

Performance of the
**Queensland child
protection system**
2024–25 Annual Report



QUEENSLAND
Family & Child
Commission







Acknowledgement

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (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 people 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.

The Commission recognises the rich and resilient cultures that continue to sustain and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We respect the right to self-determination and the critical importance of continuing connection to kin, Country and culture in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We recognise that self-determination, healing, dignity and respect are all fundamental elements needed to improve outcomes and relationships. As an agency, we are committed to embedding culturally safe and responsive design practices and delivery in our work.

The Commission acknowledges the special rights of children which are recorded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), guided by its four principles: the right of all children to survival and development; respect of the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all decisions relating to children; the right of all children to express their views freely on all matters affecting them; and the right of all children to enjoy all rights of the CRC without discrimination of any kind.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission plays a key role in overseeing Queensland's child protection system including the support and prevention services that help keep families strong. Our goal is to identify improvements to laws, policies, programs and services that lead to better outcomes, and to monitor reforms and recommendations to ensure continuous improvement. Through our oversight and engagement work, we provide assurance to the community that government agencies and funded services are meeting their responsibilities.

The Commission is required under section 40 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, to report annually on:

- Queensland's performance in relation to achieving state and national goals relating to the child protection system (including the system of services provided by relevant agencies to children and young people in need of protection or at risk of harm)
- Queensland's performance over time in comparison to other jurisdictions
- Queensland's progress in reducing the number of, and improving the outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system.

We assessed Queensland's performance in 2024–25 against national goals outlined in *Safe and Supported: The national framework for protecting Australia's children 2021–31* (Department of Social Services), *Child Safety Services performance indicators within the Department of Families, Disability Services and Child Safety's Strategic Plan 2025–29*, and *Breaking Cycles - An action plan: co-designing, developing and implementing services with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2023–25*. This year's report tells a story of statutory system involvement along a continuum.

The six sections are:

- changing social drivers
- prevention and early supports
- intervention and diversion for children and families at risk of entering the statutory systems
- statutory systems
- experience of children and young people in the care of statutory systems
- outcomes after involvement with statutory systems.



2024–25 Key issues

| **Table 1:** Summary of 2024–25 report on the Performance of the Queensland Child Protection System |

Changing social drivers	› Rising rates of housing instability, homelessness, and unaffordability are putting families under strain, with long waitlists for social housing. › Domestic and family violence, mental health, substance use, and disability remain significant contributors to child and family vulnerability. › Education barriers, including low enrolment, poor attendance, and high exclusion rates, are impacting outcomes for key cohorts. › There is increasing understanding of the prevalence of child sexual abuse. › There is a growing number of victim-survivors of domestic and family violence aged under 25 years.
Prevention and early supports	› Investment in domestic and family violence, youth mental health, homelessness and housing responses is improving outcomes for some at-risk groups. › Early intervention in education and youth justice, like case management and home education regulation, is showing promise. › Many youth offenders have prior child protection involvement and are themselves victims of crime, highlighting the need for trauma-informed prevention. › Rates of suicide, child removal, adult incarceration and youth detention are still worsening for First Nations people since the National Agreement on Closing the Gap baseline year of 2018–19.
Intervention and diversion	› Early supports are underfunded, fragmented and short-term relative to need, limiting their ability to prevent statutory involvement. › Community-controlled organisations need stronger and sustained investment to provide culturally safe services. › Police diversion efforts are uneven; youth co-responder teams are emerging as a more effective, collaborative model. › Children entering care and custody have significant unmet needs.
Statutory system intervention	› System involvement continues to grow, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, without a corresponding increase in substantiations. › System capacity and workforce shortages are delaying investigations and compromising outcomes. › There is an overuse of detention for unsentenced children, without evidence of effectiveness in changing behaviour. › The residential care market is growing beyond its purpose, with increasing complexity of children's needs not correlating with changes in care models.
Experiences in statutory systems	› There is a shortage of foster and kinship carers, increasing reliance on residential care and limiting placement stability. › Children face safety risks, limited disability and mental health support, and poor educational engagement. › Young people in detention experience harm, including self-injury, and have limited access to therapeutic supports.
Outcomes after statutory involvement	› Without sustained supports, young people exiting care or custody face higher risks of homelessness, poor mental health and early death. › Programs such as Transition to Adulthood and Transition2Success aim to assist young people in statutory systems but require better reach and evaluation. › Long-term outcomes reflect missed opportunities to intervene earlier and more effectively.

