments totalling over 2400 pages of evidence. Commissioner Twyford was called to give evidence to the Inquiry on 25 February 2026. The primary focus of this appearance was to give evidence regarding matters relating to the effectiveness of the Department as a corporate parent, particularly in the context of children in residential care, their interactions with the youth justice system and the need for a secure care facility.

Commissioner Twyford produced a further three written submissions to the Commission of Inquiry. This included consolidating our previous oversight findings into a single publication, *Fixing the Foundations*, which brought together our key evidence, systemic findings and recommendations regarding Queensland's child protection system. Further to this, Commissioner Lewis provided eight submissions on:

- Child protection decision-making reform: A child rights-based resolution model
- The ATSICPP
- Corporate parenting submission: Transition from care and post care outcomes
- Carers' willingness and capability to uphold the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care
- Systemic abuse and neglect
- Youth justice and corporate parenting
- Cairns Public Hearing
- Adequacy of existing complaints systems, procedures, and incident reporting guidelines for children under the care of the state.

1. We shape system performance in the best interests of children and their families by producing rigorous analysis and evidence-based advice

Over the last several years our monitoring activities, child death reviews and our oversight reports (on watchhouses, school disciplinary absences, interventions with parental agreements, blue card approvals for kinship carers, exiting detention, and the residential care system) have all informed government reforms. This year we worked to confirm and consolidate our oversight agenda, ensuring our oversight work is anchored in our core annual deliverables. These include our section 40 oversight functions, the *Principle Focus* report, our child death insights papers, and the thematic reviews of the Board. These deliverables form a connected body of work that collectively tells the story of how systems are performing for Queensland children and families. They help us identify the patterns, the themes, and the lessons that individual incidents alone cannot reveal.

A significant focus of our oversight of Queensland's child protection system during 2025–26 was supporting the Queensland Commission of Inquiry into Child Safety. Given the Inquiry's broad mandate to examine the performance of the child protection system, there was reduced strategic benefit in the Commission initiating major new oversight activities during the reporting period. Instead, we prioritised ensuring that the substantial body of evidence, analysis and recommendations we developed over many years informed the Inquiry's work. This approach enabled us to consolidate and present our oversight findings in a comprehensive and accessible way, ensuring that the Inquiry could draw on our evidence of systemic issues, reform priorities and the experiences of children, young people and families.

During 2025–26, we continued to strengthen our oversight approach by placing greater emphasis on the implementation, monitoring and impact of our recommendations. Recognising that oversight extends beyond the publication of reports, we focused on supporting continuous improvement through ongoing engagement with government agencies and monitoring progress against identified reforms. A key priority during the year was therefore tracking commitments, monitoring implementation, and promoting transparency and accountability for reform outcomes.

Oversight reviews

Fixing the Foundations

Fixing the Foundations was our principal submission to the Inquiry and was published on 8 April 2026. Rather than focusing on individual operational issues or isolated policy changes, the report examined the underlying design of Queensland's child protection system and argued that meaningful improvement requires structural reform rather than incremental adjustment. The report begins from the premise that Queensland has invested heavily in child protection reform over several decades, yet many of the system's fundamental challenges have persisted. Demand for statutory intervention continues to increase, more children are entering and remaining in care, the complexity of children's needs is growing, and the system remains heavily weighted towards responding to crisis rather than preventing harm. The report argues these challenges reflect deeper structural weaknesses in the way Queensland organises, governs and oversees child protection. To address these issues, the report proposed seven interconnected 'reset reforms' designed to rebuild the foundations of Queensland's child protection system. These reforms called for greater investment in keeping families together wherever it is safe to do so, improving the quality of child protection investigations and case management, guaranteeing the quality of places where children in care live, improving long-term outcomes for children in care, creating a system capable of continuous learning and improvement, reforming departmental structures to better support quality and performance, and strengthening independent oversight and accountability.

A central theme of *Fixing the Foundations* is that child protection reform must move beyond periodic inquiries and isolated initiatives towards a system deliberately designed to improve over time. The report advocates for stronger accountability, better use of data and intelligence, clearer governance, integrated oversight and a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention. It argues that protecting children requires not only capable frontline services, but also institutions that can identify emerging risks, learn from evidence and continuously improve the performance of the broader child protection system. In doing so, *Fixing the Foundations* provided a long-term blueprint for systemic reform of Queensland's child protection system.

Buyer Beware

*Buyer Beware: How economic forces are shaping Queensland's residential care market*¹⁷ explored how current market settings, funding structures and system design impact the delivery and sustainability of care, particularly for children with complex needs. While our past reviews examined the experiences and outcomes of children and young people in residential care this is the first time we've undertaken a focused economic analysis of the system. The report found that by 2030, Queensland was projected to require 5000 additional out-of-home care placements, with an estimated 4000 children expected to be in residential care due to declining foster care availability. This increased reliance on residential care is expected to significantly drive system costs, with 34 per cent of approximately 17,000 children in care placed in residential settings, in a projected \$7 billion per annum out-of-home care system.

The findings of this report pointed to opportunities to improve alignment between cost, quality, and child-centred care, and support longer-term planning and investment in the system to provide quality care for children now and in the future. The paper attracted extensive media coverage and was heavily referenced throughout the Inquiry's final report, *From Pressure to Purpose: Reforming Child Protection in Queensland*.¹⁸

Queensland Child Rights Report 2025

The *Queensland Child Rights Report 2025*¹⁹ examines key child rights areas, including child safety, youth justice, health, education, cultural connection and youth participation. It highlights key challenges to protecting children's rights in Queensland, including the jurisdictional gaps created by a federal system. The report finds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people remain dramatically over-represented in Queensland's child protection and youth justice systems and identifies gaps in data collection on violence against children, inadequate independent oversight of permanency decisions for First Nations children, and ongoing inequities in housing, health, mental health, education and school disciplinary practices.

The report calls for action to address the factors that place some children and young people at greater risk of exclusion, harm or unequal treatment. A series of briefings were delivered to key departments focusing on the translation of findings into actionable system reform priorities, with emphasis on areas of systemic risk, disparity, and accountability gaps. These briefings were an opportunity to test government response, clarify expectations, and reinforce accountability for implementation. The report was well received by key government stakeholders, prompting fruitful discussions focused on strengthening youth participation, improved data sharing, and ongoing collaboration opportunities.

Include me, don't exclude me

*Include me, don't exclude me: The experiences of children and young people who have been suspended or excluded from Queensland state schools*²⁰ explores and highlights the experiences of children, young people, and their families who have been affected by School Disciplinary Absences (SDAs). In 2023, there were 81,918 SDAs issued to 42,498 state school students, representing 7.5 per cent of all students. First Nations students and students with a disability experience SDAs at twice the rate of all students, while those living in care receive SDAs at more than three times the rate. By amplifying their voices, the report called for alternative, more effective approaches to school discipline that do not disrupt students' experiences of quality education. There is a growing recognition of the critical role that children and young people

play in providing unique insights into their own lived experiences—insights that provide alternatives to the adult-centric nature of the systems that children engage with.

Release of *In Plain Sight: Review of System Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*

On 4 December 2024, the Attorney-General referred a matter to the Child Death Review Board and requested a review of system responses to child sexual abuse under section 29I of the FCC Act. The Board was asked to use the Ashley Paul Griffith matter as a case study to review system responses to child sexual abuse and make recommendations for any necessary improvements to the laws, policies, procedures and practices across the early childhood education and care, police and the Blue Card systems. To conduct this review, the Board:

- established a dedicated team within the Commission
- issued 49 information requests to a range of Commonwealth and state government agencies, non-government organisations and private companies, using the Board's information access powers under s29P of the FCC Act
- received 494 documents in response to the information requests
- commissioned research to identify best-practice approaches for protecting children from sexual abuse, identifying perpetrators and children at risk of abuse, and responding to allegations of abuse
- mapped different pieces of legislation to help understand the legislative framework operating during and subsequent to the time of offending, focusing on three key domains: sexual offending against children, early childhood education and care (ECEC), and working with children checks
- approached several leading experts to assist, guide, and inform the Review, including attending expert roundtable meetings
- invited 51 organisations with a role in child sexual abuse prevention to contribute submissions
- sought advice from Australia's children's commissioners, advocates and guardians on best-practice initiatives underway in their jurisdictions
- documented the detailed chronology of the offender's movements based on court and public records, as well as information gathered under the Board's information access powers
- engaged with victim-survivors and their families and supported them to make submissions to the review to ensure that their perspectives and experiences were central to the Board's understanding of the case
- issued a call for public submissions on improvements needed in policies and practices in the ECEC, police and blue card systems to better protect children from sexual abuse.

In December 2025, the Board released *In Plain Sight: Review into System Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*.²¹ The 506-page report is the broadest review of Australia's response to child sexual exploitation since the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and is the first to consider contemporary issues such as early childcare, online perpetration, the darknet and online exploitation material. The report made 28 recommendations to strengthen child safeguarding in Queensland. They focus on improving leadership; institutional and organisational practice; responses to victim-survivors; strengthening intelligence gathering and actioning; building community awareness around child sexual abuse; and reforming the criminal justice system.

Dissemination of report

Following its December 2025 release, *In Plain Sight* has become the Commission's most downloaded report with over 13,595 downloads of the full report, report chapters and associated research reports. It featured in over 920 media articles in the month following its release and generated significant public debate and increased community awareness of what we should all do to prevent child sexual abuse. To support the public dissemination of the incredibly important but detail-heavy content, we released a seven-part podcast series, the first of its kind in our history. The *In Plain Sight* podcast is a core supporting communication product for the report. This approach aims to translate complex findings into clear, accessible

narratives that build understanding, trust and momentum for reform. The podcast complements formal launch materials by providing the opportunity for reflection and engagement, while remaining aligned with the overarching communication objectives and key messages. Each of the seven podcasts focussed on one of the report sections and featured a range of sector leaders and lived experience advocates.

Several briefings were provided to government and key sector stakeholders, including Queensland Police Service, Australian Federal Police, Department of Justice, Department of Education, Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, and major non-government stakeholders. Presentations were made to committees and groups including the Standing Council of Attorney-Generals, Australia and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group, and the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Protective Behaviours Community of Practice.

Queensland Government response to recommendations

On 16 June 2026 the *Queensland Government response to In Plain Sight: Review into System Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*²² was released, committing to a significant package of reforms aimed at strengthening Queensland's safeguarding system and preventing child sexual abuse across Queensland. The reforms respond directly to recommendations from the review and are designed to strengthen Queensland's ability to identify risks earlier, connect information more effectively and prevent harm before it occurs. Key reforms include:

- establishment of the Queensland Protection Commission as a dedicated safeguarding agency
- creation of a Child Safeguarding Intelligence Hub to support the identification of emerging risks and patterns of concerning behaviour, and opportunities for earlier intervention
- creation of a Child Safeguarding Intelligence Network to improve information sharing across government agencies and other entities with child safeguarding responsibilities
- integration of child safeguarding functions, including worker screening and reportable conduct oversight, to strengthen prevention and risk management.

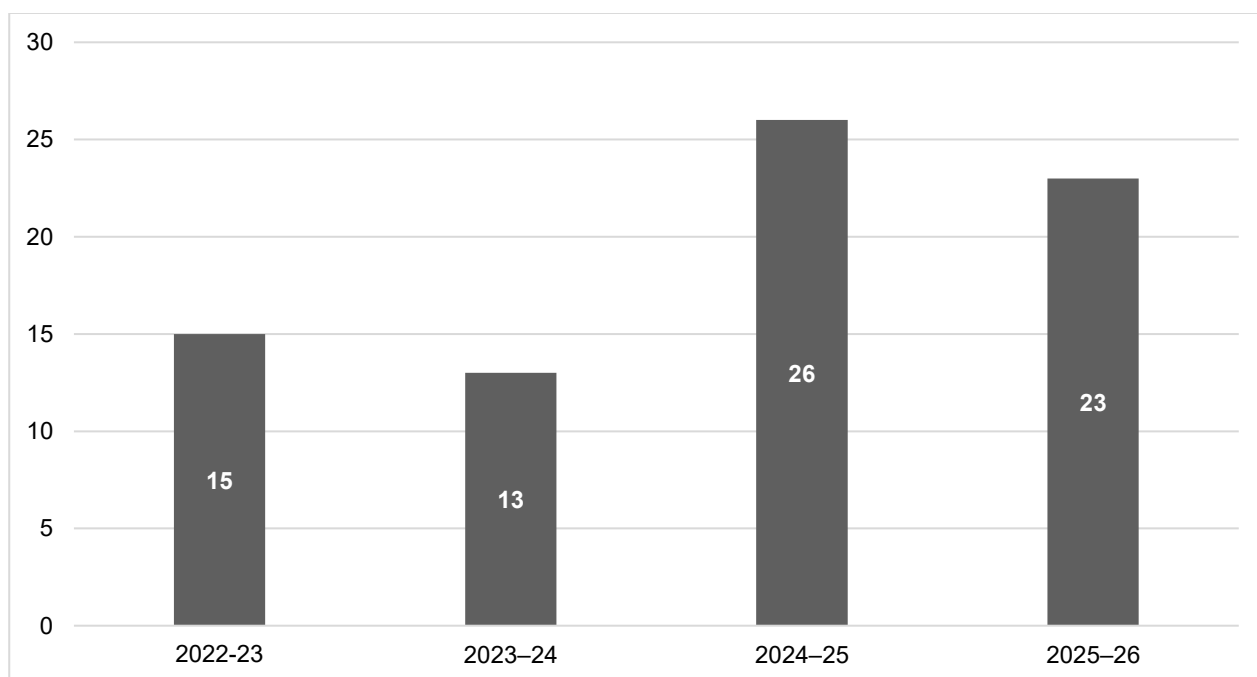
Together, these reforms are intended to improve information sharing, strengthen accountability and support earlier identification of risks to children.

Exercising our statutory information gathering powers

Access to timely and reliable information is fundamental to our independent oversight role. The FCC Act provides the Commission and the Board with statutory powers to require information from public entities and, in the case of the Board, non-government organisations. These powers ensure we can undertake robust oversight, examine systemic issues and provide evidence-informed advice to government. Section 35 of the FCC Act requires public entities to provide information relevant to the performance of Queensland's child protection and youth justice systems to us when requested. Public entities are required to comply unless disclosure is prohibited by legislation, is impracticable, would prejudice an investigation or legal proceeding, or would endanger a person's life or physical safety. The Commission expects public entities to support independent oversight through timely and complete provision of information. Access to information is essential for effective scrutiny, informed advice and public accountability.

During 2025–26, we issued 23 section 35 requests for information. While this was slightly lower than the 26 requests issued in 2024–25, it represents a sustained increase in our use of statutory powers, with information requests now occurring at almost twice the level seen prior to 2024–25. This reflects our increasing reliance on direct evidence from agencies to inform oversight activities. The Department of Child Safety was the subject of most requests, reflecting its central role in the child protection system. It was also the only agency that did not consistently comply with the Commission's statutory requests. Of the 14 requests issued to the Department, five were complied with in full, two were only partially complied with, four were declined, and three remained outstanding at the end of the reporting period. No other agency declined to provide information requested under section 35.

Figure 1: Number of s35 information requests



Child Death Review Board – section 29 requests

The Child Death Review Board may require a public entity or non-government organisation to provide information needed to perform its statutory functions. These powers allow the Board to access primary source information, examine the circumstances surrounding children's deaths and identify recurring systemic issues.

During 2025–26, the Board issued 40 section 29 information requests, an increase of 14.3 per cent from the 35 requests made in 2024–25. All requests issued during the reporting period were complied with. The increase reflects a significant change in how the power was used. Requests supporting the Board's child death review program increased by 666.7 per cent from 2024–25 (3 requests) to 2025–26 (23 requests). This reflects the Board's growing use of statutory information-gathering powers to support detailed individual and thematic reviews, including from non-government organisations who are involved in the lives of children. In 2025–26, requests associated with the *In Plain Sight: System Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* review decreased from 32 to 17, a reduction of 46.9 per cent, as the review progressed from evidence gathering towards analysis, finalisation and publication. These results demonstrate that, although the Board's total use of section 29 increased, its information-gathering activity became less concentrated on a single major review. The substantial growth in requests supporting the Board's broader review program reflects a more systematic and evidence-intensive approach to examining child deaths and identifying opportunities for prevention and system improvement.

Advocacy and advice on contemporary social policy issues

Over the last three years, our advocacy work has grown in scale and breadth. Our public appearances at parliamentary hearings, our submissions to reviews, and our own advocacy events and reports – including the Child Rights Report, movie screenings, Children’s Week sponsorships and Youth Summit – have all increased. Our priority this year has been to maintain our strong and visible advocacy across both the Queensland and national policy landscape. We have continued to strategically use the levers available to us – parliamentary submissions, conference presentations, public statements, hosted events, and social media – to make sure key issues for Queensland families remain firmly on the public agenda. These issues are well known to us, but they are far from resolved. We have continued to speak to:

- the over-reliance on and misuse of residential care
- the ineffectiveness of many statutory youth justice responses
- the prevalence of preventable child deaths
- the ongoing over-representation of First Nations children and families across statutory systems
- the prevalence of preventable child deaths
- the prevalence of child sexual abuse.

Advocacy is a core part of our legislated role. We sit in a unique position - independent, evidence-based, connected to lived experience, and able to bring together insights from across systems. We have continued to use our voice aligned to our vision of influencing positive change by drawing on the evidence we hold.

Written submissions

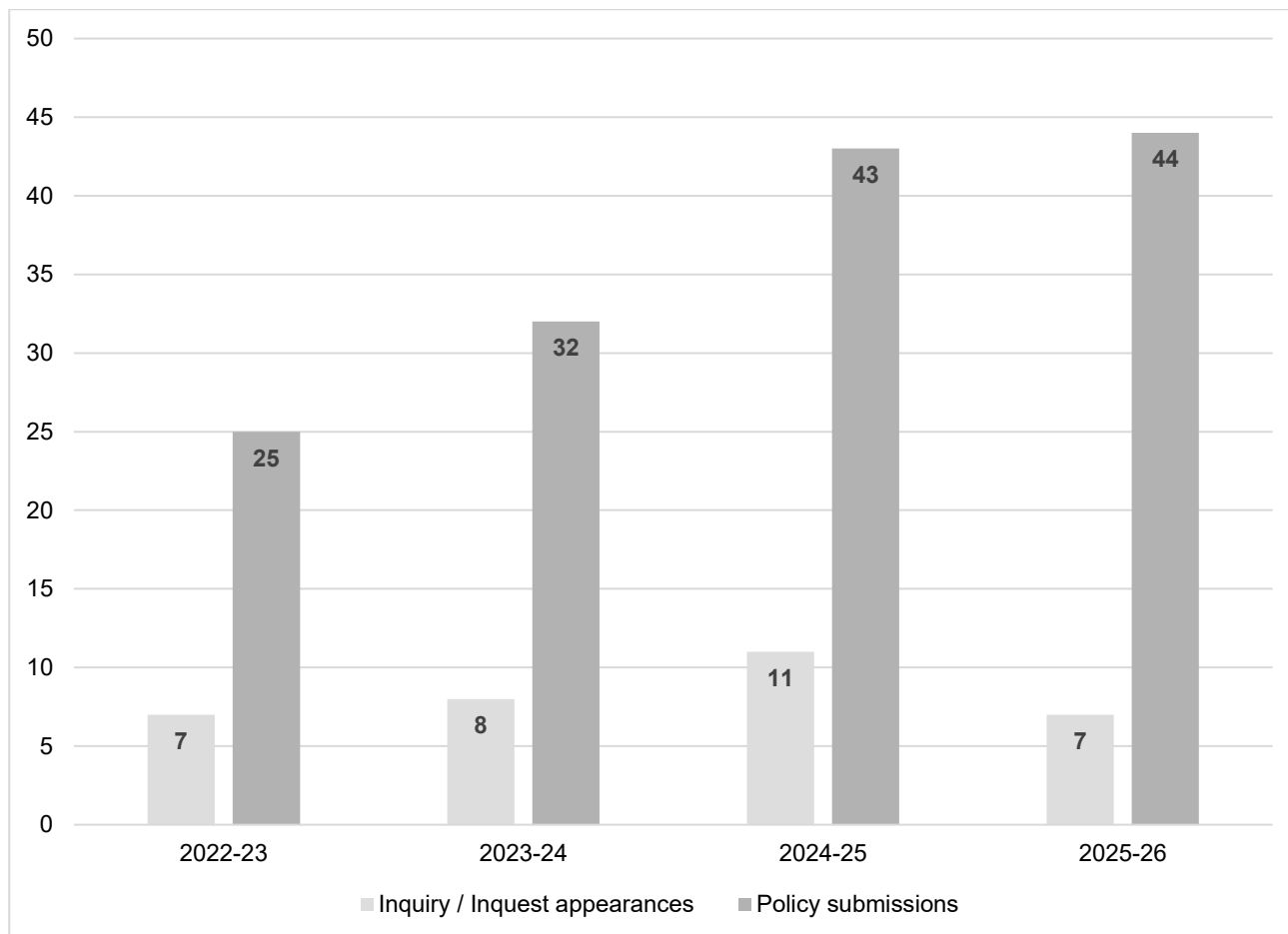
This year we provided 44 written submissions to several state and federal committees and decision-making bodies. These submissions spanned parliamentary and legislative inquiries, national and international policy shaping, and system stewardship and reform. We spoke to a range of topics impacting Queensland children, young people and their families including child safeguarding, youth justice, disability, early childhood education and care systems, transportation safety, victims’ rights, housing, and domestic and family violence.

Table 2: Written submissions

Parliamentary and legislative		Committee / Body	Commissioner
1	Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill 2025	Education, Arts and Communities Committee	Twyford
2	Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill 2025	Education, Arts and Communities Committee	Lewis
3	Community Protection and Public Child Sex Offender Register (Daniel’s Law) Bill 2025	Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee	Twyford
4	National Disability Insurance Scheme (Integrity and Safeguarding) Bill 2025	Community Affairs Legislation Committee	Twyford
5	Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026	Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee	Lewis
6	Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026	Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee	Twyford
7	Criminal Code (Defence of Dwellings and Other Premises Castle Law) Amendment Bill 2026	Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee	Twyford
8	Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026	Education, Arts and Communities Committee	Twyford
National and international policy shaping		Committee / Body	Commissioner
1	Improving the safety of quad bikes used in the workplace	Safe Work Australia	Twyford
2	Draft Children’s Online Privacy Code	Office of the Australian Information Commissioner	Twyford
3	Inquiry into the factors driving educational attainment	Standing Committee on Education	Twyford

4	Inquiry into racism, hate and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs	Twyford
5	Inquiry into racism, hate and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs	Lewis
6	Select Committee on Intergenerational Housing Inequity	Select Committee on Intergenerational Housing Inequity	Twyford
7	Integrity of the National Disability Insurance Scheme	Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme	Twyford
8	Inquiry into the relationship between domestic, family and sexual violence victimisation and suicide	Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs	Twyford
9	Access to superannuation for victims of child sexual abuse	Australian Treasury	Twyford
10	<i>In Plain Sight: System Responses to Child Sexual Abuse</i>	Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme	Twyford
11	Inquiry into Australia's youth justice and incarceration system	Federal Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee	Twyford
12	Inquiry into Australia's youth justice and incarceration system	Federal Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee	Lewis
13	Review of the Disability Discrimination Act	Attorney General's Department	Twyford
14	Review of the Disability Discrimination Act	Attorney General's Department	Lewis
15	Quality and safety of Australia's early childhood education and care system	Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment	Twyford
System stewardship and reform		Committee / Body	Commissioner
1	Criminal responses to image-based abuse consultation paper	Department of Justice	Twyford
2	Stage 2 of the review of the Charter of Victims' Rights	Office of the Victims' Commissioner	Twyford
3	Stage 2 of the review of the Charter of Victims' Rights	Office of the Victims' Commissioner	Lewis
4	Consultation Paper: Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2026	Queensland Health	Twyford
5	Child protection decision-making reform	Child Safety Commission of Inquiry	Lewis
6	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle	Child Safety Commission of Inquiry	Lewis
7	Corporate parenting: Transition from care and post care outcomes	Child Safety Commission of Inquiry	Lewis
8	Carers' willingness and capability to uphold the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care	Child Safety Commission of Inquiry	Lewis
9	Fixing the foundations: Seven reset reforms for Queensland's Child Protection System	Child Safety Commission of Inquiry	Twyford
10	Review of <i>Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2009</i>	Honourable David Thomas	Twyford
11	Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drug use in Australia	House Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Disability	Twyford
12	Review of the Queensland Charter of Victims' Rights	Office of the Victims' Commissioner	Lewis
13	Performance of the Crime and Corruption Commission review	Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee	Twyford
14	Youth justice and corporate parenting	Child Safety Commission of Inquiry	Lewis
15	FNQ hearing	Child Safety Commission of Inquiry	Twyford
16	FNQ hearing	Child Safety Commission of Inquiry	Lewis
17	Complaints	Child Safety Commission of Inquiry	Lewis
18	Complaints	Child Safety Commission of Inquiry	Twyford
19	Review of child restraint requirements in the Australian Road Rules	National Transport Commission	Twyford
20	Systemic abuse and neglect	Child Safety Commission of Inquiry	Lewis
21	A new approach to programs for families and children	Department of Social Services	Lewis

Figure 2: Number of written submissions and inquiry / inquest hearing appearances



Hearings and inquiries

In 2025–26, we provided evidence at seven public hearings and inquiries, and one coronial inquest:

- **Coronial inquest** – On 8 July 2026, Commissioner Twyford, in his role of Board Chair, gave evidence at the coronial inquest regarding the death of a child in care. The inquest considered the circumstances leading up to the death, including the appropriateness of the residential placements and support services provided by Child Safety in the months leading up to his death.
- **Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland** – Public hearing – On 27 August 2025, Commissioner Twyford and Tammy Walker (Director, Monitoring, Advocacy and Reviews) appeared before the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee as part of their inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland. They spoke to our Insights paper, *Improving safety when young people ride e-scooters and e-bikes* and acknowledged the difficult task of the committee in balancing safety, transport equity, town amenity, and the regulation of emerging technologies, and reflected on the way in which social policy challenges are never resolved through single regulatory enforcement.
- **Inquiry into the Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill 2025** – Public hearing – On 14 January 2026, Commissioners Twyford and Lewis appeared before the Education, Arts and Communities Committee. Commissioner Twyford emphasised that the youth justice system needs to be viewed as a whole system and that, if electronic monitoring is implemented by suitably qualified and trained decision-makers for clearly articulated rehabilitative purposes it may assist a young person to change their behaviour, and keep children out of detention. Commissioner Lewis advised that she does not support electronic monitoring for children.

- **Quality and safety of Australia's early childhood education and care system** – Public hearing – On 23 February 2026, Commissioner Twyford, Erin Glapiak (Executive Director, Strategy and Impact) and Anne Edwards (Executive Director, Child Safe Organisations) appeared before the Education and Employment References Committee. Commissioner Twyford's referred to the *In Plain Sight* recommendations, particularly that when an investigation is underway in an early childcare service, all parents using the centre are made aware, and that organisations engage in risk discussions in a naturally open and transparent way.
- **Commission of Inquiry into Child Safety System: Youth justice and corporate parenting hearings** – Public hearing – On 25 February 2026, Commissioner Twyford appeared before Mr Paul Anastassiou KC in Toowoomba. Commissioner Twyford responded to questions pertaining to under what circumstances secure care may be implemented, the role of the state in parenting, and the common difficulties of leading reform in child protection portfolios.
- **Oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission** – Public hearing – On 25 March 2026, Commissioners Twyford and Lewis along with Emma White (Chief Operating Officer) appeared before the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee as part of its oversight of the Commission. The Committee asked questions regarding the recommendations from the *Too little, too late* report, the Commissioners' views of youth justice including young people being held in watchhouses for extended periods, and a proposed secure care facility in Queensland.
- **Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026** – Public hearing – On 25 May 2026, Commissioner Twyford and Tammy Walker (Director, Monitoring, Advocacy and Reviews) appeared before the Education, Arts and Communities Committee. Commissioner Twyford reiterated his support for the amendments that recognise education and training centres within youth detention centres and approved re-engagement programs as valid options for the continuity of compulsory education. He spoke to re-engagement as being an important contributor to safety. The importance of information sharing in a way that arms educators and school staff with the information they need to best support and re-engage young people and their families in education was also re-emphasised.
- **Select Committee on Intergenerational Housing Inequity** – Public hearing – On 10 June 2026, Commissioner Twyford, Erin Glapiak (Executive Director, Strategy and Impact) and Tammy Walker (Director, Monitoring, Advocacy and Reviews) appeared before the Committee highlighting the safety and wellbeing impacts of unstable housing on Queensland children and families, including its contribution to the deaths of children. Commissioner Twyford highlighted the pressures faced by foster and kinship carers, suggesting tax, superannuation and other incentives could significantly reduce the financial burden faced by those willing to open their homes to others. Commissioner Twyford also asked for consideration in how the challenges relating to housing, including ownership and security, are spoken about to ensure honesty as well as hope.

Communicating evidence to enable reform

Communication is fundamental to how the Commission delivers our statutory functions. It enables us to promote the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people, advocate for the responsibility of families and communities to protect children, and influence improvements to Queensland's child protection system. Throughout 2025–26, the Commission continued to strengthen our communications capability, ensuring research, oversight findings and the voices of children and young people reached governments, practitioners, organisations and the broader community. By translating complex evidence into accessible information through publications, media, digital channels and community engagement, we support informed public understanding and promoted evidence-informed reform.

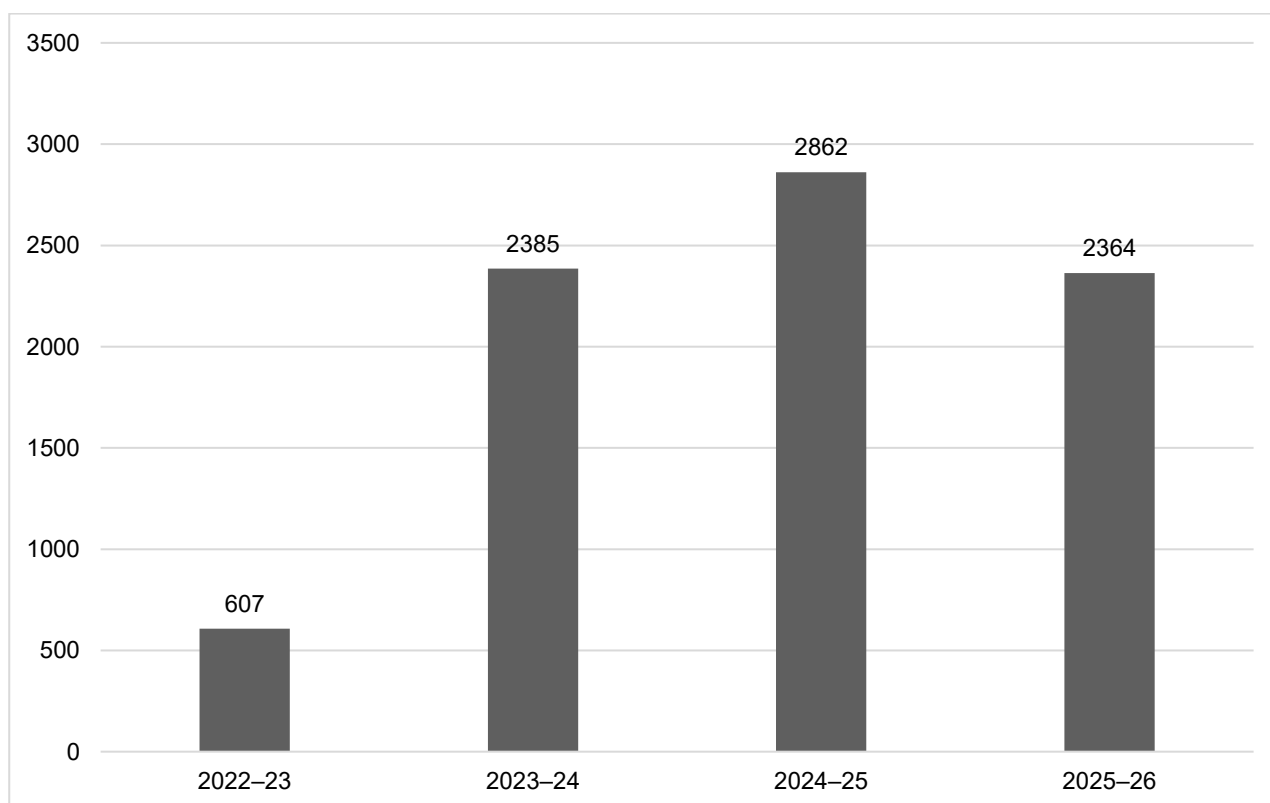
The Commission's digital presence and public profile grew significantly during the reporting period. This growth was driven by a targeted communications strategy supporting the implementation of the CSO Act, the commencement of the Reportable Conduct Scheme, and a more strategic approach to communicating across all areas of the Commission's work. Our digital presence and online communication have improved significantly over the period. During the period, we delivered a refreshed corporate website that delivered a modern, responsive and accessibility-compliant website that meets government digital standards and supports the Commission's expanded legislative functions and strategic goals.

Our website attracted more than 927,000 views, representing a 182 per cent increase from the previous period. Following the passage of the CSO Act in September 2024, our website traffic has grown almost 500 per cent, and our Child Safe Organisations information and implementation resources are our most frequently accessed content, reflecting our significant impact and reach in helping organisations safeguard children in Queensland.

Our social media channels also continued to expand their reach in 2025–26. LinkedIn followers increased by 37.1 per cent, strengthening the Commission's engagement with professionals working across child protection, education, health and community services. Our Meta channels (Facebook and Instagram) have shown the greatest performance, recording a combined reach of more than eight million over the period. This is approximately an 83.5 per cent increase in reach compared with last year. Our digital content received 26.1 million impressions across our channels over the year, a 484.6 per cent increase on the previous period. During 2025–26, expenditure on paid social media promotion totalled \$35,799, representing approximately 0.127 per cent of the Commission's total annual budget. This targeted investment substantially extended the reach of the Commission's publications, guidance, consultation activities and safeguarding messages.

Media continues to be one of the Commission's most effective mechanisms for communicating evidence and influencing public discussion. Between May 2025 and April 2026, the Commission featured in 2364 mainstream and social media reports. While this represented a 17.4 per cent decrease from 2024–25, it remained almost four times higher than the Commission's media profile in 2022–23 and was comparable with 2023–24 levels. Importantly, 98 per cent of all media coverage was assessed as positive or very positive, with no negative coverage recorded during the reporting period. More than 80 per cent of all coverage related to our research, reviews and reports, up from 76 per cent last year and 51 per cent in 2023–24.

Figure 3: Media mentions



December 2025 saw **758 media reports** driven by the release of *In Plain Sight: System Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*, which became our largest media story of the year and accounted for **58 per cent** of all media coverage during the reporting period. Through this media coverage, the Commission was able to bring evidence about child sexual abuse, safeguarding failures and system reform into the public conversation, supporting both government decision-making and broader community understanding.

Sector Insights papers

Throughout 2025–26 we continued to publish our monthly Sector Insights papers, providing in-depth analysis of current Australian research on issues affecting children, young people and families. The purpose is to provide a current and robust evidence base that supports more informed decision-making across the child and family sector. These papers, attracting 1361 downloads across the year, have become a valuable resource for government and non-government partners, enabling them to align their work with emerging trends and challenges. Key themes included the outcomes and experiences of children in out-of-home care, First Nations overrepresentation in child protection systems, the intersection of youth justice, family violence, and complex needs, and mental health and wellbeing.

Our analysis of the *Report on Government Services 2026* data release included a review of the 2024–25 data pertaining to child protection and youth justice services. Key findings include that, for the first time, Queensland recorded the highest real expenditure in the nation on care services, with an increasing share spent on out-of-home care and other supported placements. Over the past 10 years, Queensland has seen a decline in community-based supervision and sustained higher levels of detention. While the rate of youth justice supervision has decreased since 2018–19, it remains above the national average. Admissions to youth detention continue to be consistently higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people than for non-Indigenous young people.

Protecting children from the dangers of heat in vehicles

Our *Protecting children from the dangers of heat in vehicles* insights paper drew on more than 20 years of data from Queensland's Child Death Register. The paper examined the circumstances surrounding heat-related child deaths in vehicles, identified common risk factors and misconceptions, and highlighted evidence-based strategies to prevent children from being left unattended or becoming trapped in vehicles. The publication forms part of our ongoing program of translating child death review findings into practical guidance for families, professionals and policymakers. By combining analysis of child death data with contemporary research, the paper reinforced the importance of engineering, education and regulatory approaches to preventing these entirely avoidable tragedies. This work demonstrates the value of the Child Death Register as a long-term source of evidence for prevention. With more than two decades of data, the Register enables us to identify emerging trends, understand recurring risks and publish evidence that supports informed decision-making and contributes to reducing child deaths and serious injuries in Queensland.

Understanding the dangers: Quad bikes and side-by-side vehicles

Drawing on findings from the Child Death Register, this insights paper examined the deaths of 23 Queensland children in quad bike and side-by-side vehicle incidents between 2004 and 2025. It identified recurring risk factors and highlighted opportunities to strengthen child safety through improved supervision, safer vehicle use, consistent safety messaging and enhanced awareness. The paper informed our submission to Safe Work Australia's national consultation on improving the safety of quad bikes used in workplaces. In our submission, we supported a range of regulatory and non-regulatory measures designed to strengthen workplace safety and reduce the risk of serious injury and death. We also emphasised that improvements to workplace safety standards have the potential to influence broader community attitudes and practices, particularly in rural and regional settings where children are frequently exposed to these vehicles on private property. By contributing evidence from child death reviews to a national policy process, we helped ensure that the experiences of Queensland children and families informed consideration of future safety reforms.

Child Death Review Board insights papers

The Child Death Review Board produced four insights papers during 2025–26 to support system learning and improvement by examining recurring themes identified through its reviews. The papers explored understanding parenting capacity, highlighting the distinction between parental willingness to engage and the practical capacity to provide safe and consistent care; timeliness and permanency in transfers of parental responsibility, examining delays in decision-making and permanency planning; fatal medical conditions secondary to neglect, identifying systemic failures in recognising and responding to children's health needs and the importance of coordinated interagency action; and recognising abuse beyond physical acts of domestic and family violence, strengthening understanding of coercive control, emotional abuse and other non-physical forms of violence. Together, these publications translated the Board's case review findings into practical lessons to strengthen child protection, interagency collaboration and outcomes for vulnerable children.

Monitoring the implementation of recommendations

Both the Child Death Review Board and the Commission make recommendations to government to drive meaningful, long-term change to improve safety, wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people across Queensland. Monitoring the implementation of these recommendations serves as a mechanism to track their progress, ensuring that they are translated from conceptual solutions into actionable strategies and measurable outcomes. In total, the Commission and the Board have made a combined 259 recommendations to government since inception.

In September 2025, we released our annual recommendation monitoring report. Data gathering is currently underway in preparation for the release of the next report due for release in late 2026, when the status of Commission recommendations will be available.

In relation to Board recommendations, we are currently monitoring the implementation of 68 recommendations awaiting response, or outstanding (either not yet started or in progress), as of 30 June 2026. This includes 31 open recommendations as reported in the 2025 monitoring report, and an additional 37 recommendations made by the Board in 2025–26. Recommendations made this year include the 28 recommendations outlined in the *In Plain Sight* report and nine recommendations included in the Board's 2024–25 Annual Report.

Table 3: Status of the implementation of recommendations being monitored by the Commission

Reported Status	Total (count)	Total (percentage)
Closed – complete	161	62.2%
Closed – not complete	14	5.4%
Closed – achieved through other means	13	5.0%
Closed – no longer relevant	4	1.5%
Total closed	192	74.1%
Open – in progress	26	10.0%
Not started	41	15.8%
Grand total	259	100.0%

Monitoring and reporting on child deaths

We are responsible for a number of functions relating to child deaths in Queensland, including maintaining a register of all child deaths in Queensland, researching the risk factors associated with child deaths and making recommendations to prevent such deaths occurring. Our 2024–25 report²³ was tabled on 19 December 2025, reporting on the loss of 427 children and young people.

Throughout 2025–26, we continued to analyse information held within the Child Death Register to identify opportunities for system improvement. Where recurring issues or emerging hazards were identified, we provided evidence-based advice to governments, regulators, coroners and national policy bodies to support preventative action. Analysis of child deaths informed our ongoing contribution to national transport safety reforms. Drawing on evidence from the Child Death Register, we provided submissions to the National Transport Commission on the review of child restraint requirements within the Australian Road Rules and were appointed to the Commission's Expert Advisory Group, ensuring child death prevention evidence contributes directly to future national policy.

Preliminary data for 2025–26 indicates 452 child deaths in the period. The number of child deaths from natural causes was 312, while the number from external causes (such as transport incidents or non-intentional injury-related deaths) was 94. According to preliminary data, 102 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child deaths have been recorded, compared to 88 deaths in 2024–25. Ninety-one children who died in 2025–26 were known to the child protection system in the 12 months prior to their death. This is an increase of 59.6 per cent compared to 57 deaths in 2024–25. Of these seven were in care and three more had open cases. Forty-three had open investigations or intake events while the remaining 38 had no ongoing involvement.

Table 4: Preliminary data from Child Death Register 2025–26

Deaths of children and young people	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26 ¹
All deaths					
Deaths of children 0–17 years	410	446	422	427	452
Natural causes	272	336	325	328	312
External causes	95	73	73	69	94
Transport	33	28	20	23	33
Drowning	10	10	10	10	9
Other non-intentional injury	20	7	21	8	11
Suicide	22	20	19	24	28
Fatal assault and neglect	10	8	3	4	13
Unexplained causes	41	37	24	26	14
Cause of death pending	2	0	0	4	32
Sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI)					
Sudden unexpected infant deaths	44	40	27	29	33
By Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status					
Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, or Torres Strait Islander	71	94	92	88	102
Non-Indigenous	339	352	330	339	350
Known to the child protection system					
No involvement or ongoing intervention	26	35	21	20	38
Open intake event	1	5	2	6	16
Investigation and Assessment	25	16	23	19	27
Child Protection Order	12	9	4	9	7
Open Intervention with Parental Agreement	4	5	2	1	2
Support Service Case	1	1	1	2	0
Other child protection status	0	1	0	0	1
Total known to the child protection system	69	72	53	57	91

¹ Preliminary as at June 2026. By 31 October each year, the Principal Commissioner must prepare and give to the Minister a report about information contained in the register and child death prevention activities. Data reported in this report may differ from data reported in the child death annual report where further information about the classification of death becomes available.

² Deaths by cause of death are subject to change as new information is received

We also provided expert advice to Safe Work Australia on reforms to improve quad bike safety. While primarily a workplace issue, the Child Death Register demonstrates that quad bikes continue to present significant risks to children living in or visiting rural communities. Our submission sought to ensure children's safety remained an important consideration in future regulatory reform.

We also identified a concerning pattern of deaths involving severe nutritional deficiencies associated with highly restricted diets. Analysis undertaken by the Child Death Prevention team identified that, in several cases, children had consumed diets consisting almost exclusively of cow's milk. We referred these findings to the State Coroner and Queensland Health, recommending further investigation and consideration of system responses. Both agencies responded by progressing further work to better understand the issue and identify opportunities for prevention.

We also recommended improvements to coronial data collection to strengthen future child death prevention. Based on experience analysing child deaths over many years, the Child Death Prevention team identified that recording a deceased child's enrolled school within coronial records would improve the ability to identify systemic issues, examine patterns across education settings and strengthen future prevention work. This recommendation remained under consideration by the State Coroner at the end of the reporting period.

These examples demonstrate the preventative value of the Child Death Register. By systematically analysing child deaths and translating evidence into practical recommendations, we help ensure that lessons from individual tragedies contribute to broader system improvements. This work supports governments and regulators to act earlier, strengthen policy and reduce the likelihood of similar deaths occurring in the future.

Priorities for 2026–27

In 2026–27, the Commission will continue delivering its ambitious *Oversight Forward Workplan*, with a strong focus on informing and assessing implementation of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry reforms. We will provide government and the community with independent analysis of system performance, emerging issues and reform progress, while remaining a trusted, evidence-based voice on the policies, legislation and services that affect Queensland children and families.

By translating data, research and oversight into practical advice, we will help ensure reform is informed by evidence and delivers meaningful improvements in children's lives.

2. We advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children by collaborating with organisations, entities and individuals

The Commission recognises that lasting improvements in the lives of children cannot be achieved by one organisation acting alone. Throughout 2025–26, we strengthened partnerships across government, the community sector, academia and statutory agencies to support evidence-informed decision-making, improve system coordination and promote shared accountability for children's safety and wellbeing. By bringing together diverse expertise, lived experience and system leadership, we continued to influence reforms.

Collaboration also means working directly with children, young people and communities to ensure their experiences shape policy and reform. Throughout 2025–26, we continued to engage children, young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, peak bodies and community organisations to inform our oversight, reporting and advocacy. These partnerships strengthened our understanding of the issues affecting children and ensured that lived experience remained central to our work.

Leading national and sector conversations

Throughout 2025–26, we played a prominent leadership role in national and state discussions on child safety, child protection, youth justice and children's rights. Through keynote presentations, conferences, expert panels, webinars and stakeholder forums, the Commissioners shared evidence, promoted reform and strengthened collaboration across governments, regulators, researchers, community organisations and industry.

During the year, the Commissioners participated in more than **60** conferences, summits and public forums. A major focus of Commissioner Twyford's engagement was advancing national conversations on the prevention of child sexual abuse and strengthening Australia's child safeguarding system. Commissioner Twyford presented the findings of the *In Plain Sight* to national audiences, highlighting opportunities to improve early identification of abuse, strengthen organisational accountability and build more effective safeguarding systems. He also participated in strategic forums including the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation Stakeholder Operational Meeting; the Youth, Technology and Virtual Communities Conference; and the Parliamentary Friends Against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, bringing together law enforcement, regulators, policy makers, researchers and advocacy organisations to address emerging risks facing children in both physical and online environments.

Commissioner Natalie Lewis continued to provide national leadership on issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Through keynote addresses and expert panels, she advocated for reforms that strengthen children's rights, embed First Nations voices in decision-making and improve outcomes across child protection, youth justice and disability systems. Her contributions reinforced the importance of self-determination, culturally safe services, and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain connected to family, culture and Country.

Beyond formal presentations, the Commission also maintained a strong presence at community and sector events, engaging directly with parents, educators, young people, service providers and community leaders. Participation in events such as the Queensland P&C Conference, the Inspiring Journeys Summit, the Leading Reform Summit and the launch of Project Paradigm Australia's child sexual abuse prevention resources enabled us to demonstrate our role as a trusted system leader and policy advocate. By bringing together diverse perspectives, sharing evidence and fostering collaboration across sectors, we continue to strengthen professional practice and build a shared commitment.

Creating greater impact through partnerships

We therefore prioritise strong, values-aligned partnerships with organisations that share its commitment to improving outcomes for children. These partnerships enable us to extend the reach of our work, strengthen the quality and credibility of our research and education activities, increase community engagement and ensure evidence reaches those best placed to drive change. By convening expertise, sharing knowledge and working collaboratively across sectors, we continue to strengthen Queensland's child safeguarding system and promote the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

During 2025–26, we invested **\$997,095** in strategic sponsorships and partnerships, representing approximately **4.04 per cent** of our total operating budget. This compares with \$918,646 (4.21 per cent of the total budget) in 2024–25. These investments enabled us to:

- extend the reach and accessibility of child safeguarding messages and resources
- strengthen the evidence base through collaboration with researchers and subject matter experts
- engage more effectively with children, families and communities
- build capability across sectors responsible for protecting children
- promote shared responsibility for child safety across Queensland.

Rather than duplicating effort, our partnership approach recognises that sustainable system improvement depends on leveraging the expertise, influence and relationships of organisations already embedded within communities. By investing strategically in these partnerships, we amplify the impact of our own work while strengthening the collective capability of Queensland's child and family system.

Project Paradigm

The Capable Communities initiative was developed in response to the Queensland Audit Office's 2023 report highlighting a significant gap in specialist training for professionals in regional and remote communities specifically related to child sexual abuse. This gap was identified as having a detrimental effect on both physical and mental health outcomes for young victims of child sexual abuse in rural Queensland. In 2024–25, we proudly sponsored the Capable Communities initiative to a value of \$43,200 with the goal of improving outcomes for children and young people who live in rural and remote Queensland by enhancing child sexual exploitation (CSE) literacy. Through the delivery of workshops in Longreach, Roma, Emerald, Mt Isa and Charleville, a wide variety of professionals, carers and community members were trained in how to identify the signs and indicators of CSE, disrupt and identify perpetrators and report their concerns. In 2025–26, we provided an additional \$10,750 to bring this training to the Goondiwindi region.

Children's Rights Queensland

We have a long-standing relationship with CRQ, working closely together since July 2020 to educate and build awareness of children's rights in Queensland. The funding we have provided has enabled CRQ to deliver a range of initiatives that educate communities about children's rights and provide valuable engagement opportunities for us to reach a wider audience and connect directly with grassroots organisations, families and frontline delivery services. In 2025-26 this included Children's Week 2025, which saw over 200 events take place across Queensland, a grants program to support grassroots organisations to deliver local celebrations and projects, and an awards ceremony to recognise the work of people and organisations championing children's rights across the state. This year the Commission-sponsored Commissioners' Award for Community Engagement was bestowed on Bronwyn Sheehan from The Pyjama Foundation for her work supporting thousands of children in foster care through the Love of Learning Program, which pairs children with trained volunteer mentors, known as Pyjama Angels. Children's Week 2025 also marked the launch of two new CRQ resources: *The ABC of Children's Rights*, a picture book developed with help from seed funding we provided about the rights included in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and an accompanying *Colour and Learn*

Activity Book, an interactive way for children to explore and understand their rights. Alongside this, the Children's Week Ambassador Program engaged over 34 grassroots individuals to advocate, educate and promote children's rights in Queensland. Ambassadors hailed from across the state including Cairns and Mt Isa.

Deadly Indigenous Youth Doing Good

We provide sponsorship to DIYDG to deliver their Good Vibrations Program, which includes weekly peer support sessions and cultural connection activities as well as their annual wellbeing camp. This program is dedicated to fostering the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander future leaders, recognising that strong leadership is deeply connected to cultural identity, belonging, and emotional resilience. Aligned with DIYDG's Inspire, Equip, and Empower Framework, the program provides culturally responsive support that places young people's voices and lived experiences at the centre. By creating safe spaces for peer connection, skill-building, and cultural strengthening, Good Vibrations empowers young people to develop the confidence, resilience, and leadership skills needed to contribute meaningfully to their communities. Supporting partnerships with community-led organisations such as DIYDG aligns with our goal of collaborative, place-based approaches to reform and advocacy while also strengthening cultural connection and intergenerational learning, providing opportunities for On-Country experiences and mentoring to reinforce cultural pride and identity.

ATSICHS Brisbane

Delivered by ATSICHS Brisbane, in partnership with the Commission, the Young Black and Proud scholarship supports young people aged 25 and under to pursue their goals in sport, the arts and academics. Since first launching in 2016, the Young Black and Proud scholarship program has grown significantly. In 2018, a partnership with the Commission allowed ATSICHS Brisbane to expand the program statewide, increasing both the number of scholarships available and the value of scholarship amounts offered. This expansion opened greater opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in regional and remote communities. Together, ATSICHS Brisbane and the Commission have now awarded 440 scholarships, supporting the goals and dreams of young people and creating lasting impact across communities. The successful 2026 scholarship recipients will be announced later this year.

PeakCare

In partnership with PeakCare through the Sibling Carer Initiative, we are advocating for reform to ensure sibling carers are recognised and supported within the child protection system. The Sibling Carer Initiative seeks to address longstanding gaps in policy and practice by establishing dedicated supports and programs that reflect the unique needs and circumstances of sibling carers. A critical first step in this reform is the development of a consistent mechanism within the child safety system to identify sibling carers, understand their needs and monitor the sustainability of sibling care arrangements. As part of this partnership, PeakCare supported sibling carers to produce a detailed submission to the Commission of Inquiry into the Queensland Child Safety System, titled *Recognition and better support for sibling kinship carers*.²⁴

Act for Kids

We are a proud long-standing supporter of Queensland Child Protection Week (QCPW), delivered by Act for Kids. In 2026, QCPW will celebrate its 40th anniversary, marking four decades of bringing communities together, championing the rights and voices of children, and raising awareness about child abuse and neglect. We are proud to sponsor the Commitment to Child Safe Organisational Principles Award, celebrating organisations actively building child-safe cultures in line with national principles. In September 2025, Life Without Barriers was the winner of this award in recognition of their sustained commitment to child safety, wellbeing and participation over many years. We also continue to sponsor the facilitation of a statewide art project including creative workshops for children and their families which are held as part of the week-long celebrations. This year we also supported the development and distribution of a children's book focused on

children's safety, to be launched as part of QCPW's 40th anniversary in September 2026. One thousand copies of the book will be distributed to community organisations and libraries across Queensland to ensure consistent children's safety messaging across the state.

Play Matters

Play is an integral way of building strong family connections while providing opportunities for children to express themselves. Play Matters events promote childhood development, enhance family engagement and strengthen community connections, and as well as providing an important opportunity for us to connect and build awareness of the Child Safe Organisations system. This year we invested a further \$45,455 to support Play Matters to deliver more community-based events across Queensland. This event sponsorship was in addition to a grant awarded to Play Matters under our Child Safeguarding Grants Program.

CREATE Foundation

The CREATE Foundation provides art showcases for children in out-of-home care. These events aim to engage with young people that are cared for outside of the families they were born into, supporting their creativity and personal expression to promote wellbeing. This initiative aims to encourage children and young people in out-of-home care to participate in group activities and be celebrated for their achievements. CREATE facilitates creative art workshops ahead of the call for submissions from young people with a care experience across Queensland. Artworks are then showcased at local exhibitions and featured throughout Commission reports to further amplify the voices of these young people.

Daniel Morcombe Foundation

We continued to support the work of the Daniel Morcombe Foundation and their ongoing commitment to keeping children safe this year. Our team joined the 21st Day for Daniel, volunteering at Walk for Daniel on the Sunshine Coast, and providing in-kind support to help make the day run smoothly. Commissioner Twyford met with the Daniel Morcombe Foundation and the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation to progress collaborative child safety initiatives. Discussions focused on expanding child safety education, strengthening partnerships and reaching more children and communities across Queensland through shared prevention efforts.

Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates

The Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ANZCCGA) network presents an opportunity for members to raise their collective voices to promote the safety, wellbeing and rights of children and young people in Australia and New Zealand and advocate for systemic improvements. It also supports cross-jurisdictional connection and the opportunity to share learnings from recent reforms and projects. In 2025–26, the group met three times to discuss key issues affecting children and young people. These included discussing the findings and recommendations of *In Plain Sight: System responses to child sexual abuse*, eSafety's Age-Restricted Material Codes and the findings of the 2025 UN Youth Ambassador's Listening Tour.

Strengthening research through collaboration

High-quality research is essential to improving outcomes for children and families. During 2025–26, we adopted a new Research Strategy that positions the organisation as a catalyst for child and family research—bringing together researchers, governments, service providers and communities to strengthen the evidence base for policy and practice. The Strategy recognises that we create the greatest public value by enabling research across the sector. Rather than undertaking all research ourselves, we increasingly support, partner with and commission leading researchers and institutions, while focusing our own research capability on areas where we hold unique statutory data, expertise and insight.

We continued to collaborate with universities, researchers and government agencies, investing \$147,266 in research activities to improve understanding of the issues affecting Queensland children, and continued our work with government agencies to strengthen data sharing and analysis, enabling more sophisticated monitoring of system performance and better evidence to inform policy and practice. During the year, we:

- responded to 43 requests for child death data from researchers, partner organisations government agencies and community groups were actioned, a 48 per cent increase on the previous year
- continued to host postgraduate researchers and provide access to specialist expertise and unique datasets
- invested more than \$190,000 in strategic research partnerships and commissioned projects to address priority issues affecting Queensland children
- refreshed the Safer Pathways Through Childhood research agenda to strengthen collaboration with universities, government agencies and research institutes
- established stronger governance arrangements to coordinate research investment, reduce duplication and maximise the impact of research across the Commission.

Our research investment focused on issues where stronger evidence can drive meaningful system reform. During the year this included research examining the mental health impacts of childhood maltreatment, paediatric sepsis, family support models, unborn child notifications, domestic and family violence, youth suicide and child sexual abuse prevention.

A significant initiative was the Maltreatment Mental Health Framework for Healing and Recovery, delivered in partnership with the Australian Catholic University. This two-year research project, led by Dr Lottie Harris from the Institute of Child Protection Studies, brings together research evidence, practitioner expertise and the lived experiences of children, young people and caregivers to develop a framework for responding to the complex mental health impacts of childhood maltreatment. The project recognises that children and young people who experience maltreatment may present with complex and overlapping emotional, behavioural and psychological needs that cannot be addressed through a single service response. By examining the experiences of children, families and practitioners, the project aims to develop a practical, trauma-informed framework that supports a coordinated whole-of-system response to complex mental distress associated with maltreatment.

During the year, the project progressed from evidence gathering and consultation into engagement with practitioners and people with lived experience through interviews and focus groups. These perspectives will help ensure the final framework reflects both contemporary research and the realities faced by children, young people, families and the professionals who support them.

We also continued our partnership with Queensland Health and academic researchers on paediatric sepsis, building on previous child death review findings that identified opportunities to strengthen recognition, response and follow-up care for children affected by serious infection. Through the project Paediatric Post Sepsis Care: Enhancing Research Innovation and Health Outcomes through Partnerships and Translation, led by Professor Debbie Long from the Queensland University of Technology, we are contributing data, expertise and in-kind support to improve understanding of the longer-term impacts of paediatric sepsis and strengthen health pathways for survivors, families and those affected by bereavement.

We continued to support research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child suicide prevention through our partnership with the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention at Griffith University. This multi-year research project uses linked child death, health and mental health data to better understand service pathways, help-seeking experiences and opportunities for earlier intervention. The research will examine the role of cultural connection as a protective factor and explore how systems can better respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

We also contributed to broader research initiatives focused on improving prevention and early intervention. This included supporting research into unborn child notifications, domestic and family violence, youth suicide prevention and family support models, as well as contributing expertise through advisory roles with academic and sector partners. Through these partnerships, the Commission is helping to build a stronger evidence base for Queensland's child and family systems. By combining the Commission's unique data, oversight insights and statutory functions with the expertise of researchers, practitioners and communities, these collaborations support more effective prevention, earlier intervention and better outcomes for children and families.

The Child Death Register as a public resource

The Queensland Child Death Register is one of Australia's most comprehensive sources of information about the circumstances surrounding child deaths. The Register has documented over 9,800 child deaths in its 21 years of operation. As custodian of the Register, we share our data and expertise to learn from children's deaths and improve the safety and wellbeing of all Queensland children. Using and sharing data and insights from our register, we work with stakeholders and advisory groups to improve reporting systems and advocate for child death prevention activities. The Register's value extends well beyond the Commission. It supports governments, health services, researchers, regulators, coroners and national agencies to better understand why children die, identify emerging risks and develop evidence-based strategies to prevent future deaths. Throughout 2025–26, we continued to provide carefully governed access to Child Death Register information for organisations undertaking research, policy development, service improvement and public safety initiatives. This information is provided under strict legislative safeguards to ensure privacy while enabling external experts to apply the evidence to improve outcomes for children.

The Register informed a broad range of work across Queensland and Australia, including:

Strengthening health and clinical practice

- supporting Queensland Health's Pepi-Pod® initiative to reduce sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI)
- assisting the Queensland Paediatric Quality Council's expert reviews into SUDI, infant mortality and nutritional deficiency deaths
- supporting the Queensland Paediatric Sepsis Program to improve understanding of sepsis-related child deaths and establish ongoing surveillance
- providing Hospital and Health Services with regional child death analysis to inform local prevention priorities.

Advancing research

- supporting research by Griffith University, the University of the Sunshine Coast and the Hunter Medical Research Institute into suicide, sudden infant deaths and preventable mortality
- contributing evidence to national studies examining safe sleeping practices, co-sleeping, public health interventions and emerging risk factors
- strengthening Australia's evidence base for child death prevention through collaboration with leading researchers.

Improving product and injury safety

- informing work led by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit on child restraint systems, infant slings, carriers and other consumer products
- supporting reviews of vehicle restraint use, e-bikes, e-scooters, drowning prevention and children left in vehicles
- providing evidence that contributes directly to improvements in product safety standards and injury prevention initiatives.

Supporting government and public policy

- informing Queensland Government reform initiatives, including Putting Queensland Kids First
- assisting coronial investigations and whole-of-government monitoring of child deaths
- supporting interstate child death review bodies and national reporting
- providing evidence to improve policy, legislation and service delivery across multiple sectors.

These partnerships demonstrate the significant public value of the Queensland Child Death Register. By enabling external experts to responsibly access high-quality child death information, the Commission ensures that evidence generated through the Register informs clinical practice, research, public policy, product safety and child protection reform. This collaborative approach maximises the preventive value of every child's story and extends the impact of the Register well beyond the Commission itself. In 2025–26, we worked with:

- Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group (ANZCDR&PG)
- Australian National Child Death Data Collection Working Group
- Consumer Product Injury Research Advisory Group
- Child Restraint Expert Advisory Group, National Transport Commission
- Paediatric Post-sepsis Care Program Management Committee
- Queensland Government Births and Deaths Working Group
- Queensland Paediatric Quality Council Steering Committee
- Queensland Paediatric Quality Council Infant Mortality Sub-committee
- Queensland Paediatric Sepsis Mortality Action Plan
- Quad Bike Safety Roundtable
- Road Safety Research Network
- Shifting Minds Strategic Leadership Group.

On 18 June 2026, members of the Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group came together for their annual meeting. The forum enabled members to review current data trends, explore emerging issues, and participate in focused discussions on fatal neglect definitions, e-mobility devices, and youth suicide. Guest speakers also shared insights from national research and data collection initiatives.

During 2025–26, the Commission progressed significant work to strengthen how fatal child assault and neglect deaths are identified, classified and reviewed. An independent review examined national and international approaches to classifying child maltreatment deaths and identified opportunities to strengthen Queensland's child death review framework. The review informed the development of a more robust and consistent approach to identifying deaths associated with child maltreatment, with a stronger focus on preventable risks and systemic factors. The Commission

also consulted with sector leaders, researchers and practitioners on the proposed framework. This work will strengthen Queensland's capacity to identify risks, inform prevention efforts and better protect children from harm.

Australian child death statistics 2023

We continue to monitor progress by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on their work piloting a national child death data collection. A national data collection based on detailed data from Australian state and territory child death registries will provide richer data on causes and contributing factors in child deaths than is currently available in the National Mortality Dataset. Despite interest from other research organisations, several legislative, reporting and financial challenges have hindered progress. While we await the outcome of this work, we continue to collaborate with members of the Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group to present information on child mortality from all jurisdictions in the paper *Australian child death statistics 2023*.²⁵ This report was prepared by the Commission on behalf of the Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group (ANZCDR&PG), a collaboration of all state and territory child death review teams across Australia and New Zealand. Released in March 2026, the report collates data relating to the deaths of 1594 child deaths across all Australian jurisdictions in 2023, a rate of 27.7 per 100,000 population.

Priorities for 2026–27

In 2026–27, we will continue to strengthen partnerships across government, the community sector, research institutions, First Nations organisations and national counterparts to improve outcomes for children and young people. We will work collaboratively to support implementation of major child safeguarding reforms, build capability across the sectors we oversee, and share evidence, expertise and emerging insights. By fostering strong relationships and collective leadership, we will help drive coordinated action to advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of Queensland children.

3. We increase opportunities for children and families to influence decisions that affect their lives

The Commission recognises that meaningful and lasting improvements in outcomes for Queensland children, young people and their families cannot be achieved by government alone. A key priority during 2025–26 was deepening our commitment to listening to and empowering people with lived experience of the systems we oversee, including children and young people, families, carers and frontline workers. Those closest to these systems often have unique insights into the barriers, opportunities and improvements that may not be visible through data or policy alone. By creating genuine opportunities for participation and ensuring lived experience informs our work, we strengthen the relevance, credibility and impact of our oversight, research and advice.

During the year, we delivered our third Youth Summit, bringing together 28 young advocates to share their experiences and perspectives directly with senior leaders and decision-makers. We continued to invest in youth leadership initiatives that support children and young people to participate in decisions affecting them, and worked in partnership with peak bodies and community organisations to ensure lived experience was embedded across our research, reviews, policy development and system reform activities. These partnerships help ensure that the voices of those most affected by Queensland's child protection and family support systems remain central to our work and to the reforms that shape future outcomes.

Putting children's voices at the centre of reform - induction of Commissioner Anastasiou

One of our most significant contributions during the year was ensuring that the voices of children were heard at the very beginning of the Commission of Inquiry. On the afternoon before the Inquiry's formal opening, we organised for Commissioner Paul Anastassiou KC to spend several hours meeting with 20 children and young people with lived experience of Queensland's child protection system. The purpose of the session was to provide the Commissioner with a first-hand understanding of the experiences, perspectives and aspirations of the children whose lives would be most affected by the Inquiry's work. The discussion provided important context about what it means to experience the child protection system, the challenges children face in navigating services, and the changes they believed were necessary to improve outcomes for future generations. This engagement reflected our longstanding commitment to ensuring that children are active participants in decisions that affect them. Too often, children are the subject of inquiries and reform processes without being given meaningful opportunities to shape them. By creating this opportunity before the Inquiry commenced, we helped ensure that children's experiences informed Commissioner Anastassiou's understanding from the outset, rather than being considered later alongside institutional evidence.

The importance of the session was evident the following day, when Commissioner Anastasiou referred directly to the themes raised by the children in his opening address. Their messages about safety, relationships, stability, trust and being listened to helped frame the Inquiry's work and reinforced that its purpose was ultimately to improve the lives of Queensland children and young people. We are proud to have played a role in placing children's voices at the centre of one of the most significant child protection reforms undertaken in Queensland.

Residential Care Expert Advisory Council

We continued to strengthen our oversight of Queensland's residential care system by ensuring the voices of children and young people remained central to reform. Throughout 2025–26, we worked in partnership with Life Without Barriers to support the Residential Care Expert Advisory Council, providing a structured mechanism for children and young people with lived experience of residential care to directly inform the Commission's oversight and advice. During the year, we

published *Treated as Broken*, documenting the experiences and perspectives of 11 young people who participated in a youth-led workshop in Kingaroy. The report explored themes including relationships, interactions with residential care providers and the child protection system, and connection to family, culture and community – and importantly, demonstrated that the issues raised by young people were not isolated. Their experiences closely reflected those raised during an earlier workshop in Caboolture and echoed messages we have consistently heard from children and young people across Queensland: that they want stronger relationships, greater involvement in decisions affecting their lives, genuine accountability, and a system that supports them into adulthood rather than responding only in times of crisis.

During 2025–26, the Commission published *I Became My Own Carer* and *Treated as Broken*, reflecting its ongoing commitment to partnering with children and young people with lived experience of residential care. These reports add to a growing body of evidence developed through the Residential Care Expert Advisory Council, supporting the Commission's independent oversight of residential care reform and providing valuable insight into the experiences, priorities and concerns of children and young people to inform system improvement.

Supporting young people to advocate

Joint advocacy in Federal Parliament

Principal Commissioner Luke Twyford was proud to attend the Parliamentary Friends Against Abuse and Exploitation event with Amelia, a young advocate whose courage and commitment continue to drive important conversations about protecting children. The event brought together parliamentarians, survivors, advocates and sector leaders to reinforce the shared responsibility of preventing child sexual abuse and supporting children who have experienced harm.

Youth-led insights paper - Changing the system, not the student

Following Lily's speech at the 2025 Youth Summit, Commissioner Twyford invited Lily to co-design an insights paper with our Analysis, Insights and Reporting team. The result of this collaboration is *Changing the system, not the student: Reframing education to better support neurodivergent students using the social model of disability*.²⁶ Lily's speech provided the foundation for this report, which also incorporates key insights from fellow Youth Advocates Gefion, Ameya and Stella to demonstrate the prevalence and urgency of these challenges. This insight review identifies key issues affecting the rights and needs of neurodivergent children, young people, and their families, in accessing education in Queensland. Embedding these approaches in policy and practice is a critical step towards removing structural barriers to create environments where all children and young people are valued and supported to thrive.

Queensland Kids Partnership - support for young people on Intergenerational Stewardship Table

We supported two young people to participate in the Intergenerational Stewardship Table, an initiative established by Queensland Kids Partnership to bring together children, young people and senior leaders to collaboratively address issues affecting Queensland's future. The purpose of the Table is to take up collective leadership to shift the conditions young Queenslanders grow up in. In April 2026, the Queensland Kids Partnership brought together 60+ Queenslanders aged from 14 to 67 years to put intergenerational leadership into action with the first collective gathering. We are proud to sponsor Rhea and Claudia to be a part of this incredible initiative.

Meeting with National Children's Commissioner

We were pleased to support newly appointed National Children's Commissioner Deb Tsorbaris during her visit to Queensland by facilitating opportunities to engage directly with children and young people with lived experience of residential care, as well as senior Queensland Government officials and sector leaders. These conversations provided valuable insights into the experiences of children in care, current reform priorities and opportunities to strengthen safeguarding and oversight across jurisdictions. Supporting these connections reflects our commitment to ensuring the

voices of children inform national discussions and to fostering collaboration between governments and the child and family sector to improve outcomes for children.

Queensland Youth Summits

2025 Youth Summit Impact Report

The *2025 Youth Summit Impact Report* highlights the incredible work undertaken by the young people who spoke at our Summit in April 2025. Released in 2025–26, the report outlined the advocacy journeys of these young people to date. Ruby has been working on developing and promoting her Kids of Purple website, which provides support for young Queenslanders experiencing domestic and family violence. Jess attended the 2025 World Economic Forum's Global Shapers Annual Summit in Switzerland to share her ideas about global challenges. Caroline met with The Honourable Paul Anastassiou KC, Commissioner of the Child Safety Commission of Inquiry to speak about her experience as a sibling carer and growing up in out-of-home care. Teanna has launched her own YouTube channel and website providing education to young people about e-safety. These are only four examples of young people's impact and achievements, with many other achievements captured in our report.

2025 Youth Summit award

On 4 September 2025, we were thrilled to receive the Queensland Child Protection Week Youth Participation Award for our 2025 Youth Summit. The award recognises the involvement of young people in the planning of a local activity to promote child protection. Commission staff were joined on stage by summit speakers Peter, Jess and Oli as well as Tionne from the Australian School of Entrepreneurship to accept the award. In her acceptance speech, Jess spoke about the power of the Summit – *When decision-makers truly listen, they create stronger policies, safer programs, and more impactful change.*

2025 Childhood Summit – Through Their Eyes

We were proud to sponsor the 2025 Childhood Summit: Through Their Eyes. The biennial event, led by the Australian Institute of Play, provides a platform for children aged three to 14 years living in the Logan region, to speak directly to their community leaders about matters impacting them and their peers. Framed by the question, "How are the children doing?" the summit invited adults to pause and listen to the expertise of children and young people. Forty-four children aged three to 14 took to the microphone across two days to share their perspectives on issues including racism, mental health, addiction, and respect for elders. Their insights were powerful, thought-provoking, and deeply grounded in compassion and community.

2026 Youth Summit

Our third annual Youth Summit was held on 10 April 2026, marking the start of Queensland Youth Week. The popular event brought together almost 300 leaders, decision-makers, advocates and young people united by a shared goal - hearing directly from young Queenslanders to help shape a better future. Across the day, 28 young speakers shared their lived experiences alongside practical ideas for change with decision-makers and frontline professionals. Centred around six key life domains, sessions explored key areas shaping children's and young people's lives - from feeling valued, safe and supported, to participation, material basics, and identity and culture.

Speakers highlighted the importance of consistent care and early intervention, the realities of mental health and invisible illness, barriers faced in education and remote communities, and the need for genuine inclusion in decisions that affect young people. Access to housing, healthcare and financial security also featured strongly, alongside powerful reflections on culture, connection and belonging. Feedback from attendees, speakers and their families has been overwhelmingly positive, with many noting this as the most engaging summit to date.

Young Leaders Summits - Gympie and Bundaberg

In partnership with the Australian School of Entrepreneurship, the Commission hosted two Young Leaders Summits in 2025–26. Bringing together more than 400 young participants from local schools across Gympie and Bundaberg, the summits focused on interactive team-building activities, discussions on leadership and problem-solving, and keynote speeches from local leaders and business owners. The events inspired and empowered entrepreneurial young leaders, providing them with the tools and connections to positively impact their communities.

Young Achiever Awards

The annual Young Achiever Awards are an opportunity to celebrate excellence and influence Queensland's future. These annual awards pay tribute to the outstanding accomplishments of young individuals across Australia. Each program is grassroots, statewide and independently operated across every state. The awards recognise, enable and empower extraordinary young people aged 30 and under, and to amplify their innovative, economic and social achievements. The awards provide a platform to share the stories of inspiration and achievement that define the spirit of youth, Queensland wide. We proudly sponsor two awards at the Queensland Young Achiever Awards: the Contribution to Community or Family Safety Award and the Contribution to Community or Family Safety Award for First Nations.

Community Achievement Awards

The Queensland Community Achievement Awards encourage, acknowledge and reward the valuable contributions that individuals, communities and businesses make throughout Queensland. We proudly sponsor two awards at the Queensland Community Achievement Awards: the Dedicated to Supporting Young Queenslanders Award and the Dedicated to Improving Safety of Children Award. These awards recognise those that work tirelessly to improve their communities by promoting social, economic and environmental prosperity. This sponsorship supports us to deliver on our strategic objectives by recognising and amplifying community leadership, aligning with our objective to support collective action that improves outcomes for children, young people, and families across Queensland.

Priorities for 2026–27

For 2026–27, we will continue to ensure that the voices of children, young people and families remain central to the Commission's work. We will maintain established opportunities for participation through initiatives such as the Youth Summit, targeted consultations and engagement with lived experience advocates, ensuring their perspectives continue to inform our oversight, regulatory and advisory functions.

As our responsibilities evolve, we will remain committed to embedding lived experience in our work and promoting the right of children and families to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

4. We support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to grow up strong in their identity, culture, and community, free from systemic racism and discrimination

Throughout 2025–26, the Commission continued to advocate for a Queensland where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up connected to family, culture and Country, and where systems recognise and uphold their rights. We do this by ensuring that the voices, experiences and aspirations of First Nations children and communities informed oversight, policy reform and public advocacy. Central to this work was our commitment to promoting the accountability of government systems for improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We continued to work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and leaders, recognising that sustainable change is achieved through genuine partnership and community-led solutions. The Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner continued to provide oversight of the child protection, education and youth justice systems, ensuring government reforms remain focused on improving outcomes for First Nations children.

During the year, we released several significant reports examining the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across Queensland's statutory systems. These included the *Queensland Child Rights Report 2025*, *Beyond behaviour*, and *Principle focus 2026*, each highlighting areas where systemic reform is required to address persistent inequities and improve children's wellbeing and cultural connection. In particular, *Principle focus 2026* found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain significantly over-represented throughout Queensland's child protection system, with increasing rates of children entering care, longer periods spent in out-of-home care and growing reliance on residential care. The report reinforced that stronger implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, together with greater investment in prevention, family preservation, reunification and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions, is essential to achieving lasting change. We also continued to monitor education outcomes for First Nations children. Through the release of *Beyond behaviour*, we highlighted the disproportionate impact of school disciplinary absences on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and called for systemic reforms to ensure all children are supported to remain engaged in education.

Advancing national leadership for First Nations children

Throughout 2025–26, Commissioner Natalie Lewis continued to provide national leadership on the rights, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, ensuring Queensland's experience informed national policy discussions and reform. Throughout the year she represented Queensland in national and state discussions on child protection, youth justice, children's rights and implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. We also contributed evidence and policy advice to major reform processes including the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland's Child Safety System, advocating for stronger alignment between child protection reform, youth justice reform and Closing the Gap commitments. This work recognised that lasting improvements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children require governments to address the structural and systemic factors that contribute to disadvantage, rather than responding only after harm has occurred.

A significant focus of our national leadership was strengthening independent oversight for First Nations children. In October 2025, Commissioner Lewis joined a national panel hosted by the Australian Childhood Foundation to advocate for the establishment of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People's Commissioner, highlighting the need for a strong, independent voice to promote and protect the rights of First Nations children across Australia. The Australian Government's subsequent establishment of the National Commissioner during 2025–26 represented an important milestone in strengthening leadership for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Commissioner Lewis also joined the opening plenary of the Reintegration Puzzle Conference in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), where First Nations Children's Commissioners reflected on the need to move beyond punitive approaches to children in contact with youth justice systems. She emphasised the importance of nationally coordinated leadership that places children's rights, lived experience and cultural identity at the centre of policy, while promoting self-determination and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain connected to family, culture and Country.

We also continued to provide advice to parliamentary and government inquiries examining the impacts of racism, hate and discrimination on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We emphasised that improving outcomes requires governments and institutions to examine the structures, policies and practices that continue to produce unequal outcomes, ensuring systems are culturally safe, uphold children's rights, strengthen self-determination and are designed in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Monitoring the rates of over-representation - Principle focus

In May 2026 we released *Principle focus: A continued commitment to systemic accountability for the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's First Nations children*. The report examines current trends in the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland's child protection system and assesses whether reform efforts are achieving their intended outcomes. The report found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children now account for almost half of all children in out-of-home care in Queensland, are entering care at disproportionately high rates, and remaining in care for longer periods. It also found that residential care placements continue to increase significantly. The report emphasised that the ATSICPP is a key safeguard for children's rights, safety and cultural connection. It argues that transformational change will require stronger implementation of the ATSICPP across legislation, policy, programs and frontline practice to the standard of Active Efforts. *Principle focus* also calls for greater investment in prevention and early intervention, stronger support for reunification and family preservation, increased kinship placements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, improved transparency and accountability, and strengthened Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led oversight and self-determination.

Strengthening implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

Throughout the Commission of Inquiry, we provided independent evidence and advice to support lasting reform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Commissioner Natalie Lewis drew on our oversight work, evidence and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to advocate for reforms that strengthen children's connection to family, culture and Country and improve the accountability of the child protection system. This included through the release of three public statements during the Inquiry: one relating to adoption, one on secure care, and one urging governments to protect and fully implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. The latter was a joint statement released by Commissioner Lewis in conjunction with Sue-Anne Hunter (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner), Catherine Liddle (Chief Executive Officer, SNAICC — National Voice for our Children), and Phillip Brooks (Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP)).

A key focus of the statement was that the implementation of the ATSICPP is far more than a placement hierarchy. It provides a comprehensive framework for ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain connected to their identity, family, community and culture throughout their involvement with the child protection system. Effective implementation requires all five interconnected elements of the Principle—Prevention, Partnership, Placement, Participation and Connection—to be embedded across policy, practice and decision-making. The statement highlighted that while legislative recognition of the Principle is important, improved outcomes will only be achieved when it is consistently implemented in practice. Our evidence reinforced that improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children requires systems that recognise culture as a protective factor rather than an additional consideration.

Young, Black and Proud scholarship

We continued to invest in initiatives that celebrate the strengths, culture and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. In 2025–26, the Young, Black and Proud scholarships celebrated ten years of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to pursue education, leadership and career opportunities. The program continues to recognise the strengths, aspirations and achievements of young people while strengthening connections to identity, culture and community. Delivered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (ATSICHS) with funding from the Commission, the Young, Black and Proud scholarship program supports young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and helps them to reach their full potential.

In September 2025, the statewide program awarded 69 scholarships ranging from \$2,000 to \$10,000 to young First Nations athletes, artists and scholars. The scholarship program received its highest number of applications this year, with 298 young people and groups submitting applications. In 2025, there were: 12 academic scholarship recipients; 18 art scholarship recipients and 39 sport scholarship recipients. The 2026 scholarship round closed in May, with successful scholarship recipients expected to be announced later this year.

Improving understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child suicide

We continued to invest in research to strengthen understanding of the factors contributing to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child suicide and to support more effective prevention strategies. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to experience disproportionately high rates of suicide, with mortality rates more than three times those of non-Indigenous children. Improving outcomes requires a stronger evidence base to understand children's experiences, the services they access, and the opportunities for earlier intervention.

During 2025–26, we continued our partnership with the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP), Griffith University, supporting a multi-year research project led by Dr Amanda Gibson. We are providing in-kind support through access to child death review data and specialist expertise to strengthen understanding of the pathways leading to suicide among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland. During the year, we supported the linkage of child death review data with Queensland Health hospital and mental health datasets, creating a richer evidence base to examine children's interactions with services prior to their deaths. As the research progresses, it will explore how cultural connection may strengthen resilience, influence help-seeking behaviours and buffer the impacts of racism and other risk factors on suicidality. The findings from this research will contribute to improved policy, service design and suicide prevention initiatives, supporting culturally informed approaches that better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to build capability around the Child Safe Organisations system

Supporting culturally safe practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was another major investment priority for us this year. The Universal Principle requires organisations working with children to uphold cultural safety as a core element of child safeguarding. Our Child Safeguarding Grants Program included a category that provided funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and led organisations to deliver projects that would increase understanding and capability in implementing the Universal Principle.

We supported the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) to develop a First Nations toolkit, implementation resources and webinar program to assist organisations in embedding the Universal Principle, while we also supported Reconciliation Queensland to create culturally grounded training, resources and cross-sector networks that strengthened organisational understanding of cultural safety, self-determination and the rights of First Nations children. At a local level, Gympie and District Women's Health Centre partnered with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and community members to co-design the *Safe Words, Safe Conversations* resource kit,

providing culturally appropriate language and practical tools for frontline workers across health, community and child protection services.

Establishing a strategic direction for First Nations oversight

During 2025–26, Commissioner Natalie Lewis developed and launched the *Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner (OATSICC) Strategic Plan*, establishing the first dedicated strategic framework for the Office and providing a clear expression of its purpose, priorities and distinct approach to oversight. As a formal sub-strategy of the Commission's Strategic Plan, the document articulates how the Commission staff that report to Commissioner Lewis will exercise statutory functions while embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing across their work. A central objective of the strategy was to strengthen self-determination through greater functional autonomy. While remaining part of the Commission, we established governance and operating arrangements that recognised the independence of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner. These arrangements provided her with greater responsibility for setting a strategic direction, publishing independent reports and policy positions, making recommendations directly to government, and representing First Nations perspectives in parliamentary and public forums. The strategy also reinforces the importance of engaging directly with children, young people, families, communities and Elders so that lived experience informs policy, oversight and systemic reform.

During 2025–26, Commissioner Natalie Lewis commissioned a bespoke artwork to represent the identity, values and way of working of the Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner (OATSICC). Rather than creating a visual brand, the artwork was developed to capture the principles that guide the team's work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities, and to provide a lasting expression of its purpose and legacy. Released on the eighteenth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, *Our Journey, Our Story* was created by acclaimed First Nations artist Rachael Sarra in collaboration with young people. The artwork reflects OATSICC's commitment to placing children at the centre of decision-making, grounding its work in cultural authority and lived experience, and remaining accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The artwork also acknowledges the enduring influence of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, reaffirming the principles of self-determination, participation and cultural identity that underpin OATSICC's work. It stands as a lasting expression of the team's commitment to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are heard, respected and empowered in decisions that affect their lives.

Blueprint: A children's plan for Queensland

Commissioner Lewis released a *Blueprint: A children's plan for Queensland*, outlining a pathway to ensure every child can thrive. The Blueprint provides a practical roadmap for smarter investment, stronger coordination, and child-centred decision-making. The document sets out how government can work together to deliver lasting outcomes for children, families and communities across Queensland. The Blueprint also sets a clear direction for working across different levels of government, recognising the roles of local, state and federal governments. It aligns with the national reform agenda, including initiatives like Closing the Gap and *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031*, ensuring that policies support ongoing national goals.

Supporting NAIDOC Week across Queensland

Each year, the Commission supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to celebrate NAIDOC Week through a dedicated sponsorship program that provides financial and in-kind assistance to community-led events across Queensland. NAIDOC Week is one of Australia's most significant national celebrations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising the enduring strength of First Nations cultures, the leadership of communities and the vital importance of ensuring children and young people grow up proud of their identity, culture and heritage. During the year, the Commission provided \$12,770 in sponsorship funding to support NAIDOC celebrations delivered by organisations



including Logan Elders, Wan'diny, Kalwun Development Corporation, Koobara Kindy, Hymba Yumba Independent School and the Roma NAIDOC Committee. We also welcomed Aunty Margaret and Uncle Laurie to share their stories, culture and truth with staff, providing an opportunity to deepen cultural understanding and reinforce our ongoing commitment to learning from and working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Priorities for 2026–27

We remain committed to advancing self-determination and strengthening the accountability of government systems for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. In 2026–27, we will continue to provide independent oversight of child protection, youth justice and education, expand public reporting and performance monitoring, and work with governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and national partners to support reforms that enable every First Nations child to grow up strong in their identity, culture and community.

5. We ensure Queensland organisations meet their obligations to safeguard children and prevent abuse through the strategic use of our regulatory powers

The commencement of the Child Safe Organisations Act on 1 October 2025 represented the most significant milestone in the Commission's history and marked a fundamental expansion of our role as Queensland's independent child safeguarding agency. The commencement of the CSO Act reflects a major shift towards prevention—supporting organisations across Queensland to identify risks, strengthen safeguarding practices and embed children's safety into their everyday operations.

During 2025–26, the Commission undertook extensive work to establish the foundations of this new regulatory function, including developing regulatory frameworks, building organisational capability, engaging with sectors and establishing the systems required to support effective regulation. The Queensland Government also legislated to bring forward the commencement of the Reportable Conduct Scheme for all in-scope sectors to 1 July 2026, replacing the phased implementation originally set out under the CSO Act. This further accelerated our regulatory responsibilities and reinforced the importance of establishing robust systems, processes and partnerships to support Queensland's broader child safeguarding framework.

Building regulatory capability

The establishment of our regulatory functions required significant organisational transformation to ensure we could effectively perform our new statutory responsibilities. Becoming a regulator required more than new legislative powers; it required the systems, capability, culture and infrastructure necessary to exercise those powers consistently, fairly and transparently. During 2025–26, we established the organisational foundations needed to undertake this role, including:

- technology solutions for case management, information sharing, workflow management and data-informed decision-making
- clear operational policies and procedures to support consistent, fair and defensible regulatory decision-making
- a skilled, multidisciplinary workforce with expertise in assessment, investigation, interviewing, regulatory practice and trauma-aware approaches
- robust intake and triage processes to support the assessment and management of regulatory matters
- enhanced wellbeing supports recognising the complexity and impact of safeguarding work
- governance arrangements that support effective prioritisation, risk management and resource allocation.

Building workforce capability was equally important. Staff undertook specialist training on interviewing children, delivered by internationally recognised child protection specialist Eleonora De Michele, strengthening child-centred approaches and ensuring regulatory activities are informed by contemporary best practice when engaging with children and young people.

A critical component of establishing the Child Safe Organisations system was developing the technology and information systems required to support effective regulatory operations. During 2025–26, we implemented Lighthouse, our regulatory case management system, designed to support intake, assessment, monitoring, compliance and information management activities. The development of Lighthouse included extensive user testing and engagement with staff to ensure the system supports practical regulatory decision-making and provides a strong foundation for future growth.

Recognising that effective safeguarding depends on coordinated oversight, we also strengthened our partnerships across Queensland's regulatory environment. Through the Collaborative Regulators Network, representatives from more than 14 regulatory and safeguarding agencies worked together to develop shared approaches to information sharing, reporting, triage, assessment and regulatory practice. This collaboration supports a more coordinated and consistent safeguarding system while reducing duplication across agencies.

The significance of this work extends beyond establishing a new regulatory function. This transformation has required the Commission to mature as an organisation capable of balancing multiple roles simultaneously: strategic and operational, educative and regulatory, supportive while also exercising firm and independent oversight where required. Throughout this transition, we have continued to refine our approaches by listening to stakeholders, learning from implementation and adapting our regulatory practice to ensure it remains practical, proportionate and effective.

Establishing a prevention-focused regulatory approach

Keeping children safe is at the centre of the Commission's regulatory role. Under the CSO Act, we oversee the implementation of the Child Safe Standards, the Universal Principle and Reportable Conduct Scheme, supporting organisations to create environments where children are safe, respected and empowered. Our regulatory responsibilities include supporting organisations to understand and meet their obligations, monitoring compliance, responding to concerns and taking action where organisations fail to meet their responsibilities.

We have new powers to obtain and share information, investigate concerns and use enforcement tools where necessary to address risks to children. While our preferred approach is one of prevention, education, guidance and collaboration, effective regulation requires the ability to act when children's safety is at risk. We are committed to using our regulatory powers proportionately and effectively to ensure organisations meet their responsibilities and that children in Queensland are protected. Our *Regulatory Approach*, published on our website, establishes the principles that guide how these powers are exercised. It outlines a model of collaborative, risk-based regulation that seeks to build capability across Queensland's diverse sectors while maintaining strong accountability where obligations are not met.

The Commission's regulatory approach is built around five key commitments:

- clear guidance and support to help organisations understand their legal obligations and implement the Child Safe Standards in practice
- data-driven and risk-based regulation to focus proactive regulatory activity where it is most likely to prevent harm
- proportionate and professional responses to concerns and compliance matters, ensuring regulatory action reflects the nature and severity of identified risks
- collaborative regulation and information sharing with sector regulators and safeguarding partners to strengthen Queensland's broader child protection system
- transparent accountability through clear reporting, assurance mechanisms and oversight of regulatory decisions.

Through this approach, we aim to support a future where child safety and cultural safety are embedded as core organisational practices, not simply treated as compliance requirements.

Enquiries

In September 2025, the Commission established a coordinated Enquiries function to provide a consistent first point of contact for members of the public and regulated entities. All incoming contacts are recorded, triaged and assessed against defined criteria to determine the most appropriate course of action, including referral to the relevant internal team or

external agency where matters fall outside the Commission's jurisdiction. Between 15 September 2025 and 30 June 2026, we received 1118 enquiries from the public. Of these:

- 30 per cent (333 enquiries) related to the implementation of the Child Safe Standards and were referred to our Regulatory teams
- 18 per cent (203 enquiries) related to the reportable conduct scheme, including regulatory capture and implementation and were referred to our Regulatory teams
- 10 per cent (115 enquiries) related to individual concerns, including perceived inaction by the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety, and were triaged and referred to the appropriate complaint or support pathways
- 48 per cent (533 enquiries) were resolved at first point of contact, supporting timely access to information

Of all enquiries, 46 per cent (510 enquiries) were made over the phone, 32 per cent (353 enquiries) via email, six enquiries via letter and 22 per cent (249 enquiries) through our online form and social media.

Commencing regulatory operations – our first casework

On 1 October 2025, the Commission officially commenced our role as Queensland's regulator of the Child Safe Standards, representing beginning a new era of independent oversight to strengthen children's safety across Queensland. The commencement of regulatory operations marked our transition from building regulatory capability to exercising it—establishing the Commission as an active regulator committed to preventing harm, strengthening organisational practice and improving the safety of children wherever they access services.

Our proactive and intelligence-informed regulatory approach sees us responding to enquiries and emerging risks, at the same time as working collaboratively with organisations. Across 2025–26, we:

- responded to 311 Child Safe Standards-related contacts from organisations and the community
- undertook targeted follow-up with organisations requiring additional information or support to demonstrate compliance
- commenced proactive compliance engagements with 28 organisations across Queensland
- assessed evidence provided by participating organisations against the Child Safe Standards
- published eight sector insights reports, sharing lessons, emerging themes and good practice to support continuous improvement across child safe sectors.

These activities demonstrate our regulatory philosophy: one that combines independent oversight with education, collaboration and early intervention to improve safeguarding outcomes. Rather than waiting for failures to occur, we are actively identifying risks, supporting organisations to strengthen their systems and building a culture of continuous improvement across Queensland's child-serving organisations.

Fast-tracking our preparation for Queensland's Reportable Conduct Scheme

On 16 October 2025, the government announced that the Scheme would be rolled out in full on 1 July 2026, replacing the multi-year staged implementation originally planned. The amendment brought forward the start date for:

- health, education, and accommodation and residential sectors (previously scheduled to come into effect on 1 January 2027)
- religious bodies and early childhood education and care services (previously scheduled to come into effect on 1 July 2027).

This significant change in deadline rapidly scaled the pace and complexity of what was required but was met with unprecedented commitment, dedication and agility across multiple workstreams. The announcement required the rollout of a tightly interdependent program of work requiring active coordination within a fixed timeframe. From the finalisation of internal policies and procedures to underpin consistent scheme operation and related training program operational staff, progression of the information sharing project to the implementation of essential facilities and ICT uplift alongside extensive recruitment, planning quickly turned to implementation as we prepared. This work included the publication of our *Guide to Queensland's Reportable Conduct Scheme* to provide detailed implementation guidance to the estimated 10,000 organisations subject to the Scheme. The guideline was published in February 2026. It outlines responsibilities under the Act, provides step-by-step guidance on receiving and managing allegations, explains the roles of reporting entities as well as regulators and the Commission in administering the Scheme, and offers practical tools and examples to help organisations build a pro-reporting culture as they work to implement the Scheme.

Supporting Queensland to become child safe

While organisations must meet their legal obligations under the CSO Act, lasting change depends on leaders, staff and volunteers understanding what protecting children from harm looks like in practice and having the capability to embed it into their everyday work. Throughout 2025–26, we invested significantly in education, guidance and sector engagement to help organisations prepare. Our education and engagement activities are designed to equip and empower organisations and sectors to understand and comply with their obligations. . They are intended to help organisations embed children's safety into governance, leadership, workforce practice and organisational culture. By combining regulation, education, practical guidance and community investment, we are helping to build a Queensland where organisations prevent harm before it occurs, respond effectively when concerns arise and continuously strengthen their safeguarding practices. Ultimately, the success of the Child Safe Organisations system will not be measured solely by regulatory compliance, but by the creation of organisational cultures where every child is safe, every voice is heard and every organisation accepts responsibility for protecting children from harm.

Building readiness across Queensland sectors

Successful implementation of Queensland's CSO Act required sustained engagement with the sectors responsible for delivering services to children across Queensland, recognising that each sector faced different operating environments, governance arrangements, levels of regulatory maturity and implementation challenges. During the year, we delivered a coordinated statewide child safeguarding engagement program, working with organisations across metropolitan, regional and remote communities. Engagement occurred through presentations, conferences, workshops, webinars, community information sessions, sector forums, leadership roundtables and targeted meetings with organisations preparing to implement the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme. We also participated in major community events to increase public awareness of child safeguarding reforms and ensure organisations understood the practical steps required to meet their obligations. Highlights included:

- convening an Interjurisdictional Child Safe Organisations Forum with representatives from across Australia to share implementation experience and regulatory practice

- holding six roundtable meetings with representatives from sector regulators, government departments, peak bodies and influential organisations
- providing \$4.8 million since 2024 through our Child Safeguarding Grants Program, which has funded 60 projects across Queensland to build capability and support organisations' implementation of the Act
- delivering workshops and presentations to peak bodies, industry associations and community organisations, including Community Justice Groups, Community Legal Centres Queensland, Independent Schools Queensland, the Local Government Association of Queensland and disability service providers
- engaging directly with thousands of practitioners, volunteers, leaders and community members through major conferences, expos and community events
- developing practical safeguarding resources, implementation tools and workforce capability initiatives.

This broad engagement recognised that safeguarding is a shared responsibility and that organisations require practical support to translate legislative requirements into effective day-to-day practice.

Alongside our education and engagement activities, our public communications activities across 2025–26 included a heavy focus on raising awareness across the Queensland community of the introduction of the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme. This included our *Raising the Standards* advertising campaign, in market for 13 weeks from May to August 2025. The campaign was aimed at increasing community awareness and understanding of the Child Safe Standards, and ran across multiple platforms including TV, radio, and social media. The campaign achieved more than 27 million impressions across all channels and performed better than the industry benchmark in almost every channel. Market research conducted before and after the campaign's successful deployment indicates a significant increase in awareness of the Standards – from 27 per cent of those surveyed before the campaign, to 58 per cent of those surveyed in October and November 2025. A third survey in April and May 2026 found a further growth in awareness, to 67 per cent of participants, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Commission's ongoing education and capacity building work within the sector and our communications activities aimed at the broader community. These areas of activity work in partnership to increase Queensland's understanding of the Child Safe Organisations system and its critical importance in strengthening our child safeguarding across all the places children live, grow, learn, and play.

A coordinated statewide engagement program

Throughout 2025–26, the Commission's Education and Capacity Building team worked collaboratively alongside regulators, government agencies, peak bodies and leaders across every prescribed sector. Our investment in education and engagement resulted in significant sector participation and growing community awareness of Queensland's child safeguarding reforms. During 2025–26, we:

- delivered more than 200 sector engagements across Queensland
- recorded more than 74,000 downloads of Child Safe Organisations resources
- attracted more than 665,000 views of child safeguarding webpages
- welcomed approximately 2500 registrations to our live webinars
- saw over 15,300 views of our pre-recorded webinars and short video resources
- contributed to a 16 per cent increase in awareness of the CSO Act over a six-month period
- supported 60 community-led safeguarding initiatives through the Child Safeguarding Grants Program.

This approach recognised that safeguarding capability is built through ongoing relationships rather than one-off communication.

Rather than adopting a single engagement model, the Commission designed activities to reflect the diversity of organisations delivering services to children. In the education sector, the Commission worked closely with the Department

of Education, the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board, Independent Schools Queensland, TAFE Queensland and P&C Queensland, delivering presentations, workshops and forums that reached school leaders, compliance officers and education providers responsible for implementing the new legislative framework. Within the early childhood education and care sector, engagement occurred through the Early Childhood Regulatory Authority and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, with workshops and presentations supporting providers to understand both governance responsibilities and day-to-day safeguarding practice.

Across the child protection sector, the Commission worked extensively with the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety together with non-government providers delivering family support, foster care, residential care and placement services. Engagement included workshops, presentations, advisory groups and information stalls, supporting organisations responsible for some of Queensland's most vulnerable children.

The Commission also delivered significant engagement across the community services, disability and health sectors. Partnerships with Queensland Council of Social Service, the National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission, Queensland Health, Primary Health Networks and professional bodies enabled safeguarding information to reach organisations providing family support, disability services, therapy, community health and allied health services. Disability expos, sector webinars, health roundtables and targeted communications provided practical implementation support while generating valuable feedback to improve Commission resources.

Recognising the diversity of Queensland communities, the Commission also undertook targeted work with religious organisations and multicultural communities. Working alongside Multicultural Affairs Queensland, Ethnic Communities Council Queensland, Multicultural Australia and Settlement Services International, the Commission supported culturally appropriate implementation approaches and strengthened relationships with faith-based organisations delivering services to children.

Similar approaches were undertaken across sport and recreation, community organisations, justice and detention services, transport providers, government entities and accommodation and residential services, recognising that safeguarding responsibilities extend wherever children participate in organised activities or receive services.

The Commission's implementation approach relied heavily on collaboration. Rather than duplicating existing sector networks, the Commission partnered with established regulators, government agencies and peak organisations that already held trusted relationships within their sectors. These partnerships enabled information to be disseminated quickly, ensured consistent messaging across government and reduced implementation burden on organisations. Several engagement activities demonstrated the scale of this collaborative approach. The Queensland Council of Social Service Quality Collaboration Network webinar attracted 273 registered participants, while health sector roundtables brought together representatives from 23 health organisations to identify implementation challenges and opportunities. Regional visits, industry conferences, local government engagement and community forums further extended the Commission's reach into regional, rural and remote Queensland.

By the end of the reporting period, every prescribed sector had been engaged through a tailored program of communication, education and partnership activities. This proactive approach established strong foundations for implementation, strengthened relationships across Queensland's safeguarding system and positioned the Commission to transition from implementation support to ongoing education, monitoring and continuous improvement as the legislative framework matured.

Child Safeguarding Grants Program

We continued to invest in community-led approaches to child safeguarding through the Child Safeguarding Grants Program. During 2025–26, the program funded 15 new initiatives across Queensland, funding projects that strengthened organisational capability, delivered regional safeguarding workshops, developed culturally responsive resources,

increased community awareness and translated research into practical safeguarding tools. The grants program enables organisations and communities to build safeguarding capability in ways that reflect their local context and the needs of the children and families they serve.

Our Child Safeguarding Grants Program is part of our Child Safe Organisations Investment Strategy. Since 2024, we have partnered with 60 organisations, and distributed more than \$4.8 million, to reach every corner of Queensland—from Mabuiag Island to the Gold Coast, from Emerald to the Sunshine Coast. The investment has been significant and the commitment from grantees has been extraordinary. Successful grant recipients from round one (2024–25) delivered funded projects throughout 2025–26. Key outcomes include:

- RedCity Roar Basketball Inc and Life Education Queensland co-designed a practical guide capturing the views of young athletes on how sporting clubs can be child safe. The guide aims to translate legal requirements into practical action at club level, with a clear roadmap to meet their safeguarding obligations.
- Family Day Care Queensland developed and delivered free, tailored training contextualised to home-based care, providing practical training to family day care educators.
- PeakCare developed a capability framework support child, youth and family sector organisations in guiding their approach to implementing safeguarding practices that span the entirety of their workforce.
- Independent Schools Queensland developed training to support schools implement the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Designed for school leaders and risk, compliance and HR manager, Independent Schools Queensland created a dedicated eLearning module for school governing bodies to complement existing child safeguarding training.
- QCOSS and the Sexual Violence Research and Prevention Unit partnered to deliver From Knowing to Doing: Building Safeguarding Capability in Community Youth Serving Organisations, a pilot project supporting community organisations to strengthen child safety knowledge, leadership, and practice.
- Outback Independent Living's Child Safeguarding Workshop series focused on building sector knowledge and capabilities required to sustain organisations across Central West Queensland to centre children's safety in their organisations.

Following the success of round one, the second grant round opened in August 2025 and funded sector-specific capability and capacity building initiatives to support implementation of the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Grants enabled peak bodies and regional organisations to deliver tailored training, resources and implementation support, strengthening child safeguarding capability across Queensland.

In 2025–26, the Commission funded 15 grant projects valued at \$1,260,420 (excluding GST) to strengthen implementation of the Child Safe Standards, the Universal Principle and the Reportable Conduct Scheme across Queensland. The grants were awarded to organisations with extensive reach across education, child protection, disability, community, faith and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sectors, recognising that lasting child safety reform depends on organisations having the capability, leadership and practical tools to embed safeguarding into everyday practice. A strong focus of the funding was equipping organisations with practical resources and leadership capability to implement Queensland's new legislative framework. ChildSafe Australia developed sector-specific tools and training to strengthen reportable conduct systems and governance. Queensland Catholic Education Commission, Lady Gowrie Queensland and Independent Schools Queensland each delivered large-scale initiatives to support schools and early childhood services through governance resources, policy templates, professional development roadshows and implementation tools that enable consistent child safe practice across extensive statewide networks.

Several projects focused on strengthening safeguarding capability across the community and human services sectors. Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS) developed a pilot program to move organisations beyond compliance and embed safeguarding as an organisational culture. Impact Care Services produced sector-specific workshops and practical toolkits for faith communities, family support organisations and care networks, while St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland developed governance resources, reporting pathways and community engagement tools designed to create

a "ripple effect" of safeguarding capability throughout its extensive volunteer network. Blackley Group Pty Ltd delivered culturally responsive safeguarding resources and training tailored to Queensland's diverse school communities, and Outback Independent Living built safeguarding capability across more than 30 organisations in Central West Queensland, recognising the unique challenges faced by geographically isolated communities.

The grants also recognised the important role played by faith-based organisations in safeguarding children. Anglicare Southern Queensland expanded child safe and Reportable Conduct Scheme training through established interfaith partnerships while developing culturally appropriate resources for diverse communities, including the Sudanese community. Queensland Baptists delivered workshops that combined legislative requirements with cultural awareness and trauma-informed practice, supporting churches and their community partners to strengthen child safeguarding while reducing duplication of effort across the sector.

Collectively, the 15 funded projects demonstrate the breadth of Queensland's safeguarding reform. They extend beyond regulatory compliance to strengthen organisational leadership, governance, workforce capability, cultural safety, community partnerships and practical implementation. By investing in organisations that collectively reach thousands of children, families, volunteers and professionals, we are helping to build a stronger, more capable safeguarding system in which children are safer wherever they learn, participate and receive services.

Cross-Government engagement and information sharing guideline

A central feature of the Child Safe Organisations system is recognising that protecting children from harm is a shared responsibility. It relies not only on the actions of individual organisations, but also on the effective and timely flow of information across systems, by reporting entities, sector regulators, government departments, police, and relevant oversight bodies. Information sharing therefore sits at the core of this system. By enabling earlier identification of risk information sharing plays a critical role in preventing harm before it escalates and ensuring concerns are responded to appropriately and effectively.

Effective information sharing is a foundational element of a connected and responsive child safeguarding system that supports the safety and wellbeing of children. To support this work, we developed an information sharing guideline for in-scope organisations and regulators to provide clarity and practical direction on how information can be appropriately shared under the CSO Act. The guideline supports child safe entities, reporting entities and sector regulators to understand their powers, responsibilities, and expectations for discretionary information sharing under the CSO Act in relation to the Child Safe Standards and Universal Principle and the Reportable Conduct Scheme. It is intended to support these entities to understand what information may be requested, used and shared under the CSO Act.

Designing a modern regulator

Implementing the CSO Act required far more than establishing new regulatory functions. It required us to design how those functions would operate in practice. Throughout 2025–26, regulatory staff invested significant time and expertise in designing the operational framework that underpins the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Schemes. Working alongside business analysts, technology specialists and the system vendor, regulatory officers translated complex legislative requirements into practical business processes and digital solutions. This work required staff to define every stage of the regulatory lifecycle, from the receipt of notifications through to assessment, investigation, decision-making, compliance monitoring and regulatory reporting. In many cases, processes that had never previously existed in Queensland needed to be designed from first principles.

The regulatory team developed detailed process maps, business rules and workflow designs that informed the configuration of the Lighthouse case management system. Operational requirements were translated into technical specifications, enabling system developers to build functionality that reflected legislative obligations, supported consistent decision-making and ensured statutory timeframes could be managed efficiently. Throughout the build, Commission staff

worked closely with the vendor to refine requirements, validate functionality, undertake user acceptance testing and ensure the platform met the operational needs of a contemporary regulator.