How **state** and **national goals** are considered across this report

Queensland Government’s objectives for the community

Safety where you live: Making Queensland safer with stronger laws, better-equipped courts and more police with better tools, while restoring consequences for actions, fixing our Child Safety system, ensuring early intervention and a bigger focus on rehabilitation, giving victims more rights and better support, and taking critical action to arrest skyrocketing rates of domestic and family violence.

Safe and Supported: The national framework for protecting Australia’s children 2021–31

1. National approach to early intervention and targeted support for children and families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.
2. Addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems.
3. Improved information sharing, data development and analysis.
4. Strengthening the child and family sector and workforce.

Breaking Cycles - An action plan: co-designing, developing and implementing services with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children.

Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive.

Governments and community services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety Strategic Plan 2025–2029

To prevent and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence.

To deliver high quality services and safeguards and promote the safety, inclusion, engagement, rights and social and economic participation of seniors, carers and people with disability.

To enable families to safely care for their children and young people, and provide services to support the safety, belonging and wellbeing and best interests of children and young people not able to be cared for by their families.

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	Changing social drivers	Prevention and early supports	Intervention and diversion needs	Statutory system intervention	Experiences in statutory systems	Outcomes after statutory involvement
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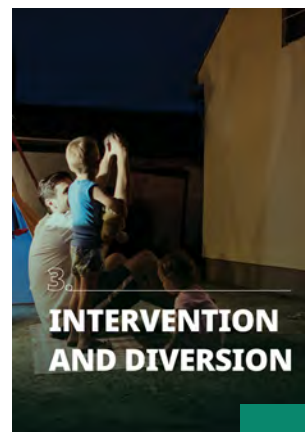
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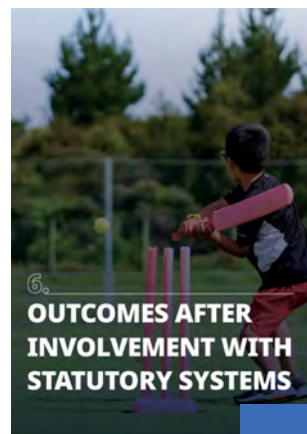
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1.