Technology alone cannot deliver effective regulation. Alongside system development, we created the operational framework that enables staff to administer the Child Safe Organisations system consistently and transparently. This included developing regulatory procedures, assessment frameworks, decision-making guidance, investigation processes, correspondence templates, standard operating procedures and quality assurance mechanisms. Together, these resources establish a consistent approach to regulatory practice while supporting fairness, procedural integrity and defensible decision-making. As implementation progressed, regulatory staff also became our first system experts. They developed and delivered training for colleagues, tested operational scenarios, refined business processes and embedded new ways of working across the organisation. This ensured that knowledge gained during the design and build phases was retained within the Commission and that staff were equipped to confidently administer the new regulatory framework from commencement.

By designing our regulatory processes, embedding them within a purpose-built digital platform and building an operational workforce capable of administering them, we have established the foundations of a modern regulator. These investments in people, systems and processes will continue to support consistent, efficient and evidence-informed regulation as the Child Safe Organisations framework matures and our responsibilities continue to expand.

Priorities for 2026–27

We enter 2026–27 with strong foundations in place, the focus will now shift from implementation to maturity—supporting organisations to embed child safe practices, strengthening regulatory capability and driving continuous improvement across Queensland's child-serving sectors. A significant milestone is the full implementation of the Reportable Conduct Scheme on 1 July 2026.. We will continue supporting organisations through this transition while exercising independent, intelligence-informed and proportionate regulatory oversight. We will also complete the implementation of our Lighthouse regulatory case management system, further strengthening our ability to manage regulatory matters, share information securely, identify emerging risks and support consistent, evidence-based decision-making.

As the Child Safe Organisations system continues to mature, we will remain focused on achieving more than legislative compliance. Through regulation, education, guidance, intelligence and collaboration, we will continue to build organisational capability, influence safeguarding culture and strengthen the systems that protect children and young people across Queensland.

6. We exhibit excellence in governance, performance and organisational culture

During 2025–26, we continued our transition from a small statutory agency into a more complex organisation with expanded responsibilities and heightened expectations of its performance. Three significant areas of focus during the year were the development of an integrated policy and procedure framework, strengthening of governance, and the implementation of new ICT capability, including systems to support our expanded regulatory functions. These initiatives are central to how staff to access clear guidance, manage information effectively, identify and manage risk, and undertake complex work consistent

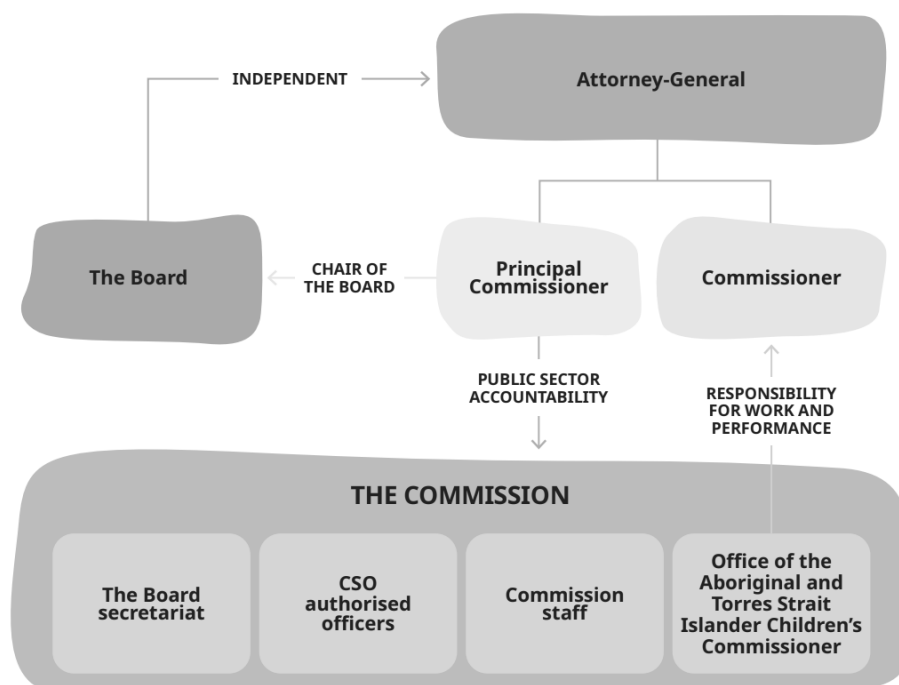
Another key priority for the Commission in 2025-26 was ensuring that organisational growth was matched by people-centred leadership. The way we lead and support our workforce, particularly through periods of complexity, change and increased scrutiny, directly influences the quality, consistency and integrity of our work.

Organisational capability

Our structure

The FCC Act establishes two Commissioners and the Commission as three separate entities. The Child Death Review Board is established as a fourth separate entity.

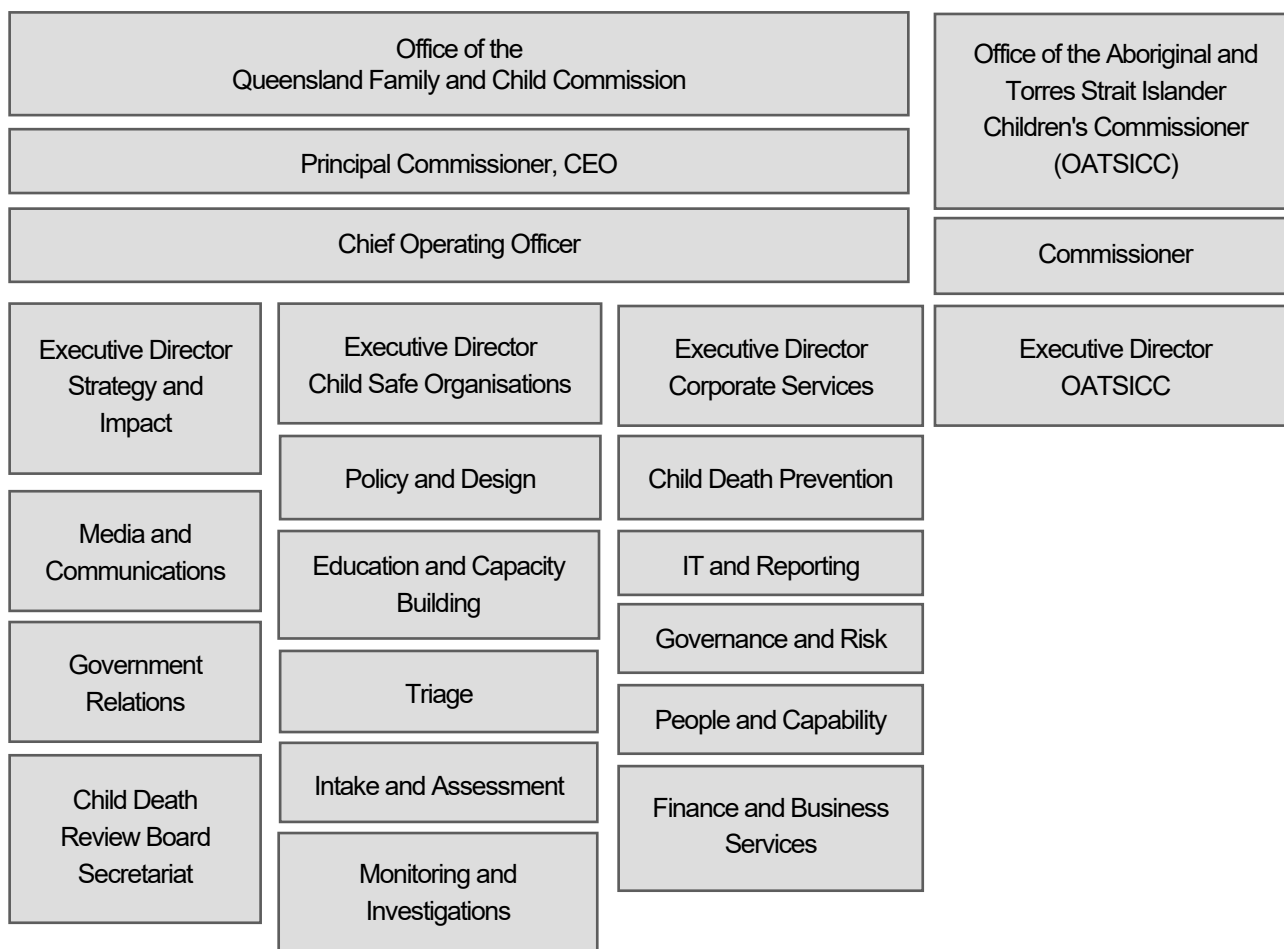
Figure 4: Commission establishment



2025–26 organisational structure

Throughout 2025–26, the Commission was organised into four divisions, each delivering distinct but complementary functions to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Figure 5: Organisational structure



Child Safe Organisations division: Led implementation of Queensland's CSO Act and established our new regulatory functions. The division is responsible for intake, assessment, education, capacity building, policy development, monitoring and investigations, working closely with regulators and the sector to embed child safe practices across more than 40,000 organisations.

Corporate Services division: Provided the organisational infrastructure to support our operations through finance, governance, risk, people and capability, facilities management, information technology, and child death prevention. The division strengthened governance and organisational capability while maintaining Queensland's Child Death Register and supporting our role in identifying systemic opportunities to prevent future child deaths.

Strategy and Impact division: Positioned the Commission as a trusted source of evidence, advice and influence. The division brought together government relations, policy and parliamentary engagement, data analysis and reporting, media and communications, and the Child Death Review Board Secretariat to strengthen our strategic impact and support evidence-based reform.

Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner (OATSICC): Led by the Commissioner's work to protect and promote the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people through oversight, advocacy and systemic reform. The Office's work was grounded in self-determination, cultural authority and a child rights-based approach, with a strong focus on improving child protection and youth justice systems.

Our executive team at 30 June 2026

Luke Twyford, Principal Commissioner, was appointed as Chief Executive and Principal Commissioner of the Commission in December 2021. Luke's parents fostered a number of children throughout his childhood, and this experience shaped the perspectives and passion he brings to his work. Luke's career spans more than 20 years across Commonwealth, New South Wales and Northern Territory governments in the areas of child protection and youth justice, research, integrity, audit and governance. He has led critical reform of legal frameworks and has extensive experience monitoring the performance of the systems designed to keep children safe.

Emma White, Chief Operating Officer, joined the Commission in June 2025 as Chief Operating Officer. Emma is a highly respected and collaborative senior leader with an unwavering commitment to improving outcomes for children and families. Emma has a distinguished career in human services, starting as a frontline social worker in remote and rural areas and progressing to become Chief Executive Officer and Director-General for the child protection portfolios in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Emma has vast experience leading programs, managing significant budgets and portfolios, and spearheading important legislative reforms, including the implementation of the Working with Children Scheme in Western Australia.

Amy Lamoin, Executive Director OATSICC, was appointed to the role of Executive Director in July 2024. Amy is an expert in social and human rights policy and is respected for her work in international aid and humanitarian response. She has expertise in child rights, child protection, refugee protection, and sexual and gender-based violence prevention. Amy has advocated for children here in Australia and abroad, leading strategic policy development for organisations including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Queensland Human Rights Commission, ChildFund Australia and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

Erin Glapiak, Executive Director Strategy and Impact, is an experienced public sector leader with a strong commitment to advancing the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people in Queensland. She has served in senior leadership roles at the Commission for over four years, leading strategic planning, innovation, youth engagement and communication functions. She has played a role in shaping and delivering reform initiatives that centre the voices of children and families.

Libby Doney, Executive Director Corporate Services, is a strategic public sector executive with extensive experience leading corporate services, organisational transformation, workforce strategy and complex reform. She joined the Queensland Family and Child Commission in 2025 following senior executive roles in the Northern Territory, and is known for translating strategy into practical organisational outcomes, building capability, and leading effectively through complexity and change. Libby holds qualifications in business, postgraduate qualifications in leadership, and a Master of Public Governance.

Executive changes in 2025–26

This year marked the conclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner Natalie Lewis' six-year term. Throughout her tenure, Natalie championed the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, challenged systems to better recognise the importance of culture and self-determination, and ensured the voices of children informed decisions affecting their lives. Her work advanced significant reforms through landmark reports, strengthened our evidence base on over-representation and child rights, and contributed to practical legislative change that improved outcomes for First Nations children and families.

This year we also farewelled Anne Edwards. During her time with the Commission Anne supported a number of significant initiatives, including the implementation of the Child Safe Organisations framework, work associated with the *In Plain Sight* taskforce, and our broader oversight functions. We thank Anne for her service during a period of considerable growth and change.

Our people

Our workforce is employed under the *Public Sector Act 2022*, except for the Principal Commissioner and Commissioner, who are employed under the FCC Act. The commencement of the CSO Act represented the most significant expansion of the Commission's responsibilities since our establishment and required a corresponding investment in organisational capability and workforce capacity. Our approved 2025–26 Service Delivery Statement (SDS) workforce increased from 65 FTE to 80 FTE, reflecting the establishment of the new Child Safe Organisations regulatory function. The approved workforce comprised 48 FTE supporting our core statutory functions, 22 FTE dedicated to Child Safe Organisations division, and 10 FTE supporting the Child Death Review Board.

During the year, our workforce budget was further increased to 89 FTE to support the accelerated implementation of the Reportable Conduct Scheme. This additional investment enabled us to recruit specialist regulatory, operational and implementation staff to prepare Queensland's new safeguarding framework for commencement on 1 July 2026.

As at 26 June 2026, the Commission employed 83.40 paid full-time equivalent staff (90 headcount), reflecting continued recruitment throughout the year to build capability across regulatory operations, oversight, policy, education and corporate services. Several recruitment processes were also underway.

Workforce profile

Our workforce establishment was comprised of:

- 71.89 per cent frontline and frontline support, and 28.11 per cent corporate (occupation type by FTE)
- 91.15 per cent permanent, 3.51 per cent temporary, and 5.34 per cent contract (appointment type by FTE)
- 85.42 per cent full-time, and 14.58 per cent part-time (employment by headcount).

The Commission's workforce reflects the specialist nature of its statutory responsibilities and the multidisciplinary capability required to undertake independent oversight, regulation, research, education and child death prevention.

Women continue to comprise the majority of the Commission's workforce, representing 82.02 per cent of all employees. This strong representation is also reflected in leadership, with women holding 57.1 per cent of senior officer positions and 83.3 per cent of Senior Executive Service and Chief Executive positions at the end of the reporting period.

The Commission is committed to building a workforce that reflects the diversity of Queensland and values the different experiences and perspectives that strengthen its work. During the year:

- 8.9 per cent of employees identified as Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, or Torres Strait Islander peoples
- 6.7 per cent identified as a person with disability
- fewer than five employees identified as speaking a language other than English at home, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and Australian South Sea Islander languages.

We recognise that workforce diversity contributes to better decision-making, stronger community engagement and more culturally responsive services, and continue to support diversity and inclusion as part of our people strategy. As the organisation continues to grow and our responsibilities expand, attracting and retaining a skilled and diverse workforce remains a strategic priority, ensuring we have the capability to

deliver independent oversight, effective regulation and evidence-informed leadership for Queensland's children and young people.

Table 5: Staff demographics – gender

Gender	Number (Headcount)	Percentage of total workforce
Woman	74	82.02%
Man	16	17.98%
Non-binary	0	0.00%

Table 6: Staff demographics – diversity groups

Diversity groups	Number (Headcount)	Percentage of total workforce
Woman	74	82.02%
Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples	8	8.88%
People with disability	6	6.74%
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse – Speak a language at home other than English [^]	< 5*	<5
*To ensure privacy, where there are less than 5 respondents, specific numbers should be replaced by < 5 [^] Includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages or Australian South Sea Islander languages spoken at home.		

Table 7: Staff demographics – women in leadership

Category	Women (Headcount)	Women as % of leadership cohort
Senior Officers (Classified, s122 and s155 combined)	4	57.14%
Senior Executive Service and Chief Executives (Classified, s122 and s155 combined)	5	83.33%

Recruitment

This year, the Commission experienced our most significant workforce growth since our establishment in 2014, increasing core staffing by 24 FTE from 65 to 89 FTE during 2025–26. This growth was enabled through 22 recruitment processes and the commencement of 24 new employees, significantly expanding organisational capability and service delivery capacity. Recruitment focused on building specialist capability across regulatory operations, policy, education, investigations and corporate support functions to enable delivery of our expanded statutory responsibilities. During the second half of the year, we paused active recruitment as part of an establishment management strategy to ensure staffing resources remained aligned with the emerging operational workload, organisational priorities and available funding.

Professional development and training

We continued to invest significantly in developing the capability of our workforce during 2025–26, recognising that delivering high-quality oversight, regulation and research relies on maintaining a highly skilled and contemporary workforce. Investment in professional development increased substantially during the year, with total expenditure on staff training, conferences and professional seminars rising from approximately \$2,827 per staff member to \$3,743 per staff member. This investment supported our significant organisational transformation, including the implementation of the CSO Act and establishment of the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Staff participated in specialist learning across regulation, investigations, administrative decision-making, child safeguarding, trauma-informed practice, information management, leadership, governance, digital systems and contemporary public administration. Professional conferences and sector forums also enabled staff to remain informed of emerging research, legislative developments and leading practice from across Australia.

We hosted two Future Leaders Policy Officer Graduates in 2025–26 as part of their Future Leaders Program rotations. Our Child Death Prevention team and the OATSICC also hosted two Griffith University students on placement.

Working for Queensland survey

The 2025 Working for Queensland Survey was completed by 79 per cent of Commission staff, providing valuable insights during a period of significant organisational growth and change. Survey results reflected a workforce with strong connection to our purpose and positive experiences in key areas, including social support, flexible work, integrity, equal opportunity and employee wellbeing. Staff reported particularly strong results in relation to understanding ethical behaviour, workplace safety obligations, respectful workplace practices and confidence in our commitment to inclusion. The results also identified opportunities to strengthen leadership capability, organisational connection, career development and perceptions of fairness and equity. In response, all divisions developed action plans with key actions underway including an organisational culture program, implementation of a new onboarding and induction framework, and strengthened external training partnerships. We also continued to provide opportunities for staff connection through all-staff workshops.

Staff wellbeing

During 2025–26, we continued to invest in proactive initiatives to support staff wellbeing, strengthen workplace culture and build a capable, connected and inclusive workforce. This work was particularly important during a period of significant organisational growth, with the Commission welcoming new employees, establishing new functions and supporting staff through substantial organisational change. We strengthened our approach to employee onboarding and connection through the introduction of its inaugural face-to-face induction program. Approved as part of our new Onboarding and Induction Framework, the program provides new and existing employees with a consistent introduction to the Commission's purpose, values, strategic priorities, governance arrangements and ways of working. The New Starter Induction Journey aligns with the Commission's *Strategic Workforce Plan 2023–2026* and reinforces our commitment to providing a supportive employee experience from the beginning of employment. The framework clarifies the shared

responsibilities of managers and employees throughout the induction process, ensuring new starters receive timely information, appropriate support and opportunities to connect with colleagues and the broader organisation.

We also continued to strengthen our focus on inclusion, cultural capability and respectful workplace behaviours. In partnership with SBS Inclusion, we introduced three new eLearning programs designed to build workforce capability and awareness:

- Core Inclusion, which builds understanding of diversity, inclusion and the principles that enable all employees to participate and thrive in the workplace
- First Nations, which strengthens understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and experiences, and supports employees to contribute to a culturally safe workplace
- Appropriate Workplace Behaviour, which supports employees to recognise behaviours that may undermine a respectful workplace and understand their role in creating a safe and inclusive environment.

These modules form part of our broader commitment to embedding inclusion and respectful behaviours across the organisation and will be incorporated into the Commission's induction program for future employees.

We also commenced implementation of the Act, Connect, Prevent eLearning program to support public sector implementation of the *Preventing and responding to sexual harassment and related conduct at work* directive. The program reinforces that all employees have a right to feel safe and respected at work and highlights the shared responsibility of all staff to prevent and respond to inappropriate conduct. Through these initiatives, we continued to build a workplace culture that prioritises wellbeing, inclusion, psychological safety and connection, while supporting employees to contribute to the delivery of our expanded statutory responsibilities.

Early retirement, redundancy and retrenchment

No redundancy, early retirement or retrenchment packages were paid in 2025–26.

Public sector ethics and public sector values

Human Rights Act 2019

The Commission's project and governance processes embed human rights impact assessments. We received no human rights complaints in 2025–26.

Victims' Commissioner and Sexual Violence Review Board Act 2024

No Charter of Victims' Rights complaints were received by the Commission.

Employee complaints

No internal formal complaints have been received in 2025–26.

Work health and safety incidents and claims

There were six notified incidents in 2025–26, up from two in the previous financial year. There are no active WorkCover claims.

Sexual Harassment Contact Officers

Our six Sexual Harassment Contact Officers (SHCOs) are formally trained by the Queensland Human Rights Commission to act as a confidential point of contact for employees who may have experienced or witnessed or have concerns about workplace sexual harassment. SHCOs offer information and guidance to help individuals understand the options available to them and provide a safe and respectful space where employees can speak openly about their concerns. The role of the SHCO is voluntary and undertaken alongside staff members' regular duties. SHCOs also

support individuals who are concerned that their behaviour may have breached the policy, or who are responding to a complaint, by helping them understand the process and available supports in a respectful and constructive manner.

Governance and accountability

During 2025–26, the Commission we continued to strengthen our internal governance arrangements to support our expanding statutory responsibilities, increased organisational complexity and transition to a regulatory agency. As our functions evolved, new governance forums were established and existing committees refined to provide appropriate oversight of major programs of work, implementation activities and organisational performance. Collectively, these governance bodies ensure strategic decisions are informed by evidence, risks are appropriately managed and resources are directed towards achieving our objectives.

Our key governance bodies during 2025–26 included:

Governance body	Purpose
Executive Leadership Board	The Commission's primary executive decision-making forum, responsible for organisational leadership, strategic direction, performance oversight and the coordination of major operational and corporate priorities.
Senior Executive Meeting	Provides a weekly operational and tactical touch point for the Commissioners and Executive to align weekly priorities, events and the external operating environment.
People, Finance and Governance Committee	Provides oversight of workforce strategy, financial management, governance, organisational policies, corporate performance, risk and compliance to support effective stewardship of our resources.
Strategic Implementation Committee	Oversees the delivery of major organisational initiatives and strategic projects, ensuring implementation activities are coordinated, risks are managed and intended outcomes are achieved.
Strategy, Impact and Partnerships Committee	Guides the Commission's strategic policy agenda, oversight program, research, stakeholder engagement and external partnerships to maximise our influence and impact.
Child Safe Organisations Implementation Governance Committee	Provides executive oversight of the implementation of the CSO Act, including operational readiness, program delivery, governance, risk management and commencement planning.
Child Safe Organisations Steering Committee	Directs the operational implementation of the Commission's new regulatory functions, monitoring project delivery, operational readiness, business process development and cross-functional coordination.
Government Reference Panel	Designed to bring together representatives from partner agencies to support coordinated implementation of the CSO Act, facilitate information sharing and address cross-government policy and operational issues.
Agency Consultative Committee	Supports consultation between management and employee representatives on workplace matters, organisational change, workforce initiatives and work health and safety, consistent with public sector industrial obligations.
Employee Consultative Committee	Provides a consultation forum for all interested staff to feed into new or changed organisational policies and procedures, workplace environment and culture, human resource matters, whole of agency training opportunities, and Working for Queensland outcomes.

Our strategic frameworks

During 2025–26, we continued to strengthen and mature our strategic architecture and developed a suite of strategic operating frameworks that guide how we perform our statutory functions. Collectively, these frameworks form our *Strategic Operating Framework*—an integrated architecture that provides consistent methodologies for delivering oversight, regulation, research, child death prevention, child and youth participation, and First Nations leadership.

While each framework has a distinct purpose, they are designed to operate together. The Strategic Plan establishes what the Commission seeks to achieve, while the operating frameworks describe how each statutory function will be delivered. This integrated approach promotes consistency across the organisation, strengthens organisational capability, and provides a clear and transparent basis for our oversight, regulatory, research and advocacy activities.

A significant focus during the year was strengthening the governance and operational foundations required to support the commencement of the CSO Act. This included establishing new governance structures, delegations, authorisations, decision-making processes, operational policies, procedures and business rules to enable us to effectively undertake our new regulatory functions from commencement. We also continued to review and refine our broader organisational policy and procedural framework, ensuring corporate and operational policies remained contemporary, fit for purpose and aligned with legislative obligations, public sector standards and emerging organisational needs. These improvements have strengthened organisational maturity by providing clearer guidance for staff, improving consistency in practice and supporting effective governance as the Commission continues to grow.

Our strategic operating frameworks

Framework	Purpose
Strategic Plan	The Commission's Strategic Plan establishes our vision, purpose, strategic objectives and organisational priorities. It provides the overarching direction for all Commission activities and aligns resources to the outcomes we seek to achieve for Queensland children and young people.
Oversight Framework	The Oversight Framework describes our methodology for undertaking independent systemic oversight. It explains how oversight priorities are identified, evidence is gathered and analysed, children and stakeholders are engaged, and recommendations are monitored to support lasting system improvement.
Research Strategy	The Research Strategy provides the framework for generating, commissioning and applying research to inform policy, oversight and system reform. It ensures our work is supported by high-quality evidence and promotes collaboration with research partners across Australia.
Safer pathways through childhood	This framework sets our strategic direction for child death prevention. It guides the use of child death data, research and cross-sector collaboration to identify opportunities to reduce preventable child deaths and improve the safety and wellbeing of Queensland children.
Child and Youth Participation Framework	The Participation Framework establishes a consistent approach to engaging children and young people in the Commission's work. Grounded in children's rights, it ensures the voices, experiences and perspectives of children and young people inform the Commission's oversight, research, policy and advocacy activities.
OATSICC Strategic Plan	The Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner's Strategic Plan provides the strategic direction for First Nations oversight and advocacy. It embeds the principles of self-determination, cultural authority and child rights across our work and guides engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities and organisations.

Regulatory Approach

In July 2025, we released our *Regulatory Approach: Child Safe Organisations*. This document outlines the way in which we will undertake our regulatory functions and powers under the CSO Act. It sets out a graduated model of regulatory action: a structured and proportionate approach to organisations that escalates interventions based on the level of risk, non-compliance, and need within regulated entities. It allows us as the regulator to balance education and enforcement, using the least disciplinary but most effective methods to promote compliance and improve outcomes.

Lived experience framework

In July 2025, the Commission released our *Lived experience framework* to support government agencies, service providers and community organisations seeking to embed lived experience in through inclusive, trauma-informed and responsive practices. The role and value of lived experience is vital to creating more effective, responsive systems in Queensland. Individuals with lived experience offer unique insights that are instrumental in shaping policies and practices that are both relevant and sustainable. Their perspectives ensure that reforms address real-world challenges and meet the needs of those directly affected. However, meaningful, lasting change cannot be achieved alone. It requires a collective commitment from government agencies, community organisations, and the community. By amplifying the voices of those with lived experience and enabling collaboration, we can build inclusive, fair, and just systems that break cycles of disadvantage and better support the children, young people, and families that need it most.

Updated policies and procedures

During 2025–26, the Commission made a significant investment in strengthening our organisational policy framework to support our transition into a more complex statutory agency with expanded regulatory responsibilities. As we prepared to commence our functions under the CSO Act, we established an expanded Governance team and a dedicated policy function with responsibility for developing, implementing and maintaining our organisational policy framework. Together, these functions have played a central role in embedding good governance practices, strengthening internal controls and ensuring our policies remain contemporary, consistent and aligned with legislative and whole-of-government requirements.

A key achievement during the year was the development of a comprehensive organisational policy framework, establishing a consistent methodology for the development, approval, review and management of policies and procedures across the Commission. The framework provides greater clarity around policy ownership, governance and review cycles, helping ensure organisational policies remain current, accessible and fit for purpose as we continue to evolve. Beyond regulatory operations, we undertook a comprehensive review and enhancement of our corporate policy suite to strengthen organisational capability, workplace safety and integrity. During the year, a range of new and updated policies and plans were introduced, including:

- a secure desk policy, strengthening the protection of sensitive and confidential information and promoting secure information handling practices across both physical and digital work environments
- a legal services policy, providing a consistent framework for obtaining and managing legal advice
- a grants and sponsorship policy, supporting transparent and accountable administration of public resources
- an updated work health, safety and wellbeing policy
- a workplace psychological health and safety strategy 2025–2027 and psychosocial risk and hazard prevention plan 2025–2027, reinforcing our commitment to psychologically safe workplaces
- an updated preventing and responding to sexual harassment and related conduct at work policy, together with a prevention plan addressing identified risks of sexual harassment and sex or gender-based harassment

- a range of supporting procedures, templates and guidance materials to improve the consistent application of organisational policies.

By the end of 2025–26, we had established a stronger governance framework capable of supporting continued organisational growth, increasing regulatory complexity and the delivery of our expanded statutory functions into the future.

Delegations and regulatory authorisations

The commencement of the CSO Act required the Commission to establish a comprehensive framework of statutory delegations and regulatory authorisations to support the lawful exercise of our new powers. We developed a suite of delegations, instruments of appointment and authorisations for staff performing regulatory functions. This included establishing appropriate authorisations for officers exercising statutory powers under the Act, including powers to enter premises, inspect records, require information, seize evidence and undertake other compliance and enforcement activities.

Recognising that the exercise of coercive statutory powers carries significant responsibility, we also invested in decision-making protocols, operational guidance, templates, recordkeeping requirements, quality assurance processes and staff training to promote procedural fairness, accountability and consistency in regulatory practice. Together with our broader governance and policy reforms, these arrangements establish a strong foundation for the fair, transparent and effective administration of Queensland's Child Safe Organisations regulatory system.

Risk management framework

During 2025–26, we strengthened our approach to enterprise risk management following a comprehensive review of our risk management framework. The revised framework established a more mature and consistent approach to identifying, assessing, managing and monitoring risk across the organisation, supporting informed decision-making and organisational resilience as our functions expanded. The framework also clarified organisational roles and responsibilities by establishing defined accountabilities for risk owners, mitigation owners and governance oversight bodies, strengthening ownership and oversight of strategic and operational risks.

To support implementation, we delivered organisation-wide training to build staff capability and embed a stronger risk culture. Staff were introduced to the Commission's enterprise risk methodology, risk categories, central risk register and reporting requirements, promoting a more consistent approach to identifying and managing risk across all business areas. These improvements have strengthened our processes for managing strategic, operational and regulatory risks.

Audits

Internal audit

The Commission's three-year internal audit plan outlines our forward program of internal audit activity, combining different styles of approach, including peer review and validation-style engagements with targeted audits over strategic, compliance and operational risks. The plan is reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure the appropriate prioritisation of focus with a formal annual review of the 1-year operational plan, and updates endorsed by the Audit and Risk Management Committee to reflect changes in our operating environment.

Four internal audits were completed as scheduled during the 2025-26 financial year.

Travel management

This audit was undertaken to ensure that the Commission is compliant with Queensland Government policies, directives and procedures, and that our internal travel management practices are efficient and effective. It determined that, overall, there is sound understanding of the processes of travel management requirements, and robust scrutiny of transactions and expenditure related to travel. Three recommendations were made regarding the timeliness of policy reviews, dissemination of information to staff reminding them of their obligations and review of user access, and documenting

procedures for providing access to travel systems used by the Commission. All recommendations have been implemented.

Grants, sponsorships and contract management

This audit assessed the Commission's adherence to grants, sponsorships and contract management processes to identify improvement opportunities. It determined that, although there was consistent, clear alignment with our strategic objectives and a demonstrated commitment to maturing processes in a practical, sustainable manner, the processes were only partially effective at the time of audit, as they were being applied inconsistently across the Commission. Frameworks also required further development and clarity. The seven recommendations arising from the audit have been implemented.

Mandatory data breach notification

This audit examined our compliance with the Queensland Government's Mandatory Notifiable Data Breach Scheme and data protection control environment, together with practices in the event of a data breach. It was undertaken in preparedness for the commencement of the Reportable Conduct Scheme on 1 July 2026, when the volume, sensitivity, and complexity of personal information we hold was expected to significantly increase. The audit determined that our staff are acutely aware of the importance of reporting suspected data breaches and understand the nature and consequences of a data breach. The audit report made four recommendations relating to policy and processes, training and awareness, governance and oversight of MNDB Scheme requirements, and third-party contract obligations. All recommendations have been implemented or are in progress.

Risk management framework health check

This audit assessed progress against our action plan arising from a 2025 review of our risk management framework. The audit showed that 68 of the 74 recommendations had been either completed or closed at the time of the review. The timeframe for this progress was significantly less than the 12–18 months projected in KPMG's review report. The audit also found that the implementation of these recommendations have been largely effective in strengthening our risk management framework, with project risk management remaining an area for further improvement in due course.

Child Safe Organisations self-assessment

As well as regulating the Child Safe Organisations Act 2024, the Commission is a child safe entity in our own right. In 2025–26, we undertook a self-assessment of our compliance with the Child Safe Standards and Universal Principle to inform an action and improvement plan to guide our compliance work. Our most recent self-assessment identified several areas for continued improvement, including:

- developing an updated and robust child and young person engagement framework to support our legislative functions
- establishing a comprehensive learning and development framework that identifies child safeguarding and cultural safety as core capabilities for our staff
- reviewing and strengthening recruitment processes to ensure they reflect child safe practices.

External audit

Each year the QAO performs an audit assessment of the design and implementation of our internal controls, which includes an interim and final audit. The QAO's 2025–26 audit focussed on accuracy and probity of grant expenses and accuracy and completeness of supplies and services. The audit undertook testing of the design and implementation of key controls, performed analysis to identify significant and unusual transactions, reviewed ASAE 3402 assurance report, assessed whether the financial statement disclosures are complete, accurate and appropriate. In the closing report, the QAO advised that they did not identify any control deficiencies in the areas reviewed, indicating that key financial

processes were operating as intended. The QAO provided their 2026 audit report. No unresolved internal control deficiencies or financial reporting issues were identified and an unmodified audit opinion was delivered.

Legislative review of our Act

On 29 May 2026, the *Review of the Family and Child Commission Act 2014*²⁷ was tabled in Parliament. The report is a legislative review into the effectiveness of the FCC Act in accordance with section 42 of the Act. The Department of Justice (DoJ) has administrative responsibility for the Act and conducted the legislative review on behalf of the Attorney General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity, as the responsible Minister (the Attorney-General). The Terms of Reference for the review included whether any amendments should be made to the objects of the FCC Act to enhance or clarify the role of the Commission or the Board, whether our powers are appropriate and fit for purpose, whether the FCC Act should provide for an enhanced focus on First Nations children to help address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system, and to determine how best to give effect to the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council's recommendation to establish an eSafety Commissioner position within the Commission.

Stakeholders were consulted and submissions accepted in early 2023. In summary, no amendments to the Act were recommended. The review deemed the current role and functions of the Australian eSafety Commissioner sufficient to meet the intent of the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council recommendation alongside the current work undertaken by the Commission to promote online safety for children and families.

Supporting the Child Death Review Board

The Commission provides the secretariat and operational support for the Child Death Review Board, enabling the Board to fulfil its statutory role of reviewing the deaths of children known to the child protection system and identifying opportunities for systemic improvement. During 2025–26, the Secretariat coordinated Board meetings, supported the Cross Agency Review Group, prepared briefing materials and evidence, and developed thematic reviews examining systemic issues arising from child deaths. The Secretariat also strengthened the Board's approach to thematic oversight by developing a forward program of reviews and associated terms of reference, supporting deeper analysis of recurring systemic issues and emerging risks. During the year, the Attorney-General appointed Ms Sharon Cavanagh-Luskin as Deputy Chair of the Board.

The Board's Annual Report 2024–25, tabled in Parliament on 19 December 2025, considered 64 individual cases of children and young people of children and young people known to child safety within the 12 months prior to their passing. The report focused on seven areas of the system including mothers with unborn children, young parents with infants and young children, young people with high-risk behaviours, the identification of domestic and family violence, interagency collaboration and information sharing, barriers to service access in remote communities and highly mobile families, and challenges working with families going through Sorry Business. The Board made nine recommendations including an urgent review and reset the Queensland Government's policy and responsibility for responding to reports about the safety of unborn children, dedicated housing pathways for young parents, the inclusion of the Department of Housing and Public Works in the Child Death Review Model, further integration of health and family services within early childhood education and care settings and public schools, and a review of remote service delivery models, focusing on equity across health, education, domestic and family violence and family support services.

Digital, ICT and Information Services

Information and communications technology

We continued to strengthen our information and communications technology (ICT) capability during 2025–26 to support our expanding statutory responsibilities and organisational growth. With the commencement of new regulatory functions under the CSO Act, we invested in building a modern, secure and scalable technology environment capable of supporting frontline regulatory operations, corporate services and strategic oversight. A significant focus during the year was enhancing our ICT capability through investment in new systems, infrastructure and specialist expertise. This included progressing the implementation of technology solutions to support case management, customer relationship management, business intelligence and reporting, while ensuring staff had access to the tools, training and technical support required to effectively perform their roles. Throughout the year, we continued to improve the reliability, resilience and security of our ICT environment while strengthening governance arrangements for technology investment and digital service delivery.

Key activities during 2025–26 included:

- Delivery of the Lighthouse case management system, supporting our regulation of the Reportable Conduct Scheme and Child Safe Standards through enhanced case management, stakeholder engagement, workflow automation, regulatory oversight and service delivery capabilities.
- Progressing implementation of system enhancements, including organisation-facing capabilities, data sharing services, integrated reporting, document generation, and business process automation, to strengthen regulatory operations and decision-making.
- Strengthening cyber security, identity management and platform resilience through secure cloud-based architecture, Microsoft Entra ID integration, enhanced access controls, backup and recovery capabilities, audit logging, secure data exchange mechanisms, and ongoing security governance aligned with Queensland Government requirements.
- Investing in workforce capability through a comprehensive digital training and change management program, including organisation-wide system training, specialised operational and regulatory training, instructional resources, knowledge transfer activities and development of internal trainer capability to support sustainable system adoption.
- Continuing investment in strategic digital transformation through technology partnerships, specialist ICT expertise and modern platform services, delivering scalable foundations for future growth, enhanced business intelligence, data sharing, reporting and regulatory service delivery.

These initiatives have established a stronger digital foundation to support the Commission's growing regulatory, oversight and corporate functions.

Website redevelopment

During 2025–26 we completed a significant redevelopment of our public website to support our expanded role as Queensland's child safety regulator. The new website was launched in April 2026, designed to accommodate increased public demand arising from the commencement of the CSO Act while providing a more accessible, user-centred experience for organisations, workers and the broader community. A key focus of the redevelopment was ensuring that regulatory information was clear, easy to navigate and readily accessible. New content, guidance materials and digital resources were developed to support organisations in understanding and meeting their obligations under the Act, while improved information architecture and search functionality enabled users to quickly locate relevant advice and resources. The redesigned website also provides a scalable platform to support the ongoing delivery of regulatory services and public information as our functions continue to evolve.

In 2025–26 our website attracted more than 927,000 views, representing a 182 per cent increase from the previous period. Following the passage of the CSO Act in September 2024, our website traffic has grown almost 500 per cent, and our Child Safe Organisations information and implementation resources are our most frequently accessed content.

Building the digital foundations for child safeguarding

During 2025–26, we completed the design, procurement and implementation of Lighthouse, representing the largest procurement undertaken in our history and one of the most significant organisational capability investments since the Commission was established. The Queensland Government invested \$4.307 million to design, build and implement the platform. At 30 June 2026, \$2.629 million had been invested in the project, with the remaining contractual milestones scheduled for completion during 2026–27. Final implementation activities are expected to conclude by 31 October 2026.

The procurement followed more than 18 months of business design, governance development and system planning. During this period, we designed the regulatory workflows, governance arrangements, information architecture and business requirements needed to administer Queensland's new Child Safe Organisations regulatory framework. This work ensured the technology reflected the Commission's operational model and would support consistent, transparent and defensible regulatory decision-making from commencement.

The procurement process itself reflected the significance of the investment. A closed tender commenced on 12 August 2025, with 13 organisations invited to participate. Four vendors submitted proposals, with Infosys Technologies Limited selected following a comprehensive evaluation process. In March 2026, we entered into a three-year contract to deliver the solution and transitioned from procurement into implementation.

We successfully delivered not only a new regulatory case management system but also a public reporting portal and the supporting digital infrastructure required for the commencement of the Reportable Conduct Scheme on 1 July 2026. Together, these systems provide us with a secure, integrated regulatory platform capable of supporting end-to-end administration of the Child Safe Organisations framework. Lighthouse provides a single source of truth for our regulatory operations, supporting:

- intake, notifications and regulatory submissions
- assessment, triage and statutory decision-making
- compliance monitoring and enforcement activities
- secure evidence and document management
- workflow management and statutory timeframes
- regulatory reporting, intelligence, analytics and system oversight.

As we begin receiving thousands of notifications, investigation reports and regulatory interactions each year, the ability to manage information securely, consistently and transparently is fundamental to maintaining public confidence in the Child Safe Organisations system. The platform has been designed to support efficient regulatory operations while generating real-time intelligence that will strengthen organisational performance, identify emerging safeguarding risks and improve oversight across Queensland.

Implementation of Lighthouse also provided an opportunity to strengthen our broader digital capability. During the year, internet capacity was upgraded, the Content Manager records management system was enhanced, and business continuity and disaster recovery arrangements were reviewed and strengthened. Security and compliance requirements were embedded throughout the project, with the platform designed to align with the Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture (QGEA), the Queensland Government Information Security Policy (IS33) and the Essential Eight cyber security framework.

By the end of the reporting period, we had successfully transitioned from procurement into implementation, establishing a contemporary regulatory platform that underpins the commencement of the Reportable Conduct Scheme and provides a scalable digital foundation for future Child Safe Organisations regulatory functions. Together, these investments have positioned us to administer one of Queensland's most significant child safeguarding reforms with professionalism, integrity, security and accountability.

Recordkeeping and information security

During 2025–26, we continued to strengthen our recordkeeping, information management and information security capability to support our expanding regulatory responsibilities and increasing volumes of operational information. Key activities during 2025–26 included:

- Strengthening information governance arrangements through the development and review of policies, procedures and standards supporting privacy, information management, data sharing, records governance, information classification and lifecycle management across our expanding regulatory functions.
- Progressing significant recordkeeping improvements to support the transition to a modern digital operating environment, including enhanced records management processes, retention and disposal planning, integration design for corporate recordkeeping systems, and strengthened oversight of information assets.
- Enhancing information security capability through improvements to access controls, audit logging, security monitoring, information classification, cloud security governance, identity and access management, secure information exchange arrangements, and the implementation of controls aligned with Queensland Government information security requirements and Essential Eight principles.
- Undertaking privacy, security and assurance activities to support the implementation of new regulatory systems and information-sharing capabilities, including Privacy Impact Assessments, security reviews, compliance assurance activities, risk assessments and the progressive implementation of recommendations to strengthen privacy and information security compliance.
- Delivering targeted staff awareness, training and capability uplift initiatives focused on privacy obligations, information security, records management, appropriate information handling, and the protection of sensitive information to support a strong culture of information stewardship and accountability.

These improvements have strengthened our information management capability and provide a robust foundation to support our continued growth and evolving statutory responsibilities.

CODA enhancements

Several database enhancements have been implemented to strengthen system performance, efficiency, data quality and reliability. For example, enhanced alias search functionality, help text and additional fields to capture with further clarity and consistency homelessness history and status at time of death, recording suicidality of alleged perpetrators associated with fatal assault and neglect incidents, improved data capture of cultural adoptions, and adjustments to data that account for direct exposure or ingestion of alcohol and substances and toxicology results for infants and young children in the context of parental substance misuse.

Priorities for 2026–27

We will maintain a strong focus on organisational excellence while preparing for the transition to the Queensland Protection Commission. We will strengthen governance, performance, workforce capability and organisational culture to support our expanding responsibilities, while continuing to invest in systems, processes and leadership that enable effective delivery. We will ensure the organisation remains well governed, financially sustainable and values-driven, providing a strong foundation for the successful establishment of the Queensland Protection Commission and the continued delivery of high-quality services for Queensland children and families.

Performance of the Queensland child protection system

Assessing system performance

Section 40 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* requires the Commission to report annually on Queensland's performance against state and national goals for the child protection system. The Act requires us to assess performance over time and against other jurisdictions and examining Queensland's progress in reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children involved in the child protection system.

There is no single strategy against which the performance of this system can be assessed. Queensland's commitments are distributed across several state and national frameworks which, taken together, describe the outcomes governments have committed to achieving. The Queensland Government's objectives for the community include *Safety where you live*, incorporating commitments to fix the Child Safety system, strengthen early intervention and rehabilitation, improve responses to domestic and family violence and make communities safer. These objectives establish the state government's overarching direction for reform. Within that direction, the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (Child Safety) *Strategic Plan 2025-2029* establishes specific responsibilities for the service system: enabling families to safely care for their children and young people and, where children cannot remain with their families, providing services that promote their safety, belonging, wellbeing and best interests. The Strategic Plan also recognises the interconnected role of responses to domestic, family and sexual violence, disability, carers and broader family supports.

Queensland's performance must also be understood within the national reform agenda. *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* seeks to shift Australia's child protection systems toward prevention and earlier support, particularly for children and families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage. Its priorities include addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems, strengthening the child and family services workforce, and improving information sharing, data and analysis. These priorities provide an important test of whether system reform is occurring upstream of statutory intervention. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, these commitments are reinforced by Queensland's *Breaking Cycles: An action plan*. *Breaking Cycles* envisaged a system in which families have access to quality and culturally safe universal and targeted services; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations exercise greater control over decisions affecting their children; law, policy and practice are culturally safe and responsive; and governments and services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The 2023–2025 Action Plan has now concluded, and at the time of this report, a successor action plan had not been published.

These state commitments sit alongside the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which establishes measurable outcomes extending across the life course. Of particular relevance to this report are Target 4, concerning early childhood development; Target 11, reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention by at least 30 per cent by 2031; Target 12, requiring a 45 per cent reduction in the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 2031; and Target 13, seeking at least a 50 per cent reduction in family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

While these frameworks differ in scope, they point in a broadly consistent direction. Success should mean fewer families reaching crisis, earlier and more effective support when difficulties emerge, fewer children requiring statutory intervention, safe and effective responses when intervention is necessary, reduced over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and better experiences and outcomes for children who do enter statutory systems.

Opening comment on the context of 2025–26

The last financial year (2025–26) represented a period of significant structural examination and change in Queensland's child protection system. The landscape was defined by the convergence of the Commission of Inquiry, the implementation of the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme, and the Queensland Government's response to the Child Death Review Board's *In Plain Sight* report. These all occurred against a backdrop of longstanding operational pressures, the implementation of a new case management system, and the unavailability of performance data.

In particular, this year, our task in assessing the performance of Queensland's child protection system became significantly more difficult following the implementation of Child Safety's *Unify* case management system. While intended to modernise case management and improve information sharing, the transition substantially disrupted the continuity, availability and comparability of child protection performance data. The implementation affected both operational data and Child Safety's established corporate reporting. The disruption to data reporting also reduced the availability of contemporary performance information available for public and independent scrutiny. Throughout 2025 and 2026, Child Safety did not resume publication of its corporate child protection datasets, and no data was provided publicly until February 2026. On this date the department released a limited set of operational data relating to 31 March 2025 as an interim measure. This limited data, reflecting information that is 11 months old, provided a partial historical snapshot but could not provide a contemporary picture of system activity or performance. This constrained the ability of oversight agencies, researchers, policymakers, the Inquiry and the broader community to assess the performance of Queensland's child protection system or evaluate the impact of ongoing reforms.

The absence of reliable data also affected national reporting. Queensland child protection data was unavailable for key measures in both the 2025 and 2026 editions of the Report on Government Services. This included the absence of information relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care (OOHC). Given Queensland's population size, the scale of its child protection system and its substantial Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, these omissions reduce the completeness of national reporting and limit the ability to monitor progress against national priorities.

Collectively, these issues created a significant gap in the oversight of the child protection system. In complex service systems, routine administrative data provides the longitudinal measures needed to distinguish short-term variation from sustained changes in demand, performance and outcomes. Reliable administrative data is fundamental to monitoring system performance, identifying emerging risks, evaluating reform and maintaining public accountability and confidence. To be clear, system performance is distinct from departmental performance. Without consistent, comparable and timely reporting, it is not possible to accurately assess whether safety outcomes for children are improving, where pressures are increasing, or whether significant reforms are achieving their intended objectives. This data speaks directly to the safety of Queensland children and communities. From a performance-monitoring perspective, breaks in longitudinal administrative data reduce the capacity to distinguish genuine changes from changes arising from data definitions, changing thresholds, collection methods or information systems. Reliable administrative data is not simply a reporting function; it is part of the infrastructure required for effective community governance, enabling emerging pressures to be identified, reform impacts to be tested and the safety of children and families to be assessed over time.

As at 30 June 2026, publication of Child Safety's corporate child protection reporting had not resumed, and no comprehensive replacement dataset had been released beyond the March 2025 operational data. As such there remained no comprehensive, contemporary and routinely published dataset from which the overall size, activity and performance of the statutory child protection system could be assessed. The department has regularly indicated that historical reporting will be progressively restored during 2026. Until this occurs, the capacity of government, oversight bodies and the community to monitor the performance of one of Queensland's most significant statutory systems remains materially constrained.

On 30 July 2026, the Government released its formal response to the Commission of Inquiry, and Child Safety published new performance data to 31 March 2026. On 10 August 2026, Child Safety also provided us with a partial response to the information requested for this report. This report incorporates our analysis of this newly available information, alongside the broader data, evidence and other sources considered in reaching our findings.

Commission of Inquiry into Queensland's Child Safety System

The final report of the Inquiry, led by Commissioner Paul Anastassiou KC, was released in June 2026 and provides a stark assessment of a system failing children and the community. The Inquiry identified the record number of children in care (13,568 as of March 2025) as a primary measure of systemic failure, stating that Queensland's aggregate and proportionate rates of children in care are higher than any other Australian state. A central focus of the Inquiry was the billion-dollar residential care sector, which the Commission observed has become a holding environment rather than a purposeful care response. The annual cost of residential care had escalated from approximately \$300,000 per child in 2019–20 to approximately \$500,000 per child in 2024–25. The growing number of children self-placing out of residential care signifies a failing model, with those children experiencing increased vulnerability and increased risk of abuse, including sexual exploitation. Analysis of critical incident reports found approximately 67 per cent of reported incidents of sexual abuse of children in care involved children placed in residential care.

The Inquiry's 52 recommendations call for a substantial structural reset of Queensland's child protection system. This includes the fundamental redesign of Child Safety to better align decision-making authority with executive accountability, a shift away from reliance on residential care towards family-based care and the creation of a statutory Child Guardian function to provide dedicated leadership for the state's corporate parenting obligations. Collectively, the recommendations seek to reorient the system around the needs, safety and long-term wellbeing of children. The Inquiry proposes that the purpose of the reformed child safety system is:

to give every child who comes within any part of the system support and care that is responsive to their individual circumstances; provide stability, permanency, and a sense of belonging in a place and community that 'feels like home'; and where they feel safe, valued, and accepted, with an ongoing, loving, nurturing attachment to at least one adult, that enables them to 'achieve developmental, physical, cognitive, emotional milestones.

The Queensland Government released its formal response to the Commission of Inquiry on 30 July 2026, accepting 48 of the Inquiry's 52 recommendations either in full or in principles. The government's response establishes a broad reform agenda focused on restoring the best interests of children as the paramount consideration in decision-making, strengthening early intervention and support for families, increasing access to stable family-based care and permanency, reforming child protection litigation, and modernising the legislative and operational foundations of the system. The response was supported by an additional \$200 million investment in the 2026–27 State Budget to commence the implementation of the reforms.

Consistent with the Inquiry's emphasis on reducing reliance on residential care, the Queensland Government has announced a policy that no child under five will remain in residential care. The government response also builds upon the broader government *Safer Children, Safer Communities* agenda, which has already committed to increasing child safety staffing by 20 per cent by 2028; introducing a dual-carer model for therapeutic residential care; and establishing a \$50 million therapeutic secure care facility for young people with the most complex needs. The 2025–26 State Budget provided \$50 million over three years for the secure care facility, \$28.8 million over four years for a professional foster care pilot, and additional support for foster and kinship carers, including \$1,500 to assist children in care to participate in extracurricular activities. The 2026–27 State Budget further develops this direction by fast-tracking and expanding the professional foster care pilot to provide more individualised family-based care for children with high and complex needs.



Implementation will now move into a 30-month reform program, with actions scheduled for immediate implementation and at three, six, 12, 18 and 30-month intervals. A Child Safety Cabinet Committee will oversee the reform agenda, including the significant legislative, policy and operational changes required to give effect to the Inquiry's recommendations. The next phase will require detailed policy and legislative design, engagement with children, families, carers and the sector, and coordinated implementation across government and service systems.