CHANGING SOCIAL DRIVERS

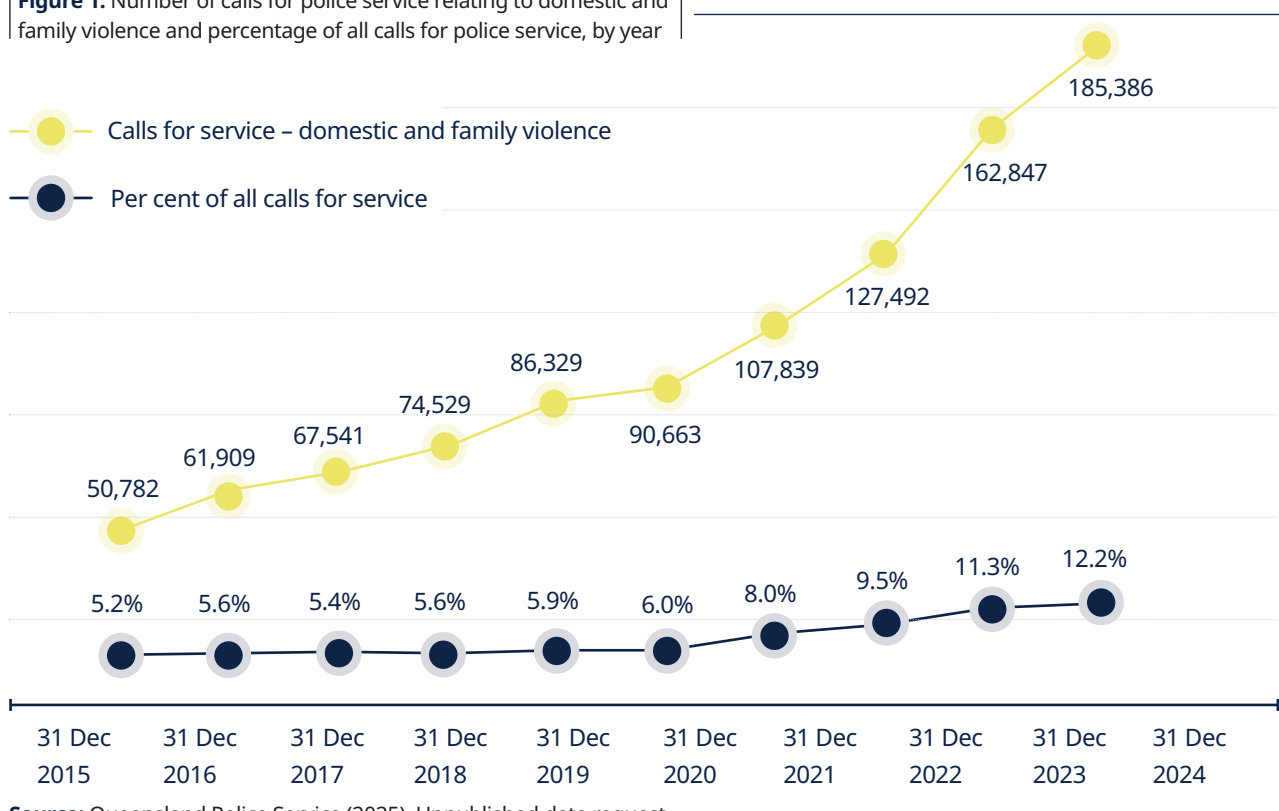
Changing **social drivers**

Increasing rates of **domestic** and **family violence**

Rates of reported domestic and family violence continue to increase in Queensland. Charges for domestic and family violence related offences, or 'flagged offences', more than doubled in the last five years across the state.¹ Charges lodged for contravening Domestic Violence Orders (DVOs) increased by 2.6 per cent statewide annually in the year to date to 31 May 2025. The largest increases were in Cleveland (31.3%), Toowoomba (28.7%), Gladstone (27.8%), Townsville (24.1%), Rockhampton (23.5%) and Caboolture (19.4%).²

Over the past 10 years, statewide police service calls related to domestic and family violence have increased by 265 per cent. Some police districts have had substantially higher increases, including Wide Bay Burnett (8218% increase), Mount Isa (6353% increase) and Ipswich (2876%).³

Figure 1: Number of calls for police service relating to domestic and family violence and percentage of all calls for police service, by year



Source: Queensland Police Service (2025). Unpublished data request

A government media statement released in April 2025 reports that due to the evolving and complex nature of domestic and family violence, it takes on average 4.6 hours for police to respond to each incident. The Queensland Police Union estimates that domestic and family violence now accounts for 90 per cent of frontline policing.⁴

As at 31 May 2025, there were 46,874 DVOs made in Queensland Courts in the 2024–25 period. Police lodged 83.6 per cent of applications. In 82.8 per cent of DVOs the aggrieved was female, and in 82.1 per cent of DVOs the respondent was male. In 72.1 per cent of applications, the nature of relationship was 'intimate personal' and in 27.5 per cent the relationship was 'family'.⁵

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be over-represented as both victim-survivors and perpetrators of domestic and family violence; 14.4 per cent of all DVOs made in Queensland Courts listing an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person as the aggrieved party, and 15.6 per cent of all orders listing an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person as the respondent. However, this data is limited and unlikely to be a true representation of the disproportionate extent to which domestic and family violence is experienced by First Nations families. Estimates suggest that approximately 90 per cent of cases of violence go unreported.⁶ In a national study, about two-thirds of First Nations respondents (n=440) disagreed that violence against First Nations women was taken seriously by the government. Approximately half of respondents agreed that fair treatment would be provided by the courts and police when First Nations women report violence, and just under half agreed that decisions about the custody of children would be fair.⁷