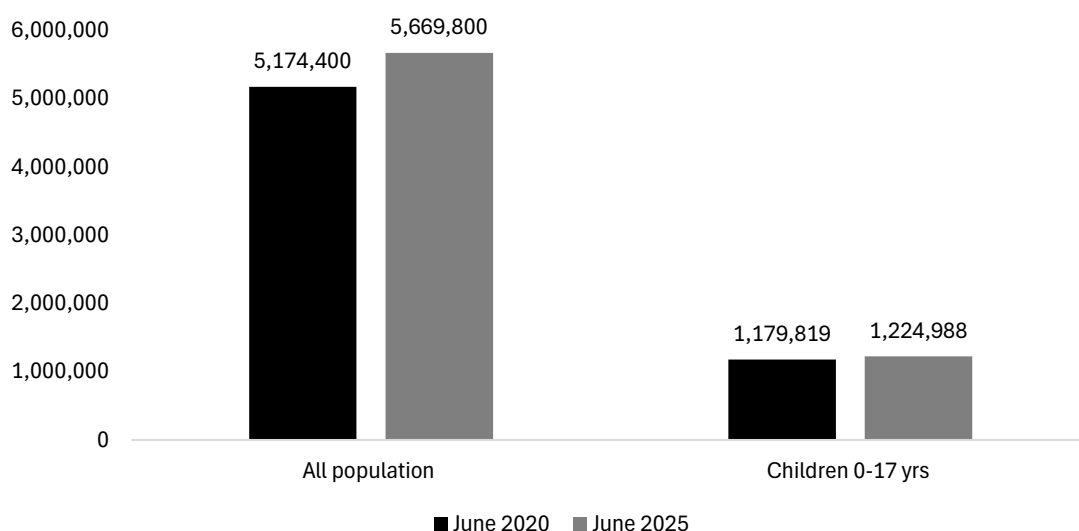
1. Changing social drivers

Queensland's children and families

Queensland is Australia's second largest state by area and one of its fastest growing populations. In 2025, the state's population reached approximately 5.7 million people, increasing by almost 10 per cent since 2020. Queensland remains one of Australia's youngest states, with around 1.7 million children and young people aged 0–24 years, representing almost one-third of the population.

The state's child population is also becoming increasingly diverse. Queensland is home to Australia's second largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. First Nations Queenslanders have a considerably younger age profile than the broader population, with more than half aged under 25.²⁸ As a result, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent a larger share of Queensland's child and young adult population than of the population overall - around five per cent of Queenslanders aged 0–24. Further, around one in five young Queenslanders speak a language other than English at home. These demographic trends reinforce the importance of ensuring services are culturally safe, accessible and responsive to the diverse communities they serve.

Figure 6: Queensland population June 2020 to June 2025



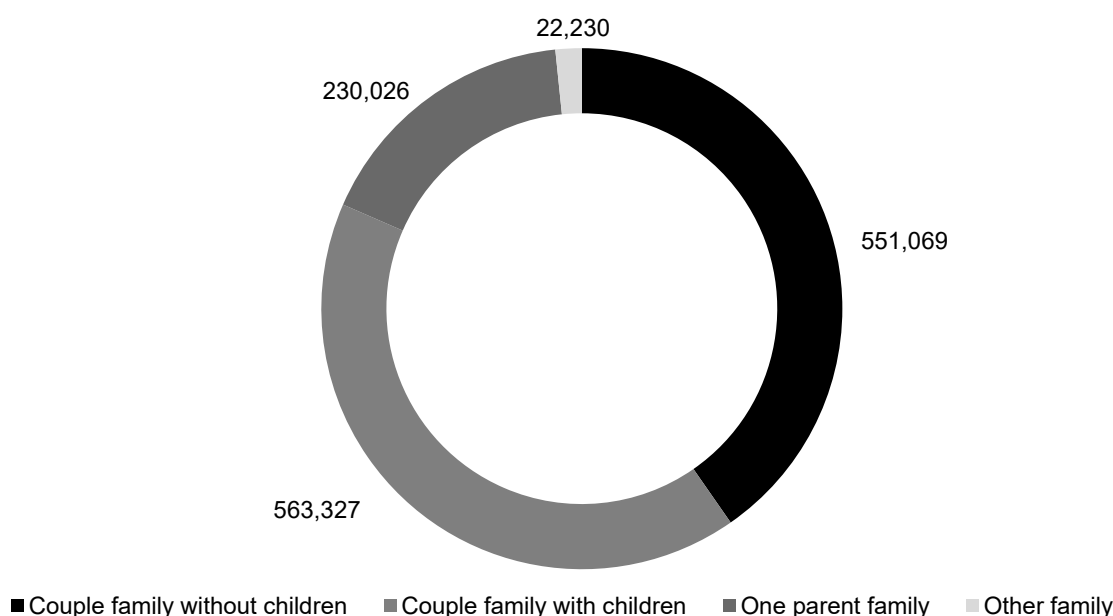
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2025, December). *National, state and territory population*.

Changing demographics for families

Queensland is home to approximately 1.37 million families living across 1.87 million households, with family households accounting for more than 70 per cent of all households.²⁹ More than 50 per cent of families are raising dependent or non-dependent children at home, while the remainder comprise couples without children, lone-person households or other family arrangements. Although the traditional couple-with-children family remains the most common family type, Queensland families are becoming increasingly diverse in their structure, composition and formation. Research from the Australian Institute of Family Studies indicates that while families with children in the early years (0–5 years) remain a significant component of the population, they represent a shrinking proportion of all Australian families with children, declining from 41.6 per cent in 2020 to 39.7 per cent in 2024.³⁰

At the 2021 Census, Queensland had 230,026 one-parent families, representing 16.8 per cent of all families, slightly higher than the national average of 15.9 per cent. Around four in five (80 per cent) one-parent families were headed by women. While family diversity is a feature of modern Queensland, one-parent families continue to experience disproportionately poorer outcomes across a range of social indicators. Employment rates among single parents (55.3 per cent) are substantially lower than among couple families (95 per cent)³¹, more than one-third of children in single-parent households are projected to live below the poverty line,³² and single parents report lower levels of community connectedness and social support than couple parents.

Figure 7: Distribution of family types in Queensland households

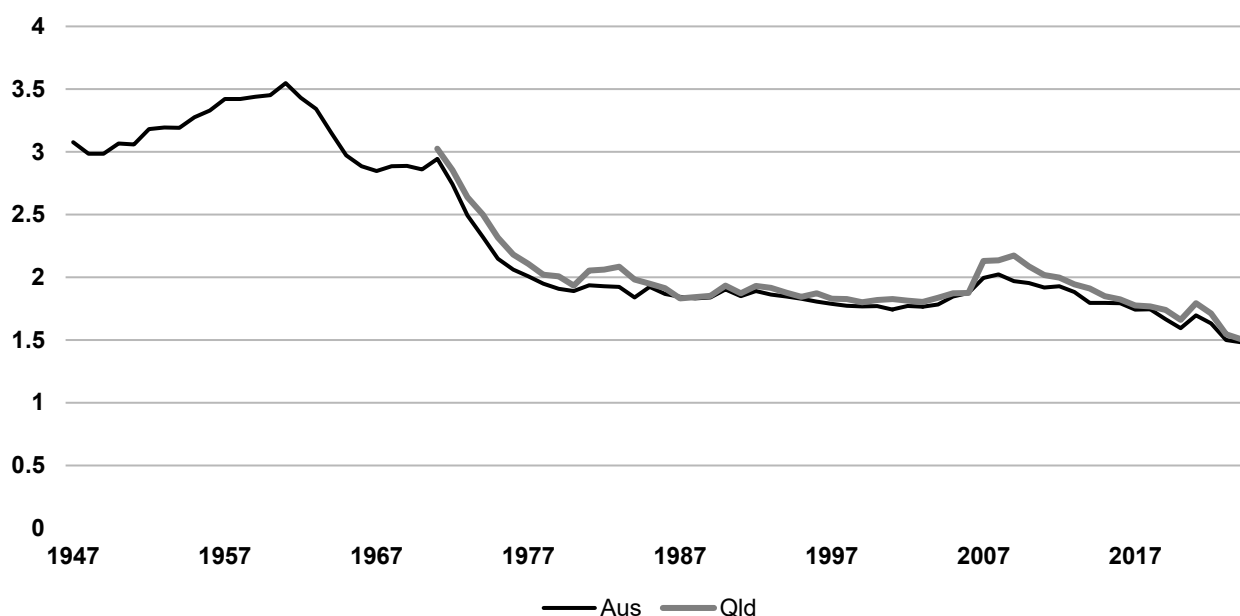


Source: ABS. (2021). *Queensland 2021 Census – All persons – Quick Stats*.

Family life is also increasingly characterised by separation and re-partnering. Many Queensland children now experience childhood across more than one household and within blended family arrangements that include step-parents, step-siblings and shared parenting arrangements. At the 2021 Census, around one in ten couple families with children were step or blended families, reflecting the growing diversity of children's family relationships and caregiving arrangements. Grandparents also play an increasingly important role in raising Queensland children. Across Australia, more than half of grandparents report providing regular childcare for their grandchildren, with 14 per cent stating they provide care for five or more days per week.³³ These caregiving roles have become an important feature of family support networks, particularly where parents experience illness, separation, substance misuse or other challenges.

Queensland households are also becoming smaller. Average household size has continued to decline over recent decades as fertility rates fall, people have children later in life, and more people live alone or as couples without children. In 2024, Queensland's total fertility rate fell to a record low of 1.505 births per woman, continuing a sustained decline in recent years.³⁴ At the same time, parents are having children later, with the median age of mothers increasing from 30.1 years in 2014 to 31.2 years in 2024, and fathers from 32.1 to 33.0 years. These changes reflect long-term demographic shifts in family formation rather than short-term fluctuations in birth rates.

Figure 8: Total fertility rate, Queensland and Australia, 1974 to 2024



Source: ABS. (2024). *Births, Australia*.

Queensland also continues to record lower marriage rates and higher divorce rates than the national average.³⁵ In 2025 there were 23,091 marriages, representing a crude marriage rate of 5.0 per 1000 population, compared with 5.3 nationally, while 10,780 divorces were granted, equating to 2.3 per 1000 population compared with 2.2 nationally. Although both marriage and divorce rates have gradually declined over the past decade, Queensland continues to experience fewer marriages and more divorces relative to its population than Australia overall. Collectively, these trends demonstrate that Queensland families are becoming smaller and more diverse, with children increasingly growing up in smaller family units, and across a wider range of family structures and caregiving arrangements than in previous generations. While most families continue to provide safe, stable and nurturing environments for children, understanding these demographic changes is essential to ensuring policies and services reflect the realities of contemporary family life.

Queensland children are navigating the digital frontier

Children and young people are increasingly spending more time engaged with digital devices and platforms, which has exposed them to a range of emerging and evolving risks. This shift requires online safety to be embedded as a core element of child protection. Research from the eSafety Commissioner identifies four primary categories of online risk: content risks, where children are exposed to distressing or harmful material; contact risks, involving unwanted communication from adults intending harm; conduct risks, such as cyberbullying and sexual harassment; and contract risks, where children are exploited by commercial or illegal interests, including the distribution of sexual exploitation material.³⁶ The 2023 Australian Child Maltreatment Study revealed that 7.6 per cent of participants had a sexual image shared without their consent before the age of 18, a figure that rises to 10.9 per cent for girls.³⁷ Children are increasingly vulnerable to technology-facilitated domestic and family violence, including the use of tracking devices and location settings to stalk victims or exercise coercive control. These experiences can lead to severe social, emotional, and psychological impacts, including hypervigilance, self-harm, and a withdrawal from essential support networks. The intensity of these risks is often compounded for children with diverse needs. Research indicates that 61 per cent of young people with a disability reported that their time spent online had a negative impact on their lives, significantly higher than the national average of 55 per cent.³⁸

Recent eSafety research found that 96 per cent of Australian children aged 10-15 had used social media and 94 per cent had used communication platforms, while 14 per cent reported experiencing grooming-type behaviour online.³⁹ The distinction between children's online and offline environments is consequently becoming less meaningful: relationships can commence in one environment and continue in another, while risks can move rapidly across organisational and geographic boundaries. In response to these multifaceted threats, the regulatory environment is undergoing a significant shift toward holding digital platforms more accountable for the safety of children. As of 10 December 2025, many major social media platforms are prohibited from allowing Australians under the age of 16 to have accounts, a measure intended to reduce exposure to harmful content and high-risk interactions. This reform is part of a broader effort to ensure that platforms take greater responsibility, with substantial penalties of up to \$49.5 million for failure to implement these changes.⁴⁰

Social cohesion and belonging

A growing "belonging gap" is emerging in Australia. The proportion of Australians reporting a strong sense of belonging declined from 63 per cent in 2020 to 46 per cent in 2025, with the decline particularly pronounced among younger generations.⁴¹ Only 31 per cent of Australian-born Gen Z and 34 per cent of Australian-born Millennials reported a strong sense of belonging in 2025. This generational divide is associated with broader economic and social pressures: younger people concerned about income inequality are significantly less likely to report a strong sense of belonging. This decline forms part of a broader weakening in social cohesion. The Scanlon Index of Social Cohesion remained at 78 in 2025, its lowest recorded level and unchanged for three consecutive years.⁴² Persistent financial hardship is associated with lower levels of wellbeing, interpersonal and institutional trust, and neighbourhood connection, with financial pressures particularly evident among younger people, renters and single-parent families. This study found that single and distressed parents fare worse in Australia, with single parents reporting significantly lower levels of social connection and support compared to couple parents.⁴³

Attitudes towards migration and diversity are also entering regular public narrative. Two-thirds of Australians regard racism as a major problem. Among people born in Asia and Africa, 40 per cent reported discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic origin or religion in the previous year, while approximately half experienced at least one form of mistreatment, including exclusion, verbal or physical threats or abuse, or unfair treatment at work. At the same time, support for multiculturalism remains high, with 84 per cent of Australians agreeing that multiculturalism has been good for Australia.⁴⁴ For children and families, the emerging picture is one of widening differences in people's experience of connection, inclusion and security. Longitudinal evidence and systems evaluations show that deep cultural connection serves as the primary protective factor for Indigenous children's holistic wellbeing,⁴⁵ while cultural safety in schools and health services is critical to ensuring families can access essential support without facing racism or systemic barriers.⁴⁶

Deeper intersections of vulnerability and risk

Analysis from the Child Death Review Board's 2024–25 Annual Report identifies a recurring combination of risk factors threatening family safety: domestic and family violence (DFV), methamphetamine use and housing instability. The co-occurrence of these factors is a defining feature of the majority of cases reviewed, with 77 per cent involving DFV and 39 per cent involving both methamphetamine use and housing instability.⁴⁷ Together, these factors create chronic and compounding vulnerability that exceeds the capacity of families to manage and single-service responses to resolve. These risks operate as key drivers of statutory system contact, while broader social and economic pressures, particularly housing affordability and cost-of-living pressures, act as upstream contributors to family instability. The Inquiry similarly concluded that demand on child protection systems will remain high unless these underlying drivers are addressed.

Parental substance use, particularly methamphetamine, is a key driver of child vulnerability, often co-occurring with DFV and housing instability. Methamphetamine disrupts parenting capacity through cycles of agitation, volatility, fatigue, and depression, which reduces supervision, attachment, and responsiveness. Prenatally, maternal use is associated with

miscarriage, premature birth, and low birthweight. Postnatally, children face heightened risks of neglect, unsafe sleep environments, and injury. Longitudinal reviews by the Board found that methamphetamine use was present in approximately one-third (32.9 per cent) of the 170 child deaths reviewed between July 2020 and June 2023.⁴⁸ This year, our review⁴⁹ of 56 child deaths involving amphetamine-type stimulants between 2014 and 2025 highlights critical systemic risks:

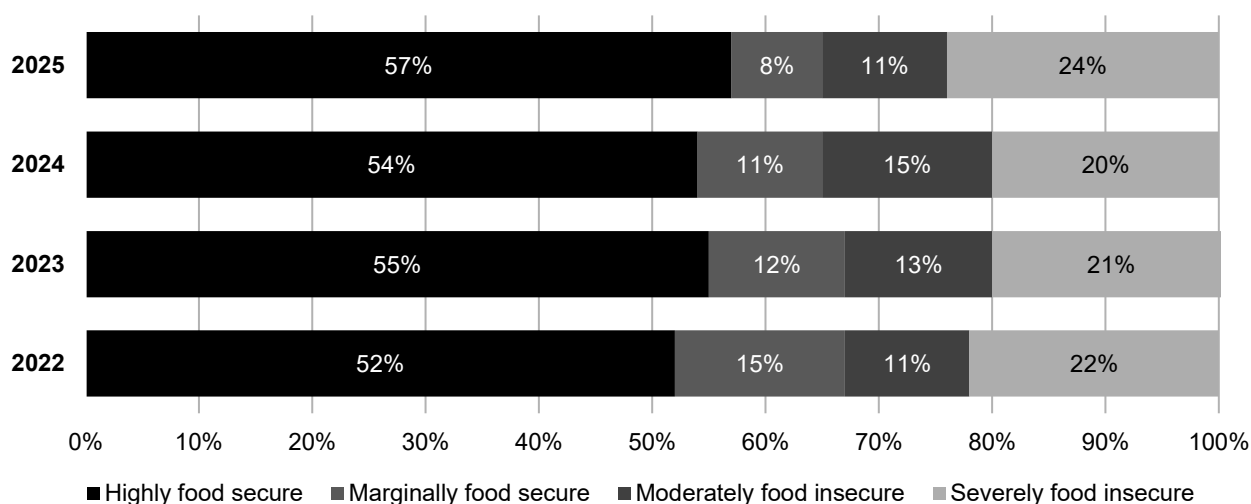
- child death cases where amphetamine-type stimulants were detected in the child or parent almost doubled from 17 cases (2014–19) to 32 cases (2020–25)
- 80.4 per cent of deaths (45 cases) occurred in highly disadvantaged areas (SEIFA Q1 and Q2)
- First Nations children represented 39.2 per cent of the cohort (22 cases), experiencing a mortality rate of 1.7 per 100,000 - six times higher than non-Indigenous children
- 60.7 per cent of all children (34 cases) and 68.0 per cent of infants aged 0–3 were known to child protection in the 12 months prior to their death.

Increasing cost of living pressure on Queensland's children and families

Rising cost-of-living pressures are reshaping family life in Queensland and are emerging as a key structural driver of contact with the child protection system. Research indicates that 61.0 per cent of Queensland parents report difficulty meeting day-to-day living costs, while around one in seven families experienced food insecurity during the previous year.⁵⁰ While Queensland has historically exhibited lower rates of child poverty compared to other Australian jurisdictions, recent trends indicate a reversal. In June 2025, an estimated 12.0 per cent of Queensland children (approximately 155,800) were projected to be living in poverty.⁵¹ Nationally, 5.7 per cent of children are projected to live in households with incomes below 30 per cent of the median. Single-parent families are disproportionately affected, with 36.6 per cent of children living below the poverty line and 10.8 per cent in extreme poverty. In Queensland, financial modelling indicates that a single-parent household with two children faces a weekly budget shortfall of \$227.47, with the poverty line for a single adult projected at \$559.80 per week after housing costs.⁵²

The 2024 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) showed that developmental vulnerability is at its highest level since 2009, with children from disadvantaged backgrounds significantly less likely to be on track in social and emotional domains. Growing up in poor quality or unhealthy housing increases the risk of serious and chronic illnesses, increasing the health burden through the life-course. Food insecurity is a direct and increasing manifestation of financial stress, affecting 35.0 per cent of Queensland households.⁵³ Cost-of-living pressures are the primary driver, cited by 91.0 per cent of affected families. Severe food insecurity affects 46.0 per cent of single-parent households and 67.0 per cent of households including a person with disability. For single parent families, food insecurity is no longer episodic but persistent, with 26.0 per cent reporting prolonged periods without adequate food. Inequitable food insecurity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children functions as a major health disparity, severely lowering diet quality and driving higher rates of dental disease.⁵⁴

Figure 9: Food insecurity – Regional Queensland



Source: Foodbank Australia. (2025). *Foodbank Hunger Report 2025*.

Child safeguarding: increased visibility of the danger posed to children in organisations

In 2025, safeguarding within early childhood education and care settings emerged as a significant factor shaping both community concern and the broader safeguarding environment. Increased public attention followed a series of high-profile cases, including the charging of a childcare worker in Victoria and the conviction of Ashley Paul Griffith in Queensland.⁵⁵ These cases contributed to a broader shift in how safeguarding risk is understood. They demonstrated that serious harm can occur within regulated environments commonly assumed to be safe, and reinforced that organisational culture, workforce practices, information sharing and regulatory oversight are integral to preventing harm. This heightened focus has occurred alongside longer-term changes in the environments in which Australian children grow up. Children increasingly move between a network of family, educational, care, recreational and other institutional settings. In Queensland there were 3366 approved early childhood education and care services as at 30 June 2026, with regulated centre-based and other services collectively approved to provide 270,019 places at any one time.⁵⁶ Together, these changes are altering the safeguarding task. Protecting children can no longer be understood primarily as identifying risk within families or responding after individual incidents of harm. The Queensland Ombudsman recommended Queensland Health enhance its identification and response to child neglect through clearer guidance on concepts like cumulative harm, following an investigation into the effectiveness of current public sector practices.⁵⁷ Evidence from Australian inquiries shows that harm, such as child sexual exploitation, is often driven by systemic failures within residential care, including poor placement matching, ill-equipped workforce, fractured reporting systems and disempowering practices.⁵⁸

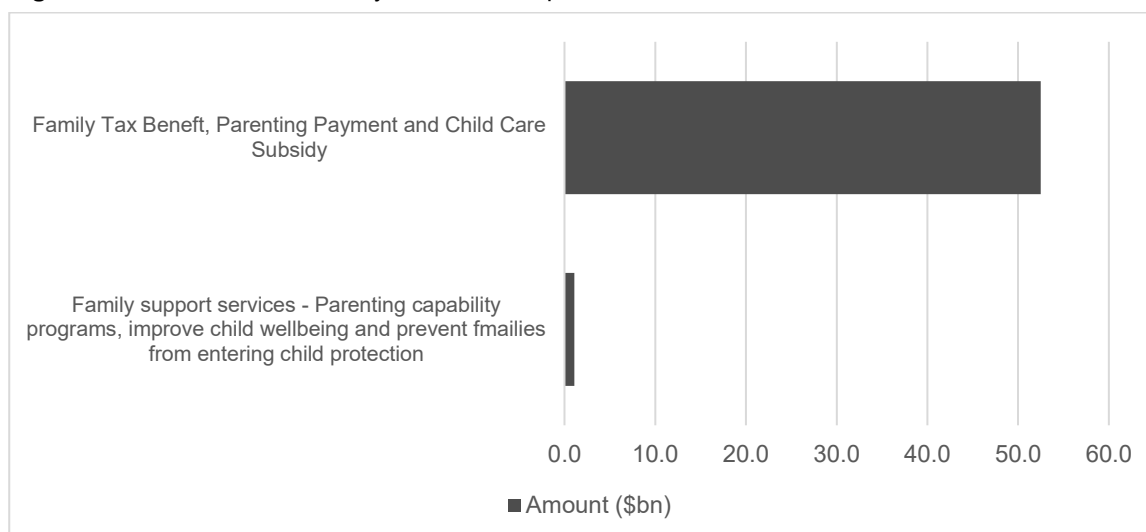
Increasingly, safeguarding requires attention to the systems and organisations that surround children: who has access to them, how workers are screened and supervised, how concerning behaviour is identified and shared, how organisations respond to allegations, and whether regulators can identify patterns of risk across organisations and sectors. The changing nature of childhood therefore strengthens the case for safeguarding approaches that operate across family, institutional and digital environments and are capable of identifying emerging risks before they result in serious harm.

2. Prevention and early supports

Reforming family support services - a test of Commonwealth and State coordination

Australia invests more than \$52 billion each year in supporting families with children, making family assistance one of the Australian Government's largest areas of social expenditure. Most investment is directed towards income support and workforce participation measures, including Family Tax Benefit, Parenting Payment and the Child Care Subsidy. By comparison, direct investment in targeted family support and harm prevention services represents a significantly small proportion. Of the \$52.5 billion allocated to family assistance in 2025–26, approximately \$1.1 billion (around two per cent) funded family support services designed to strengthen parenting capability, improve child wellbeing and prevent families from entering statutory child protection systems.

Figure 10: Commonwealth family assistance expenditure 2025–26



While representing a comparatively small share of total expenditure, Commonwealth investment in family support is undergoing one of its most significant structural reforms in decades. The Australian Government is redesigning how prevention and early intervention services are funded and delivered. From July 2027, five long-standing programs—including Children and Parenting Support, Communities for Children and Family Mental Health Support Services—will be consolidated into a single Children and Family Support Program, supported by an additional \$171.7 million investment. The new model is expected to support approximately 270,000 children and families each year, around 26,000 more families than under current arrangements.⁵⁹ The new program places greater emphasis on strengthening parenting capability, improving child development, intervening earlier to reduce demand on statutory systems, and providing communities with greater flexibility to design services around local need. Alongside simplified funding arrangements, the Commonwealth has signalled a stronger focus on measuring child and family outcomes rather than service outputs. This strategic focus on early intervention is critical given that state and territory child protection spending nearly doubled over the past decade (2014–15 to 2023–24) to \$10.2 billion, with the majority going to crisis-driven OOHHC.⁶⁰

Queensland's experience, including findings from the Inquiry, demonstrates that families are entering statutory systems at increasing rates.⁶¹ From a policy perspective, the Commonwealth's reforms could represent an important rebalancing of investment.

Domestic and family violence

Domestic and family violence continues to generate substantial demand across Queensland's policing and justice systems. In 2024–25, the Queensland Police Service recorded 71,006 breaches of domestic violence orders (DVOs), an increase of 8.6 per cent in the number of recorded offences from the previous year and equivalent to a rate of 1257.7 offences per 100,000 people.⁶² The rate of recorded DVO breaches increased by 6.3 per cent during the year and was more than three-and-a-half times the rate recorded a decade earlier. The severity of offending is reflected in 2557 charges for non-fatal strangulation in 2025–26 (a 5.48 per cent increase from 2024–25) and a doubling of domestic and family violence-flagged offences to 24,403 charges from 2020–21 to 2025–26.⁶³ The growing complexity of domestic and family violence is also evident across the service system, with more family service referrals now involving domestic and family violence as a primary factor, alongside an increase in demand that is impacting service capacity and duration.⁶⁴

There were 40,670 recorded victims of domestic and family violence-related personal offences in 2024–25, an increase of 1.7 per cent from the previous year. Assault accounted for 82.3 per cent of these victims and sexual offences for 10.1 per cent. Across all recorded personal offences where the offender–victim relationship was known, 47.8 per cent of victims were in a domestic or family relationship with their offender.⁶⁵ The scale of domestic and family violence offending is also evident in court data. In 2024–25, one in five adult cases sentenced in Queensland courts (20.4 per cent, or 20,476 cases) involved at least one domestic and family violence-related offence.⁶⁶ DFV-related offences accounted for 15 per cent of all adult offences sentenced statewide. Contravention of a Domestic Violence Order (CDVO) was the second most common most-serious offence sentenced in Queensland courts, accounting for 11.2 per cent of adult cases, while CDVO offences comprised 68.2 per cent of all DFV-related offences sentenced. The number of sentenced CDVO charges increased by 257.7 per cent between 2013–14 and 2024–25, from 8944 to 31,994. In 2025–26, 20,843 defendants were convicted of CDVO. Despite a slight drop in total convictions, the number of defendants sentenced to physical imprisonment or detention for CDVO rose to 8,938 (up from 8,301 in 2024–25). This means that 42.88 per cent of all convicted CDVO defendants received a custodial sentence in 2025–26, up from 38.77 per cent in 2024–25.⁶⁷ For aggravated contraventions, more than half of imprisonment orders involved time spent on remand, with a median of 56 days in custody prior to sentencing. This growth has occurred alongside a substantial expansion in the number of breaches of domestic violence orders, which increased by 255.2 per cent between 2013–14 and 2022–23.⁶⁸

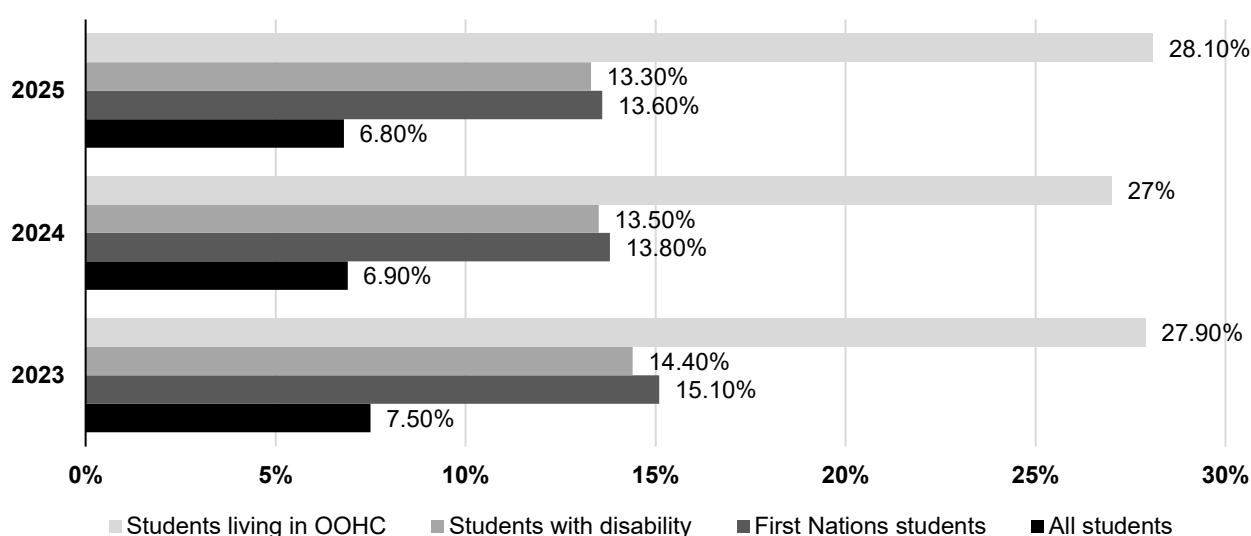
Recent legislative reforms have sought to strengthen the legal framework to better recognise the impact of domestic and family violence on children. Amendments to the *Criminal Law (Coercive Control and Affirmative Consent) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024* criminalised coercive control from 26 May 2025, while changes to the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992* (Qld) require courts to treat violence against, or exposure of, children as an aggravating factor in sentencing, balanced against the potential hardship of imprisonment on dependent children.⁶⁹

School disengagement

School attendance remains a key protective factor for children; however, disengagement continues to increase. Over the past four years, Queensland state school attendance has declined, with 61.4 per cent of students attending school at least 90.0 per cent of the time.⁷⁰ In Semester 1, 2025, average attendance was 87.3 per cent in state schools compared with 91.0 per cent in independent schools and 90.7 per cent in Catholic schools. Attendance declines with age, reducing from 89.3 per cent in primary school to 84.4 per cent in secondary school, with the lowest attendance in Years 9 (82.5 per cent) and 10 (82.4 per cent). Attendance is strongly associated with disadvantage. Students in the lowest ICSEA quarter attended at 81.9 per cent, compared with 92.0 per cent in the highest quarter. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attended at 78.8 per cent, with only 37.9 per cent meeting the 90.0 per cent attendance benchmark. This year the Board found that almost two-thirds of older compulsory school-aged children who died between 2020 and 2024, and known to child protection in the 12 months prior to their death, were disengaged from education, and that disengaged children were substantially more likely to engage in high risk behaviours than engaged peers (74.0 per cent compared to

16.0 per cent).⁷¹ This vulnerability is compounded by exclusionary discipline practices. School suspensions disproportionately affect disadvantaged and First Nations students, with primary school suspensions correlated with increasing odds of police contact by early adolescence.⁷² Although the total rate of School Disciplinary Absences (SDAs) declined to 6.8 per cent of all school students in 2025, disproportionality increased. More than 28.0 per cent of students in the care of the state received an SDA in 2025—more than four times the rate of the general student population. Exclusion is also occurring earlier, with 621 prep students receiving SDAs in 2025 (up from 381 in 2023), with 79 per cent having a disability.⁷³

Figure 11: Percentage of students who received an SDA, by demographic, 2023–25



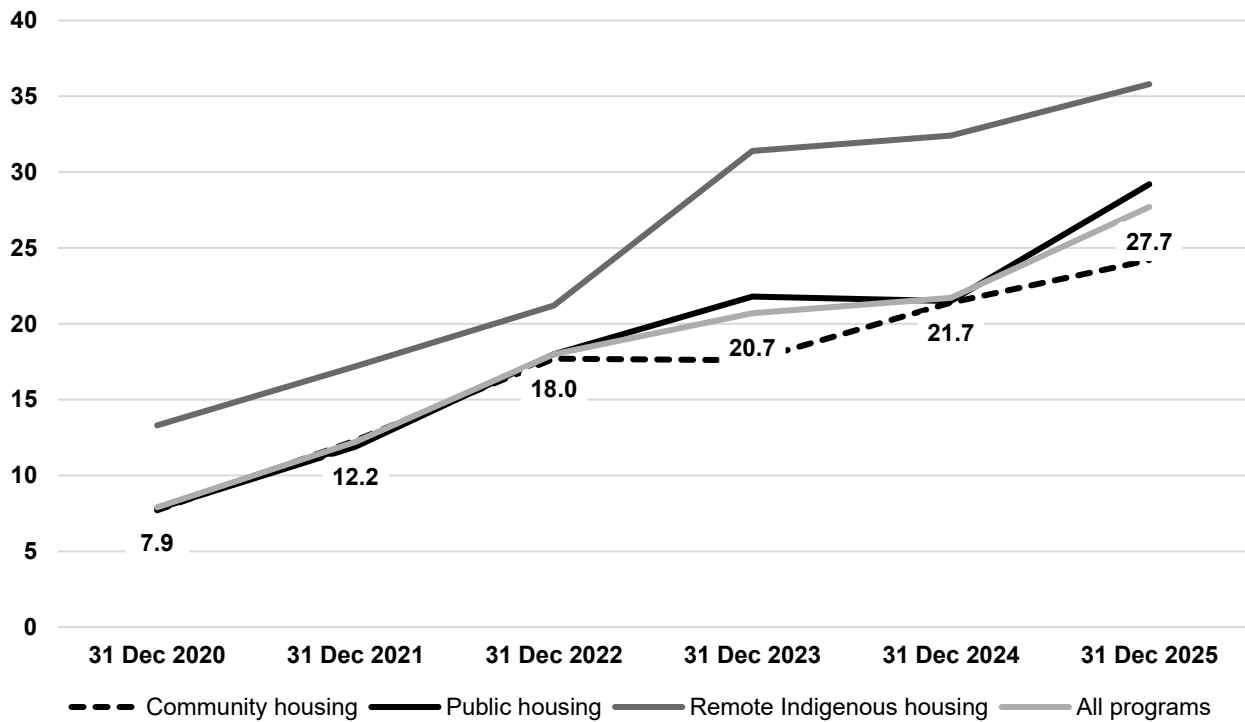
Source: Queensland Family and Child Commission. (2026). *Beyond behaviour: Extending the analysis of school disciplinary absences in Queensland state schools*.

Housing instability and homelessness

Queensland's private rental market is under sustained pressure, with vulnerable families facing increasing barriers to accessing safe, affordable and stable housing. The Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot 2026 found that 0 per cent of advertised properties across metropolitan, regional and remote Queensland were affordable and appropriate for households reliant on income support.⁷⁴ Housing costs are the largest fixed expense for low-income families, consuming between 36 and 48 per cent of disposable income. Rental growth has been substantial, with Brisbane median rents increasing by 51.0 per cent in the five years to September 2025, alongside sharper rises in regional centres including Gladstone and Rockhampton.

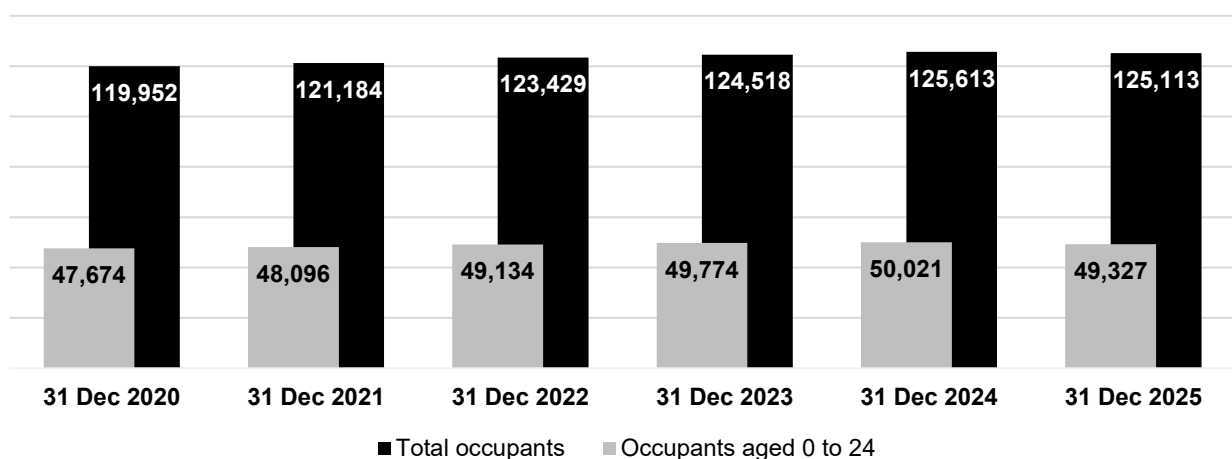
Demand for social housing continues to exceed supply.⁷⁵ As at 31 December 2025, the social housing register increased by 17.7 per cent to 10,611 family applications. Families with children face an average wait time of 26.8 months, increasing to 38.3 months in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These delays represent prolonged periods of instability during critical developmental stages. Despite this need, the total number of social housing tenancies decreased from 59,312 to 59,129 over the same period. This is also reflected in the number of occupants aged between 0 and 24 living in social housing tenancies which fell from 50,021 to 49,327.

Figure 12: Average months between application received date, to tenancy start date, for applications including at least one child under the age of 18, by housing program



Source: Department of Housing Public Works. (2026) Unpublished data request.

Figure 13: Number of occupants of government-managed social rental housing, by occupant age and year



Source: Department of Housing Public Works. (2026) Unpublished data request.

Government investment has increased in response. The 2025–26 State Budget⁷⁶ committed \$1.96 billion over four years, with \$500 million ongoing, to deliver 53,500 social and community homes by 2044, including targeted investments in youth foyers, domestic violence shelters, and housing in remote and discrete communities. A further \$1.024 billion was committed in the 2026–27 Budget⁷⁷ toward this target, alongside the *Securing our Housing Foundations* plan. Eight youth foyers across Queensland will provide housing and tailored support, including education and employment opportunities, for young people aged 16–25. Three existing youth foyers have supported over 430 young people since 2019, with five new foyers in development. A report from the Foyer Foundation highlighted the positive outcomes from these programs, with young people 1.6 times more likely to achieve a higher level of education compared to a Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS). Sixty-five per cent of foyer participants gain employment, compared to 51.0 per cent of SHS clients, and 80.0 per cent of foyer participants exit to stable housing, with 72.0 per cent exiting into private housing.^{78,79}

Housing instability is a key driver of homelessness and system contact. In 2024–25, approximately 54,700 Queenslanders accessed specialist homelessness services, representing 19.0 per cent of the national total. Of these, 61.0 per cent were already homeless at presentation. While updated SHS data is not yet available, more recent but granular data from Brisbane illustrates the extent to which homelessness is affecting families with children. Brisbane Zero recorded 1230 families and 2,125 children experiencing homelessness during 2024–25.⁸⁰ Of these families, 604 (77.0 per cent of those for whom this measure was reported) were identified as experiencing homelessness for the first time, while 924 families still required permanent housing at the end of the year. This data provides a contemporary indication of the scale and persistence of housing instability affecting families in Brisbane, although they relate only to people participating in the Brisbane Zero By-Name List and should not be interpreted as a complete count of family homelessness.

Changing support for Queensland children living with disabilities

As at 31 March 2026, 165,611 Queenslanders were active NDIS participants, representing about one in 35 Queenslanders (2.9%). Queensland accounted for approximately 21.0 per cent of all NDIS participants nationally. Children make up a particularly large share of Queensland's NDIS population. There were approximately 87,650 Queensland children aged 0–18 with an active NDIS plan: 35,687 aged 0–8, 34,061 aged 9–14 and approximately 17,900 aged 15–18. This means around 53.0 per cent of all Queensland NDIS participants were children aged 18 or younger.⁸¹ The participation rates are also significant. As at March 2026, 6.1 per cent of Queensland children aged 0–8, 7.9 per cent of children aged 9–14, and 6.0 per cent of young people aged 15–18 were NDIS participants. The rate for 9–14 year-olds equates to approximately one in every 13 Queensland children in that age group. By comparison, only 2.9 per cent of the Queensland population overall participated in the NDIS. Autism is by far the largest primary disability category in Queensland's NDIS population. As at March 2026, 74,197 Queensland participants had autism recorded as their primary disability, equivalent to approximately 45.0 per cent of all Queensland participants. Developmental delay accounted for another 15,359 participants and intellectual disability for 18,859 participants.

In 2026 the scheme is undergoing significant reform to reduce annual expenditure growth to 8.0 per cent by 2026–27.⁸² These reforms are expected to reduce entry rates and increase exits, particularly for children accessing early intervention who do not meet the permanency requirements for lifetime support. At the time of writing this report, Queensland is the last remaining state yet to sign a bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth to enact Thriving Kids. The Queensland Government has raised concerns that the Australian Government has not consulted effectively with the states to ensure participants would have their needs met.⁸³ For families, this creates uncertainty regarding eligibility and continuity of support.

Youth suicide and youth mental health services

In 2024–25, 24 children died by suicide.⁸⁴ The Board's research identified youth suicide as the outcome of cumulative and intersecting risks rather than a single event. Exposure to domestic, family and sexual violence is strongly associated with suicidal ideation, self-harm and suicide, with risks compounded by abuse, neglect, parental substance use and parental mental illness. Trauma, social disadvantage, housing instability and justice system involvement can further intersect and increase vulnerability. Against these cumulative risks, a stable relationship with a primary caregiver remains the strongest protective factor. However, nearly 60 per cent of parents report feeling tired or exhausted, with higher rates among those experiencing psychological distress.⁸⁵

Accessible, affordable and inclusive mental health support is a leading priority for young Queenslanders, with 58.0 per cent identifying it as a top-five issue in 2024–25. This occurs against comparatively high levels of mental ill-health: in 2022, the age-standardised prevalence of long-term mental and behavioural conditions was 31.0 per cent in Queensland, compared with 26.2 per cent nationally, rising to 50.8 per cent among Queensland females aged 15–24.⁸⁶ Preventing youth suicide therefore requires coordinated, trauma-informed responses that address intersecting adversity while strengthening the protective relationships around children and families.

Mental health issues are present in 65.0 per cent of households with a child in need of protection, and nearly one-quarter of children in OOHC report poor or very poor mental health. Young people with lived experience describe the cumulative impacts of trauma and system contact and emphasise the need for trauma-informed care and support from trusted adults with lived experience. Barriers to adolescent mental health care are primarily structural. Of those who attempted to access youth mental health services in the past three years, 72.0 per cent reported long waitlists and 58.0 per cent identified cost as a barrier. Young people consistently report the need for free or subsidised counselling and expanded Medicare coverage, with cost-of-living pressures identified as a direct contributor to psychological distress. In regional and remote areas, limited service availability further constrains access, often requiring relocation and increasing financial and emotional burden.

The Queensland Government has committed \$1.65 billion through the *Better Care Together* plan and expanded acute response services across Hospital and Health Services. These reforms align with the strategic direction set out in *Shifting Minds 2023–2028*, which establishes a whole-of-community, whole-of-person and whole-of-system approach to mental health and wellbeing, with a strong emphasis on prevention, early intervention, and integrated, person-centred care. The plan prioritises improving access to coordinated community-based supports, addressing inequitable service access, and strengthening responses for children and young people experiencing adversity.

Prevalence of child sexual offending in Queensland

Data from the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) published in June 2026 reveals that in 2023–24, police proceeded against 2999 individuals for sexual offences in Queensland, representing a state rate of 60.84 per 100,000 population. This positions Queensland as having the second-highest absolute headcount of offenders nationally. While men continue to represent the vast majority of offenders, Queensland reported the highest number of female sexual offenders in the country, with 278 individuals proceeded against during the reporting period. Offending involving children represents a substantial and complex component of this landscape, with Queensland documenting 975 adults proceeded against exclusively for child sexual offences in 2023–24. Within this adult cohort, the most frequent offence type was non-penetrative sexual conduct, involving 591 individuals, followed by 291 cases of penetrative sexual conduct and 76 cases of conduct enabling unlawful sexual conduct. Notably, 140 of these adult offenders in Queensland were linked to two or more unique victims, indicating a concerning level of multiple-victim offending. These patterns are further underscored by a disproportionately high prevalence of offences relating to Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). Queensland recorded 616 CSAM offenders, accounting for 34.4 per cent of the national total. The state's CSAM offender rate of 12.50 per 100,000 is

nearly 70 per cent higher than the national rate of 7.44, either reflecting an acute concentration of technology-facilitated harm or exceptional policing within the jurisdiction.

The statistical outlier status of Queensland is most pronounced within the youth cohort, where offending rates are more than double the national average. In 2023–24, there were 659 youth sexual offenders in Queensland, accounting for 46 per cent of all youth offenders documented nationally. This resulted in a youth sexual offender rate of 113.83 per 100,000 population aged 10–17, more than double the national youth rate of 53.22. Nationally, the primary driver for youth proceedings is the handling of CSAM (42%), a trend frequently linked to peer-to-peer electronic sharing. Despite the focus on external threats, AIC data indicates that strangers are responsible for only 17.0 per cent of child sexual offences perpetrated by adults. Instead, harm is overwhelmingly perpetrated by individuals known to the victim, with 39.0 per cent identified as non-intimate partner family members and 31.0 per cent as other known individuals. This relational proximity corresponds with the finding that 78.0 per cent of adult child sexual offences occurred at or around a residential location, illustrating that the domestic environment remains the primary site of risk for children.

Disadvantage defining the youth justice cohort

The Youth Justice Census (2020–2025)⁸⁷ provides a detailed profile of children and young people under supervision and in custody, highlighting the complexity and intensity of need within this cohort. The survey responses are provided by case managers/workers and reflect the case manager's knowledge at the time of entry.

Indicators of social disadvantage are evident across both supervised and custodial cohorts. In 2025, 26.0 per cent of young people under supervision were living in unstable or unsuitable accommodation, increasing to 34.0 per cent for those in detention. Disengagement from school and employment was similarly high, affecting 53.0 per cent of the supervised cohort and 54.0 per cent of those in detention. Exposure to domestic and family violence (DFV) was also widespread, with 62.0 per cent of all supervised youth and 73.0 per cent of those in detention having experienced or been directly impacted by violence. This represents a substantial increase over time, with DFV exposure in the detention cohort rising from 57.0 per cent in 2020.

The prevalence of disability and neurodevelopmental conditions within the detention cohort is particularly pronounced. In 2025, 75.0 per cent of children in detention were diagnosed with, or suspected of having, a cognitive, physical, or sensory disability. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was identified in 64.0 per cent of detained children, while 23.0 per cent were identified as having Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). These figures indicate that neurodevelopmental impairment is a significant factor in youth justice involvement.

Mental health concerns have also increased over time. Between 2020 and 2025, the proportion of young people in the youth justice system with diagnosed or suspected mental health conditions rose from 32.0 per cent to 46.0 per cent across all supervision, and from 28.0 per cent to 43.0 per cent in detention (peaking at 47 per cent in 2024). Within the detention cohort, anxiety increased from 16.0 per cent to 29.0 per cent, post-traumatic stress disorder from 17.0 per cent to 24.0 per cent, and depression from 14.0 per cent to 20.0 per cent over the same period. Behavioural disorders, including conduct disorder and oppositional defiance, were present in 23.0 per cent of the detention cohort in 2025. Substance use remains a near-universal feature of the cohort. In 2025, 83.0 per cent of young people under supervision and 87.0 per cent of those in detention reported active substance use. Cannabis was the most commonly used substance, with 81.0 per cent of detained young people reporting use. Methamphetamine (ice) use remained persistently high, reported by 24.0 per cent of the supervised cohort and 40.0 per cent of those in detention. A notable increase was observed in stimulant use (excluding methamphetamines), rising to eight per cent under supervision and 15.0 per cent in detention in 2025, although this change is attributed in part to improved data capture.

The census also highlights the intergenerational nature of disadvantage. In 2025, 35.0 per cent of young people under supervision had a parent or guardian who had previously been incarcerated, increasing to 42.0 per cent within the detention cohort. This reflects a continuation of patterns observed since 2020 and underscores the role of intergenerational contact with the criminal justice system as a contributing factor to youth offending. Overall, the data demonstrates that children and young people in the youth justice system experience multiple, intersecting forms of disadvantage, including trauma, disability, mental health concerns, substance use, and social exclusion. These findings reinforce the need for responses that move beyond justice-based interventions to address the underlying drivers of offending through coordinated and prevention-focused approaches.

Table 8: Profile snapshot of young people under youth justice supervision or in youth detention, 2020 and 2025

	Individuals under youth justice supervision			Individuals in youth detention		
	2020 (1578 surveys)	2025 (1407 surveys)	Change	2020 (218 surveys)	2025 (283 surveys)	Change
Living in unstable and/or unsuitable accommodation	29%	26%	-3%	44%	34%	-10%
Experienced or been impacted by DFV	60%	62%	+2%	57%	73%	+16%
Used at least one substance ^a	80%	83%	+3%	84%	87%	+3%
Have at least one diagnosed or suspected disability ^b	31%	60%	+29%	43%	75%	+32%
Have at least one diagnosed or suspected mental health condition ^c	32%	46%	+14%	28%	43%	+15%

^a Reported substances include marijuana, tobacco, vape, alcohol, ice and other methamphetamines, solvent inhalation, misused prescription medication, stimulants and other substances; ^b Reported disabilities include Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Developmental/Language Disorder, Cognitive/Intellectual, Physical, Sensory (visual or auditory); ^c Reported mental health conditions include Anxiety, Depression, Post-traumatic stress disorder, Personality disorder, Psychosis, Bipolar disorder, Eating disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive disorder

Source: Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support (2026) Unpublished correspondence

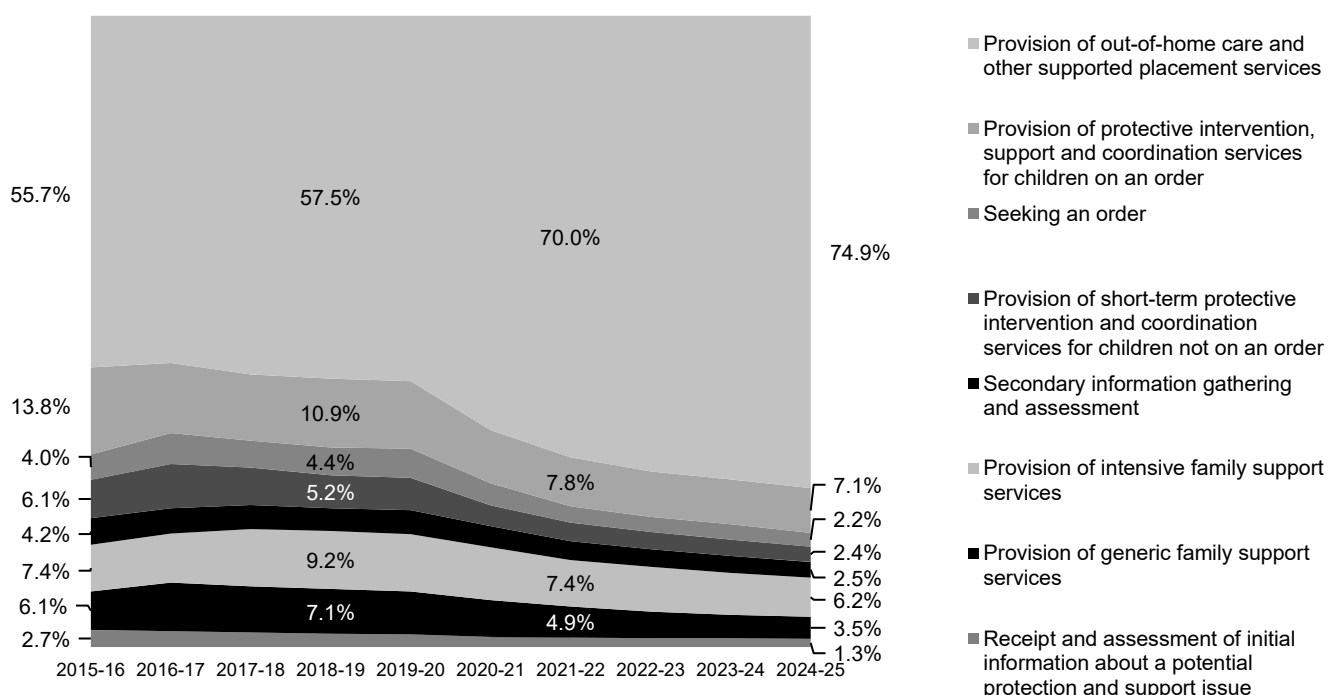
3. Intervention and diversion

Investment imbalance in Queensland's child protection system

Over the past decade, there has been a significant structural shift in Queensland's child protection expenditure toward downstream crisis responses. While total system expenditure has increased substantially over this time, rising from \$887.9 million in 2019–20 to \$2.01 billion in 2024–25, the majority of additional investment has been directed toward OOHC rather than upstream prevention and early intervention. In 2015–16, 55.7 per cent of total expenditure was allocated to OOHC and placement services; by 2024–25 this had increased to 74.9 per cent. Over the same period, investment in family support services has declined proportionally, with intensive family support services representing just 2.5 per cent of total expenditure and family support services 1.3 per cent.⁸⁸ This represents a service system increasingly weighted toward crisis response rather than earlier support for families with risks.

The 2025–26 Queensland Budget included \$3.62 billion for Child Safety⁸⁹; however, a significant proportion of this funding is directed to residential care, rather than preventative family support. Overall, the current funding profile reflects a system in which insufficient upstream investment contributes to increase downstream demand.