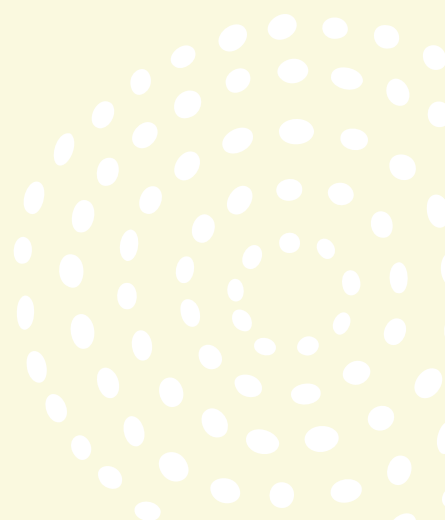
Domestic and family violence contributes to both family support system involvement and homelessness. In the year ending 31 December 2024, 37 per cent of families commencing a Family and Child Connect (FaCC) service or referred to Family Wellbeing Service (FWS) or an Intensive Family Support (IFS) service presented with domestic and family violence as a primary concern. Since June 2020, referrals of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families for domestic and family violence have increased by 5.2 per cent, while referrals for non-Indigenous families have decreased by 17.3 per cent.⁸

Brisbane Youth Service reported that in 2023–24, 75 per cent of the young people they supported had experienced family violence and 46 per cent reported experiencing past relationship violence.⁹ During the same period, domestic and family violence was the primary reason 8229 (17.0%) Queensland clients sought assistance from specialist homelessness services.¹⁰

Of the 70 deaths of children reviewed by Child Death Review Board (the Board) in 2023–24, 56 per cent of cases showed domestic and family violence was present in the child's life.¹¹ Seven cases were examined in detail, which revealed that in all seven cases, DVOs were in place, and five cases showed that siblings were present in the home. Various forms of additional abuse were documented, such as coercive control, physical violence, emotional and verbal abuse, and sexual abuse.

Despite these significant impacts, children and young people remain largely overlooked as victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. Between 2016 and 2022, 31.7 per cent of all domestic and family violence occurrences reported to Queensland Police Service (QPS) involved children. This is likely under-reported, as most children were not identified as witnesses or victims. Furthermore, the QPS's risk screening tool does not collect information specific to the experiences of children, such as if they have been hurt and feel unsafe or scared.¹² The Australian Child Maltreatment Study found that 43.8 per cent of young people aged 16 to 24 years had experienced exposure to domestic violence.¹³

More recent data in Queensland is unavailable due to reporting limitations. For example, Queensland Courts do not report on the age of aggrieved parties for whom DVO applications are made.¹⁴ This gap in reported data reflects a lack of recognition of the unique needs and risks of children and young people affected by domestic and family violence.



Increasing **housing instability** and **homelessness**

Significant increases in homelessness for children and young people

Of all people seeking support from Specialist Homelessness Services in 2023–24, 27 per cent were under 18. This includes children presenting as part of a family and young people presenting alone. Housing crisis (i.e. eviction) was the most common reason for young people presenting alone. Other reasons include seeking assistance (19%), followed by family and domestic violence (16%) and relationship/family breakdown (12%).

Brisbane Youth Service has reported an increase from 58,664 support occasions in 2022–23, to 68,310 support occasions in 2023–24. Approximately half of the young people supported by Brisbane Youth Service were homeless, with 77 per cent in unsafe, overcrowded or unaffordable housing.¹⁵

The number of rough sleeping clients presenting to specialist homelessness services with children increased by 62.9 per cent between 2017–18 and 2022–23.¹⁶ In comparison, there was a 15.8 per cent average national increase during the same period. Between December 2017 and December 2024, the monthly number of 0–17-year-old clients supported by a specialist homelessness service grew by 56.7 per cent (from 2768 to 4337) compared to a national average increase of 10.0 per cent.¹⁷