Figure 14: Activity group unit costs, Queensland, proportion of total expenditure



Source: Productivity Commission. (2026). *Report on Government Services 2025: Child protection*. Table 16A.29A

Reduction in the use of Family Support Services

Queensland funds different tiers of family support. Family Wellbeing Services (FWS) are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services providing culturally responsive support to families. Intensive Family Support (IFS) works with families who are at higher risk of entering the child protection system. Across the last 12 months to March 2026 there has been a marked reduction in the number of families receiving family support. The data shows that engagement with the three lower intensity programs all fell, while the most intensive service increased. Together the three services opened 2110 fewer cases than the year before, a decline of 7.6 per cent.

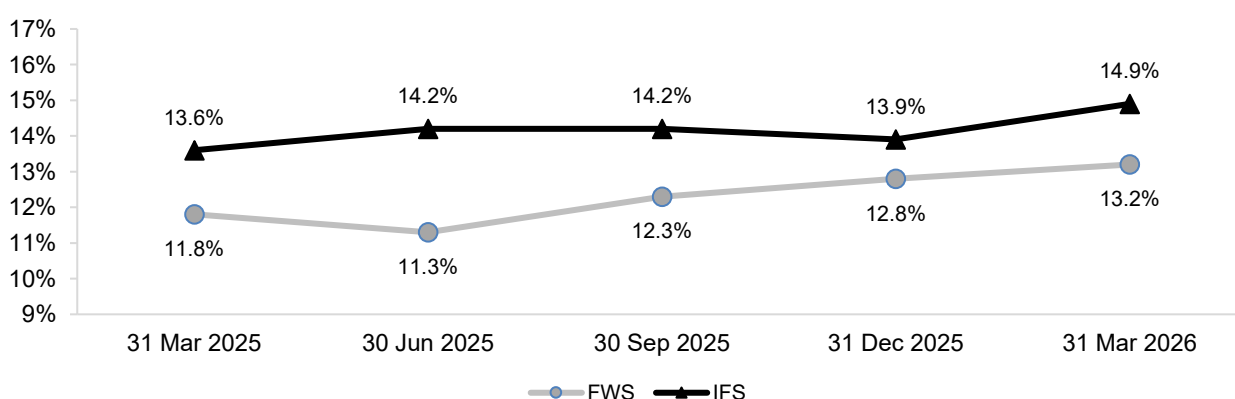
Both FWS and IFS recorded reductions in families consenting to receive the service, from 40.5 per cent to 38.8 per cent for FWS, and from 37.9 per cent to 36.1 per cent for IFS.

Table 9: Enquiries received and cases open across FaCC, FWS, IFS, 31 March 2025 to 31 March 2026

Service	Year to 31 Mar 2025	Year to 31 Mar 2026	Change
FaCC, enquiries received	26,344	23,663	-10.2%
FaCC, cases opened	15,050	13,075	-13.1%
FWS, cases opened	5,836	5,411	-7.3%
IFS, cases opened	6,764	7,054	+4.3%
Total cases opened, all three services	27,650	25,540	-7.6%

Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (2026). *Our Performance – Supporting Queensland families.*

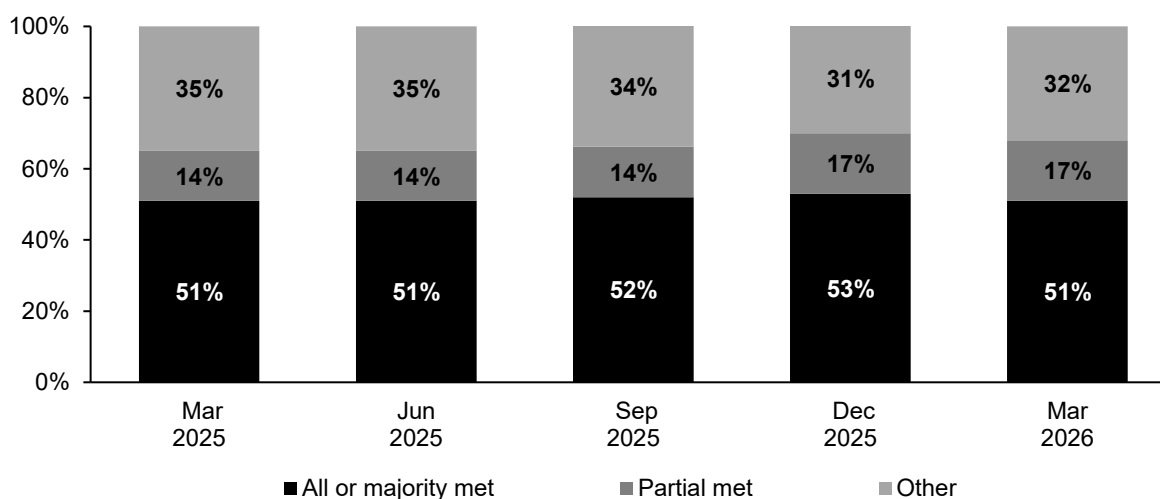
Figure 15: Families who refused support, 31 March 2025 to 31 March 2026



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (2026). *Our Performance – Supporting Queensland families.*

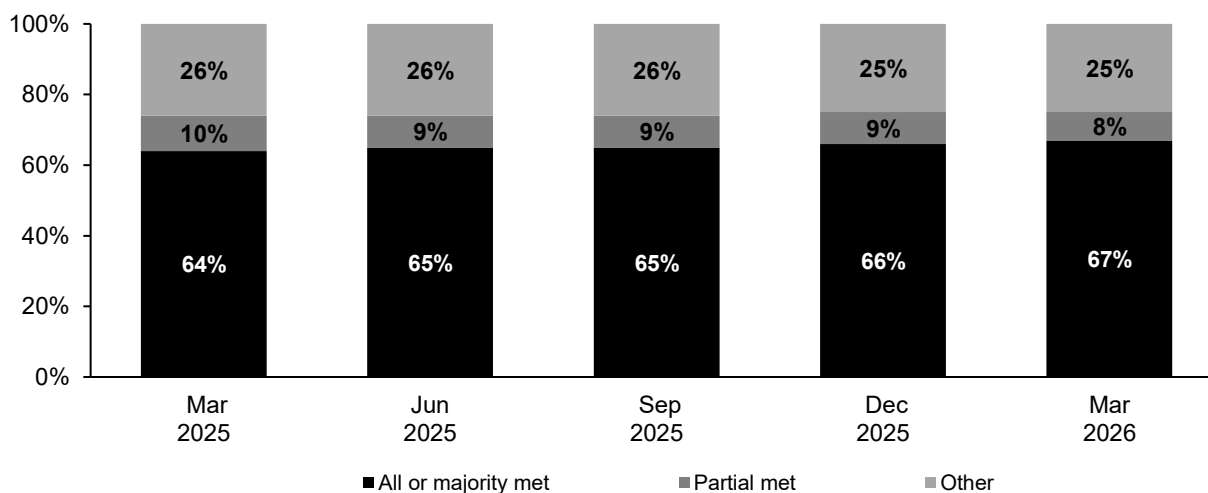
For families that did engage with these services the majority resulted in success with between half and two-thirds achieving their case plan goals.

Figure 16: FWS - family needs met, 31 March 2025 to 31 March 2026



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (2026). *Our Performance – Supporting Queensland families*.

Figure 17: IFS – family case plan goals achieved, 31 March 2025 to 31 March 2026



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (2026). *Our Performance – Supporting Queensland families*.

Case churn in Intensive Family Support (IFS) engagement

IFS occupies an important position in Queensland's child protection system. It is intended to work with families experiencing significant and multiple vulnerabilities before those concerns escalate to a level requiring statutory child protection intervention. By strengthening parenting capability, addressing underlying family needs and connecting families with other supports, IFS provides one of the principal mechanisms through which the system can intervene to keep children safely with their families. The Inquiry reinforced the importance of this function, identifying targeted intervention and family support as critical components of an effective child protection system. The rationale is both social and economic: where families can be stabilised safely through effective early support, children can avoid deeper statutory intervention and the substantially greater personal and financial costs associated with entry to OOHC. For that model to work, however, families need to receive support sufficiently early and remain engaged for long enough for the intervention to have an effect. The available data identifies challenges at both points.

Firstly, families are waiting longer for support. Demand for IFS is increasingly exceeding the capacity to allocate families promptly. In 2023–24, 1133 IFS case summaries remained unallocated for 91 days or more. By 2024–25, this had increased to 1,551 cases – an increase of 36.9 per cent in a single year. This was more than twice the 17 per cent growth in overall allocations over the same period. The increase is significant because a three-month wait is substantially longer than contemplated by the IFS service model. Child Safety considers a family to be waitlisted where a worker cannot commence with them within four weeks.⁹⁰ Against that benchmark, approximately 40 per cent of cases exceeded the four-week threshold in 2024–25, compared with 38 per cent in the previous year. The data shows pressure accumulating at the point at which preventative intervention is intended to occur. A service designed around early intervention becomes progressively less preventative if substantial numbers of families cannot receive it promptly.

Secondly, a significant proportion of referrals do not progress to service delivery. Capacity is only part of the issue. The data also indicates considerable attrition between referral and actual engagement. Families may be unable to be contacted, assessed as inappropriate for IFS, found to already be receiving another service or exited for other administrative or service reasons. Between 2020–21 and 2024–25:

- referrals closed because they were assessed as inappropriate increased by 84 per cent, from 405 to 747;
- closures because the family was already engaged with another service more than doubled, from 290 to 636;
- cases involving a supported referral to another service because IFS was at capacity fell by one-third, from 278 to 185; and
- cases closed because the service was unable to contact or locate the family increased from 398 to 444.

These trends require careful interpretation. The 84 per cent increase in inappropriate referrals could reflect changes in referral quality or classification as well as changes in the families by the time they presented to the service. A family waiting three months for an intensive service may be materially different by the time contact occurs. Similarly, the doubling of referrals involving families already engaged elsewhere may indicate duplication, changing service patterns or limited visibility across the family-support system. The administrative data cannot distinguish between these explanations. Crucially, there is currently no data source available to quantify the overall volume of IFS referrals closed prior to case management contact with an allocated caseworker⁹¹, and the system does not track outcomes for these families. Nevertheless, the aggregate pattern is important. Increasing numbers of families are being identified and referred for intensive support without the referral necessarily resulting in an IFS intervention. The group that cannot be contacted warrants particular attention. Across the five years examined, between 384 and 459 referrals each year were closed because the family could not be contacted or located. These represent families for whom a need for support was identified, a referral was made, but meaningful engagement was not achieved.

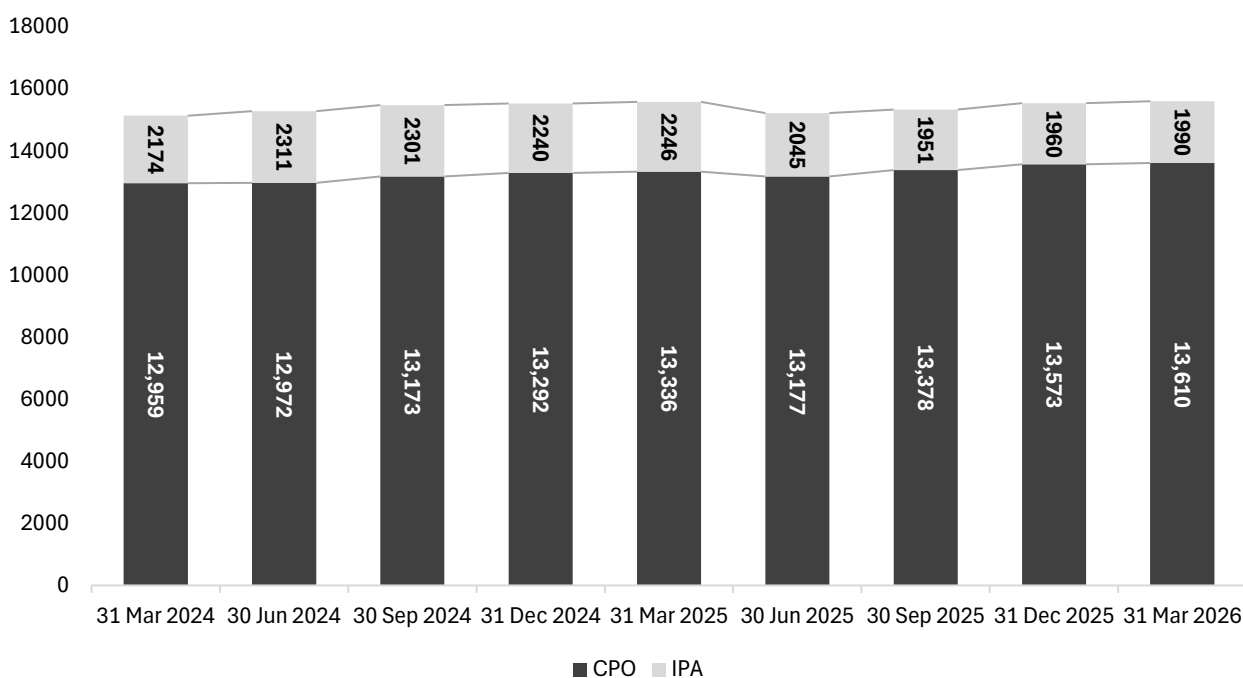
Reducing use of Intervention with Parental Agreement

An Intervention with Parental Agreement (IPA) is a time-limited, non-court-based agreement initiated when Child Safety assesses that parents are willing and able to work cooperatively to address protective concerns. Conversely, a Child Protection Order (CPO) is a court-ordered intervention initiated when a child is assessed as being in need of protection and voluntary collaboration is deemed impossible or inappropriate, frequently resulting in the removal of the child from the home and placement into the OOHC system.

Between 30 June 2025 and 31 March 2026, the total number of children subject to active ongoing intervention in Queensland rose from 15,222 to 15,600 - a net expansion of 378 children (+2.48%) in nine months. A critical insight from the updated dataset is the widening gap between court-ordered intervention and voluntary, partnership-based safety agreements over the last two financial years. The number of children subject to IPAs fell by 8.5 per cent while the number of children on orders rose five per cent. This suggests the system is undergoing a critical structural shift - moving away from collaborative, partnership-based interventions toward court-ordered supervision.

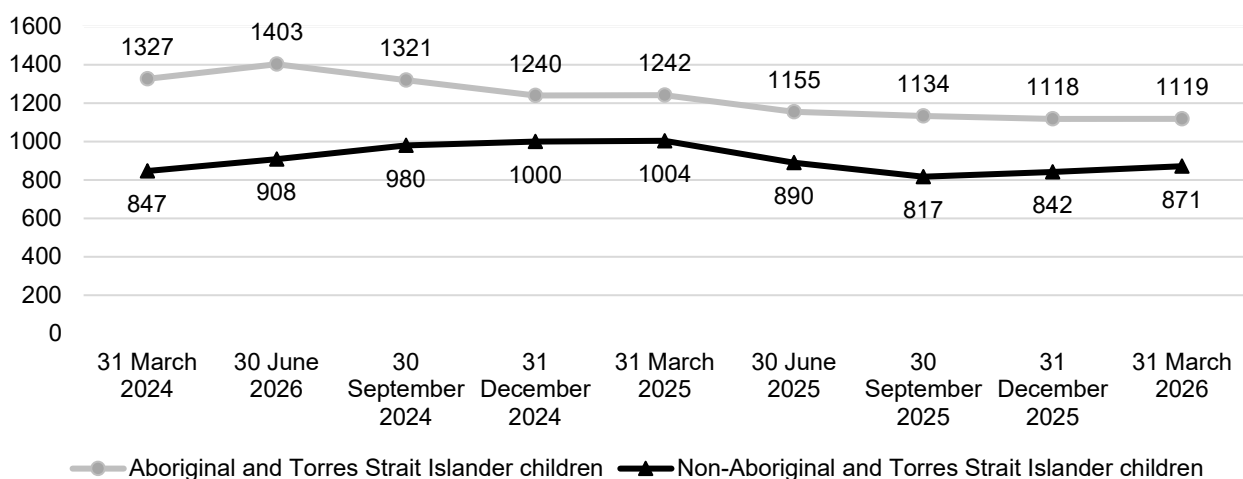
There appears to have been a concentrated effort to increase the use of IPAs between March 2024 and March 2025, followed by a decline in the March 2025 to March 2026. The Inquiry found that funding, commissioning and service delivery models remain heavily weighted towards tertiary out-of-home care placements, with court-ordered reunifications and families on IPAs frequently deprioritised. These findings are consistent with the Commission's earlier reviews of IPAs. In our 2022 *Keeping children in focus* review, the Commission found that support services often prioritised children already in care, and that the capacity of the secondary sectors constrained the timely and effective support available to keep children safe.

Figure 18: Children subject to ongoing intervention, 31 March 2024 to 31 March 2026



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (2026). *Our Performance – Improving care and post care support*.

Figure 19: Children subject to IPA, 31 March 2024 to 31 March 2026



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (2026). *Our Performance – Improving care and post care support*.

Increased investment in the youth justice portfolio

Queensland is entering a substantially different phase of youth justice investment, simultaneously expanding detention capacity and investing in community-based intervention and alternatives to detention. The Wacol Youth Remand Centre commenced in March 2025, while further capacity being developed at Woodford Youth Detention Centre.⁹² At the same time, significant new investment is being directed to early intervention, bail monitoring, post-release rehabilitation and alternative sentencing models.⁹³ The *Staying on Track* program represents one of the most significant changes to the post-detention model, providing up to 12 months of support, including at least six months of intensive rehabilitation following release. This sits alongside new early-intervention investment and the development of the *Circuit Breaker Sentencing* program as an intensive alternative intervention model.

The significance of these investments means that Queensland is increasing both its capacity to detain children and the interventions intended to prevent their return. This creates a clearer test of system performance. Queensland begins from a challenging baseline: it detains more children than any other state, and it has the highest national rate of return to sentenced supervision⁹⁴.

There is evidence that integrated and place-based interventions can achieve better results. Youth co-responder teams have been associated with seven fewer offences per young person within six months, including a 73.0 per cent reduction among serious repeat offenders,⁹⁵ while the *Pathways to Prevention* project demonstrated a 50.0 per cent reduction in later offending through early childhood education and family support.⁹⁶ This is particularly important given the concentration of vulnerability within the youth justice cohort: 73.0 per cent have had prior child protection contact, 71.0 per cent of young people in detention have disability, and 72.0 per cent of the dual-order cohort have experienced school exclusion or suspension.^{97,98,99} The Queensland Government's \$560 million investment in preventative and rehabilitative initiatives under *Safer Children, Safer Communities*, including the \$50 million *Regional Reset* program, creates an opportunity to test whether greater investment in prevention and rehabilitation can alter these trajectories.¹⁰⁰

Changes in the use of youth justice diversion, bail and electronic monitoring

Queensland is recording fewer young people coming into contact with police for offending, but a small cohort continues to experience increasingly concentrated justice-system contact. In 2024–25, the number of unique youth offenders aged 10–

17 fell to 10,056—966 fewer than the previous year and an 8.8 per cent reduction. The population-adjusted rate fell to 1722.8 per 100,000, the lowest in the available ten-year series, 36.8 per cent below 2014–15 and below even the unusually low rate recorded during COVID-19 restrictions in 2021–22. Yet the number of young people subject to police action on 10 or more separate days almost doubled over the decade, from 52 to 102.¹⁰¹ This cohort represents only 1.0 per cent of youth offenders but accounts for disproportionate repeat system contact and community harm.

Against this reduction in overall offending, the use of diversion has also declined. Cautions remained relatively stable at 28.2 per cent of police actions, with theft accounting for 29.1 per cent of cautioned offences. Drug diversion changed more substantially following legislative reforms: traditional drug cautions fell 43.9 per cent, while 1,852 drug diversion warnings were issued in the first full year.¹⁰² The new Illicit Drug Enforcement and Diversion Framework retains diversion for minor cannabis offences and police discretion in other cases, but removes the previous graduated, multi-opportunity model.¹⁰³

Other diversionary pathways also contracted. Restorative justice referrals fell 14 per cent to 1,916 young people, overall admissions to diversionary programs declined seven per cent, and court-ordered diversionary referrals and related orders fell 18.9 per cent.¹⁰⁴ The combination warrants attention: fewer young people are entering the justice system, but those who do are encountering a system making less use of several established diversionary pathways, while a small high-frequency cohort remains entrenched in repeat contact.

Bail is another increasingly important point of intervention. In 2024–25 there were 7,459 convicted breach-of-bail charges against children, an increase of 11.3 per cent in one year, despite a 9.2 per cent decline in the number of distinct young people with a proven charge. Over the same period, the average completed period of unsentenced detention increased from 48 to 54 days.^{105,106} This suggests increasing intensity of justice-system contact among a smaller cohort and strengthens the case for examining whether community-based alternatives can safely reduce reliance on remand.

Electronic monitoring has emerged as one such alternative. Queensland's 2025 evaluation¹⁰⁷ found that children subject to electronic monitoring had an 11 per cent higher bail-completion rate, were less likely to reoffend, committed fewer victim-involved offences and spent less time in custody while on bail than a comparison cohort. Importantly, the evaluation could not isolate the effect of electronic monitoring from the intensive wraparound support delivered alongside it, concluding that the combination may be effective for some young people. The model was also operationally intensive: 5667 confirmed monitoring alerts—around 50 per order—resulted in only 33 breaches of bail.

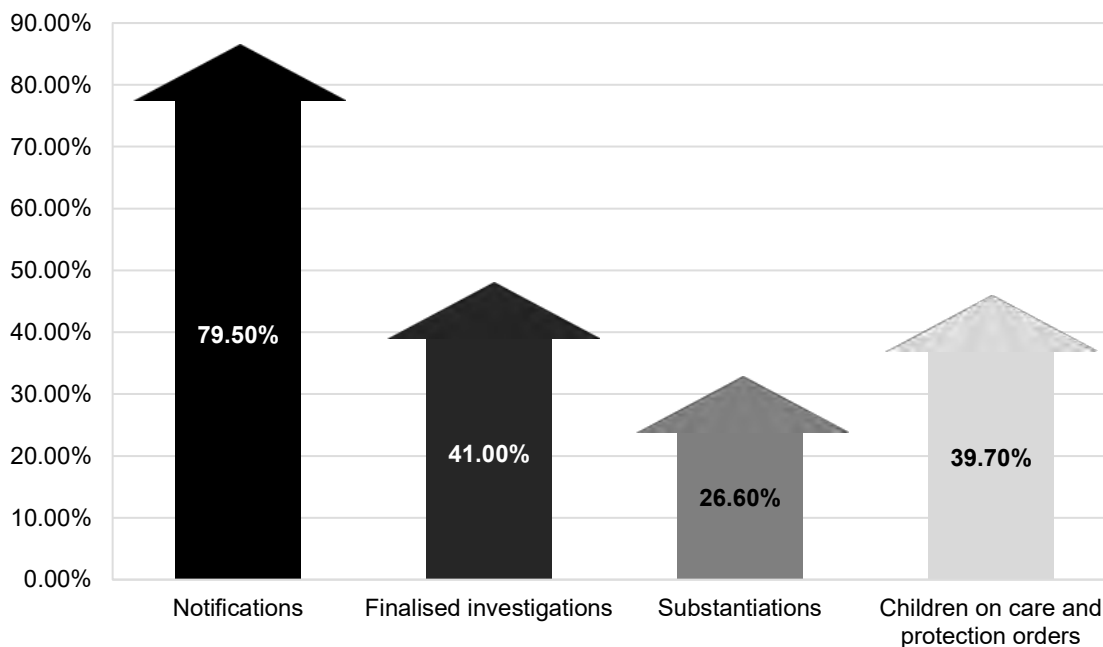
From 30 April 2026, electronic monitoring became a permanent statewide bail option and eligibility expanded to children aged 10–17. The expansion now creates a clear evaluation question: whether the positive outcomes observed in the more narrowly selected trial cohort can be sustained at scale, whether electronic monitoring reduces reliance on remand, and whether the operational resources required are proportionate to its additional risk-management benefit. Critically, evaluation will need to distinguish the effect of the technology itself from the intensive supports surrounding it.

4. Statutory system intervention

Growing gaps between system demand and system capacity

Queensland's child protection system is managing substantially greater demand at its front door, but this growth has not translated into a comparable increase in investigations or children found to have experienced significant harm. Between 2015–16 and 2023–24,¹⁰⁸ the number of children subject to notifications increased by 79.5 per cent, from 19,905 to 35,723. Over the same period, finalised investigations increased by 41.0 per cent and substantiations by 26.6 per cent. The result is a widening gap between the volume of concerns being reported to Child Safety and the number of matters progressing through investigation to a finding of substantiated harm.

Figure 20: Growth in key child protection measures, 2015-16 to 2023-24



Source: Report on Government Services, Child Protection, Productivity Commission 2026

This gap between demand and capacity is particularly apparent in the relationship between notifications and substantiations. In 2015–16, there was approximately one substantiation for every 3.5 notifications, with substantiations equivalent to 28.2 per cent of notifications. By 2023–24, there was approximately one substantiation for every five notifications, with the equivalent ratio falling to 19.9 per cent. Put another way, notifications increased by almost 16,000 over the period, while annual substantiations increased by around 1500. This divergence has important implications for understanding system demand. Notifications measure concerns reaching the statutory system, rather than the prevalence of child abuse and neglect, and increases can be influenced by mandatory reporting requirements, community awareness, reporting practices and changes in how concerns are identified and referred. The data shows that Child Safety must now process and assess a much larger volume of reports to identify a comparatively modest increase in the number of children ultimately found to require statutory intervention.

While notifications have continued to place increasing pressure on intake and assessment functions, growth in investigations and substantiations has been considerably more constrained. This may reflect changes in the nature of matters being reported, screening and assessment practices, or the capacity of the system to respond to increasing

demand. Between 2015–16 and 2023–24, the number of children subject to care and protection orders increased by 39.7 per cent, substantially faster than the growth in annual substantiations. Unlike notifications and substantiations, which primarily reflect annual flows through the system, the population of children on orders reflects not only the number of children entering statutory care but also the duration of their involvement, including the effectiveness and timeliness of reunification, restoration and permanency pathways. This creates continuing demand for placements, casework and services even where the number of newly substantiated children is relatively stable. This distinction is important for system planning. Increasing demand cannot be understood simply by counting notifications or children in care; it requires understanding how children move through the system, where demand is being absorbed, and where capacity constraints may be emerging.

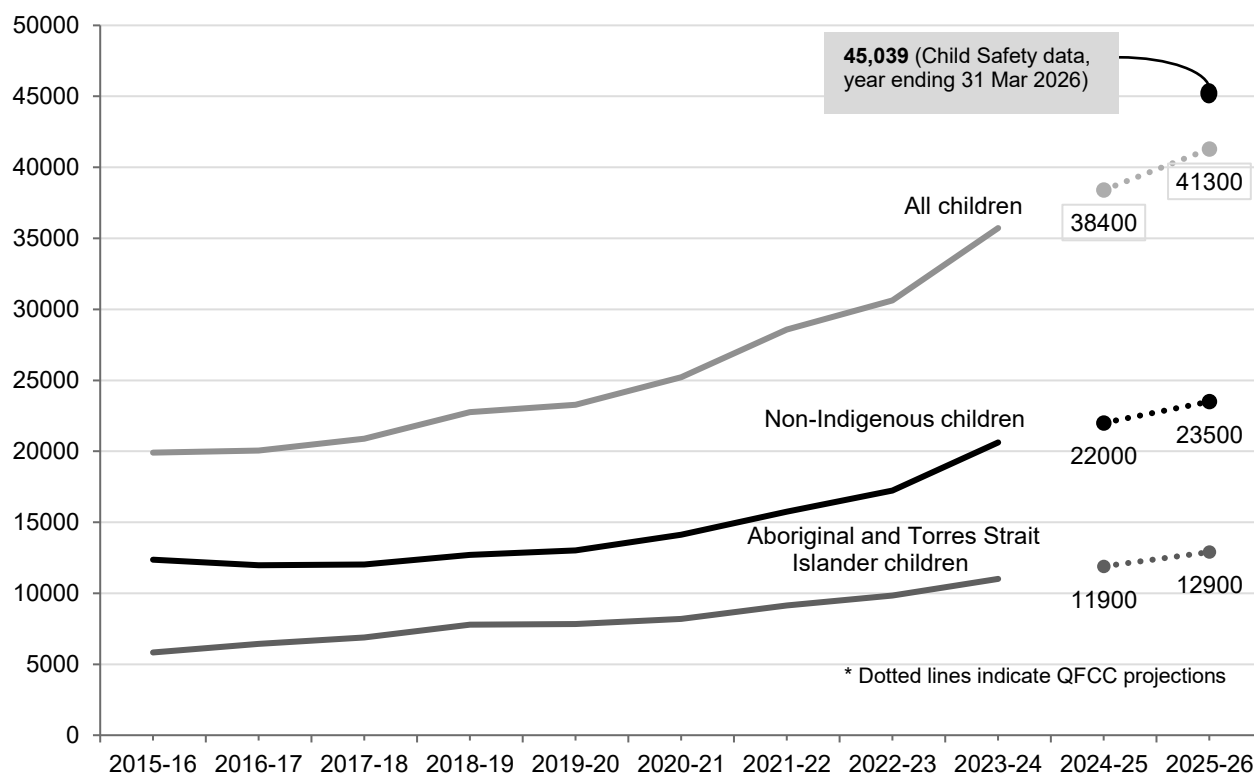
The overall picture is consequently one of pressure at both ends of the statutory system: a rapidly expanding volume of concerns requiring assessment at the front, alongside an accumulated population of children requiring ongoing statutory care. This pressure is also experienced unevenly. Since 2021–22, the number of non-Indigenous children on care and protection orders has remained broadly stable at around 7000, while the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has continued to increase, reaching 6363 as at 30 June 2024. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children consequently accounted for 47.5 per cent of children on care and protection orders, up from 41.6 per cent in 2015–16, despite comprising a much smaller proportion of Queensland's child population. The increasing concentration of statutory intervention among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is therefore a distinct and continuing feature of system demand. Understanding the factors contributing to entry, duration of orders, restoration and reunification outcomes is essential both to reducing pressure on the statutory system and to Queensland's commitments to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC.

Increases in notifications of child abuse and neglect

Over the decade to 2023–24, Queensland experienced sustained growth in demand at the front end of the child protection system. The number of children subject to a notification increased from 19,905 in 2015–16 to 35,723 in 2023–24, an increase of almost 80 per cent. Growth also accelerated over time: notifications increased at an average annual rate of 7.6 per cent across the full period, compared with 11.3 per cent over the most recent five years and 12.3 per cent over the final three years. This established a clear trajectory of increasing statutory demand immediately before the interruption to Queensland's public child protection data.

The implementation of the Unify case management system subsequently removed the comparable administrative series for 2024–25 and 2025–26. In the absence of actual data, the Commission used historical growth rates to understand the scale of demand Queensland could reasonably expect if previous trends continued. Applying the long-term, five-year and three-year growth rates to the last published result produced a projected range of approximately 38,400–40,100 children subject to notifications in 2024–25 and 41,300–45,100 in 2025–26. These were not forecasts of actual performance, but scenario estimates illustrating the likely scale of demand if historical growth persisted.

Figure 21: Distinct children subject to a notification, 2015–16 to 2023–24, projection for 2024–25 and 2025–26

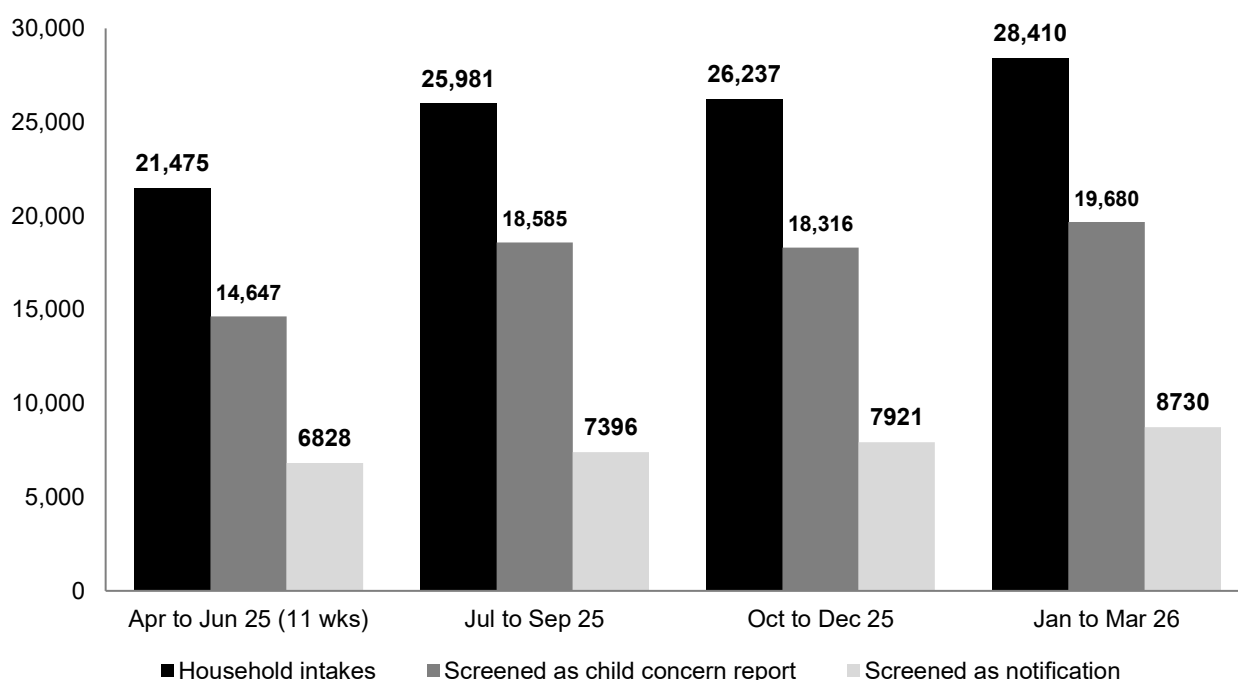


Source: Report on Government Services, Child Protection, Productivity Commission 2026; Child Safety data released 30 July 2026.

The first substantial data from the new system, received by the Commission on 10 August 2026, now provides greater visibility of what occurred during this period. In the 12 months to 31 March 2026, Child Safety recorded 102,103 household intakes, comprising 71,228 child concern reports and 30,875 household intakes screened as notifications. Around 30.2 per cent of intakes were screened as notifications, meaning they crossed the threshold at which there was reasonable suspicion that a child was in need of protection.

More than 102,000 concerns reached the intake system in the 12 months to March 2026, and both the volume and statutory intensity of those intakes were increasing across the available quarters. Comparing the first full quarter following implementation of the new system with the most recent quarter, household intakes increased from 25,981 in July–September 2025 to 28,410 in January–March 2026, an increase of 9.3 per cent. Notifications increased more rapidly, from 7396 to 8730, up 18.0 per cent, while the proportion of intakes screened as notifications increased from 28.5 to 30.7 per cent. This suggests that growth was occurring not only in the volume of concerns reaching Child Safety, but also in the proportion assessed as meeting the statutory notification threshold.

Figure 22: Household intakes and notifications per quarter – April 2025 to March 2026



Source: Child Safety Data Released 30 July 2026.

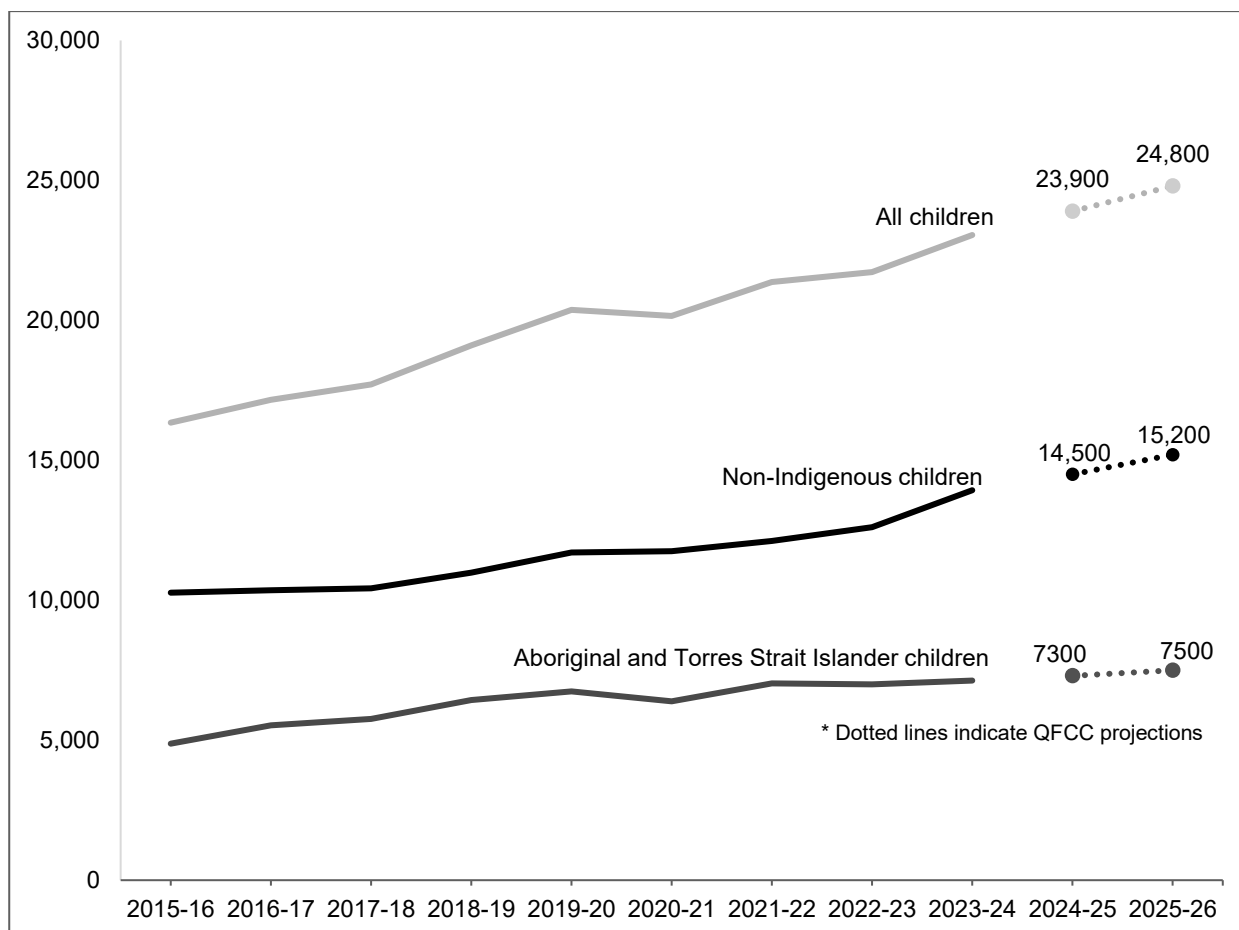
Child protection investigations

The longer-term data show that child protection investigation activity increased substantially over the decade to 2023–24, but that the rate of growth had begun to moderate before comparable public reporting ceased. Using published Queensland data from 2015–16 to 2023–24, the number of children subject to a finalised child protection investigation increased from 16,347 to 23,049, an increase of 41.0 per cent. This represents average annual growth of approximately 4.4 per cent across the period. The population-adjusted investigation rate also increased, from 14.5 children per 1000 in 2015–16 to 18.9 per 1,000 in 2023–24. The increase therefore reflects more than population growth: by 2023–24, a greater proportion of Queensland children were coming into contact with the statutory investigation system than a decade earlier.

The trajectory was not uniform across the decade. Growth moderated in the later years of the series, indicating that investigation activity was beginning to stabilise at a comparatively high level. This was particularly evident for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Between 2017–18 and 2023–24, their investigation rate increased from 54.5 to 62.2 per 1000 children, although the number of children investigated showed considerably less growth in the latter part of the period. For non-Indigenous children, by contrast, the investigation rate continued to rise, increasing from 9.9 to 12.6 per 1000 over the same period.

Comparable published data is not available for 2024–25 and 2025–26 following implementation of the Unify case management system. In the absence of this data, we used the established historical series to estimate the likely scale of investigation activity had recent trends continued. Applying the lower growth observed toward the end of the published series suggested approximately 23,700 to 24,100 children in 2024–25, increasing to approximately 24,300 to 25,200 children in 2025–26. These were not forecasts of Child Safety's performance, but an analytical range against which subsequently available information could be assessed.

Figure 23: Distinct children subject to a finalised investigation and assessment, 2015–16 to 2023–24, with projection for 2024–25 and 2025–26



Source: Report on Government Services, Child Protection, Productivity Commission 2026; Child Safety data released 30 July 2026.

Information subsequently provided to the Commission in August 2026 provides the first substantive view of investigation activity during the period for which comparable public reporting has been unavailable. It does not recreate the former published series and therefore cannot be directly compared with the projections above. In particular, the new data counts assessments, rather than unique children subject to finalised investigations. Nevertheless, it provides important evidence about the volume, composition and outcomes of contemporary investigation activity.

Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, 20,169 assessments were completed. On average, approximately 1,681 assessments were completed each month, or around 388 each week. This measure counts every assessment finalised during the 12-month period, irrespective of when the original intake was received. Of these, 13,519 assessments (67%) produced a recorded outcome for at least one child. The remaining 6650 assessments (33%) were completed without an outcome recorded for any child. The new data therefore reveals not only the scale of investigative activity, but also a substantial difference between the volume of assessments processed by the system and the volume that ultimately produces a child-level outcome.

Assessments relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children accounted for 34.3 per cent of all completed assessments, equivalent to approximately 6900 assessments across the year. That proportion remained relatively stable

across the reporting period. The persistence of this share is particularly significant when considered against the much smaller proportion of Queensland children who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander however it is consistent with the substantial over-representation evident throughout the historical investigation series and indicates that this feature of the system has persisted through the transition to Unify.

The new information also changes what can confidently be concluded from the historical projections. It does not establish that the number of children investigated in 2025–26 was 20,169, nor does it demonstrate that investigation activity fell below the Commission's projected range of 24,300 to 25,200 children. The measures are not equivalent: an assessment may involve more than one child, while the historical series counted children rather than assessments. A direct numerical comparison would therefore risk interpreting a change in measurement as a change in system activity. The data does establish that Queensland continued to process a substantial volume of child protection assessments during 2025–26, broadly consistent with a system operating at the elevated level of demand evident before comparable reporting ceased. Importantly, however, the changed reporting framework makes it substantially more difficult to determine whether the longer-term growth in the number and rate of children investigated has continued, stabilised or reversed. The August 2026 data improves visibility of activity but does not yet restore visibility of children. This distinction matters for system oversight. Measures of assessments describe workload and administrative activity; measures of unique children describe the reach of statutory intervention into the child population. Both are important, but they answer different questions. Until a comparable child-level series is restored, it will remain difficult to assess whether Queensland's child protection system is investigating a greater or smaller proportion of children than it did before the implementation of Unify, or whether the substantial over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is improving.

Timeliness of child protection investigations

The timeliness of child protection investigations provides an important measure of the capacity of the statutory system to respond to reported concerns about children. Queensland's historical data shows that timeliness had been under pressure for several years before changes to Child Safety's assessment model altered the established performance series in 2025.

In April 2025, Child Safety introduced the Enhanced Intake and Assessment Approach (EIAA) to establish a flexible model focused on earlier assessment and targeted support. These practice and pathway changes triggered time series breaks, rendering some subsequent performance measures not directly comparable to historical data. Over the decade preceding those changes, routinely published data showed a system managing increasing demand while experiencing persistent difficulty commencing and completing investigations within expected timeframes. Immediately before the reporting change, approximately 66.0 to 69.0 per cent of investigations and assessments were reported as commencing within the required timeframe. While performance fluctuated, the longer-term series provided a reasonably consistent basis for monitoring whether statutory response capacity was keeping pace with demand.

That series effectively ended in April 2025, when Child Safety introduced a new investigation and assessment model. The previous commencement priorities of 24 hours, five days and 10 days were replaced by 24 hours, 72 hours and seven days. These changes represent a material strengthening of the timeliness expected of the system, but performance before and after April 2025 cannot be directly compared.

The Inquiry provided a window into the data gap when it subsequently obtained and published departmental data extending to March 2026. For 24-hour priority responses, it reported compliance declining from 96 per cent in 2021–22 to 91 per cent between July 2024 and March 2025 and 44 per cent between April 2025 and March 2026. It also reported 2025–26 commencement compliance of 13 per cent for 72-hour assessments and six per cent for seven-day assessments, with median commencement times of 41 and 63 days respectively. Those figures provided important evidence of operational pressure. However, the subsequent release of more detailed departmental data allows the results to be interpreted more precisely. In particular, the April 2025 reforms mean that some apparent comparisons across the period combine different service standards and different measurement methodologies. The 72-hour priority did not exist in

the previous framework, while the seven-day priority replaced the previous five- and 10-day categories. The historical commencement measure was also calculated on a per-child basis against the previous priority categories. The pre- and post-April 2025 figures should therefore not be treated as a single continuous performance series. The evidence still indicates significant timeliness pressure, but the scale of change cannot reliably be inferred simply by comparing percentages on either side of April 2025.

New data provides a clearer view of timeliness performance

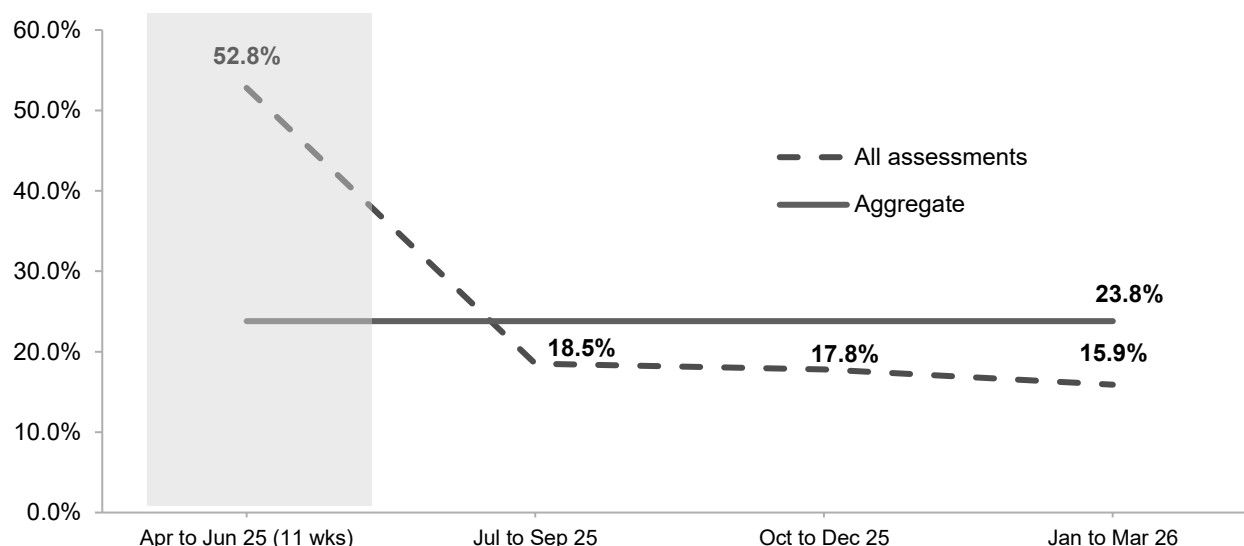
Newly available quarterly data now provides the first opportunity to examine performance under the new framework over a sustained period. The clearest measure is the new 72-hour priority assessment category. On this measure, performance has deteriorated consistently across each reported quarter. The proportion of 72-hour priority assessments commenced within the required timeframe fell from 24.6 per cent in April–June 2025 to 8.8 per cent in January–March 2026. By January–March 2026, fewer than one in 11 priority assessments requiring commencement within 72 hours were commencing within that timeframe.

The 24-hour category provides a useful counterpoint. Unlike the other categories, the 24-hour standard was retained through the April 2025 reforms. The newly released quarterly data shows performance remaining at approximately 89 per cent. This suggests that the system has maintained substantially stronger performance for children assessed as requiring the most urgent response, while experiencing much greater difficulty meeting the new intermediate priority timeframe. This may indicate a system successfully prioritising the most urgent cases under constrained capacity, but with insufficient capacity remaining to meet the required response for the next tier of risk.

On the latest available data, three findings are particularly significant.

- the system appears to be maintaining strong performance for the most urgent 24-hour responses, at around 89 per cent.
- performance against the newly introduced 72-hour priority has deteriorated in every reported quarter, from 24.6 per cent to 8.8 per cent.
- completion timeliness remains a critical challenge. While the reporting period aggregate of 23.8 per cent result reflects the processing of pre-EIAA assessments and should be interpreted cautiously, the latest quarterly result of 15.9 per cent indicates that the large majority of investigations and assessments are not being completed within the applicable timeframe.

Figure 24: Assessment completion within timeframe, by quarter, April 2025 to March 2026



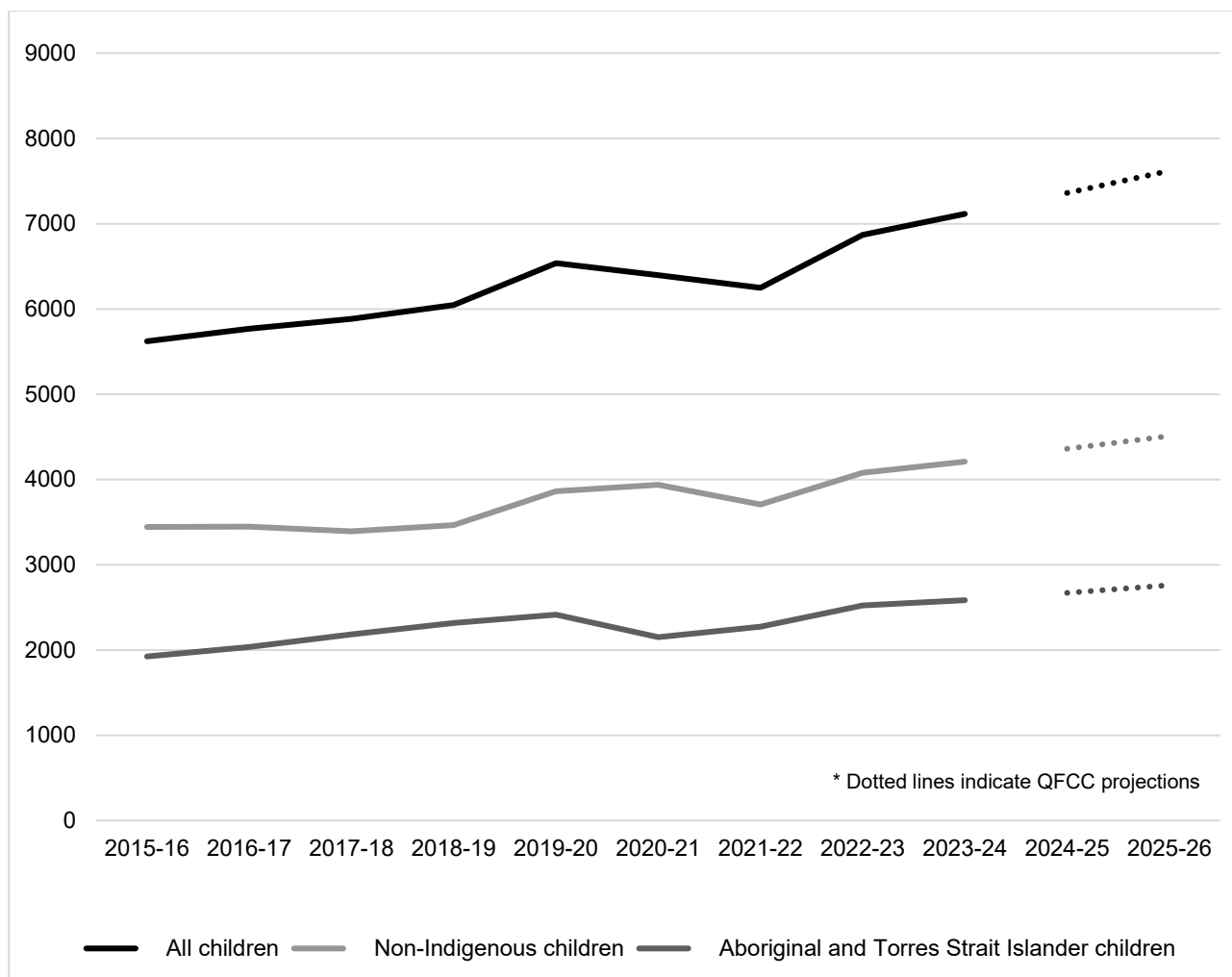
Source: Child Safety data released 30 July 2026.

Children assessed as in need of protection

Over the decade to 2023–24, the number of Queensland children with substantiated child protection concerns increased from 5621 in 2015–16 to 7115 in 2023–24, an increase of 26.6 per cent. Substantiations grew at an average annual rate of approximately 3.0 per cent, and by 2.1 per cent annually over the final five years. Growth strengthened somewhat immediately before the interruption to reporting, averaging 4.4 per cent over the final three years. The implementation of the Unify case management system interrupted this comparable series for 2024–25 and 2025–26. In the absence of actual data, the Commission applied the long-term, five-year and recent growth rates to understand the scale of substantiations that might reasonably have been expected had historical trends continued. This produced an indicative range of approximately 7260–7430 children in 2024–25 and 7410–7760 in 2025–26. These projections were not estimates of actual performance, but scenarios against which the likely trajectory of the system could be considered during the reporting gap.