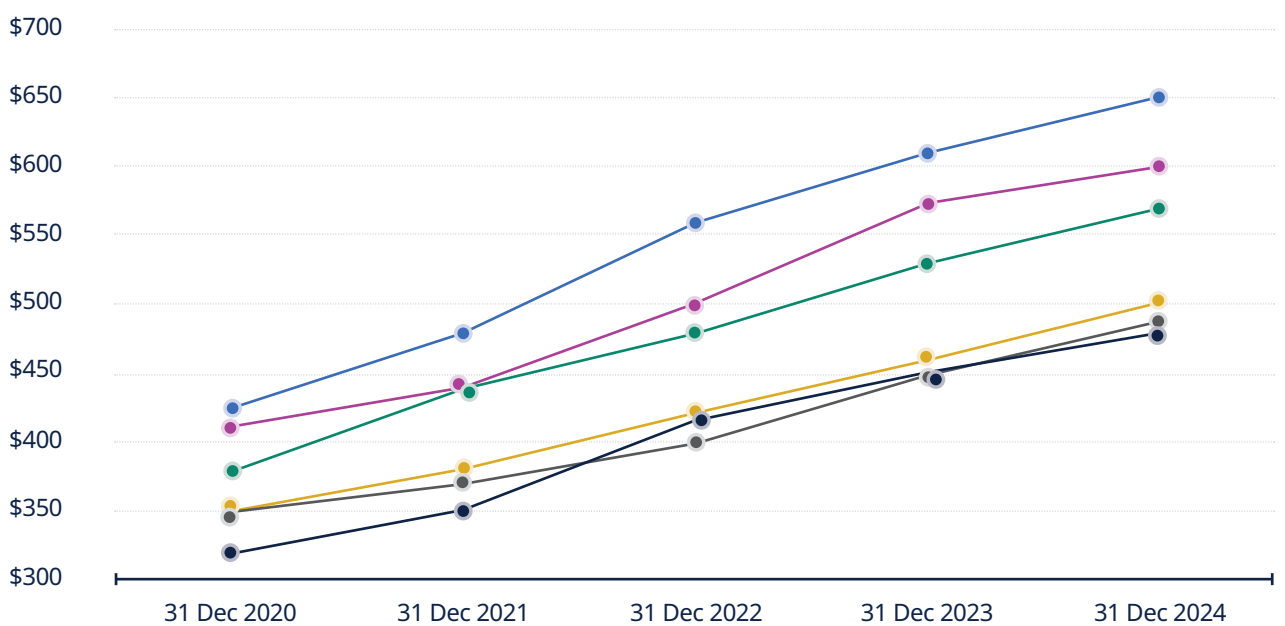
The national proportion of 0–17-year-olds supported by specialist homelessness services in Queensland increased from 15.6 per cent to 22.2 per cent over the same period.

A 2024 study has documented that there are high levels of unmet need for homelessness services for unaccompanied young people under the age of 18 nationwide.¹⁸ This cohort is too young to access adult crisis and community accommodation, and some youth crisis accommodation providers do not provide support to young people under the age of 16. This includes Mackay's only youth shelter, Kalyan Youth Service, where an estimated 80 per cent of clients were turned away in March 2025.¹⁹

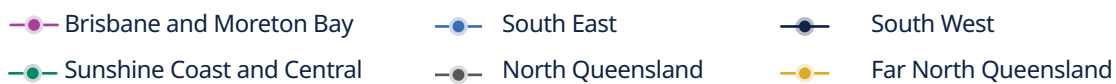
Decreasing housing affordability is placing further strain on social housing and homelessness support services

Median rents in Queensland have increased 52.6 per cent, from \$395 to \$580 in the five years ending 31 December 2024. Between March 2024 and March 2025, the median rent for all new tenancies in Queensland increased by 5.4 per cent, from \$550 to \$580.²⁰

Figure 2: Median rent from 31 December 2020 – 31 December 2024, by Child Safety region |



Source: Residential Tenancies Authority. (2025) Unpublished data request



The National Rental Affordability Scheme ended in Queensland on 30 June 2025.²¹ The scheme increased the number of affordable rental homes by reducing rental costs for low to medium income households by at least 20 per cent below market rent.²² Of the approximately 10,000 dwellings originally in the scheme in Queensland, more than half had exited by October 2023,²³ with a further 2810 exiting by June 2024. Of the remaining occupied properties due to exit the scheme by June 2025, approximately a third were tenants with children.²⁴ There is no direct replacement for the scheme.