The first substantial data from the new system, received by the Commission on 10 August 2026, provides greater visibility of outcomes to 31 March 2026, but it does not restore the historical substantiation series. Under the previous framework, a substantiation could result in either a finding that a child was in need of protection, or that significant harm had occurred but the child was not in need of protection because a parent was able and willing to protect them. Following introduction of the new assessment framework in 2025, the latter category ceased to exist. The new outcome of child not in need of protection therefore includes both children for whom no significant harm was identified and children who may have experienced significant harm but have a protective parent. As a result, Child Safety no longer separately reports the total number of children assessed as having experienced significant harm.

Figure 25: Children in substantiated cases, 2015–16 to 2025–26

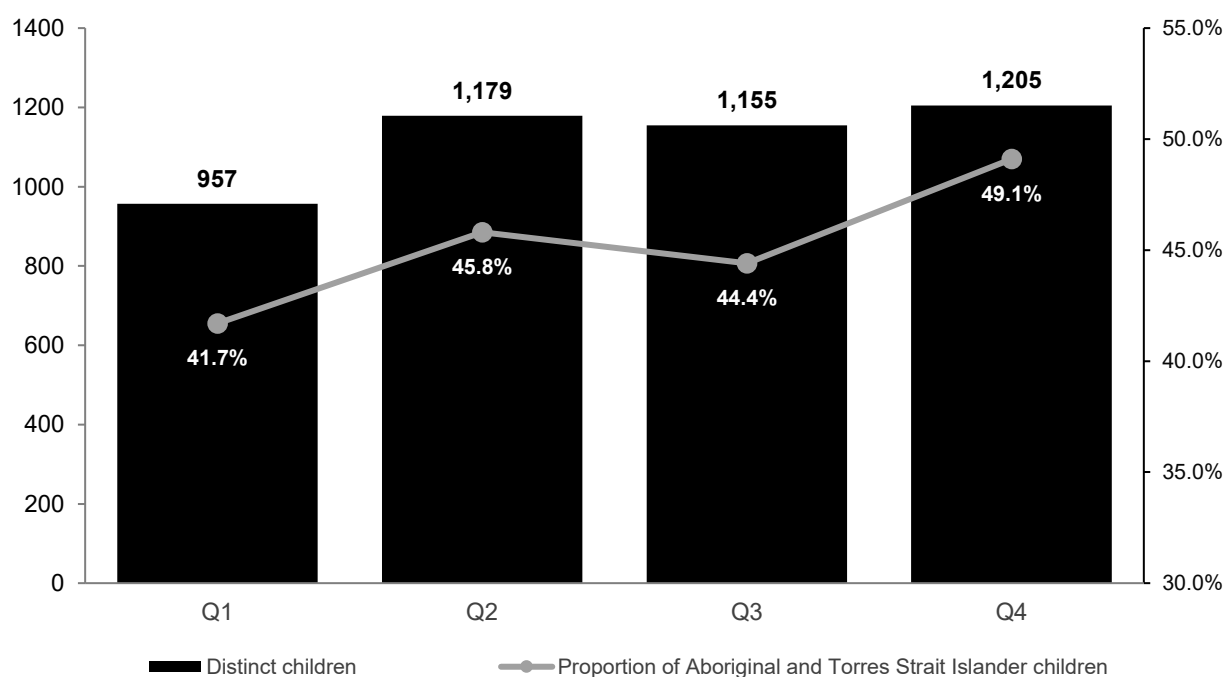


Source: Report on Government Services, Child Protection, Productivity Commission 2026; Child Safety data released 30 July 2026.

This definitional change is critical to interpreting the new data. In the 12 months to 31 March 2026, 4496 children were assessed as being in need of protection. This is substantially below the Commission's projected historical substantiation range of 7410–7760, but the difference should not be interpreted as a reduction in substantiated harm. The new measure is definitionally narrower and excludes a category of children previously included within substantiation reporting. Within the new measure itself, however, an emerging pattern can be identified. Quarterly numbers increased from 957 children in April–June 2025 to 1179 in July–September, 1155 in October–December and 1205 in January–March 2026. The March-quarter result was 25.9 per cent higher than the first quarter, although much of that increase occurred between the first and second quarters; across the final three quarters the number remained comparatively stable at between 1155 and 1205 children. More significant is the changing relationship between assessments and outcomes. The proportion of children subject to priority assessment who were found to be in need of protection declined from 21.3 per cent in April–June 2025 to 15.1 per cent in January–March 2026, a reduction of 6.2 percentage points, or approximately 29 per cent in relative terms. This occurred while front-end demand was increasing: over the available period, household intakes and notifications increased and the proportion of intakes crossing the notification threshold also rose. The emerging picture is

therefore of more concerns entering the statutory pathway, but a declining proportion of assessed children ultimately being found in need of protection.

Figure 26: Children in need of protection per quarter, 14 April 2025 to 31 March 2026



Source: Unpublished Child Safety data received 10 August 2026.

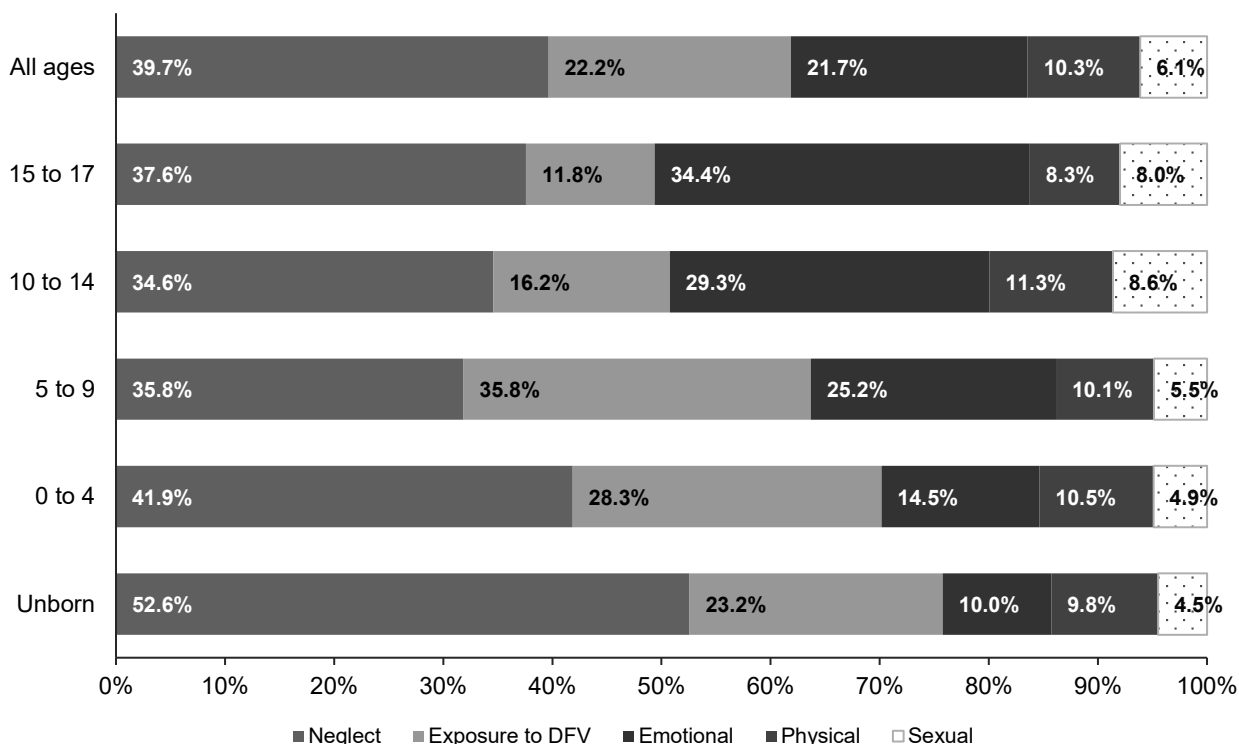
Increase in neglect and exposure to domestic and family violence

Between 14 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, a total of 4496 distinct children were assessed as being in need of protection (defined as having suffered, suffering, or at unacceptable risk of significant harm with no parent able and willing to protect them). First Nations children are heavily over-represented, accounting for 2044 children (45.46%) of this cohort, despite representing only 9 per cent of the state's child population.

An important development in Queensland's new intake and assessment approach is the explicit recognition of exposure to DFV as a form of abuse capable of causing harm to a child, alongside physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, neglect and sexual abuse.¹⁰⁹ This is an important conceptual and practice shift because it recognises children as people who can experience harm from domestic and family violence in their own right, rather than treating violence primarily as an adult relationship issue or only recognising its impact where a child is physically assaulted. Queensland's revised practice framework requires assessment of the impact of the violence on the child and recognises that patterns of behaviour, including coercive and controlling behaviour, can produce cumulative physical, psychological and emotional harm. Queensland is not alone in moving in this direction. Comparable approaches operate in other jurisdictions, with South Australia explicitly recognising domestic and family violence as a distinct type of risk and harm,¹¹⁰ New South Wales identifying it as a basis for a child being at risk of significant harm,¹¹¹ and Victoria screening all child protection reports for family violence through a dedicated category within its SAFER children assessment framework.¹¹² The Queensland reform aligns with a broader national shift towards recognising children as victim-survivors of DFV and assessing the cumulative impact of coercion, control and violence on their safety, development and wellbeing.¹¹³ Disaggregating children in need of protection by abuse type shows assessments identifying significant numbers of neglect and exposure to

domestic and family violence, with neglect accounting for 52.6 per cent of unborn child notifications, 41.8 per cent of the 0–4 age group and 37.6 per cent of the 15–17 age group. Exposure DFV accounted for 28.3 per cent of the 0 to 4 age group, 23.2 per cent of unborn child concerns and 23.4 per cent of the five to nine age group.

Figure 27: Most serious abuse type as a percentage of children in need of protection, by age group, 14 April 2025 to 31 March 2026



Source: Unpublished Child Safety data received 10 August 2026.

Children on care and protection orders

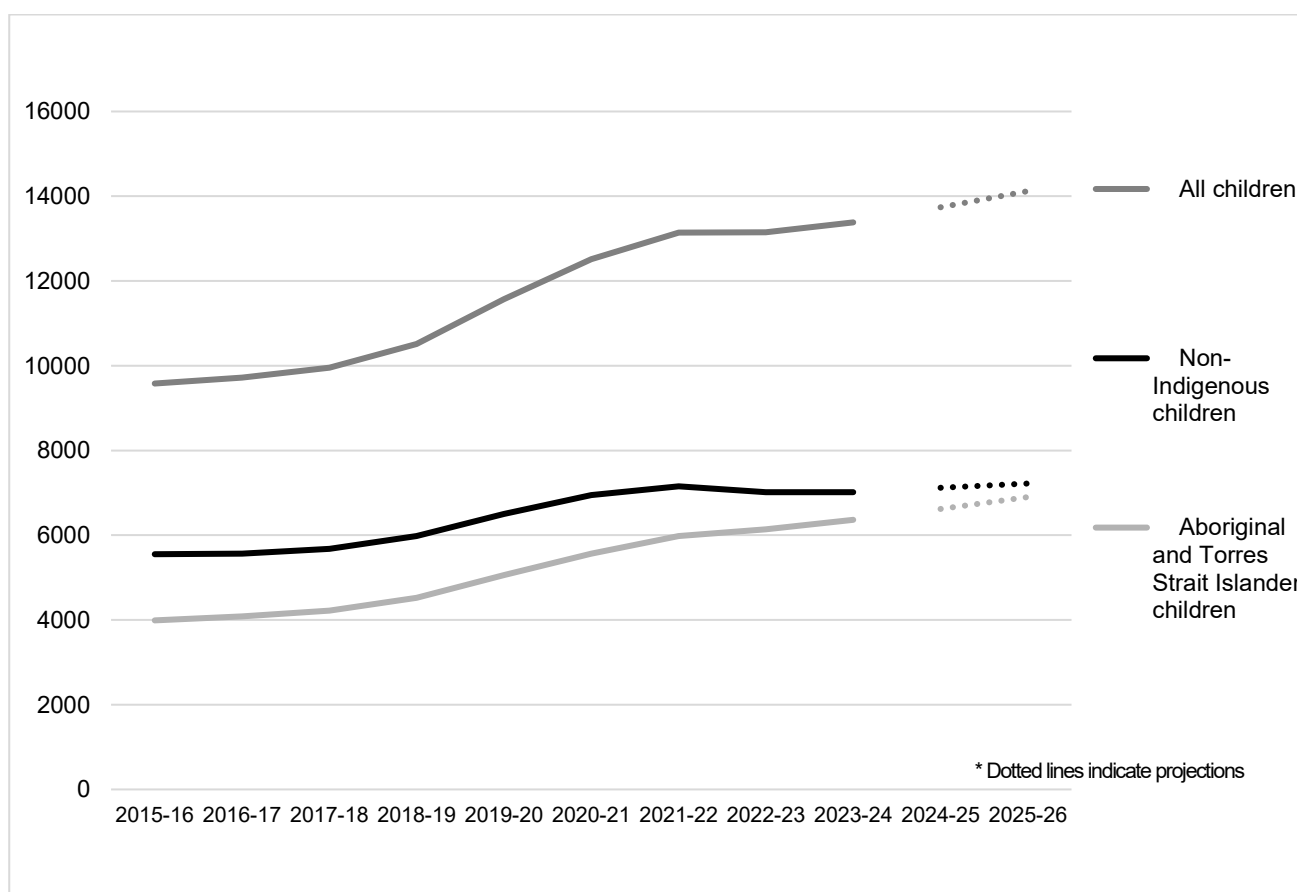
The number of Queensland children subject to care and protection orders increased substantially over the decade to 2023–24. Between 30 June 2016 and 30 June 2024, the number of children on care and protection orders increased from 9,580 to 13,383, an increase of 39.7 per cent and average annual growth of approximately 4.3 per cent. The population-adjusted rate increased from 8.4 to 10.9 children per 1,000 over the same period, demonstrating that growth in the statutory care population exceeded growth in Queensland's child population.

Growth was not evenly distributed. Over the eight years to 2023–24, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on care and protection orders increased by approximately 59 per cent, compared with 26 per cent for non-Indigenous children. However, the pace of overall growth moderated considerably toward the end of the published series with the average annual growth reducing from 4.3 per cent across the full eight-year period to 3.7 per cent over the most recent five years and approximately 0.6 per cent over the final three years. That stabilisation was concentrated among non-Indigenous children. Over the final three years of the published series, the number of non-Indigenous children on orders was effectively unchanged, while the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continued to increase. Comparable publicly reported Queensland data were unavailable following implementation of the Unify case management system. In the absence of those data, the Commission used the established historical series to estimate the likely size of the statutory care population if recent trends continued. The Commission estimated that the number of

children on care and protection orders would increase from 13,383 as at 30 June 2024 to approximately 13,600–13,900 at 30 June 2025, and 13,900–14,400 at 30 June 2026.

Data subsequently provided to the Commission in August 2026 allow these projections to be tested against actual system performance. As at 30 June 2025, 13,643 children were subject to child protection orders in Queensland. This was an increase of 260 children, or 1.9 per cent, from 13,383 at June 2024. The actual result fell within the Commission's projected range of 13,600–13,900, confirming the assessment that the substantial growth experienced earlier in the decade had moderated during 2024–25, however the trajectory changed during 2025–26. By 31 March 2026, 14,147 children were subject to child protection orders. This represents an increase of 504 children, or 3.7 per cent, in nine months from June 2025. It is also 764 children, or 5.7 per cent, higher than as at June 2024. Importantly, by March 2026 the number of children on orders had already reached the Commission's projected range of 13,900–14,400 for 30 June 2026, with three months of the financial year remaining. While the March figure cannot determine the eventual June 2026 result, it provides evidence that the period of near-stability evident in the final years of the historical series did not continue through 2025–26. Instead, the statutory care population began growing again at a materially faster rate.

Figure 28: Queensland children on care and protection orders, 2015-16 to 2025-26



Source: Productivity Commission. (2026). *Report on Government Services: Child protection*.

The composition of this growth is equally significant. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children accounted for 48 per cent of children on orders as at June 2025 and 49 per cent by March 2026. Applied to the reported totals, this equates to approximately 6550 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at June 2025 and 6930 at March 2026. The increasing share is consistent with the longer-term trend identified in the historical data: growth in Queensland's statutory care population continues to be disproportionately concentrated among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Viewed across the full period, the new data therefore refine rather than overturn the historical analysis. The decade to 2023–24 was characterised by substantial growth followed by a marked period of moderation. The June 2025 result was consistent with that trajectory and closely aligned with the Commission's projection. The subsequent increase to March 2026, however, provides an early indication of renewed growth. This is particularly important because children on care and protection orders represent an accumulated statutory population, rather than a measure of annual activity. An increase of more than 500 children over nine months means that, across that period, additions to the population of children subject to orders exceeded exits by that amount. Whether this reflects increased entries, longer durations on orders, fewer exits or a combination of these factors cannot be determined.

Data provided by the Office of the Director for Child Protection Litigation (DCPL) shows 4195 child protection matters were received from Child Safety in 2025-26, compared to 4126 in 2024-26 – a slight increase of 1.7 per cent. The Office of the DCPL's Annual Report 2024-25 reports an increase of 15.5 per cent of child protection matters received from the previous financial year. The proportion of matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has increased from 44.4 per cent in 2024-25 to 48.7 per cent in 2025-26.

By March 2026, Queensland will be approaching a system of care where the majority of children in care are Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, or Torres Strait Islander.

Placement capacity

Growth in the number of children requiring statutory care has not been matched by equivalent growth in Queensland's family-based placement capacity. The latest Productivity Commission report on child protection services details the number of foster and relative/kinship carer households with a child placement.¹¹⁴ Over the period for which comparable data are available, the system accommodated increasing demand principally through growth in kinship care households, while the number of foster care households declined. Between 2020 and 2024, the number of children on care and protection orders increased from 11,570 to 13,383, an increase of 15.7 per cent. Over the same period, the combined number of foster and kinship care households with children placed increased from 3,948 to 4,279, an increase of only 8.4 per cent. The statutory care population grew at almost twice the rate of the available family-based carer household population.

The aggregate increase in placement households also masks a significant change in the composition of Queensland's family-based care system. Foster care households with children placement declined from 1,992 in 2020 to 1,880 in 2024, a reduction of 112 households or 5.6 per cent. While 2024 recorded a modest increase of 26 foster households from the previous year, this was insufficient to reverse the longer-term decline. The Queensland experience broadly reflected a national contraction in foster care capacity, with foster households nationally declining by 13.3 per cent over the same period. Kinship care moved in the opposite direction. The number of kinship care households increased from 1,956 in 2020 to 2,399 in 2024, an additional 443 households or 22.6 per cent. As a result, all of the net increase in Queensland's family-based placement capacity over this period was attributable to kinship care. Without this growth, Queensland would have experienced a net reduction in family-based carer households at the same time as the number of children subject to statutory orders was increasing.

This has fundamentally changed the composition of Queensland's family-based care system. In 2020, foster households accounted for 50.5 per cent and kinship households for 49.5 per cent. By 2024, those proportions had shifted to 43.9 per cent foster households and 56.1 per cent kinship households. Kinship care had become the dominant form of family-

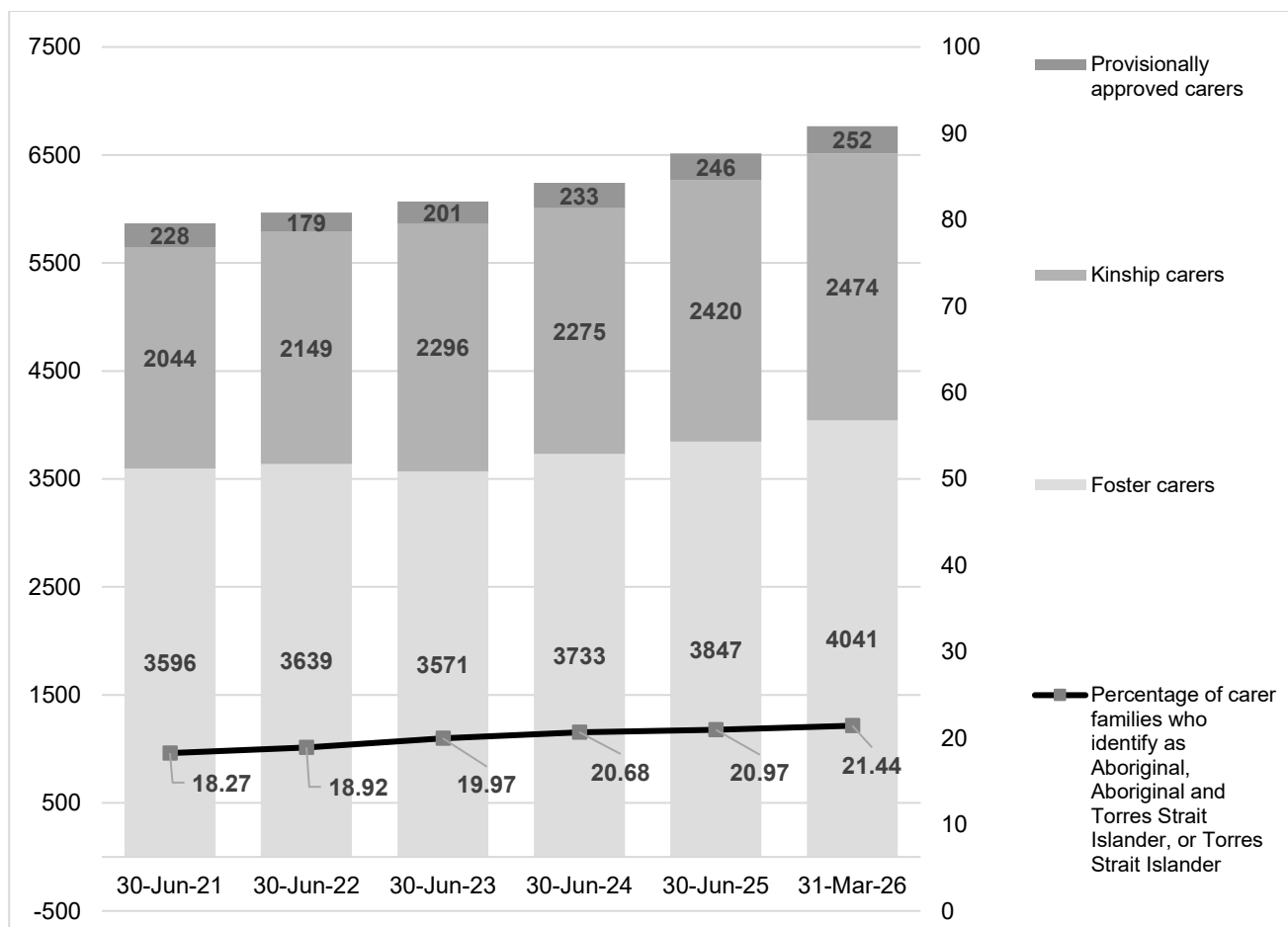
based carer household in Queensland. This transition is consistent with the policy objective of maintaining children's relationships with family, community and culture wherever it is safe to do so. It is particularly important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

Before the disruption to data associated with Child Safety's transition to Unify, three pressures were evident. First, the population requiring statutory intervention was growing more quickly than the family-based carer population. Second, growth in capacity was becoming increasingly dependent on kinship care. The addition of 443 kinship households more than offset the loss of 112 foster households, producing the net increase of 331 family-based carer households. This meant that the apparent growth in aggregate capacity concealed a continuing contraction in the pool of foster households available to the system. Third, demand was changing as well as increasing. Between 2020 and 2024, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on care and protection orders increased by approximately 25.8 per cent, compared with 7.9 per cent for non-Indigenous children. This increased the need for additional placements that are family-based and capable of maintaining children's family, cultural and community connections. Taken together, these trends indicated that maintaining the existing ratio of carers to children would require continuing growth in family-based care capacity, while the declining foster carer population made the system increasingly dependent on the ability to identify, approve and sustain kinship carers.

More recent child safety data offers additional insight into placement capacity; however, disruptions associated with the implementation of Unify mean it cannot be directly aligned with the historical Productivity Commission series. Child Safety data also differs from the Productivity Commission dataset, which reports both foster and kinship carers as households with a child placed. The new Child Safety data includes all foster carers regardless of current child placement status. In contrast, kinship carers and provisionally approved carers are counted only when they have a child placement. Child Safety reports 2503 kinship carer households in 2025, increasing from 2399 in 2024. This represents an additional 104 households, or 4.3 per cent, and indicates that the expansion of kinship care evident throughout the historical series continued beyond 2024.

As at 31 March 2026, 2474 kinship carer households were reported. This was 29 fewer than the 2025 figure, a reduction of approximately 1.2 per cent. While the March 2026 figure is a point-in-time it nevertheless provides no evidence, at that point in the year, of the strong growth in kinship households that had characterised the preceding period.

Figure 29: Number of carer families, by type, 30 June 2021 to 31 March 2026



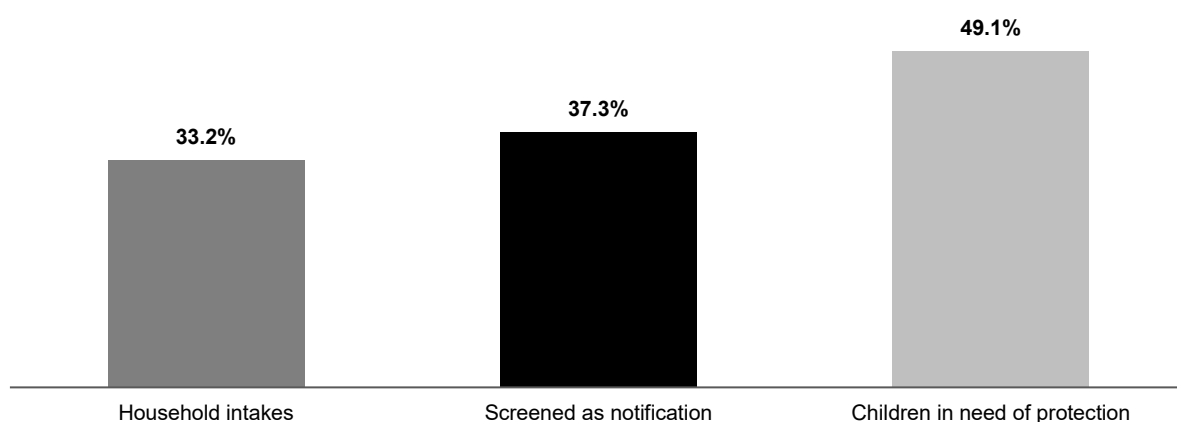
Source: Child Safety data released 30 July 2026.

Additional data provided by Child Safety suggests that between 30 June 2025 and 31 March 2026, Queensland's active carer family pool expanded by 3.9 per cent, growing from 6513 to 6767 families.¹¹⁵ Overall growth was sustained by continuous recruitment streams, which offset total exit volumes across the period. During the year ending 31 March 2026, 1824 carer families exited the system. Kinship carers represented the largest proportion of exits at 37.2 per cent (679 families), followed by foster carers at 32.0 per cent (583 families) and provisionally approved carers at 30.8 per cent (562 families). Regionally, exit activity was concentrated in Brisbane and Moreton Bay (405 exits) and South West (397 exits). While Brisbane and Moreton Bay achieved positive net growth (+65 carer families, reflecting 420 commencements against 405 exits), the South West region recorded a break-even turnover rate, with 395 commencements nearly offset by 397 exits. Across the state, provisionally approved carers accounted for 73.5 per cent (1396) of all 1900 new commencements for the year ending 31 March 2026.

Increasing concentration among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

One of the most significant structural trends in Queensland's child protection system is the increasing concentration of statutory intervention among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. While the overall number of children subject to some forms of statutory intervention has begun to stabilise, this aggregate picture masks markedly different trajectories for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children. Across each major stage of the statutory system, growth in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has exceeded that for non-Indigenous children.

Figure 30: Over-representation rises at each decision point, January to March 2026



Source: Unpublished Child Safety data, received 10 August 2026.

Between 2015–16 and 2023–24, notifications involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children increased by 88.9 per cent, compared with 66.7 per cent for non-Indigenous children. Finalised investigations increased by 46.2 per cent, compared with 35.6 per cent; substantiations by 34.3 per cent, compared with 22.2 per cent; and the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on care and protection orders increased by 59.5 per cent, more than twice the 26.4 per cent increase among non-Indigenous children. Rate data demonstrate that this is not simply a consequence of population growth. For non-Indigenous children, the rate of children on care and protection orders increased from 5.4 per 1,000 in 2017–18 to 6.6 per 1,000 in 2021–22, before declining to 6.3 per 1,000 in 2023–24. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the rate increased in every year for which data were available, from 39.7 to 55.1 per 1,000 over the same six-year period—an increase of almost 39 per cent. By 2023–24, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child was approximately 8.7 times more likely to be on a care and protection order than a non-Indigenous child.

More recent data indicate that this divergence has continued. As at 31 March 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children comprised 49.7 per cent of all children in care, up from 47.8 per cent in March 2025. In absolute terms, 6,745 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were living away from their parents. The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care had already increased from 44.8 per 1,000 in June 2021 to 54.2 per 1,000 in June 2025, meaning more than one in 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland were living in OOHC. These trends are particularly significant in the context of Closing the Gap Target 12, which seeks to reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC by 45 per cent by 2031.

The changing composition of individual placement types provides a further indication of this concentration. As at March 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children represented 52.8 per cent of children in foster care, up 2.5 percentage points from 50.3 per cent in March 2025. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children comprise a majority of Queensland

children in foster care, representing 48.3 per cent of children in kinship care, up 1.8 percentage points from 46.5 per cent, and 48.3 per cent of children in residential care, up 2 percentage points from 46.3 per cent.

Over-representation is also geographically concentrated. In Far North Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children account for 75.6 per cent of children subject to ongoing intervention. The disparity is evident from the earliest stages of life: analysis of newborn cases in Far North Queensland found that 86 per cent of infants subject to emergent or other child protection orders between 2021 and 2025 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. The concentration of statutory intervention among newborn children points to the importance of support during pregnancy and the period immediately following birth, before risks escalate to the point of statutory intervention. Taken together, the data show that over-representation is not simply a persistent feature of Queensland's child protection system; on several important measures, the disparity has widened. Aggregate stability in the overall statutory care population therefore cannot, by itself, be interpreted as evidence of equivalent improvement across population groups. The central performance question is increasingly whether Queensland can reduce the rate at which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enter and remain in statutory care, increase safe restoration and permanency, strengthen compliance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, and expand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led prevention and decision-making. Progress against these measures will be important to assessing whether broader child protection reform is reducing, rather than reproducing, the existing disparity.

Delegated authority and the value of community-based interventions

As at 10 December 2025, the use of delegated authority in Queensland remained limited. Data provided to the Inquiry showed that delegated authority had been conferred for 439 children across the state. Most delegations were concentrated in the Sunshine Coast and Central Region (284 children), while substantially fewer occurred in Brisbane and Moreton Bay (37), South East (34), South West (28), Far North Queensland (27) and North Queensland (29). The Inquiry observed that, despite strong advocacy for broader implementation, delegated authority had to date been used on a relatively limited scale.¹¹⁶ By mid-2026, Delegated Authority has expanded from early pilot activity into a statewide framework, encompassing 19 service responses across 25 child safety service centres delivered by 14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (ACCOS).¹¹⁷ This represents a 310 per cent increase in reach since 2022. Evidence of impact is strongest in relation to reunification and diversion. Internal data indicates that 90 per cent of children reunified with family were supported within a Delegated Authority catchment. Programs such as *Nyanya Munjindei* demonstrate accelerated pathways from supervised contact to full-time family reunification within six months.¹¹⁸ Diversion outcomes are also notable, with a 2025 case study of the HALT collective in Brisbane finding that only four per cent of cases progressed to ongoing statutory intervention when intake and assessment were led by ACCOs.¹¹⁹ Despite this expansion, investment has not kept pace with need and the system continues to be weighted toward crisis response rather than the foundational community control required to achieve Closing the Gap commitments.¹²⁰

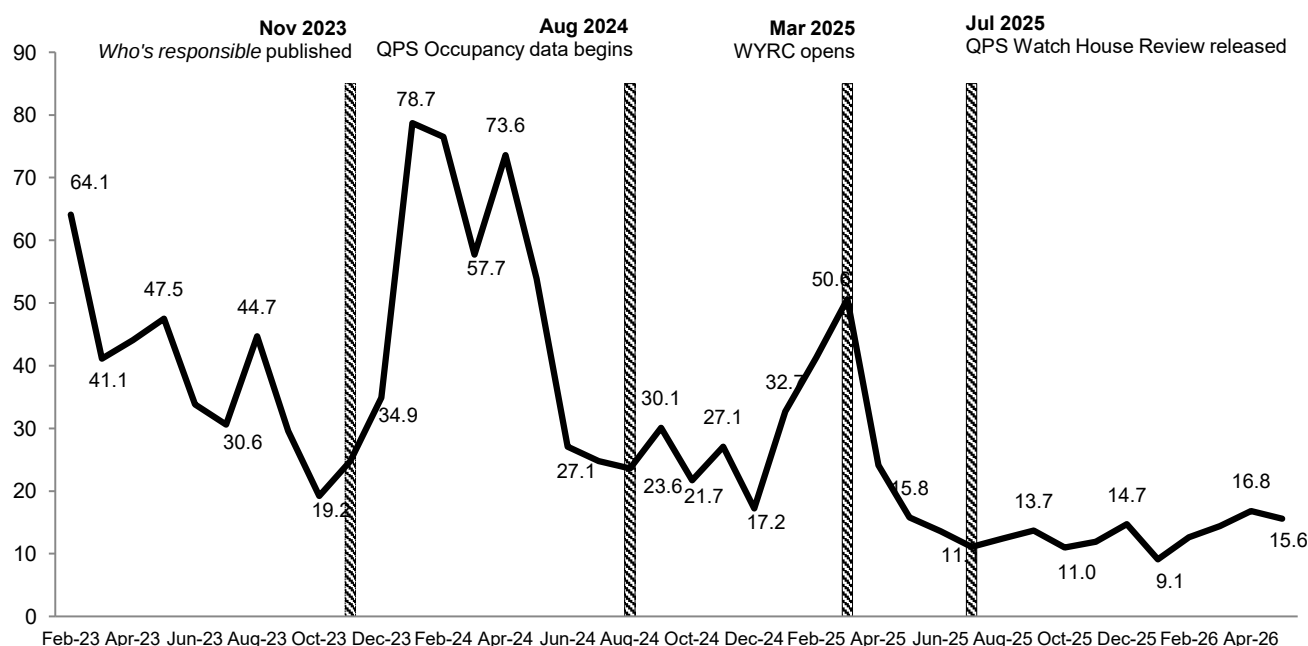
Children in adult watch houses

The continued use of police watch houses to detain children remains one of the clearest indicators of systemic failure across Queensland's youth justice and child protection systems. These facilities are widely recognised as unsuitable for children; however, their use persists due to capacity constraints within the youth detention system. Legislative amendments introduced in August 2023 have entrenched this practice, explicitly permitting the detention of children in watch houses until a youth detention placement becomes available.¹²¹ This framework is underpinned by a time-limited human rights override, in effect until 31 December 2026.

In November 2023, the Commission published *Who's responsible: Understanding why young people are being held longer in Queensland watch houses*.¹²² The review considered the issues contributing to extended stays in Queensland watch houses, why they were occurring and who was empowered to monitor and address the issue. The Commission recommended the Queensland Government establish public reporting on the number and circumstances of young people

held in watch houses, which commenced soon after the report was released.¹²³ While these recent improvements have enhanced transparency, reporting gaps remain. Facilities such as the Wacol Youth Remand Centre (WYRC) are not consistently captured within watch house reporting despite operating as short-term custodial environments.¹²⁴ This results in an underestimation of the number of children held in settings not designed for youth detention.

Figure 31: Average daily number of children in watch houses, February 2023 to April 2026



Source: Unpublished Office of the Public Guardian data.

A clear reduction in watch house use followed the opening of the WYRC in March 2025, with average daily numbers falling from a peak of 50.6 children to 13.6 by June 2025. However, this decline has not been sustained. Daily averages began to rise again in early 2026, increasing from 9.1 in January to 16.8 in April, indicating that reliance on watch houses remains embedded within the system. While currently gazetted as a youth detention centre, the WYRC is designed as a police watch house and continues to operate in a form not purpose-built for youth detention. The continued reliance on watch houses - supported by legislative override, driven by capacity constraints, and sustained by system gaps - demonstrates a system under pressure. While infrastructure responses have provided temporary relief, they have not addressed the underlying drivers of demand. As a result, children continue to be held in environments that do not meet their needs.

Foster carer funding and extra-curricular support

In Queensland, approved foster and kinship carers receive a fortnightly caring allowance ranging from \$652.40 to \$763.98 per child (from 1 January 2026), depending on the child's age, together with additional payments where children have high or complex support needs.¹²⁵ Importantly, Child Safety states that the fortnightly caring allowance is not intended to meet all costs associated with caring for a child, but rather to assist with day-to-day expenses such as food, clothing, education, transport and recreation. In 2024–25 the Queensland Government provided eligible carers with a new additional payment of \$1,500 as an annual extracurricular activities payment for each child.¹²⁶ While Queensland has expanded targeted supports in recent years, the evidence suggests that carers continue to make substantial personal financial contributions, particularly where children have experienced trauma, live with disability or exhibit complex behavioural and health needs.

This has implications not only for the financial wellbeing and retention of existing carers, but also for the recruitment of new foster and kinship carers at a time when demand for family-based care continues to increase.

Concern about the sustainability of foster care has increasingly shifted from a focus on recruiting more carers to understanding why fewer Australian households are able or willing to foster, and what is required to retain those who do. In 2024, the Commission began examining the financial pressures facing carers.¹²⁷ Its analysis found that 53 per cent of foster and kinship carers surveyed were dissatisfied with carer allowances, up from 16 per cent in 2014, while 66 per cent considered annual CPI increases insufficient to meet the actual costs of caring for a child. This occurred within a system in which average expenditure on residential care exceeded \$400,000 per child each year, compared with just over \$30,000 for family-based care. The issue was reinforced through the Commission's independent oversight of Queensland's residential care review. Young people with experience of care consistently emphasised the importance of maintaining stable relationships and argued that greater support for carers could prevent otherwise viable family placements from breaking down. This contributed to a broader proposition emerging from *A System that Cares*: strengthening family-based care requires investment not only in recruiting carers, but in creating the financial, practical and professional conditions that allow them to continue caring.¹²⁸ The Commission subsequently partnered with PeakCare and The Demographics Group to test the future sustainability of the foster care model. The resulting 2024 report, *Preserving a Vital System: The Future of Foster Care*, identified a structural demographic challenge.¹²⁹ Queensland's population is growing, but the pool of households realistically positioned to foster is tightening as a result of rising housing and living costs, fewer spare bedrooms, high workforce participation, later family formation and changing generational circumstances. The analysis concluded that traditional recruitment campaigns alone were unlikely to generate the number and range of carers required over the coming decade. It called for foster-carer allowances to reflect the actual cost of care, superannuation contributions on allowance payments, a national benchmark for carer support costs, foster-care leave entitlements, practical housing supports and more flexible and professionalised models of home-based care.

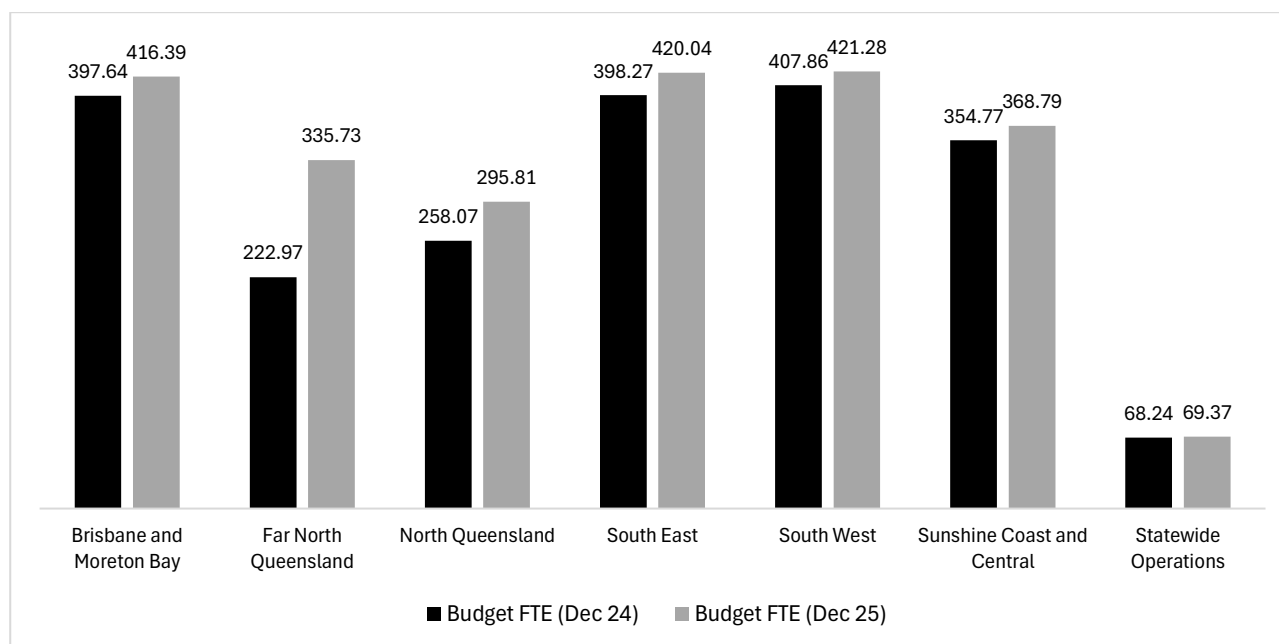
In 2025, the Principal Commissioner made a submission to the Australian Institute of Family Studies review of foster, kinship and permanent carer payments, arguing for financial arrangements that better recognise the real costs associated with providing stable family-based care.¹³⁰ The national review similarly heard that existing payment structures frequently fail to cover the full cost of caring and identified opportunities to improve the adequacy, consistency and accessibility of financial support.¹³¹ A key finding of the reviews was a widespread consensus that current carer payments are insufficient and do not reflect the actual cost of raising a child in OOHC. Specifically, the study estimated that raising a child in OOHC is 12 per cent to 18 per cent more expensive for a couple household compared to raising a child who is not in OOHC. This financial gap is even more pronounced for those caring for children with complex or additional needs, as these situations often require more time and result in higher expenses.

From 1 July 2025, the Queensland Government provided \$1,500 per child per year for extracurricular activities, as part of a \$70.1 million investment over three years.¹³² For children in family-based care, this is paid as two automatic payments of \$750 to carers or guardians; equivalent funding is available for children in non-family-based care. By September 2025, the Government reported that more than 10,000 children living in family-based care had benefited from the first round of payments, with almost \$8 million distributed to foster and kinship carers.¹³³ The funding is intended to reduce the financial cost of providing care while ensuring children in care can participate in the same developmental and community activities as their peers, including sport, tutoring, music and arts, clubs, recreation, On Country programs and camps. The stated objective extends beyond financial assistance: participation is intended to strengthen children's skills, confidence, wellbeing, cultural and community connection, and social and emotional development. A second \$750 payment was scheduled for January 2026, making the annual entitlement \$1,500 for each eligible child.

Child protection workforce - caseloads and capacity

The Queensland child protection workforce during the 2025–26 period is defined by a divergence between budgeted capacity and actual operational capability.¹³⁴ The child protection caseworker workforce has seen an expansion in its budgeted FTE allocation, rising from 2108 FTE in December 2024 to 2225 FTE in December 2025. The budgeted frontline child protection workforce comprises 1773.16 FTE across three key operational roles. This includes 1345.91 child safety officers responsible for core statutory child protection functions, supported by 134.01 child safety support officers and 293.24 senior team leaders providing operational supervision and leadership. Child safety officers account for approximately 76 per cent of this frontline workforce, with around one senior team leader for every 4.6 child safety officers. However, a persistent gap exists between these authorised positions and active paid personnel. While active paid FTE rose to 2135.68 by late 2025, the number of vacant caseworker FTE positions increased by 57.9 per cent, jumping from 56.70 FTE in 2024 to 89.51 FTE in 2025. These vacancies are highly concentrated, with remote and regional areas bearing the greatest burden. In 2024–25, the ten Child Safety Service Centres (CSSCs) with the highest average vacancy rates were all in regional and remote areas, led by the Fitzroy CSSC at 13.05 per cent. Localised staffing shortages are even more severe at specific points in the year; for example, as of April 2024, multiple South West CSSCs reported vacancy rates between 25 and 40 per cent, with the Roma CSSC peaking at an 52.25 per cent. This high vacancy rate directly compounds the pressure on active staff, leading to severe caseload bottlenecks. In the Commission's 2025 statutory systems workforce survey, 77 per cent of child safety employees reported direct risks to their safety or wellbeing at work, citing threats, physical assaults, and secondary trauma.¹³⁵ These findings are mirrored in the department's own 2024 Working for Queensland survey, which revealed that: one in six (15%) of employees intend to leave their positions within the next 12 months.¹³⁶ To address these capacity gaps, the Queensland Government's *Safer Children, Safer Communities* budget platform has committed to a 20 per cent frontline child safety staffing uplift by 2028.¹³⁷

Figure 32: Child Safety budget FTE, by region, December 2024 and December 2025



Source: Unpublished Child Safety data, received 5 February 2026.

Increasing programmatic links between detention and behaviour change

Queensland has substantially increased investment in programs intended to improve young people's transition from detention and strengthen educational engagement. The reforms respond to issues identified through several years of Commission oversight: high rates of reoffending following detention, inadequate transition support and significant educational disengagement among young people involved in youth justice.

In 2024, the Commission's *Exiting youth detention: Preventing crime by improving post-detention reintegration* examined whether transition and rehabilitation arrangements were addressing the factors contributing to offending.¹³⁸ At the time, 91.26 per cent of children released from detention in 2020–21 returned to sentenced supervision within 12 months, with other Queensland data indicating 12-month reoffending rates of between 84 and 96 per cent. The review found transition planning and rehabilitation programs were not operating as effectively as they could and recommended stronger post-detention support addressing the underlying causes of offending. This was consistent with Queensland Audit Office findings that 53 per cent of young people leaving detention reoffended within two weeks—most commonly on the first day—and 28 per cent of serious repeat offenders examined had no transition plan when released.¹³⁹

The Government's \$225 million *Staying on Track* program represents a significant shift towards the sustained reintegration model recommended by the Commission.¹⁴⁰ Young people leaving detention can receive up to 12 months of rehabilitation and support, including at least six months of intensive assistance across housing, education and employment, health and wellbeing and family connection. With Government material reporting post-detention reoffending at approximately 94 per cent, the program begins from a clear and exceptionally high baseline against which its impact can be assessed.¹⁴¹

Education represents a second important point of intervention. The Commission's *Changing the Sentence* review found approximately 53 per cent of children in the statutory youth justice system were disengaged from education, training or employment and identified educational engagement, prevention and early intervention, and targeted responses for serious repeat offenders as priorities.¹⁴² It highlighted initiatives including the Education Justice Initiative, flexi-spaces, alternative schooling and regional youth engagement hubs. Subsequent work, including *Include me, don't exclude me* and *Beyond Behaviour*, has continued to identify disproportionate school exclusion among First Nations children, children with disability and children in out-of-home care—cohorts also disproportionately represented in statutory systems.¹⁴³ The Queensland Government has now committed \$90 million to specialised education responses, comprising \$50 million for *Crime Prevention Schools* and \$40 million for *Youth Justice Schools*.¹⁴⁴ These models are intended to provide smaller, more intensive learning environments, behavioural support and stronger integration with youth justice and other services. Together with *Staying on Track*, *Transition to Success* and other re-engagement initiatives, this represents substantial investment at both the education and post-detention stages of the youth justice pathway.

5. Experiences of children in statutory systems

Residential care numbers: a well-known and worsening system failure

Over the last three years, the Commission has spoken directly with hundreds of children and young people about their experiences of Queensland's residential care system. The titles of the reports arising from that work - always drawn directly from the words of young people themselves - tell their own story: *I was raised by a checklist*, *Treat us like humans*, *I became my own carer* and *Treated as broken* collectively describe a system in which children too often experience care as institutional and procedural rather than relational, stable and nurturing.

Queensland's over-reliance on residential care is not a new or emerging problem. For several years, government has known that too many children are being placed in residential care, that many do not require this form of care, and that continued growth is neither appropriate for children nor financially sustainable. In July 2023, the then Minister for Child Safety initiated a comprehensive review of Queensland's residential care system specifically in response to concerns about the growing number of children and young people living in residential care and whether those arrangements were meeting their needs. At that time, the then Queensland Government had already set an objective of reducing the proportion of children in residential care to seven per cent by 2027. The review was therefore not undertaken to establish whether Queensland had a problem with residential care; that problem was already recognised. Its purpose was to determine what needed to change.

Across 2023, the Commission was asked to provide strategic and independent oversight and advice to the review. Through visits to residential care services, consultation with Child Safety and sector workers, engagement with young people and analysis of the system, the Commission identified a consistent set of structural problems. Residential care had lost its intended purpose as a specialised response for a relatively small cohort of young people with complex needs. Instead, shortages in foster, kinship and alternative care models were causing children to be escalated into residential care because there was nowhere else for them to live. The Commission found broad recognition that many children already living in residential care did not require that model of care, and that it was unfit to meet their needs. The Queensland Government's review resulted in the Roadmap for Residential Care in Queensland, released in February 2024 with 31 actions.

In April 2024, the Commission published its formal advice to the then Minister for Child Safety, *A System that Cares*. That advice: it set out practical mechanisms for reducing Queensland's dependence by calling for greater investment in kinship and foster care, new home-based and therapeutic models between traditional foster care and residential care, better support to retain carers, differentiated models of residential care, stronger service standards, outcome-focused contracting and substantially greater government stewardship of the market. Importantly, the Commission also warned against responding to increasing demand simply by purchasing more of the existing model. *A System that Cares* recommended that new residential care contracts should not be entered. The Commission also identified the stark economic imbalance in the system: residential care was approximately 13.77 times more expensive per child than family-based care. The implication was clear — considerable resources were already available within the system, but they needed to be redirected toward care arrangements capable of preventing children entering residential care.

By December 2024, the Commission's assessment had hardened. *Too Little, Too Late* examined implementation of the Roadmap and concluded that the required transformation had not occurred. After six months of review and ten months of implementation, the Commission could not identify what material benefit children living in residential care had received. Major building blocks — including new models of care, revised service standards and a performance framework — had not commenced. The Commission concluded that Child Safety had continued to make incremental adjustments to an ineffective system rather than undertaking the structural reform required. *Too Little, Too Late* consequently made a series of direct recommendations. It called for a new integrated strategy for the entire OOH system; greater public transparency;

an immediate end to generic residential care contracts; new residential houses to be established only as strategic pilots of alternative models; an outcomes framework; and rapid implementation and expansion of professional foster care as an alternative to residential care.

Buyer Beware, published by the Commission in August 2025, found that since March 2024 a further 30 residential care contracts had been executed and 173 placements procured, notwithstanding the earlier recommendation to cease expanding the generic model. The Commission found that the system had continued to grow reactively, with inadequate capacity planning, weak market stewardship and insufficient investment in alternatives. Residential care expenditure had increased from approximately \$200 million in 2014–15 to \$1.12 billion in 2024, without corresponding improvements in capacity, quality or outcomes. *Buyer Beware* warned that, without intervention, Queensland would require approximately 5000 additional OOHC placements by 2030, around 4,000 of which would be residential care placements, and annual OOHC expenditure would exceed \$7 billion. More immediately, the modelling projected that during the period of the Inquiry, the residential care system could grow by almost 1000 places, or 33 per cent.

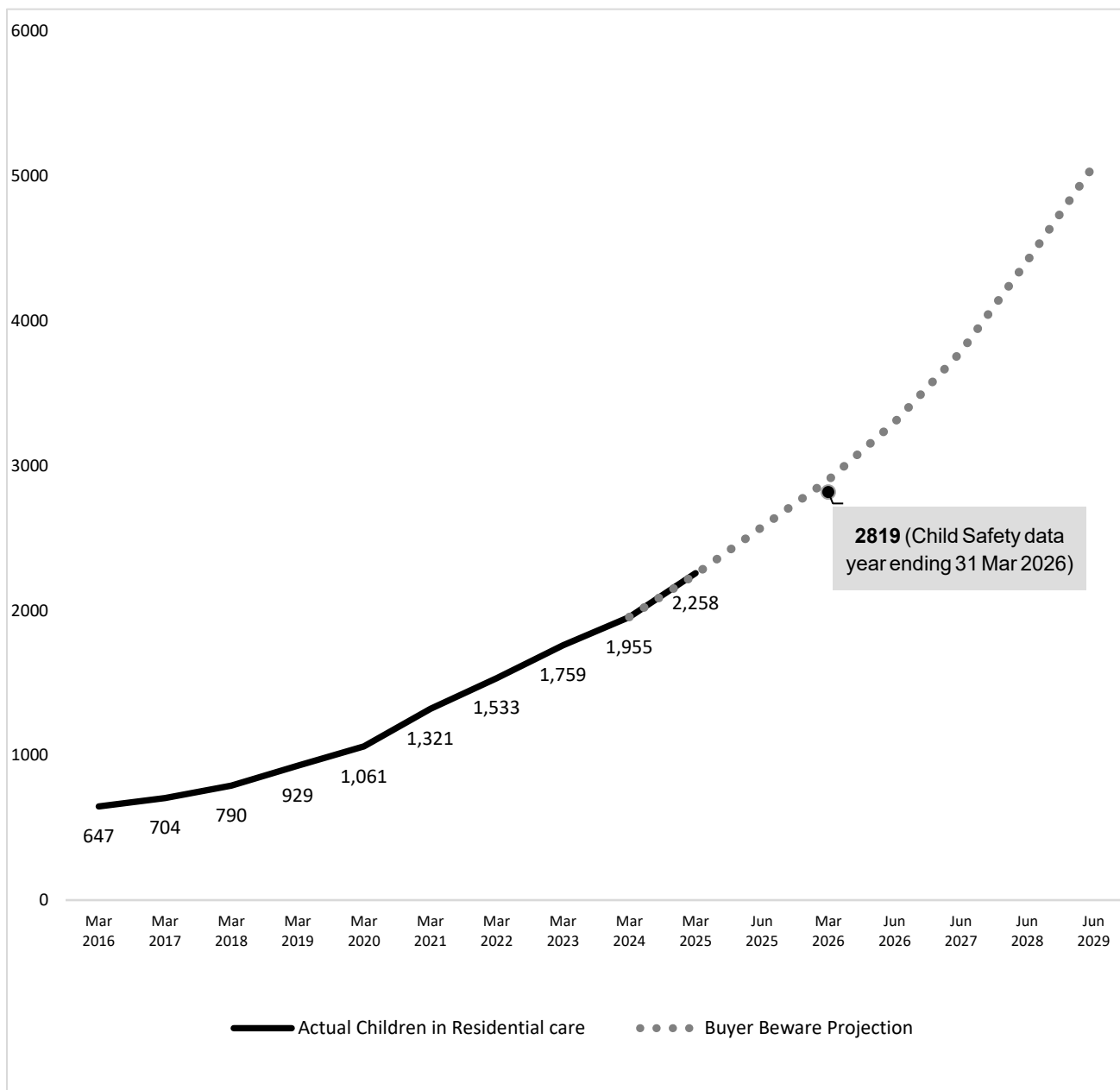
The subsequent evidence before the Inquiry reinforced rather than displaced these concerns. As at 31 March 2025, 2258 children were living in residential care, including 78 children aged under five and 472 aged between five and nine. By 18 February 2026, 19.7 per cent of Queensland children in OOHC were in residential care, compared with approximately seven per cent in New South Wales, five per cent in Victoria and eight per cent in Western Australia. Queensland accounted for nearly half of Australia's residential care population despite representing approximately one-fifth of the national population.

Child Safety data provided to the Inquiry indicated that, as at 27 March 2026, approximately 2800 children were living in residential care and 1555 of them were assessed as suitable for family-based care with intensive supports if such a placement were available. More than half of the children in residential care were therefore in residential care because the system lacked sufficient alternatives.

When Child Safety released new data on 31 July 2026 it confirmed that the projected growth projected in *Buyer Beware* is occurring. The change from 2258 children at 31 March 2025 to 2819 children by 31 March 2026 represents an increase of 561 children, or almost 25 per cent, in just 12 months. That is equivalent to an average net increase of almost 11 children every week. It is also strikingly consistent with the direction of the Commission's *Buyer Beware* modelling. System growth has further impacted placement quality and sibling co-placement rates. By 31 March 2026, 1942 children in residential care had a sibling in care, just over half (982 children) were placed with a sibling, leaving 960 children separated from a sibling in care as the residential care population grew.¹⁴⁵

The new data provided to the Commission in August demonstrates that the underlying system dynamics identified through the 2023 Residential Care Review, the 2024 *A System that Cares*, the 2024 *Too Little, Too Late* and the 2025 *Buyer Beware* reports have not yet been sufficiently altered to change the trajectory.

Figure 33: Actual number of children in residential care against Buyer Beware projections



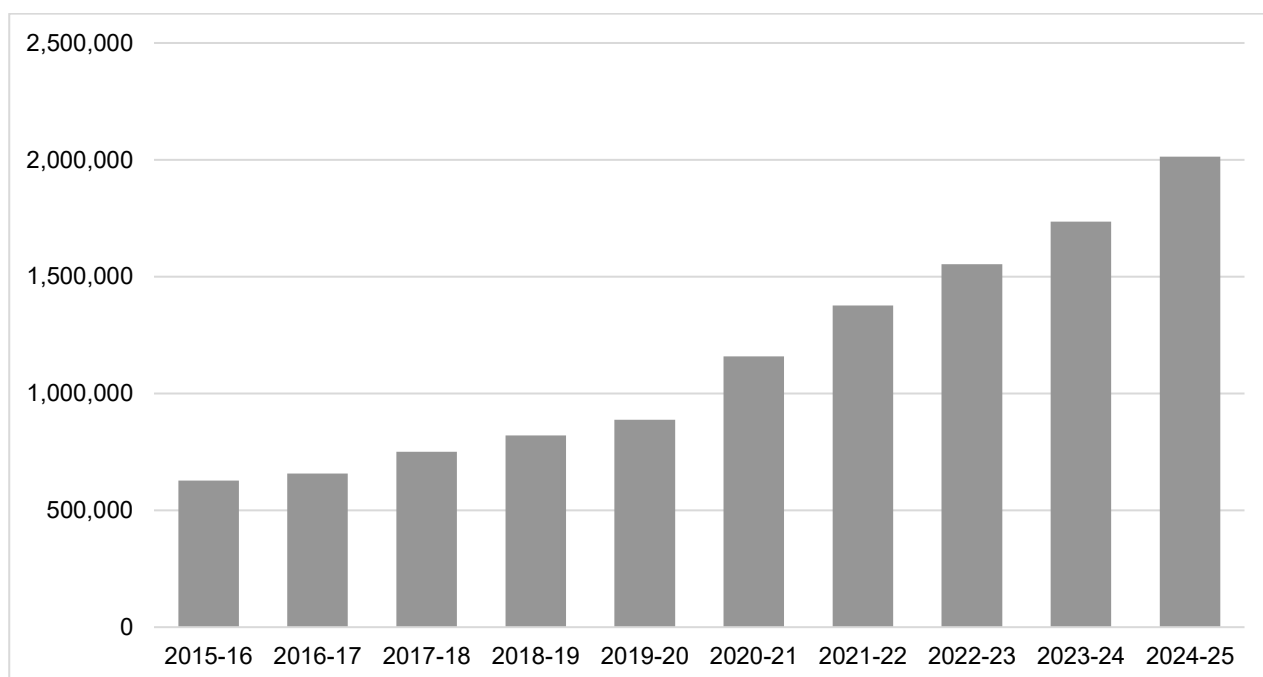
Source: Queensland Family and Child Commission (2026).

The rising cost of care

Queensland's increasing reliance on residential care has profound financial consequences. Residential care is not only the most intensive form of OOHC; it is also the most expensive by a considerable margin. As the number of children entering residential care has increased, expenditure has followed. The available Queensland data shows the average annual cost of maintaining a child in residential care increasing from approximately \$300,000 in 2019–20 to around \$500,000 by 2024–25. This is substantially higher than family-based care. In 2023–24, a foster or kinship care placement cost approximately \$48 per child per night, compared with approximately \$1,192 per night for residential care — around 25 times the placement cost. For individual children requiring highly intensive arrangements, annual placement expenditure has

reached as high as \$1.9 million. The latest national data reinforces the scale of this cost differential. The Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services 2026* found that, in jurisdictions for which comparable 2024–25 data was available, residential care cost between approximately \$660,000 and \$1.2 million per child per year, compared with between approximately \$58,000 and \$79,000 for non-residential care.

Figure 34: Real expenditure on care services (\$'000) in Queensland, 2015-16 to 2024-25



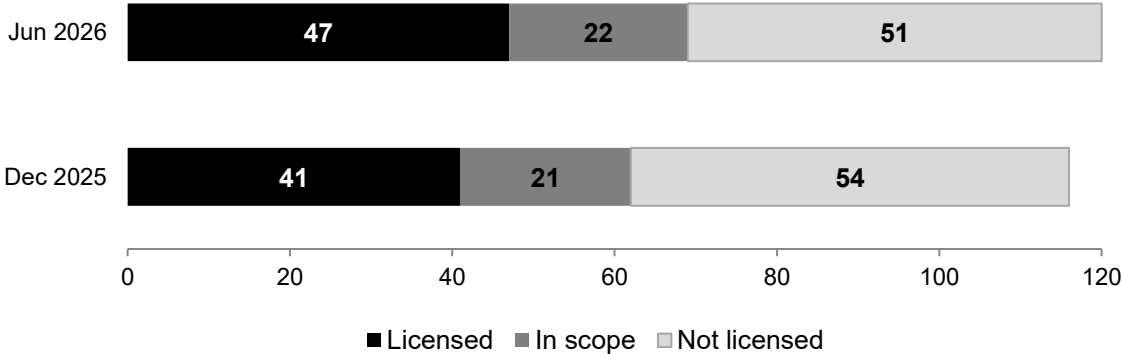
Source: Productivity Commission. (2026). *Report on Government Services: Child protection*. Table 16A.38

Continuing growth in residential care providers

The Commission has consistently identified residential care commissioning as a structural contributor to both increasing costs and variable care quality. In December 2024 in *Too Little, Too Late*, the Commission found that generic contracting and service standards continued to purchase residential care capacity without sufficiently tailoring funding, service expectations and performance measures to the needs and outcomes of individual children. The report made a very clear recommendation that the Queensland Government cease using generic residential care contracting. It called for individualised, outcomes-based commissioning, supported by performance measures operating at the level of the child, house, provider, region and longer-term outcomes. The Commission's recommendation was not simply to improve the existing generic contract. It argued: 'The failing to understand, after months of consistent feedback, that the generic contracts and related service standards were causing harm, frustration and inefficiency is discouraging.' Despite this, *Buyer Beware* published in June 2025 subsequently found that contracting arrangements had continued largely unchanged, with 30 new generic contracts covering 173 placements entered after the Commission's earlier recommendation. At that time (30 April 2025), Queensland's residential care market comprised 118 organisations, of which only 37 were licensed and 81 were unlicensed. Licensed organisations provided 69 per cent of placements, while the 81 unlicensed providers delivered the remaining 31 per cent. The Commission's analysis was that rapid demand growth, combined with insufficient market stewardship and generic purchasing arrangements, had increasingly positioned government as a price taker—purchasing available capacity in response to immediate placement demand rather than actively shaping a provider market around the quality, stability and outcomes required for children.

As at 30 June 2026 the number of funded providers has again risen - from 116 in 2025 to 120. Within that, licensed providers rose from 41 to 47, and providers recorded as not licensed fell from 54 to 51. This means the licensed proportion of the market rose from 35.3 per cent to 39.2 per cent. Of the 120 providers funded to deliver residential care at June 2026, 108 were funded at December 2025. Of these, 94 held the same licensing status at both dates and 14 held a different status. Eight providers moved from not licensed to in scope. Six moved from in scope to licensed. No provider moved to a lower status over the period, and 12 new providers therefore entered the system. In a reform environment focussed on the urgent need to dramatically reduce the use of residential care the growth in new providers is notable.

Figure 35: Residential care providers by licensing status, December 2025 and June 2026



Sources: DFSDSCS (2026). Unpublished data request.

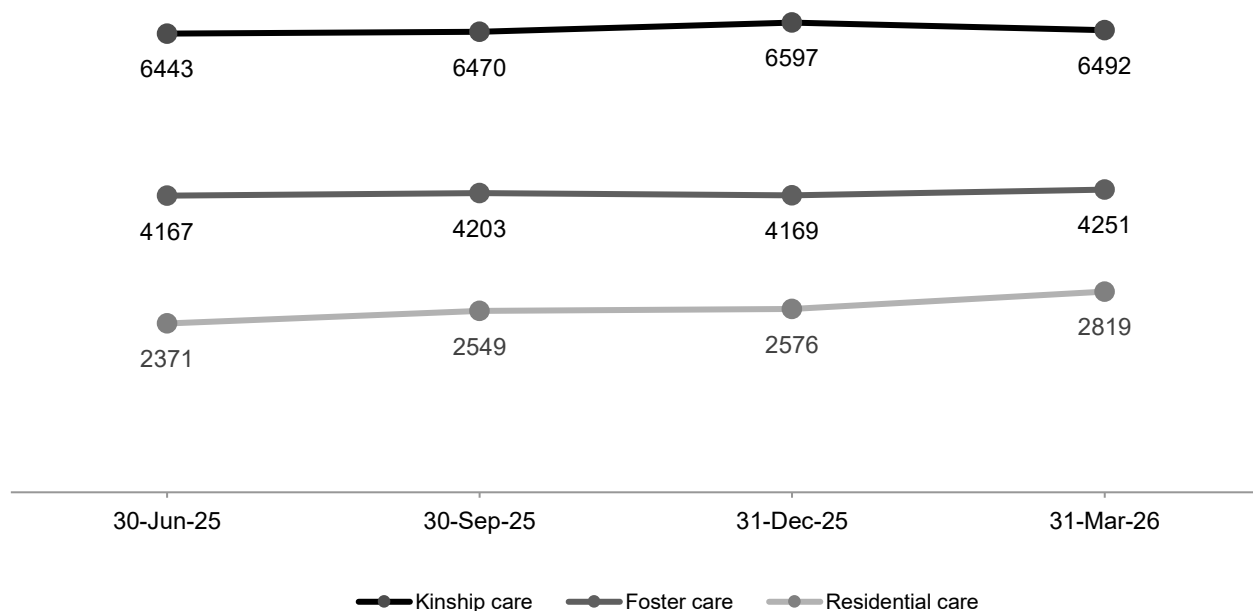
Where children in care live

Over the decade for which comparable data was available, the most significant change in Queensland's out-of-home care system was not simply growth in the number of children in care, but a fundamental change in where those children were living. Between 2016 and 2024, the number of children living in home-based care increased from 8044 to 8098—just 54 additional children, or 0.7 per cent, over eight years. Within that relatively fixed capacity, however, the composition changed. Foster care declined from 4205 to 3870 children, while relative and kinship care increased from 3839 to 4228. In effect, the growth of kinship care largely replaced lost foster care capacity rather than expanding the overall number of children who could be accommodated in family-based settings.

Residential care followed a very different trajectory. Between 2016 and 2024, the number of children living in residential care increased from 626 to 1994, an increase of 218.5 per cent. Its share of the out-of-home care population increased from 7.2 per cent to 19.8 per cent—moving from around one in fourteen children in care to almost one in five. Over the same period, Queensland's total care population increased by 1422 children, while residential care increased by 1368. On the available historical series, approximately 96 per cent of the net growth in the care population was therefore accommodated in residential care rather than through additional family-based capacity. The interruption to published placement data during 2024–25 and 2025–26 meant the Commission could not initially determine whether this structural shift had continued.

New information provided by Child Safety on 30 July 2026 now allows part of that projection to be tested against actual experience. As at 30 June 2025, 2371 children were living in residential care and by 31 March 2026, that number had increased to 2819.

Figure 36: Placement types, June 2025 to March 2026



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (2026). *Our Performance*.

There is an important limitation in connecting the new figures directly to the historical series. Child Safety's contemporary operational data was produced following implementation of Unify and is described as indicative rather than equivalent to previously published corporate data. In particular, the substantial discontinuity in reported kinship and home-based care numbers means those figures should not simply be appended to the earlier time series as though definitions and reporting methods were unchanged. The new data is therefore most useful for assessing the contemporary direction and composition of placement growth, rather than constructing an uninterrupted historical series. On that basis, however, the central trend identified in the historical data has not been arrested; it has intensified. Residential care continues to absorb a disproportionate share of growth. The issue is therefore no longer simply that Queensland has more children in care.

Census of children absent from care

A critical missing part of the current data picture is the circumstances of children who were historically recorded within the 'other' placement category. For many years, the Commission has called for greater transparency about this cohort, recognising that more than 800 children have at times been recorded outside their approved placement and may therefore be exposed to heightened risks in unapproved locations, including rough sleeping or environments in which they may be vulnerable to exploitation, violence and abuse. These circumstances are often described as 'self-placing', but that terminology can obscure what is actually occurring. While some children may actively choose to stay elsewhere, in other cases the more accurate description is placement breakdown, placement instability or an inability of the system to provide and maintain a safe and suitable placement. Describing a child as 'self-placing' risks locating responsibility with the child for where they are living, rather than examining why an approved placement is unavailable, unsuitable or unable to keep them connected.

For an oversight body, the critical question is therefore not simply whether a child has left their approved placement, but where that child is actually living, whether they are safe, why the approved placement has not been sustained, and what the system is doing to restore a safe and stable care arrangement. The Queensland Government's first statewide census of self-placing children, commissioned in July 2025 and released in September 2025, identified 772 children who were absent from their approved placements or living without an authorised care arrangement. The Queensland Government should be recognised and thanked for leading this transparent work and encouraged to publish the 2026 and all future reports.

The 2025 findings highlighted a cohort experiencing significant complexity and vulnerability, with many children presenting with overlapping disability, mental health, trauma and justice system needs. Self-placement was most prevalent among adolescents; however, the census also identified younger children experiencing placement instability, including 27 children under 12 years of age, with the youngest child identified as eight years old. More than three-quarters of children identified in the census were recorded as frequently missing or absent, demonstrating that self-placement is often not an isolated event but part of an ongoing pattern of disengagement from care arrangements. Children who leave approved foster, kinship or residential care placements without an alternative safe arrangement represent one of the clearest indicators of instability within the OOH system. The Inquiry described self-placement as a "literal and figurative exit poll" of children's experiences of care, highlighting that children's decisions to leave placements provide important insights into whether care arrangements are meeting their safety, relational and developmental needs. For children who self-place, the absence of a safe and supported placement pathway can increase exposure to homelessness, exploitation, victimisation and contact with the youth justice system.

The cohort also reflected a high prevalence of disability and mental health needs. Almost 77 per cent of children who self-placed had either a diagnosed or suspected disability or mental health condition. Youth justice involvement was also significant, with 81 children subject to a youth justice order and 51 young people self-placing while on bail. These intersections demonstrate the need for responses that address underlying trauma, disability and unmet support needs, rather than focusing solely on placement compliance. Children's reported reasons for leaving placements provide important insights into their experiences of care. While some children reported preferring to live elsewhere or dissatisfaction with their placement, others identified concerns about safety, with 55 children reporting that they did not feel safe in their approved care environment. These experiences highlight the importance of understanding absence from care as a communication of unmet need and a potential indicator of placement failure.

In response to the census findings, the Queensland Government has commenced trials to embed Child Safety Officers alongside police at three locations to improve information sharing and strengthen coordinated responses when children are absent from care. These initiatives reflect a shift toward recognising self-placement as a child safety concern requiring active intervention, rather than solely as a placement compliance issue.

In a related move the Board has recommended stronger oversight of placement instability, including joint case management reviews for children experiencing more than two placement changes within a year and for children under 12 years living in residential care. These approaches recognise that repeated placement disruption is a key indicator of vulnerability and that earlier, coordinated intervention is required to maintain children's connection, safety and visibility.

With the return of Unify System capacity to report on the placements of children, the missing visibility of this cohort can now be corrected.

Legal permanence in care

Achieving permanence for children who cannot safely return to their parents is a central objective of the child protection system. Permanence encompasses more than the legal status of a placement: it includes stable and enduring relationships, belonging, cultural and family connection, and confidence about where and with whom a child will grow up. Legal orders can support these outcomes by transferring guardianship from the state to a suitable family member or long-term carer and reducing a child's continuing reliance on statutory care.

Recent data show increasing use of permanent care orders (PCOs) in Queensland. Between March 2024 and March 2026, the number of active PCOs increased by 53.9 per cent, from 349 to 537. This represents a substantial increase in the use of this form of legal permanence over a relatively short period. However, there was no corresponding growth in long-term guardianship to suitable family members: the number of Long-Term Guardianship (LTG) orders to relatives or other suitable people declined slightly, by 1.9 per cent, from 1573 to 1543 over the same period.

Taken together, 2,080 children were subject to these two forms of family-based permanent or long-term legal arrangement at March 2026. While the growth in PCOs demonstrates greater use of one pathway to legal permanence, the overall scale of family-based legal permanence remains relatively small when considered against the size of Queensland's OOHC population, which comprised 13,382 children in late 2024. The comparison is not exact—the populations and reference dates differ and not every child in OOHC requires an alternative permanent legal arrangement—but it illustrates the comparatively limited scale at which guardianship has been transferred away from the Chief Executive. This issue was examined directly by the Inquiry which identified a tendency for Child Safety to pursue Long-Term Guardianship to the Chief Executive (LTG-CE) rather than systematically considering the full hierarchy of permanency options. More than 80 per cent of litigation referrals sought LTG-CE, indicating that state guardianship remained the predominant legal pathway in cases progressing towards long-term orders. The Inquiry's analysis raises an important distinction between *placement stability* and *legal permanence*: a child may remain with the same foster or kinship carer for many years while guardianship continues to rest with the state. A stable placement therefore does not necessarily provide the same legal, relational and decision-making permanence as guardianship transferred to an enduring family.

There is also a significant disparity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. As at 31 March 2026, First Nations children represented 38.5 per cent of children subject to active PCOs or long-term family-based guardianship arrangements—801 of 2,080 children. By comparison, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children comprised 49.7 per cent of Queensland's overall OOHC population. First Nations children are therefore substantially less represented among children who have achieved these forms of family-based legal permanence than they are within the care population from which those arrangements arise. This disparity is particularly important because permanence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children cannot be considered solely through the transfer of legal guardianship. Decisions must also preserve identity, culture, kinship and connection to family and community and operate consistently with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. The Inquiry identified compounded challenges in achieving permanence for First Nations children, meaning that reducing their over-representation in care requires attention not only to entry into care, but also to restoration, culturally appropriate guardianship and other pathways by which children can leave long-term state guardianship. The age profile of children achieving permanent legal arrangements warrants further attention. Between June 2025 and March 2026, the number of children aged 0–4 years on permanent orders declined by 6.5 per

cent, from 153 to 143, while the number aged 5–9 years increased by 9.8 per cent, from 541 to 594. The data do not establish how long individual children waited to achieve permanence, but the contrasting trajectories raise an important question about timeliness. Early childhood is a particularly significant developmental period, and where restoration is not achievable, timely decisions about a child's long-term family and legal arrangements can reduce prolonged uncertainty and repeated statutory decision-making.

Viewed together, the data suggests that Queensland has substantially increased its use of PCOs, but this growth has occurred alongside a slight decline in long-term guardianship to relatives and other suitable people, continued predominance of long-term guardianship to the Chief Executive in litigation referrals, and significant disparity in access to family-based legal permanence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The crossover between child protection and youth justice

Children who experience both the child protection and youth justice systems experience multiple and interacting vulnerabilities and require coordinated responses across systems that would otherwise operate with different legislative purposes, service models and accountabilities. For children subject simultaneously to child protection and youth justice orders, the State has responsibilities both for their care and protection and for responding to their offending behaviour. The extent to which children progress from protective intervention into youth justice is therefore an important indicator of how effectively those systems are working together.

The Commission has maintained a sustained focus on this crossover cohort. In its 2022 issues paper, *Designing a better response to youth offending in Queensland*, the Commission identified children subject to dual child protection and youth justice orders as a group requiring particular attention, noting that 411 children were subject to dual orders during 2019–20. The Commission drew attention to the complex needs of these children and the particular difficulties experienced by young people moving between residential care, informal placements and youth justice supervision. The Commission subsequently undertook dedicated analysis of the crossover cohort, using departmental data obtained through its statutory information-gathering powers. This resulted in the 2024 *Crossover Cohort* Insights Paper, which examined the interaction between child protection and youth justice at multiple points in the systems. The analysis found that, as at 30 June 2023, 20.7 per cent of young people in Queensland youth detention centres—51 of 246 young people—were simultaneously subject to a child protection order and a supervised youth justice order. Among the 452 young people classified as serious repeat offenders, 133, or 29.4 per cent, had an active child protection order.

The analysis also identified a substantial disparity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Among young people aged 10 and over already subject to a child protection order, 4.6 per cent of First Nations children were also subject to a youth justice order in 2023, compared with 1.8 per cent of non-Indigenous children. While both rates had declined from earlier years, a First Nations child already subject to a protection order remained more than twice as likely to also be subject to a youth justice order.

The latest linked national AIHW analysis found that 25 per cent of young people under community-based youth justice supervision in 2022–23 had experienced OOHC during the preceding decade. Among young people in detention, the proportion was 28 per cent.¹⁴⁶ The overlap becomes more significant when placement histories are examined. Among justice-involved young people with an OOHC history, 39 per cent of those under community supervision had experienced five or more placements. Around two-thirds of justice-involved young people who had experienced OOHC had also experienced residential care—68 per cent of those under community supervision and 66 per cent of those in detention.¹⁴⁷ Again, these figures do not establish that OOHC causes offending. Children who experience multiple placements or residential care generally have substantially more complex histories and needs than the broader child protection population. The data does, however, demonstrate a considerable overlap between two expensive statutory systems. For government, this creates an important prevention opportunity. Many of the young people subsequently requiring intensive youth justice intervention were already known to another statutory system during childhood. Better longitudinal analysis

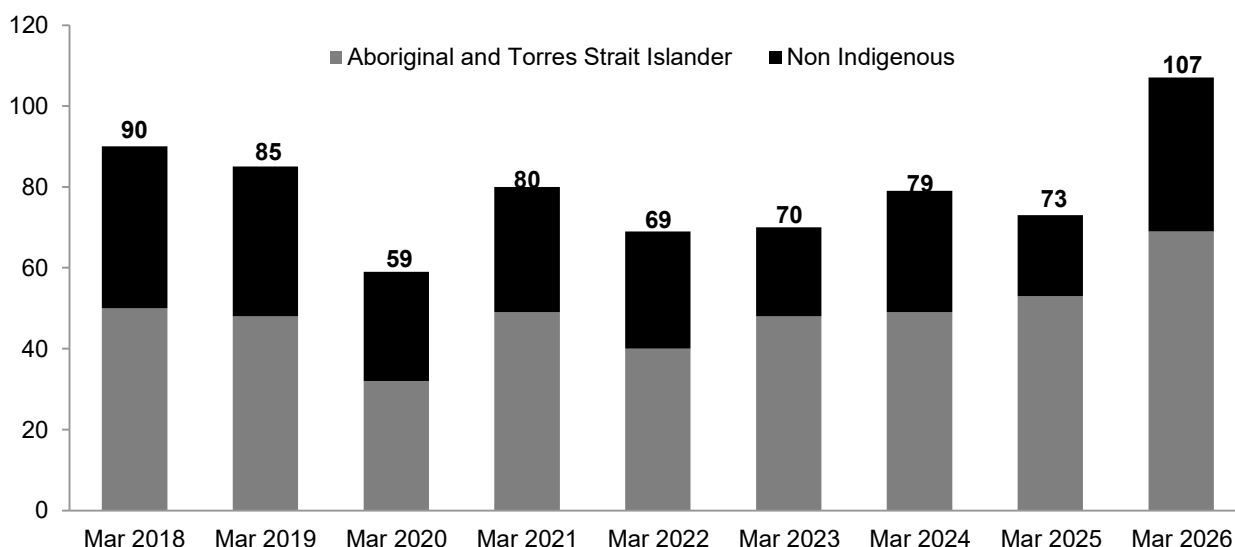
could therefore identify the characteristics and experiences most strongly associated with movement between the child protection and youth justice systems and enable earlier intervention.

Residential care is an important part of this intersection. The Commission's earlier analysis found substantial regional variation in youth justice involvement among children living in residential care. As at 31 March 2023, 5.1 per cent of Queensland children aged 10–17 living in residential care were subject to a youth justice order, but the rate ranged from 2.5 per cent in North Queensland to 13.8 per cent in the South West, with rates of 6.3 per cent in the South East and 6.0 per cent in the Sunshine Coast and Central region. This variation suggested that the relationship between residential care and youth justice involvement was not uniform and warranted closer examination of local placement, service and justice-system factors.

More recent Child Safety data indicate a significant increase in the number of children experiencing this dual involvement while living in residential care. The number of children aged 10–17 in residential care who were simultaneously subject to a child protection order and a supervised youth justice order increased from 73 in March 2025 to 107 in March 2026—an increase of 47 per cent in one year. The March 2026 figure is the highest recorded across the published series commencing in 2018. Of these 107 children, 69 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, meaning First Nations children represented approximately 64.5 per cent of this crossover cohort. This is particularly significant when considered against the broader composition of residential care. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children represented 48.3 per cent of children in residential care at March 2026, yet accounted for 64.5 per cent of children in residential care simultaneously subject to child protection and supervised youth justice orders. The comparison indicates that the over-representation of First Nations children becomes more pronounced at the intersection between the two statutory systems.

The Commission's work has consistently argued that these children should not be understood simply as a youth justice cohort. Their involvement in youth justice occurs in the context of an existing statutory responsibility for their care and protection. This makes the interface between the systems particularly important: placement instability, absence from care, inappropriate criminalisation of behaviour within care environments, inadequate coordination between agencies and the availability of suitable placements can all affect a child's trajectory through the two systems. The latest data therefore warrant close attention. The increase from 73 to 107 children in a single year does not, by itself, establish why crossover has increased or whether the increase reflects changes in offending, residential care populations, supervision practices or other system factors. It does, however, identify a growing cohort of children for whom the State simultaneously exercises protective and justice responsibilities. The concentration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within that cohort further reinforces the importance of coordinated, culturally responsive intervention.

Figure 37: Children in residential care on dual child protection and supervised youth justice orders



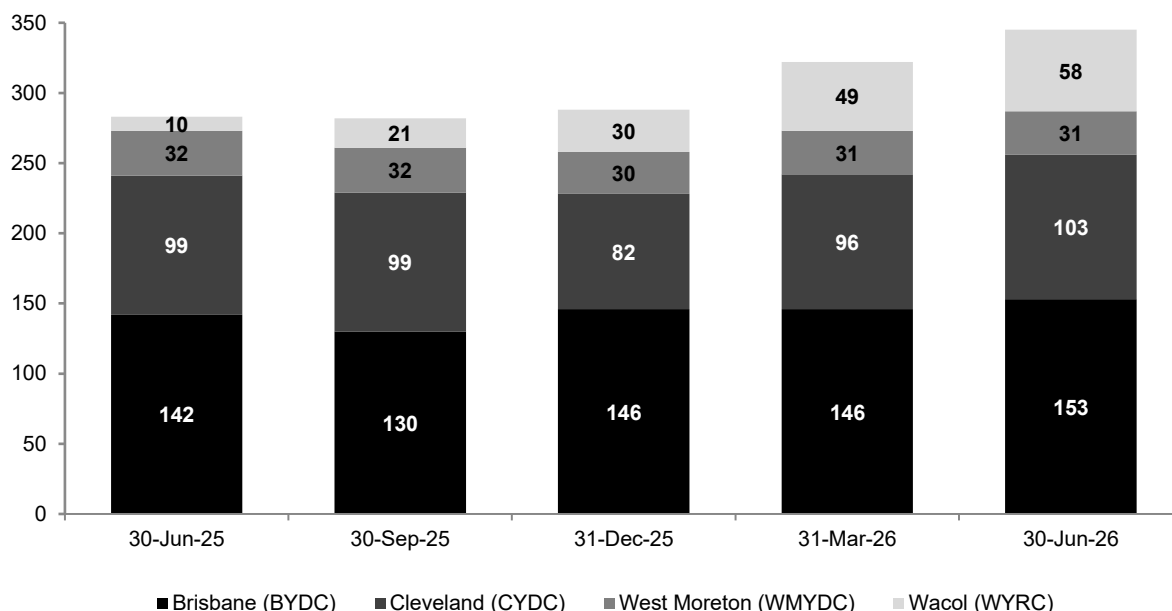
Children in the statutory youth justice system

Administrative data reveals a diverging trend between community-based supervision and custodial detention. There has been a sustained, long-term decline in the average daily number of young people under community-based supervision. From a peak of 1,636 in 2018–19, the community caseload fell 27.0 per cent to 1,195 in 2024–25 (representing a stabilising of workload with just 3 more children per day than the previous year). Conversely, the average daily number of young people in youth detention has experienced an acute long-term increase, climbing from 184 in 2015–16 to 285 in 2024–25, representing a 54.9 per cent expansion of the daily incarcerated cohort over ten years.

Current data from the 2026 Report on Government Services indicates that while the overall rate of youth justice supervision in Queensland has declined from its peak in 2018–19, the state continues to record supervision volumes and rates significantly above the national average. In 2024–25, the rate of young people aged 10–17 under youth justice supervision in Queensland was 19.6 per 10,000, compared to a national rate of 11.9. Consequently the physical capacity of Queensland's youth detention system remains under critical strain. The state's permanently funded, purpose-built youth detention centres (Brisbane, Cleveland, and West Moreton) remain strictly capped at 288 beds. To provide emergency relief, the Department of Youth Justice transitioned the WYRC into operation in April 2025, temporarily expanding operational capacity to 364 beds. While this expansion successfully lowered the statewide detention utilisation rate to 78.3 per cent (down from the near-overflow rate of 99.6 per cent recorded in 2023–24), the temporary nature of this facility conceals severe safeguarding compromises. Crucially, the WYRC was originally designed and constructed by the Queensland Police Service (QPS) as an adult watch house and remand facility. It has been loaned to the youth justice department until 2027, when the permanent, purpose-built Woodford Youth Detention Centre is scheduled to open.

The primary driver of the capacity issues in Queensland's detention centres is the overwhelming reliance on unsentenced remand. On an average day in 2024–25, 88.5 per cent of all young people in custody (252 out of 285 per day) were unsentenced. This represents children who have not been convicted of their current charges and are awaiting court finalisation. Unsentenced custody has climbed to its highest level in a decade, representing an 88.4 per cent increase from 2014–15 (when the daily unsentenced average was 134). In contrast, the daily average of sentenced young people in detention has declined over the last decade, falling to a historical low of just 33 per day in 2024–25 (down from 40 the previous year).

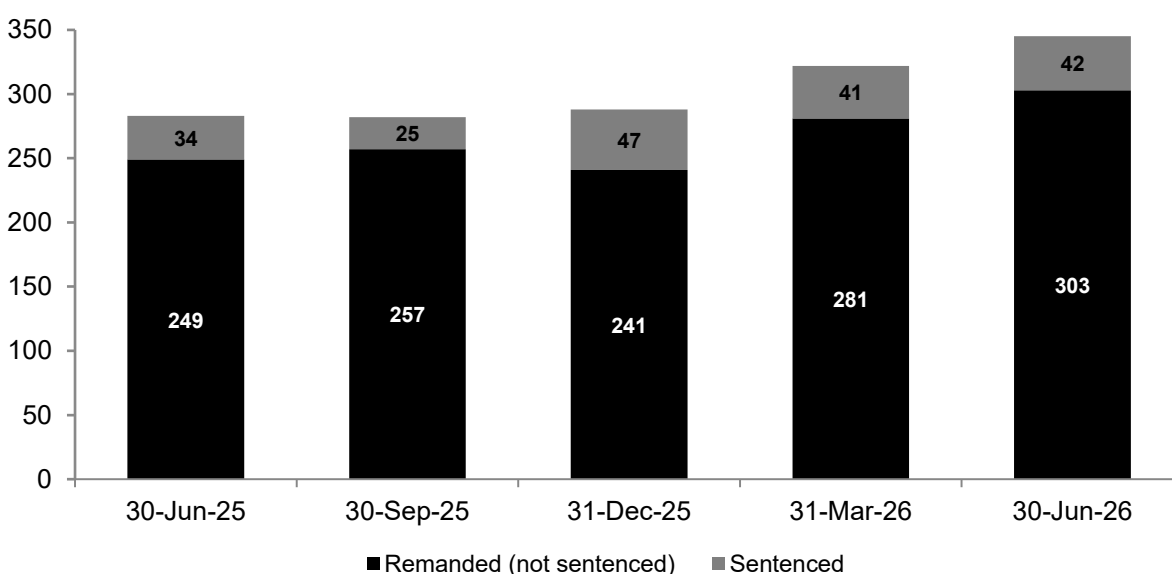
Figure 38: Children in youth detention by centre, June 2025 to June 2026



Note: daily point-in-time counts at five quarter end dates. Counts are of children held on a single day.

The number of children in youth detention rose from 283 to 345 over the year, and increase of 62 children or 21.9 per cent. Almost all of that increase was held at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre, which grew from 10 children to 58. Most children in youth detention have not been sentenced. Across all five dates, children on remand made up between 83.7 and 91.1 per cent of detention population. The proportion of children on remand did not shift materially over the year. Because remand accounts for most of the population, it also accounts for most of the additional children, 54 of the 62.

Figure 39: Average daily number of young people in youth detention centres by legal status – time series



Not only are more children being held unsentenced, but they are also being detained for significantly longer periods. In 2024–25, the average length of stay in detention per unsentenced episode rose to 54 days - an increase of 6 days over

the previous year, and a near doubling over the past decade (up from 36 nights in 2014–15). This prolonged remand has severe impacts on court outcomes. In 2024–25, 46.1 per cent of all finalised appearances in which a detention order was made resulted in the young person being immediately released from court with 'time served' on remand. In 26 per cent of these appearances, the child was released with no supervised orders or transition support. This indicates the system is increasingly utilising high-security incarceration as a front-end containment mechanism.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people continue to experience severe and worsening over-representation in Queensland's youth justice system, particularly in custody. In 2024–25, First Nations young people comprised 72 per cent of the average daily detention population (204 out of 285 children per day), despite making up only 8.2 per cent of Queensland's child population. On an average day, First Nations young people were 26.1 times more likely to be in youth detention than their non-Indigenous peers (a custodial rate of 39.9 per 10,000 compared to 1.5 per 10,000) - the highest disproportionality ratio in the last four years. This over-representation is particularly pronounced among younger children (aged 10–13 years). In 2024–25, Queensland recorded the highest volume of First Nations children aged 10–13 in the system nationally, with 147 under community supervision and 91 in detention. Within this young cohort, First Nations children accounted for 73.4 per cent of those in detention and 72.8 per cent of those under community supervision. Furthermore, this group is heavily characterised by 'crossover' contact with child safety. AIHW data confirms that 73 per cent of young people under youth justice supervision in Queensland have had documented child protection contact in the preceding ten years. This crossover rate reflects a systemic failure to intervene early with family support, converting child protection vulnerability into tertiary justice system entrenchment.

The financial cost of maintaining this detention model has escalated dramatically. Between 2015–16 and 2024–25, real recurrent expenditure on youth justice services in Queensland more than doubled, rising from \$214.8 million to \$536.1 million. In 2024–25, Queensland's recurrent expenditure exceeded all other major jurisdictions, including New South Wales (\$327.1 million) and Victoria (\$438.0 million). Crucially, the QAO identified that over 90 per cent of this \$1.25 billion total five-year spend is directed into internal, detention-based services and departmental programs with limited independent evaluation of core rehabilitation outcomes.

These figures call into question the efficacy of current interventions. Queensland continues to record particularly high rates of return to youth justice supervision.¹⁴⁸ Of young people aged 10–16 released from sentenced supervision in 2022–23, 71.5 per cent returned to sentenced supervision within 12 months—the highest rate reported among Australian jurisdictions and substantially above the national rate of 56.7 per cent. This compares with 60.5 per cent in Queensland in 2014–15, although rates have fluctuated over the intervening period. The persistence of high return rates is significant when considered alongside the substantial resources directed towards the most intensive end of the youth justice system. Nationally, two-thirds (66.2 per cent) of the \$1.7 billion spent on youth justice supervision in 2024–25 was directed to detention-based supervision. Together, these indicators reinforce the importance of assessing not only the scale of investment in youth justice, but whether expenditure is producing sustained reductions in reoffending and successful reintegration following supervision.

Rehabilitation, education, health and safety in detention

Whether detention contributes to reduced offending also depends on what occurs during the period of custody. Removing a child from the community does not itself constitute rehabilitation. Detention can reasonably be expected to contribute to improved outcomes only where children have reliable access to education, therapeutic intervention, health care, family connection and structured activity.

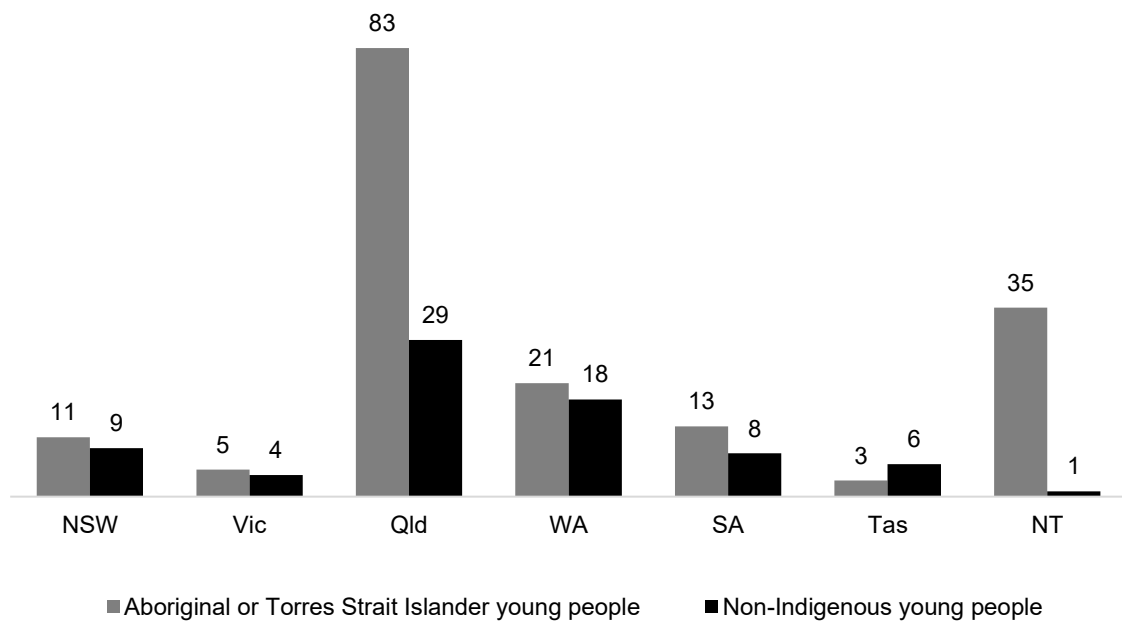
Historical evidence identified significant limitations in this respect. QAO analysis of serious repeat offenders found that 18 per cent received no rehabilitation program while detained, while 34 per cent had no recorded participation in CHART, then the Department's principal cognitive-behavioural intervention.

Operational pressures also affected the capacity to deliver these interventions. At Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, daytime operational lockdown increased from 12 per cent in 2018–19 to 81 per cent in 2022–23. Over a similar period, the number of young people completing rehabilitation programs at Cleveland fell from 215 in 2018 to 31 in 2022, an 86 per cent reduction. Although youth detention schools were intended to provide approximately 17 hours of education each week, most children received only three to five hours of face-to-face education per week during the period examined.

These historical figures should not be treated as measures of current service delivery. They do, however, establish an important performance baseline. More recent evidence indicates that operational constraints have remained relevant, including periods during which units at Cleveland operated in separation or 'night mode'. Independent inspection has also continued to identify the relationship between staffing levels, separation and children's ability to participate in ordinary activities and services. The significance of separation extends beyond the amount of time children spend outside their rooms. Restrictions on movement can affect access to education, rehabilitation programs, recreation, health services and family contact. These are not peripheral activities: they are among the principal mechanisms through which detention is intended to address offending behaviour and prepare children for successful return to the community. The health and developmental characteristics of children in detention make these issues particularly important. Children entering youth justice commonly experience multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities, including mental ill-health, substance use, disability, disrupted education and previous exposure to trauma.

Safety within detention therefore provides another important measure of performance. The Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services includes nationally comparable reporting on self-harm and attempted suicide in custody, including incidents requiring hospitalisation and other incidents requiring psychological or medical treatment, expressed relative to custody nights. These measures provide an important complement to traditional measures of security and offending because they assess whether children are being kept safe while deprived of their liberty.

Figure 40: Incidents of self-harm and attempted suicide resulting in psychological or medical treatment, or hospitalisation, by jurisdiction, 2024–25



Source: Productivity Commission (2026). *Report on Government Services 2026*, Table 17A.19.

Taken together, these measures provide a broader test of detention performance. A detention system should not be assessed solely by whether it securely contains children. Its performance also depends on whether children are safe while detained, receive meaningful education and rehabilitation, maintain appropriate connections with family and community, and leave custody better equipped to live safely in the community than when they entered.

Mechanisms of complaint for children in care

In 2025–26, Child Safety's complaints system recorded a total of 4397 formal matters. The First Attempt at Resolution (FAAR) process remains the primary mechanism for managing complaints. FAAR matters accounted for 82.58 per cent (3631 matters) of all complaints received, while only 14.51 per cent (638 matters) progressed to formal complaints and 2.91 per cent (128 matters) to internal review. This distribution indicates that the majority of concerns are addressed at a local level rather than through formal investigative pathways. For matters that do escalate, outcomes data indicates a low rate of corrective action. Of the 638 formal complaints finalised in 2025–26, 71.47 per cent (456 matters) resulted in no further action, while only 13.01 per cent (83 matters) led to further action. Similarly, 65.63 per cent (84 matters) of internal reviews were closed with no further action, compared to 17.19 per cent (22 matters) that resulted in additional action. These figures demonstrate a substantial gap between complaint escalation and the likelihood of achieving a change in decision or practice.

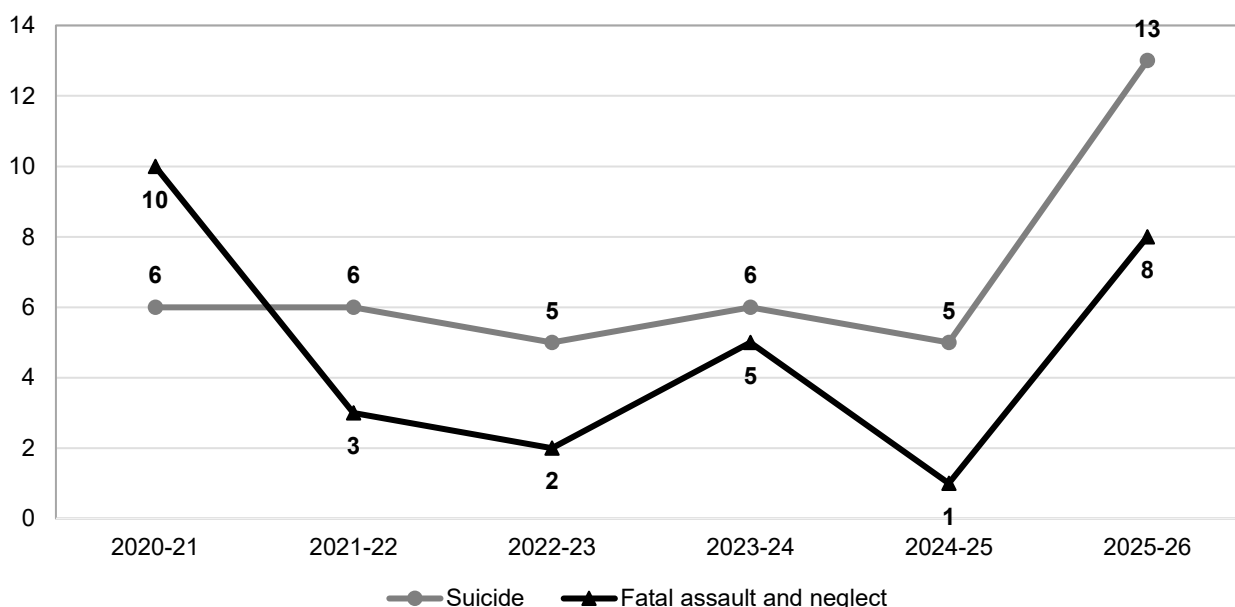
The dataset also highlights the limited direct participation of children and young people in the complaints process. Only 72 complaints (1.64%) were initiated by a young person, while the majority were lodged by adults, including mothers (36.6%), fathers (16.58%), grandparents (11.89%), and approved carers (10.58%). Further disparities are evident in representation across population groups. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander complainants accounted for 17.49 per cent (769 matters) of all complaints, which is significantly lower than their representation within the child protection system. This difference suggests a gap between system involvement and engagement with formal complaints mechanisms.

For those matters that were categorised, the most common issues related to decision-making and procedural fairness (28.05%), communication and participation (17.92%), and contact and family connection (15.01%).

Marked increase in suicide deaths for children known to child safety

The number of suicide deaths among children known to the child protection system increased substantially in 2025–26. The Board reviewed 13 suicide deaths, more than double the number reviewed in the previous year (5 suicide deaths) and the highest number recorded during the six-year reporting period. In the preceding five years, annual suicide deaths remained relatively stable, ranging between five and seven cases. While year-to-year fluctuations are expected given the relatively small number of deaths, the increase observed in 2025–26 represents a significant departure from the pattern seen over recent years. The children reviewed commonly experienced complex and cumulative adversity, including involvement with multiple service systems, mental ill-health, family violence, trauma, placement instability and other longstanding vulnerabilities. The increase reinforces the importance of sustained attention to suicide prevention for children known to the child protection system. It also highlights the need for coordinated responses across child protection, mental health, education and community services to identify risk earlier and intervene before children reach crisis.

Figure 41: Number of deaths reviewed by the Board of children known to the child protection system within 12 months of their death, with suicide or fatal assault and neglect as cause of death, 2020-21 to 2025-26



Sources: Child Death Review Board (2026). Unpublished data; Child Death Review Board. (2025).

Spike in deaths of Queensland children from fatal assault and neglect

Fatal assault and neglect, including filicide, is a relatively uncommon but potentially preventable cause of child death. Current Child Death data indicates an increase in these deaths during 2025*-26, with 10 children dying from fatal assault or neglect, compared with three in 2024-25 and four in 2023-*24. While small numbers mean annual fluctuations should be interpreted cautiously, the increase warrants close examination of the circumstances and risks preceding these deaths.

Analysis of the 2025-26 cohort identified a concentration of known vulnerabilities:

- 78 per cent of children had experienced previous abuse
- 52 per cent of families had a documented history of domestic and family violence
- 39 per cent of perpetrators had a history of criminal offending
- 57 per cent of perpetrators had suspected or diagnosed mental health concerns
- 43 per cent of perpetrators had a history of alcohol or substance misuse.

These contemporary findings are consistent with the Commission's earlier analysis of 109 Queensland child deaths between 2004 and 2019 in which a parent or caregiver was responsible. That analysis found that:

- 47 per cent of victims had experienced repeated child protection concerns
- biological parents were responsible for the majority of deaths (65 of 90 events), compared with step-parents, extended family members or other caregivers
- most deaths occurred in the context of fatal child abuse (44 events) or domestic homicide (31 events)
- in 49 per cent of cases, a government agency had previously recorded threats by the perpetrator to kill the child.



Taken together, the current and historical evidence shows that fatal assault and neglect rarely occurs in isolation or without preceding indicators of vulnerability. Prior abuse, domestic and family violence, parental mental ill-health, substance misuse and offending frequently intersect, and in some cases explicit threats to the child are known to services before the death occurs.

Prevention therefore depends on recognising the accumulation and escalation of risk across incidents and service systems, rather than assessing individual events in isolation. This requires effective information sharing across health, child protection, justice and community services, and timely intervention where multiple or escalating risks are identified. It also requires domestic and family violence responses to assess children's safety as victims in their own right, particularly where threats, coercive behaviour or escalating violence indicate a direct risk to the child.

6. Outcomes after exiting statutory systems

Long-term outcomes for people with child protection involvement

The consequences associated with childhood maltreatment and child protection involvement extend well beyond the period in which a child receives statutory services. Australian longitudinal and linked administrative data identify elevated rates of mental ill-health, homelessness, income-support receipt, health-service use and justice-system involvement extending through young adulthood.¹⁴⁹¹⁵⁰¹⁵¹

Importantly, recent research challenges a simple interpretation that these outcomes are caused by placement in OOHC itself. Children entering care are a highly selected population who have generally experienced more severe and accumulated maltreatment and other forms of adversity before entering care. The more useful analytical question is therefore whether the poorer outcomes observed among care-experienced people reflect the effects of maltreatment and pre-existing adversity, the experience and stability of care, or the interaction between these factors. Maltreatment appears to be a stronger determinant of mental health than care itself

Recent Australian research provides important new evidence on this distinction. A 2025 study drawing on the Australian Child Maltreatment Study compared 395 people who had experienced OOHC with 395 maltreated people who had not entered care. The groups were statistically matched according to characteristics including the age of onset, duration, frequency, perpetrator, type and range of maltreatment experienced. Once differences in maltreatment intensity were taken into account, experience of OOHC was not independently associated with increased odds of any of the four mental disorders examined — post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, generalised anxiety disorder and alcohol use disorder. The combined estimate was not statistically significant and the researchers concluded that the intensity and characteristics of childhood maltreatment were more important determinants of subsequent mental disorder than the experience of OOHC itself.¹⁵² This is an important qualification to the conventional narrative about outcomes for children in care. Comparisons between care-experienced people and the general population can substantially conflate the effects of care with the adversity that preceded it.

This does not make the quality of care irrelevant. Australian research involving more than 2000 children with an OOHC history has found that placement instability, longer and more frequent exposure to maltreatment and other characteristics of the child's care and child protection history are associated with educational underachievement, diagnosed mental disorder and police contact. The evidence therefore suggests considerable variation within the care population itself. The performance question for the child protection system is consequently more sophisticated than whether people who experienced care subsequently achieve the same outcomes as the general population. Children entering care frequently begin from a substantially different baseline. The relevant question is whether statutory intervention reduces the effects of prior adversity and provides sufficient safety, stability, relationships and therapeutic support to improve the child's longer-term trajectory.

Economic disadvantage extends well beyond leaving care

The most comprehensive national evidence of longer-term economic outcomes comes from AIHW's linkage of state and territory OOHC records with Commonwealth income-support data. This allows outcomes to be followed beyond the immediate transition from care and through to 30 years of age.¹⁵³ Across ages 16–30, 56 per cent of the OOHC study population received income support — approximately three times the proportion in the comparable Australian population. The difference remained substantial at age 30, when people with an OOHC history were almost four times as likely to receive income support as the broader population.¹⁵⁴

The pattern is not limited to short-term assistance immediately after leaving care. Earlier AIHW analysis found that young people transitioning from care were substantially more likely to receive unemployment, parenting and disability support

payments and were four times as likely to remain on payments for longer periods than other young people.¹⁵⁵ The type of income support also changes as care-experienced people move through adulthood. AIHW found comparatively high use of unemployment, parenting and disability-related payments, while teenagers with an OOHC history were up to six times as likely to receive parenting payments as other Australian teenagers. Young people who exited care at ages 17 or 18 were also more likely to receive income support.¹⁵⁶

These findings suggest that the economic consequences associated with childhood adversity and child protection involvement are not confined to a difficult transition at age 18. For a significant cohort, disadvantage remains visible well into adulthood.

The effects are visible across health and other service systems

Recent Australian population-level research provides an unusually broad view of these longer-term outcomes. A 2024 Western Australian linked-data study examined a birth cohort of 414,266 people, comprising 6526 people with an OOHC history, 78,095 who had child protection contact but had not entered care, and 329,645 with no recorded child protection contact.¹⁵⁷ The three-group comparison is analytically important. Care-experienced young people experienced significantly poorer outcomes across physical and mental health, disability, education, social housing and criminal justice involvement than people with no child protection contact. However, people who had experienced child protection involvement without entering care also experienced poorer outcomes than those with no child protection contact.¹⁵⁸ The findings demonstrate a gradient of disadvantage rather than a simple distinction between people who have and have not experienced care. That pattern is consistent with the emerging evidence about maltreatment intensity. Placement in care identifies a population with particularly significant needs, but the underlying association with poorer outcomes is already observable among children known to child protection who never enter care. This suggests that the longer-term policy issue extends beyond care leavers. Child protection involvement itself identifies a population at elevated risk of future health and social disadvantage, with the level of risk increasing among children experiencing the greatest accumulation of adversity including in the statutory system.

The transition from care is substantial in scale

Nationally, approximately 11,000 children were discharged from OOHC during 2023–24. Around 41 per cent were reunified with family, while approximately 2300 children—21 per cent of all children discharged—aged out of care.¹⁵⁹ This represents a substantial annual cohort moving from comparatively intensive statutory support towards either greater independence, or isolation. Governments across Australia now provide leaving-care assistance beyond 18, generally to at least age 21, including various combinations of housing, financial, education, employment, health and community support.¹⁶⁰ The emerging longitudinal evidence suggests that this transition period warrants particular attention. The risks associated with leaving care do not occur independently: housing instability can disrupt education and employment; poor mental health can affect housing stability; financial insecurity can increase reliance on crisis services; and justice involvement can further disrupt housing and employment.

From child protection expenditure to lifetime service demand

Taken together, the evidence has significant implications for how child protection performance and expenditure are assessed. Traditional child protection measures largely end at the boundary of the statutory system: notifications, investigations, substantiations, placement type, placement stability, reunification and expenditure on OOHC. These measures describe what happens within child protection, but provide limited information about what happens to children afterwards. The emerging Australian linked-data evidence demonstrates that disadvantage remains visible across government systems long after statutory child protection involvement has ended. People with an OOHC history are three times as likely to receive income support across ages 16–30; more than half of one longitudinal Victorian care-leaver cohort accessed homelessness services within four years; and approximately one-quarter of young people under youth justice supervision have an OOHC history.¹⁶¹¹⁶²¹⁶³ This creates an important distinction between the immediate cost of

the child protection system and the longer-term service demand associated with childhood adversity. Where the effects of maltreatment, developmental need, disrupted education, housing instability and mental ill-health persist it can migrate into homelessness, health, mental-health, income-support and justice systems.

The 2025 Australian Child Maltreatment Study analysis provides an important qualification to that conclusion. It suggests that this downstream disadvantage should not simply be characterised as an outcome of being placed in care. Maltreatment intensity appears to be a more important determinant of subsequent mental disorder than OOHC itself.¹⁶⁴ That finding arguably increases the importance of effective child protection intervention. If the children entering care already carry a substantially elevated lifetime risk arising from maltreatment and accumulated adversity, the purpose of care cannot be limited to providing immediate safety. Statutory intervention represents an opportunity to alter a longer-term trajectory.

Programs supporting care-leavers

Queensland significantly expanded its support for young people leaving care from 1 July 2023 through Extended Post Care Support (EPCS). The reform effectively extended support to age 21 rather than expecting young people to transition abruptly to independence at 18. Young people remaining with foster or kinship carers can have the fortnightly caring allowance continue until age 21, while eligible young people living independently can receive financial support of up to \$16,000 per year, administered through an EPCS provider alongside intensive case support. That support can include assistance to secure and maintain housing, meet everyday living costs, access education, training and employment, and maintain connections with family, culture and community.

EPCS operates alongside Next Step Plus, Queensland's longer-standing transition and after-care service. Next Step Plus works with young people from age 15 while they are still in care to build the skills and connections required for adulthood and remains available to care leavers up to age 25. Support is tailored to the young person and can include assistance with housing, finances and entitlements, education and employment, health and other practical aspects of independent living. The two programs therefore perform complementary functions: EPCS provides an enhanced entitlement to financial and case support to age 21 for the eligible post-2023 cohort, while Next Step Plus provides a broader transition and after-care service extending to age 25.

The first year of EPCS provides useful evidence about implementation. During 2023–24, 517 young people turned 18 and left statutory care to live in their own arrangements, making them eligible for the independent-living component of EPCS. Of these, 331 received financial assistance during the year, equivalent to around 64 per cent of the eligible cohort. The Government provided \$4.35 million to EPCS services to support the 517 eligible young people—\$999,000 in the first half of the financial year and \$3.352 million in the second.¹⁶⁵

Importantly, the Government acknowledged at the time that its information systems could not readily provide more detailed utilisation data. Collection was described as a manual process reliant on reporting by funded providers, six-monthly utilisation figures were unavailable, and expenditure actually incurred on individual young people could not yet be reconciled. This is analytically significant: the introduction of an entitlement does not necessarily demonstrate that young people are accessing it, and the first year showed a material difference between the number eligible for financial assistance and the number recorded as receiving it.

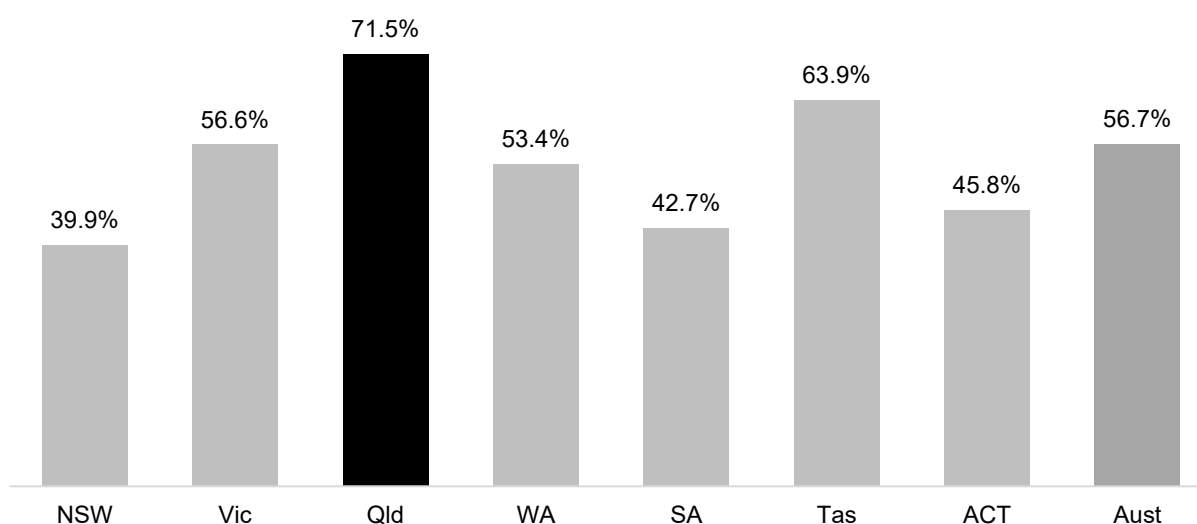
The program subsequently expanded. Departmental reporting indicates that 831 eligible young people were supported through the extension of post-care support in 2024–25. The 2024–25 Budget provided \$31.8 million for 18 EPCS services and direct support payments, with the Government estimating at the time that around 1658 young people would become eligible for the enhanced supports in the program's second year.

Repeat offending following detention

A central measure of the effectiveness of youth detention is what happens after children leave it. Queensland has substantially increased its investment in youth justice and detention, but high rates of repeat contact with the justice system remain a persistent performance challenge. The contemporary evidence suggests that the issue is not simply whether detention capacity is available, but whether detention and the transition back to the community are contributing to a sustained reduction in offending. The latest nationally comparable data demonstrates the scale of this challenge. Of Queensland young people aged 10–16 released from sentenced supervision in 2022–23, 71.5 per cent returned to sentenced supervision within 12 months. This was the highest proportion reported by any Australian jurisdiction for which comparable data was available. The comparable national proportion was 56.7 per cent, while the lowest jurisdictional result was 39.9 per cent.

This measure requires careful interpretation. A return to sentenced supervision is not the same as reoffending. It only captures young people who subsequently receive another supervised sentence and can include returns associated with breach of an existing order. It does not capture offending that does not come to the attention of authorities or result in another supervised sentence. The Productivity Commission therefore expressly cautions against interpreting the measure as a direct measure of recidivism. It nevertheless provides a nationally consistent indication of repeated involvement in the youth justice system, and Queensland's result remains materially above the national rate.

Figure 42: Proportion of young people released from sentenced supervision who returned to sentenced supervision within 12 months, 2022–23



Source: Productivity Commission (2026). *Report on Government Services 2026*, Table 17A.26.

Other Queensland evidence points to the same underlying challenge. Queensland Government material has reported post-detention reoffending at approximately 94 per cent. While this is a different measure and should not be directly compared with the Productivity Commission's return-to-supervision measure, both indicate a very high level of continuing justice-system contact among children who have experienced detention. Of particular concern is how quickly offending has historically occurred following release. The QAO examined children leaving detention between 2018–19 and 2021–22 and found that approximately 75 per cent subsequently reoffended. More than half—53 per cent—reoffended within two

weeks of release. Reoffending was particularly concentrated on the first day after release, with further peaks on the fourth and fifth days.

The period immediately following detention is therefore a critical point of intervention. For many children, the highest risk of further offending has historically been measured in days rather than months. This makes the quality of transition planning, accommodation, family support and continuity of therapeutic and other services an important part of assessing the effectiveness of detention itself. Previous transition arrangements did not always reflect this level of risk. QAO found that the Department relied substantially on a 72-hour transition planning model, introduced in March 2022, despite being unable to demonstrate an evidentiary basis for selecting that period. QAO concluded that children leaving detention required support over a longer period.

There has subsequently been a significant change in approach. The Government's Staying on Track model provides children transitioning from detention with rehabilitation and support for up to 12 months, including at least six months of intensive support, with assistance intended to address at-risk behaviours and support engagement in education, training and employment. This is a material shift from the previous transition model and responds to an identifiable weakness in the system. The performance question now becomes whether that change produces measurable improvement: fewer children reoffending after detention, a longer period before any subsequent offence, fewer returns to sentenced supervision and improved engagement with accommodation, education, training and employment.

Exiting care into homelessness

Housing instability is increasingly visible across the child protection system, affecting children while subject to statutory intervention and continuing for many young people after they leave care. The available data indicates that this interaction is not simply more common among children known to child protection; it is frequently repeated, prolonged and unresolved. In Queensland, 16.7 per 10,000 children on care and protection orders accessed Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS), above the national rate of 14.7 per 10,000. Nationally, approximately 8500 children on care and protection orders received specialist homelessness assistance in 2024–25, of whom 58 per cent were returning clients. The median duration of support increased to 109 days, from 102 days in 2022–23, indicating that engagement is often both repeated and prolonged.¹⁶⁶

Their reasons for seeking assistance also demonstrate the intersection between housing instability and broader family vulnerability. Thirty-eight per cent identified family and domestic violence as their principal reason for seeking assistance and a further 17 per cent identified a housing crisis. Compared with the overall SHS population, children on care and protection orders were substantially more likely to require assistance for family and domestic violence (41% compared with 28%), family or relationship issues (19% compared with 11%), educational assistance (12% compared with 7.7%) and school liaison (7.7% compared with 3.0%). Demand for accommodation frequently exceeds the assistance available. Around 61 per cent of children on care and protection orders—approximately 5,200 children—needed accommodation assistance in 2024–25, but only around 3,800 received accommodation. This reflects broader capacity constraints within the homelessness system, where nationally around one-third of SHS clients requiring accommodation received neither accommodation nor a referral to another service.

Importantly, receiving homelessness assistance does not necessarily result in housing stability. Of approximately 2,700 children on care and protection orders who were homeless when SHS support commenced, around 1,400 remained homeless when support ended, most living in short-term accommodation or couch surfing. A further 340 children who had been at risk of homelessness when support commenced were homeless by the end of their support period. These outcomes suggest that housing instability can persist alongside statutory child protection intervention rather than being resolved through it.

The pattern continues into the transition from care. Nationally, approximately 6,200 people leaving care accessed homelessness services in 2024–25. Of these, 69 per cent were returning clients, indicating that homelessness-service contact was generally not a first or isolated episode. Among clients aged 18–24, 71 per cent had previously received specialist homelessness assistance.¹⁶⁷ Leaving-care homelessness also intersects with other service systems: among clients whose dwelling type was recorded when support commenced, approximately 20 per cent were in a psychiatric hospital or unit and 16 per cent were in another hospital setting.¹⁶⁸

Longitudinal research demonstrates how these risks can accumulate into early adulthood. An Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute study following 1848 Victorian young people who left care in 2013 and 2014 found that 54 per cent accessed homelessness services within four years of leaving care. The same cohort had substantial involvement with mental health, alcohol and other drug, hospital and justice services, with use of alcohol and other drug, justice and homelessness services estimated at seven times that of the comparable general population.¹⁶⁹

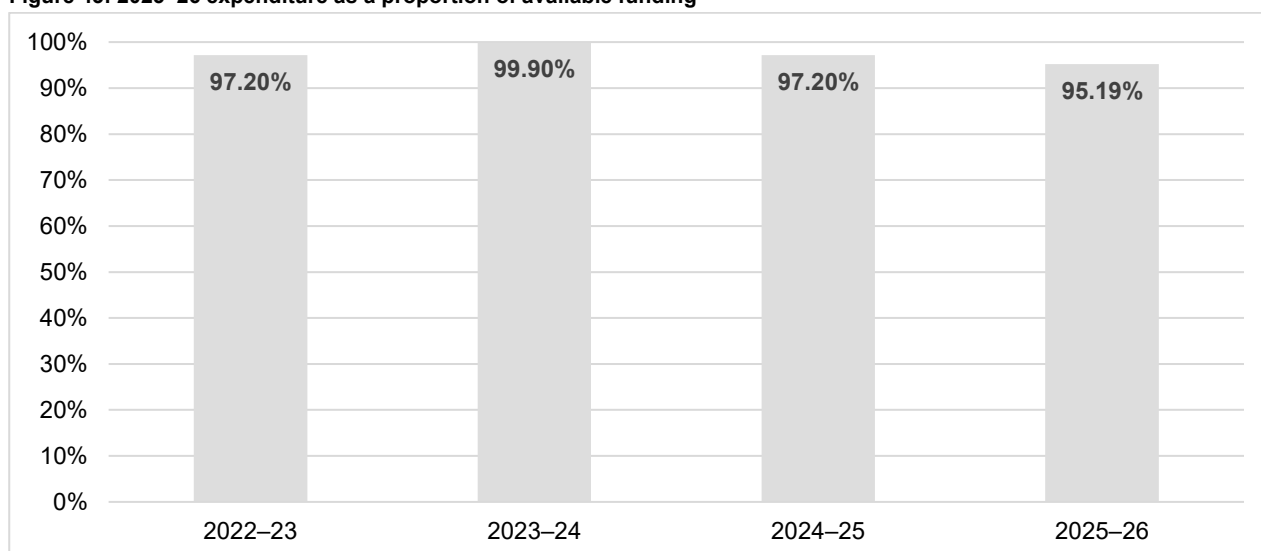
Taken together, the data reveals a continuum of housing instability across children's interaction with the child protection system. Children on care and protection orders access homelessness services at higher rates, more than half are repeat users, and for many homelessness persists despite receiving assistance. After leaving care, repeated homelessness-service use remains common and increasingly intersects with mental health, substance use, hospital and justice systems.

Financial performance

The Commission continued to demonstrate strong financial stewardship throughout 2025–26, managing a period of significant organisational growth while maintaining disciplined financial management and delivering its expanding statutory responsibilities within approved funding. The Commission's final income for the year was \$24.665 million, increasing from the original budget of \$23.245 million. Additional funding supported several priority initiatives, including accelerated implementation of the Reportable Conduct Scheme, state wage supplementation, research into international best practice for supporting children affected by child sexual abuse and adjustments associated with prevailing interest rates.

Despite this significant expansion in activity, the Commission's total expenditure for the year was \$23.478 million. This continues the Commission's record of prudent budget management, building on expenditure outcomes achieved over the previous four years.

Figure 43: 2025–26 expenditure as a proportion of available funding



The Commission's budget reflects the breadth of its statutory responsibilities. Funding supported the delivery of functions under both the FCC Act and the CSO Act, including oversight, child death prevention, research, education, regulation and implementation of Queensland's new Child Safe Organisations framework. Significant investments during the year included the continued development of the CSO case management system and delivery of the Child Safe Organisations Capacity Building Grants Program. Consistent with the Commission's operating model, people remain its most significant investment. Employee costs totalled \$14.41 million, representing approximately 60 per cent of total expenditure and supporting an approved workforce of 89 full-time equivalent positions.

Financial results

Queensland Family and Child Commission	Actual 2026 \$'000	Actual 2025 \$'000
Income from continuing operations		
User charges	-	78
Grants and other contributions	24,204	21,149
Other revenue	461	471
Total income from continuing operations	24,665	21,698
Expenses from continuing operations		
Employee expenses	14,410	10,827
Supplies and services	6,664	5,849
Depreciation and amortisation	3	4
Other expenses	2,401	4,412
Total expenses from continuing operations	23,478	21,092
Operating results from continuing operations	1,187	606
Total comprehensive income	1,187	606

Financial position

Queensland Family and Child Commission	Actual 2026 \$'000	Actual 2025 \$'000
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	6,650	4,955
Receivables	394	756
Prepayments	37	-
Total current assets	7,081	5,711
Non-current assets		
Plant and equipment	29	3
Total non-current assets	29	3
Total assets	7,110	5,714
Current liabilities		
Payables	1,142	1,041
Accrued employee benefits	455	347
Total current liabilities	1,597	1,388
Total liabilities	1,597	1,388
Net assets	5,513	4,326
Equity		
Contributed equity	2,427	2,427
Accumulated surplus	3,086	1,899
Total equity	5,513	4,326

Further information

The Commission did not engage in overseas travel. The Commission engaged in consultancies in 2025–26.

This data will be published on the Open Data Portal – <https://data.qld.gov.au/>

**Queensland Family and Child
Commission**

Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Queensland Family and Child Commission Financial Statements 2025-26

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Queensland Family and Child Commission**STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME**
for the year ended 30 June 2026

	Notes	2026 \$'000	2025 \$'000
Income from Continuing Operations			
User charges		-	78
Grants and other contributions	3.	24,204	21,149
Other revenue	4.	461	471
Total Income from Continuing Operations		24,665	21,698
Expenses from Continuing Operations			
Employee expenses	5.	14,410	10,827
Supplies and services	6.	6,664	5,849
Depreciation and amortisation		3	4
Other expenses	7.	2,401	4,412
Total Expenses from Continuing Operations		23,478	21,092
Operating Result from Continuing Operations		1,187	606
Total Comprehensive Income		1,187	606

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION****as at 30 June 2026**

	Notes	2026 \$'000	2025 \$'000
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	8.	6,650	4,955
Receivables	9.	394	756
Prepayments		37	-
Total Current Assets		7,081	5,711
Non Current Assets			
Plant and equipment		29	3
Total Non Current Assets		29	3
Total Assets		7,110	5,714
Current Liabilities			
Payables	10.	1,142	1,041
Accrued employee benefits	11.	455	347
Total Current Liabilities		1,597	1,388
Total Liabilities		1,597	1,388
Net Assets		5,513	4,326
Equity			
Contributed equity		2,427	2,427
Accumulated surplus		3,086	1,899
Total Equity		5,513	4,326

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY**
for the year ended 30 June 2026

	Accumulated Surplus \$'000	Contributed Equity \$'000	TOTAL \$'000
Balance as at 1 July 2024	1,293	2,427	3,720
Operating Result from Continuing Operations	606	-	606
Balance as at 30 June 2025	1,899	2,427	4,326
Balance as at 1 July 2025	1,899	2,427	4,326
Operating Result from Continuing Operations	1,187	-	1,187
Balance as at 30 June 2026	3,086	2,427	5,513

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS**
for the year ended 30 June 2026

	2026 \$'000	2025 \$'000
Cash flows from operating activities		
<i>Inflows:</i>		
User charges	-	122
Grants and other contributions	24,204	21,149
GST input tax credits from ATO	1,391	564
GST collected from customers	10	17
Other revenue	461	471
<i>Outflows:</i>		
Employee expenses	(14,385)	(10,762)
Supplies and services	(6,597)	(4,967)
GST paid to suppliers	(948)	(964)
GST remitted to ATO	(10)	(17)
Other	(2,401)	(4,412)
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	1,725	1,201
Cash flows from investing activities		
<i>Outflows:</i>		
Payments for plant and equipment	(29)	-
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities	(29)	-
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	1,696	1,201
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	4,955	3,754
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	6,650	4,955

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS for the year ended 30 June 2026

NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF CASH FLOW

Reconciliation of Operating Result to Net Cash provided by Operating Activities

	2026 \$'000	2025 \$'000
Operating surplus/(deficit)	1,187	606
Depreciation and amortisation expense	3	4
<i>Changes in assets and liabilities:</i>		
(Increase)/decrease in receivables	(81)	93
(Increase)/decrease in GST input tax credits receivable	443	(400)
(Increase)/decrease in prepayments	(37)	-
Increase/(decrease) in accounts payable	102	845
Increase/(decrease) in accrued employee benefits	108	53
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	1,725	1,201

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

Section 1: About the QFCC and this Financial Report

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

Section 2: Notes about our Financial Performance

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

Section 3: Notes about our Financial Position

- Note 8: Cash and Cash Equivalents
- Note 9: Receivables
- Note 10: Payables
- Note 11: Accrued Employee Benefits

Section 4: Notes about Risks and Other Accounting Uncertainties

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

Section 5: Notes on our Performance compared to Budget

- Note 16: Budgetary Reporting Disclosures

Section 6: Other Information

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

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

1. Basis of Financial Statement Preparation

General Information

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

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

In October 2024, the Queensland Government passed the Child Safe Organisations Act (The Act), a significant reform for the QFCC. The Act gives effect to a system recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Underpinned by a child's rights and strengths-based approach, the Act aims to ensure that organisations working with children provide safe environments where children's rights, needs and interests are met. The QFCC is responsible for supporting and overseeing implementation of the new Child Safe Organisations system, including the Child Safe Standards and the Universal Principle, which promote institutional responsibility and align with national and international child protection standards.

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 2025.

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.

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. Due to rounding, totals may not add exactly.

Comparatives

Comparative information reflects the audited 2024-25 financial statements.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

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

Presentation (cont'd)

Current / Non-Current Classification

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

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 the right at the end of the reporting period 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 receipted but not banked as at 30 June.

Shared Service Provider

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

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

Going concern

In response to the Child Death Review Board's In Plain Sight review, the Queensland Government has announced its intention to establish a new child safeguarding entity, the Queensland Protection Commission (QPC). The QPC will bring together a range of existing government functions, including those currently performed by the QFCC and Queensland Workers Screening Services, together with a new child safeguarding intelligence hub. As part of this reform, the QFCC is expected to be abolished on 31 January 2027, with its assets and liabilities transferring to the State. These financial statements have been prepared on a basis consistent with a going concern basis as the QFCC will continue to operate and perform its statutory functions until the transfer date, after which its functions, assets and liabilities will continue through the QPC.

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

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

Presentation (cont'd)

Authorisation of Financial Statements for Issue

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

2. Objectives of the QFCC

The QFCC has the following objectives:

- Shape system performance in the best interests of children and their families by producing rigorous analysis and evidence-based advice.
- Advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children by collaborating with organisations, entities and individuals.
- Increase opportunities for children and families to influence decisions that affect their lives.
- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to grow up strong in their identity, culture and community, free from systemic racism and discrimination.
- Ensure Queensland organisations meet their obligations to safeguard children and prevent abuse through the strategic use of regulatory powers.
- Exhibit excellence in governance, performance and organisational culture.

	2026 \$'000	2025 \$'000
3. Grants and Contributions		
Grants received from the Department of Justice	24,204	21,149
Total	24,204	21,149

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

3. Grants and Contributions (cont'd)

Accounting Policy - Grants and Contributions

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

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

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

The QFCC received grant funding from the Department of Justice. The funding has been recognised as revenue on receipt under AASB 1058 as the QFCC's obligations are not sufficiently specific.

	2026 \$'000	2025 \$'000
4. Other Revenue		
Other operating revenue	68	2
Interest	393	469
Total	461	471

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

	2026	2025
	\$'000	\$'000
5. Employee Expenses		
<i>Employee Benefits</i>		
Wages and salaries	10,254	7,803
Employer superannuation contributions	1,449	1,085
Annual leave levy	1,045	819
Long service leave levy	273	206
Termination benefits	184	-
<i>Employee Related Expenses</i>		
Payroll tax	641	464
Other employee related expenses	564	450
Total	14,410	10,827

	2026	2025
Full-Time Equivalent Employees *	83	68

* FTE data as at 30 June 2026 (based upon the fortnight ending 26 June 2026 (being the last pay period of the year).

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.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

5. Employee Expenses (cont'd)

Accounting Policy - Annual Leave

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

Accounting Policy - Long Service Leave

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

Accounting Policy - Superannuation

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

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

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

Accounting Policy - Workers' Compensation Premiums

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

Key management personnel and remuneration disclosures

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

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

	2026 \$'000	2025 \$'000
6. Supplies and Services		
Building services *	939	717
Administration costs	110	250
Contractors and consultants	3,789	3,057
Corporate services provider costs	979	863
Advertising and promotions	108	227
Minor plant and equipment	138	191
Other supplies and services	601	544
Total	6,664	5,849

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, which holds substantive substitution rights over the assets used within these schemes. Building Services includes office rental payments to QGAO of \$693k (2025: \$543k), which are expensed in the periods in which they are incurred. Rental payments are reduced by monthly rental incentives for the full 2025-26 financial year.

Contractors and consultants

Payments to contractors and consultants included \$1.860 million in relation to the Child Safe Organisations ICT Project. The project involves the implementation of a Software as a Service (SaaS) solution to support the QFCC in fulfilling its legislative functions and responsibilities under the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024*.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

	2026 \$'000	2025 \$'000
7. Other Expenses		
Insurance premiums (QGIF)	5	5
External audit fees *	30	31
Sponsorships and Grants	2,338	4,346
Other expenses	28	30
Total	2,401	4,412

* Total audit fees quoted in the Queensland Audit Office's plan for 2025-26 is \$45,000 (2024-25: \$30,593).

Sponsorships and Grants

Grants and sponsorship funding is provided to relevant organisations to support them in meeting their legislative obligations, particularly in relation to engagement and capacity building initiatives, as well as to enable those best placed to deliver activities aligned with the QFCC's strategic vision. Grants in 2025-26 specifically funded sector-specific capability and capacity building packages for sectors subject to the Reportable Conduct Scheme and projects to improve existing child safeguarding training.

8. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash at bank	6,650	4,955
Total	6,650	4,955

For the purpose of the Statement of Financial Position and the Statement of Cash Flows, cash assets include all cash and cheques receipted but not banked at 30 June as well as deposits at call with financial institutions.

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

	2026 \$'000	2025 \$'000
9. Receivables		
Trade debtors	1	3
GST receivable	110	553
Annual leave reimbursements	206	140
Long service leave reimbursement	77	60
Total	394	756

Accounting Policy - Receivables

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

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

Impairment of Receivables

Accounting Policy - Impairment of Receivables

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

No impairment losses have been recognised for receivables in 2025-26.

	2026 \$'000	2025 \$'000
10. Payables		
Trade creditors	1,054	964
Other payables	88	77
Total	1,142	1,041

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.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

	2026 \$'000	2025 \$'000
11. Accrued Employee Benefits		
<i>Current</i>		
Annual leave levy payable	281	251
Long service leave levy payable	79	60
Salaries and wages outstanding	95	36
Total	455	347

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*.

12. Contingencies

There were no other known contingent assets or liabilities as at 30 June 2026.

13. Financial Risk Disclosures

Financial Instrument Categories

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

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

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

Category	Note	2026 \$'000	2025 \$'000
Financial Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	8.	6,650	4,955
Financial assets at amortised cost:			
Receivables	9.	394	756
Total financial assets		7,044	5,711
Financial Liabilities			
Financial liabilities at amortised cost:			
Payables	10.	1,142	1,041
Total financial liabilities at amortised cost		1,142	1,041

Financial risk management

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

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

14. Events Occurring After Balance Date

No events have occurred after balance date that have a material effect on these financial statements. However, it should be noted that the QFCC is expected to dissolve its operations on 31 January 2027 with the Queensland Government announcing its intention to establish a new child safeguarding entity, the Queensland Protection Commission (QPC). The QFCC will form a part of the QPC with its assets and liabilities transferring to the State. These financial statements have been prepared on a basis consistent with a going concern basis.

15. 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 18 Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements

AASB 18 applies to not-for-profit public sector entities for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2028, which will be the 2028-29 financial year. As the QFCC is expected to cease prior to this date, the new standard will be considered as part of the QPC.

All other Australian accounting standards and interpretations with future effective dates are either not applicable to QFCC's activities or have no material impact on the QFCC.

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

16. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures

This section contains explanations of major variances between the QFCC's actual 2025-26 financial results and the original budget presented to Parliament.

Budget to Actual Comparison - Statement of Comprehensive Income

		2026	2026	
	Variance	Actual	Original	Budget
	Notes	\$'000	budget	variance
			\$'000	\$'000
Income from Continuing Operations				
Grants and other contributions	1.	24,204	23,120	1,084
Other revenue	2.	461	125	336
Total Income from Continuing Operations		24,665	23,245	1,420
Expenses from Continuing Operations				
Employee expenses	3.	14,410	13,429	981
Supplies and services	4.	6,664	8,435	(1,771)
Depreciation and amortisation		3	4	(1)
Other expenses	5.	2,401	1,377	1,024
Total Expenses from Continuing Operations		23,478	23,245	233
Total Comprehensive Income		1,187	-	1,187

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

16. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures (cont'd)

Budget to Actual Comparison - Statement of Financial Position

		2026	2026	
	Variance	Actual	Original	Budget
	Notes	\$'000	Budget	Variance
			\$'000	\$'000
Current Assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	6.	6,650	3,754	2,896
Receivables		394	453	(59)
Other		37	-	37
Total Current Assets		7,081	4,207	2,874
Non-Current Assets				
Plant and equipment		29	(1)	30
Total Non-Current Assets		29	(1)	30
Total Assets		7,110	4,206	2,904
Current Liabilities				
Payables	7.	1,142	191	951
Accrued employee benefits	8.	455	294	161
Total Current Liabilities		1,597	485	1,112
Total Liabilities		1,597	485	1,112
Net Assets		5,513	3,721	1,792

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

16. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures (cont'd)

Budget to Actual Comparison - Statement of Cash Flows

		2026	2026	
	Variance	Actual	Original	Budget
	Notes	\$'000	Budget	Variance
			\$'000	\$'000
Cash flows from operating activities				
<i>Inflows:</i>				
Grants and other contributions	1.	24,204	23,120	1,084
GST input tax credits from ATO		1,391	-	1,391
GST collected from customers		10	-	10
Interest receipts	9.	393	125	268
Other		68	-	68
<i>Outflows:</i>				-
Employee expenses	10.	(14,385)	(13,429)	(956)
Supplies and services	11.	(6,597)	(8,439)	1,842
GST paid to suppliers		(948)	-	(948)
GST remitted to ATO		(10)	-	(10)
Other	12.	(2,401)	(1,377)	(1,024)
Net cash (used in) operating activities		1,725	-	1,725
Cash flows from investing activities				
<i>Outflows:</i>				
Payments for plant and equipment		(29)	-	(29)
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities		(29)	-	(29)
Net increase in cash held		1,696	-	1,696
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year		4,955	3,754	1,201
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year		6,650	3,754	2,896

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

16. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures (cont'd)

This section contains explanations of major variances between the QFCC's actual 2025-26 financial results and the original budget presented to Parliament.

Explanations of Major Variances

Statement of Comprehensive Income

1. The QFCC received additional grant funding in 2025-26 to support the implementation of the Child Safe Organisations Regulatory Framework, including the accelerated rollout of the Reportable Conduct Scheme, and to finalise activities arising from the Griffith Inquiry. At 30 June, activities associated with the Child Safe Organisations ICT project were not fully completed, resulting in \$1.187 million in funding being unspent. This funding will be spent in the 2026-27 financial year to complete the project.
2. The variance primarily reflects higher interest revenue due to higher average cash balances and interest rates exceeding budget expectations during 2025-26.
3. The variance is primarily attributable to increased employee expenses associated with the accelerated implementation of the Reportable Conduct Scheme under the Child Safe Organisations legislative reforms. The increased costs relate to staffing resources, recruitment activities, education and training programs for staff, including organisational cultural change workshops.
4. Supplies and services expenditure is below budget due to ICT project delays, with related costs now expected to be incurred later than originally planned.
5. The increase in other expenses is primarily due to sponsoring initiatives that align to the QFCC strategic objectives.

Statement of Financial Position

6. The increase in cash and cash equivalents is primarily attributable to unspent grant funding, the timely receipt of Business Activity Statement (BAS) refunds, and outstanding trade creditor payments that remained unpaid at 30 June 2026.
7. Trade payables are above budget due to the timing of supplier invoices received at year-end, resulting in a higher level of accrued expenses.
8. The variance in accrued employee benefits reflects higher-than-planned workforce levels, with actual FTEs exceeding the assumptions used in the budget.

Statement of Cash Flows

9. The variance in interest received is due to a combination of a higher cash balance being maintained during the year and higher than originally planned interest rates.

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

16. Budgetary Reporting Disclosures (cont'd)

Explanations of Major Variances (cont'd)

Statement of Cash Flows (cont'd)

10. Employee expenses were higher than budget as a result of increased FTE levels and associated employment costs. This reflects workforce changes implemented to support the organisation's evolving service delivery and governance requirements, including obligations under the Child Safe Organisation Regulatory Framework.
11. The underspend in supplies and services primarily reflects delays in the ICT project, with associated expenditure deferred to future reporting periods.
12. The increase in other expenses relates to a decision through year to increase the sponsorship initiatives where those sponsorships align to the QFCC's strategic objectives.

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

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

Details of Key Management Personnel

The following details for key management personnel include those positions that had authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of the QFCC during 2025-26 and 2024-25.

Position	Position Responsibility
Principal Commissioner & CEO	The Principal Commissioner provides strategic and cross sectoral leadership and direction to government and non-government agencies to promote laws, policies, practices and services that improve the child protection and family support systems. The role is responsible for providing expert, evidence-based advice on child protection and safeguarding practices, to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. This role is also the Chair of the independent Child Death Review Board.
Commissioner	In partnership with the Principal Commissioner, the Commissioner provides strategic and cross sectoral leadership and direction to government and non-government agencies to strengthen laws, policies, practices and services that improve the child protection and family support systems. The role has a strong focus on collaboration, partnerships and networks across the sector to improve outcomes for all Queensland children and their families, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.
Chief Operating Officer	The Chief Operating Officer (COO) plays a pivotal role in ensuring the effective governance, integrity, and performance of the Commission, while fostering a strong organisational culture and embedding strategies that enhance service delivery and governance. This role has a strong focus on shaping and overseeing the Commission's regulatory and oversight operations, corporate services, and strategy and impact functions to enable efficient, consistent and scalable core operations. It ensures the Commission fulfills its statutory obligations, operates efficiently, complies with laws and public sector regulations, and delivers on its strategic objectives.

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

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

Details of Key Management Personnel (cont'd)

Position	Position Responsibility
Executive Director, Child Safe Organisations (previously Operations)	The Executive Director, Child Safe Organisations (CSO), leads Queensland's CSO regulatory scheme, overseeing the delivery of a complex, high-volume regulatory function established under the <i>Child Safe Organisations Act 2024</i> (CSO Act). This role provides strategic and operational leadership for the administration of the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct scheme, ensuring regulatory decisions are timely, consistent, evidence-based and aligned with legislative requirements.
Executive Director, Corporate Services (previously Government Relations & Corporate Services)	The Executive Director, Corporate Services, leads the division and plays a pivotal role to deliver effective and high quality services that builds the capacity, capability and integrity of the Commission, ensuring the best standards are in place for the Commission's government interactions, financial management, human resources, governance, information technology and Queensland child death register. The position was vacant until 23 November 2025.
Executive Director, Office of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commissioner (previously First Nations and Child Rights Advocacy)	The Executive Director, Office of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commissioner (OATSICC), partners with the Commissioner to provide strategic leadership to advance the rights and wellbeing of all children in Queensland, with a strong focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This role leverages strong leadership, strategic insight and people and project management capability to influence meaningful change.
Executive Director, Strategy and Impact	The Executive Director, Strategy and Impact, provides strategic leadership across the Commission's communication, insights, review and engagement functions to strengthen public understanding and drive positive outcomes for Queensland's children and their families. The role ensures the integrity of Child Death Review Board Secretariat and leads the systemic process of reviewing government service delivery to children who have died whilst known to the child protection system to identify system improvements, and supports the Board to make impactful recommendations.

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

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

Details of Key Management Personnel (cont'd)

Position	Position Responsibility
Director, Information Security, Governance & Risk (previously Corporate Strategy and Culture)	The Director, Information Security, Governance & Risk oversees corporate services functions including governance and risk, IT and reporting, as well as the Child Death Prevention team within the Commission, while developing and driving a business culture strongly aligned to achieving organisational objectives and continuous improvement.
Director, Monitoring, Advocacy & Reviews (previously Monitoring & Oversight)	The Director, Monitoring, Advocacy and Reviews oversees the Child Death Review Board Secretariat, Government Relations and Performance, and Analysis, Insights and Reporting functions. This role is required to provide strategic leadership to ensure the coordination between operational teams to maximise influence, insight and strategic impact of the Commission's public-facing, statutory and stakeholder-focused work.
Director, System Response Investigations	The Director, System Response Investigations was responsible for overseeing and evaluating the effectiveness of systems designed to protect children, including early childhood education, law enforcement (State and Federal), and the Blue Card system. It led the development of high-quality reports in response to defined Terms of Reference, examining system responses to child sexual abuse. This role ceased with the release of the In Plain Sight: Review into Systems Responses to Child Sexual Abuse report completed its review into system responses to child sexual abuse in Queensland. Position was vacant from 29 November 2025 until it ceased to be a key management personnel position as of 10 March 2026.
Director, Business Operations (previously Corporate Services)	The Director, Business Operations, oversees corporate services functions including human resources, finance, procurement, contract management and facilities within the Commission, while developing and driving a business culture strongly aligned to achieving organisational objectives and continuous improvement.
Director, Regulations (previously Child Safe Organisations)	The Director, Regulations is responsible for overseeing the frontline regulatory operations of the Child Safety Standards and the Reportable Conduct scheme governed by the <i>Child Safe Organisations Act 2024</i> (CSO Act). This role develops and drives a customer centric culture strongly aligned to the protection of children and young people, including providing strategic leadership to stakeholders to mitigate risks of non-compliance in safeguarding children, while enabling constructive, trusted engagement across government interactions. Position was vacant from 1 November 2025 to 1 February 2026.

Note: The Position Titles in brackets represent the former position titles prior to July 2025.

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

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

KMP 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 Sector Act 2022* by the Public Sector Commission Chief Executive or the Minister responsible for public sector industrial relations.

Remuneration expenses for those KMP comprise the following components:

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

Remuneration Expense

The Department of Justice's responsible Minister is identified as part of the Commission's KMP, consistent with additional guidance included in the revised version of AASB 124 Related Party Disclosures. That Minister is the Honourable Deborah (Deb) Frecklington, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity.

Ministerial remuneration entitlements are outlined in the Legislative Assembly of Queensland's Members' Remuneration Handbook. The Commission does not bear any cost of remuneration of Ministers. The majority of Ministerial entitlements are paid by the Legislative Assembly, with the remaining entitlements being provided by Ministerial Services Branch within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. As all Ministers are reported as KMP of the Queensland Government, aggregate remuneration expenses for all Ministers is disclosed in the Queensland General Government and Whole of Government Consolidated Financial Statements, which are published as part of Queensland Treasury's Report on State Finances.

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

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

Remuneration Expense (cont'd)

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

1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026

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
Principal Commissioner	290	-	8	37	-	335
Commissioner (to 31 May 2026)	233	6	6	29	48	322
Chief Operating Officer (from 1 July 2025)	295	6	8	35	-	344
Executive Director, Child Safe Organisations (to 31/10/2025)	203	6	5	27	136	377
Executive Director, Corporate Services (from 21/11/2025)	127	-	3	15	-	145
Executive Director, Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner	229	1	6	27	-	263
Executive Director, Strategy and Impact	207	6	5	26	-	244
Total Remuneration	1,584	25	41	196	184	2,030

For the 2025–26 financial year, directors under the SO classification are no longer included as part of Key Management Personnel (KMP) for reporting purposes.

Queensland Family and Child Commission
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

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

Remuneration Expense (cont'd)

1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025

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
Principal Commissioner	298	-	8	37	-	343
Commissioner	255	6	7	30	-	297
Executive Director, Operations	201	7	5	25	-	238
A/Executive Director, Operations (01/07/2024 - 08/07/2024)	4	-	-	1	-	5
Executive Director, Government Relations & Corporate Services	207	7	5	26	-	244
Executive Director, First Nations & Child Rights Advocacy (08/07/2024 - 30/06/2025)	220	2	6	26	-	253
Director, Corporate Services and Culture (09/12/2024 - 30/06/2025)	89	2	2	10	-	103
Director, Monitoring, Advocacy & Reviews	121	-	3	16	-	140
A/Director, Monitoring, Advocacy & Reviews (16/09/2024 to 27/09/2024)	4	-	-	-	-	4
Director Monitoring & Oversight (long term leave 1/07/2024 to 30/06/2025)	47	-	1	10	-	58
A/Director, Monitoring & Oversight (01/07/2024 - 07/01/2025)	62	-	2	8	-	71
Director, System Response Investigations (17/02/2025 - 30/06/2025)	64	-	2	7	-	73
Executive Director, Strategy and Impact (02/04/2025 - 30/06/2025)	52	5	1	6	-	65

Queensland Family and Child Commission**NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26**

17. Key Management Personnel (KMP) and Related Party Disclosures (cont'd)**Remuneration Expense (cont'd)****1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025 (cont'd)**

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
Director, Business Operations (long service leave between 24/02/2025 and 30/06/2025)	112	-	3	22	-	137
Director, Child Safe Organisations (28/01/2025 – 30/06/2025)	71	-	2	8	-	81
Total Remuneration	1,806	28	47	232	-	2,114

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

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

Related Party Transactions

Transactions with people/entities related to KMP

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

Transactions with other Queensland Government-controlled entities

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

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

The QFCC received services from CAA (Note 1) totalling \$800K and has an operating rental agreement with the Department of Housing and Public Works for commercial office accommodation totalling \$972K for services such as rent (Note 6), electricity, cleaning, repairs and maintenance, security and parking.

18. Taxation

The QFCC is a state body as defined under the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936* and is exempt from Commonwealth taxation with the exception of Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) and Goods and Services Tax (GST). FBT and GST are the only Commonwealth taxes accounted for by the QFCC. GST credits receivable from, and GST payable to, the ATO are recognised under Note 9 - Receivables.

19. Insurance

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

20. Accounting Estimates and Judgements

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

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

Queensland Family and Child Commission

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025-26

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

Accounting standards applied for the first time

No new accounting standards or interpretations that apply to the QFCC for the first time in 2025-26 had any material impact on the financial statements.

Accounting Standards Early Adopted

No Australian Accounting Standards have been early adopted for 2025-26.

22. Climate Risk Disclosures

Whole-of-Government climate-related reporting

The State of Queensland, as the ultimate parent of the QFCC, provides information and resources on climate related strategies and actions accessible at:

<https://www.treasury.qld.gov.au/policies-and-programs/climate/>

The Queensland Sustainability Report (QSR) outlines the Queensland Government's approach to managing key Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) risks and opportunities, including governance structures, major commitments and policies, and how these risks and opportunities are measured, monitored and managed across government. The QSR is supported by comprehensive datasets and data dictionaries. The QSR is available via Queensland Treasury's website at:

<https://www.treasury.qld.gov.au/programs-and-policies/queensland-sustainability-report>

Accounting estimates and judgements – climate-related risks

The QFCC considers climate-related risks when assessing material accounting judgements and estimates used in preparing its financial report. Key estimates and judgements identified include the potential for changes in asset useful lives, changes in the fair value of assets, impairment of assets, the recognition of provisions or the possibility of contingent liabilities.

The QFCC continues to monitor the emergence of material climate-related risks that may impact the financial statements of the QFCC, including directives from Government or Queensland Treasury.

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

**Queensland Family and Child Commission
Management Certificate
for the year ended 30 June 2026**

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

- (i) the prescribed requirements for establishing and keeping the accounts have been complied with in all material respects; and
- (ii) the financial statements have been drawn up to present a true and fair view, in accordance with prescribed accounting standards, of the transactions of the Queensland Family and Child Commission for the financial year ended 30 June 2026 and of the financial position of the office at the end of that year.

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

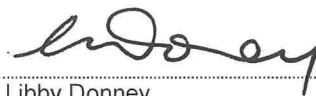


.....
Luke Twyford

Principal Commissioner

Queensland Family and Child Commission

Date: 27 August 2026



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Libby Donney

A/Chief Operating Officer

Queensland Family and Child Commission

Date: 27 August 2026

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Principal Commissioner of Queensland Family and Child Commission

Report on the audit of the financial report

Opinion

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

The financial report comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2026, the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes to the financial statements including material accounting policy information, and the management certificate.

In accordance with s. 40 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, for the year ended 30 June 2026:

- 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.
- c) In my opinion, the financial report:
 - i. gives a true and fair view of the entity's financial position as at 30 June 2026, and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended
 - ii. complies with the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*, the Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019 and Australian Accounting Standards.

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 (including independence standards)* (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.

Emphasis of matter – Expected future abolishment

I draw attention to Note 1 *Going concern* and Note 14 *Events occurring after balance date* of the financial report, which outlines that the financial report has been prepared on a basis consistent with the going concern basis. The QFCC is expected to be abolished on 31 January 2027. On abolishment of the entity, its functions, and its assets and liabilities are expected to be transferred to the Queensland Protection Commission.

Accordingly, no changes have been made to the measurement of assets and liabilities of the entity. My opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

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 such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error
- the establishment and keeping of accounts in accordance with prescribed requirements
- 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 the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at:

www.auasb.gov.au/auditors_responsibilities/ar4.pdf

A further description of my responsibilities under the *Auditor-General Act 2009* and *Auditor-General Auditing Standards* is located at the Queensland Audit Office website at:

www.qao.qld.gov.au/audit-program/audit-standards

These descriptions form part of my auditor's report.



Lisa Fraser
as delegate of the Auditor-General

28 August 2026

Queensland Audit Office
Brisbane

Appendix A – Glossary

ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
ATSICCOs	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation sector
ATSICPP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ATSICHS	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service
ANZCCGA	Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates
Board	Child Death Review Board
CAA	Corporate Administration Agency
CDVO	Contravention of a Domestic Violence Order
Commission QFCC	Queensland Family and Child Commission
CRQ	Children's Rights Queensland
CSO	Child Safe Organisations
CSO Act	Child Safe Organisations Act 2024
CSSCs	Child Safety Service Centres
DIYDG	Deadly Inspiring Youth Doing Good
DFSDSCS, Child Safety, the Department	Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety
DJAG	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
DoJ	Department of Justice
DPC	Department of the Premier and Cabinet
DYJ	Department of Youth Justice
DYJVS	Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support
EIAA	Enhanced Intake and Assessment Approach
FaCC	Family and Child Connect
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
FCC Act	Family and Child Commission Act 2014
FTE	Full time equivalent
FWS	Family Wellbeing Service
I&As	Investigation and Assessments
ICMS	Integrated Client Management System
IECMs	Intensive Education Case Managers
IFS	Intensive Family Support
IPS	Individual Placement and Support
the Inquiry	Commission of Inquiry into the Child Safety System
JICS Committee	Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee
NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
OATSICC The Office	Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner
OOHC	out-of-home care

OPG	Office of the Public Guardian
OSD	Outsourced Service Delivery
QAO	Queensland Audit Office
QATSI CPP	Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak
QCPW	Queensland Child Protection Week
QCOSS	Queensland Council of Social Services
QFKC	Queensland Foster and Kinship Care
QHE	Queensland Home Education
QPC	Queensland Protection Commission
QPS	Queensland Police Service
SDA	School Disciplinary Absence
SDS	Service Delivery Statements
SHS	Specialist Homelessness Services
SUDI	Sudden unexpected deaths in infancy
TQKP	Thriving Queensland Kids Partnerships
WYRC	Wacol Youth Remand Centre
YCRT	Youth Co-Responder Teams

Appendix B – Compliance checklist

Summary of requirement		Basis for requirement	Annual report reference
Letter of compliance	A letter of compliance from the accountable officer or statutory body to the relevant Minister/s	ARRs – section 7	3
Accessibility	- Table of contents - Glossary	ARRs – section 9.1	5, Appendix A – Glossary202
	Public availability	ARRs – section 9.2	2
	Interpreter service statement	Queensland Government Language Services Policy ARRs – section 9.3	2
	Copyright notice	Copyright Act 1968 ARRs – section 9.4	2
	Information Licensing	QGEA – Information Licensing ARRs – section 9.5	2
General information	Introductory Information	ARRs – section 10	5
Non-financial performance	Government's objectives for the community and whole-of-government plans/specific initiatives	ARRs – section 11.1	7
	Agency objectives and performance indicators	ARRs – section 11.2	8
	Agency service areas and service standards	ARRs – section 11.3	11
Financial performance	Summary of financial performance	ARRs – section 12.1	139
Governance – management and structure	Organisational structure	ARRs – section 13.1	55
	Executive management	ARRs – section 13.2	56
	Government bodies (statutory bodies and other entities)	ARRs – section 13.3	-
	Public Sector Ethics	<i>Public Sector Ethics Act 1994</i> ARRs – section 13.4	60
	Human Rights	<i>Human Rights Act 2019</i> ARRs – section 13.5	60
	Queensland public service values	ARRs – section 13.6	60
Governance – risk management and accountability	Risk management	ARRs – section 14.1	64
	Audit committee	ARRs – section 14.2	64
	Internal audit	ARRs – section 14.3	64
	External scrutiny	ARRs – section 14.4	65

Summary of requirement		Basis for requirement	Annual report reference
	• Information systems and recordkeeping	ARRs – section 14.5	67
	• Information Security attestation	ARRs – section 14.6	67
Governance – human resources	• Strategic workforce planning and performance	ARRs – section 15.1	57
	• Early retirement, redundancy and retrenchment	<i>Directive No.04/18 Early Retirement, Redundancy and Retrenchment</i> ARRs – section 15.2	60
Open Data	• Statement advising publication of information	ARRs – section 16	141
	• Consultancies	ARRs – section 31.1	https://data.qld.gov.au
	• Overseas travel	ARRs – section 31.2	https://data.qld.gov.au
	• Queensland Language Services Policy	ARRs – section 31.3	https://data.qld.gov.au
	• Charter of Victims' Rights	<i>VCSVRB Act 2024</i> ARRs – section 31.4	https://data.qld.gov.au
Financial statements	• Certification of financial statements	FAA – section 62 FPMS – sections 38, 39 and 46 ARRs – section 17.1	34
	• Independent Auditor's Report	FAA – section 62 FPMS – section 46 ARRs – section 17.2	200

FAA	Financial Accountability Act 2009
FPMS	Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019
ARRs	Annual report requirements for Queensland Government agencies
QGEA	Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture
VCSVRB	Victims' Commissioner and Sexual Violence Review Board Act 2024

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