The threshold for housing stress (defined as when housing costs are more than 30 per cent of the household budget²⁵), is surpassed for many Queenslanders renting in the private market, particularly for families receiving income support.²⁶ In 2025, zero per cent of private rental properties in Queensland were affordable and appropriate for single parents receiving income support. For couples with two children, affordability ranged from zero to one per cent of available properties. No properties were affordable and appropriate for single young people living in shared housing.

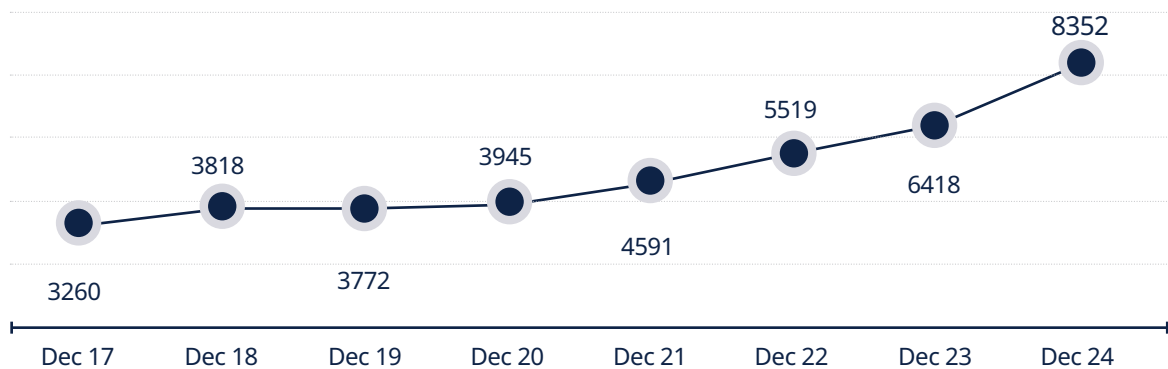
Table 3: Number (and %) of rentals affordable for Queenslanders on various forms of income support, by household type and region, 2025

			Affordable and appropriate rentals (number)	Affordable and appropriate rentals (%)
 Couple with two children (one <5years, one <10 years) receiving Jobseeker Payment				
Central Queensland	8	1%		
North Queensland	6	1%		
Southern Queensland	6	0%		
 Single parent with two children (one <5years, one <10 years) receiving Parenting Payment Single				
Central Queensland	1	0%		
North Queensland	0	0%		
Southern Queensland	2	0%		
 Single young person in a share house receiving Youth Allowance or Austudy				
Central Queensland	0	0%		
North Queensland	0	0%		
Southern Queensland	0	0%		

Source: Anglicare Australia. (2025). *Rental Affordability Snapshot Regional Reports 2025*

Increasing housing affordability stress has coincided with an increase in the number of Queenslanders seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services and family support services. There was a 156 per cent increase in the monthly number of Queensland clients citing housing affordability stress as a reason for seeking assistance from homelessness services between December 2017 and December 2024. This was the greatest increase in the country and is more than double the average national increase of 63 per cent.²⁷

Figure 3: Specialist homelessness services clients seeking assistance for housing affordability stress, from December 2017 to December 2024



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2025). *Monthly data*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients were more than 10 times more likely to present to specialist homelessness services. In 2023–24, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in Queensland presented at a rate of 647.7 per 10,000 Estimated Resident Population (ERP) compared to 62.9 per 10,000 ERP for non-Indigenous clients.²⁸

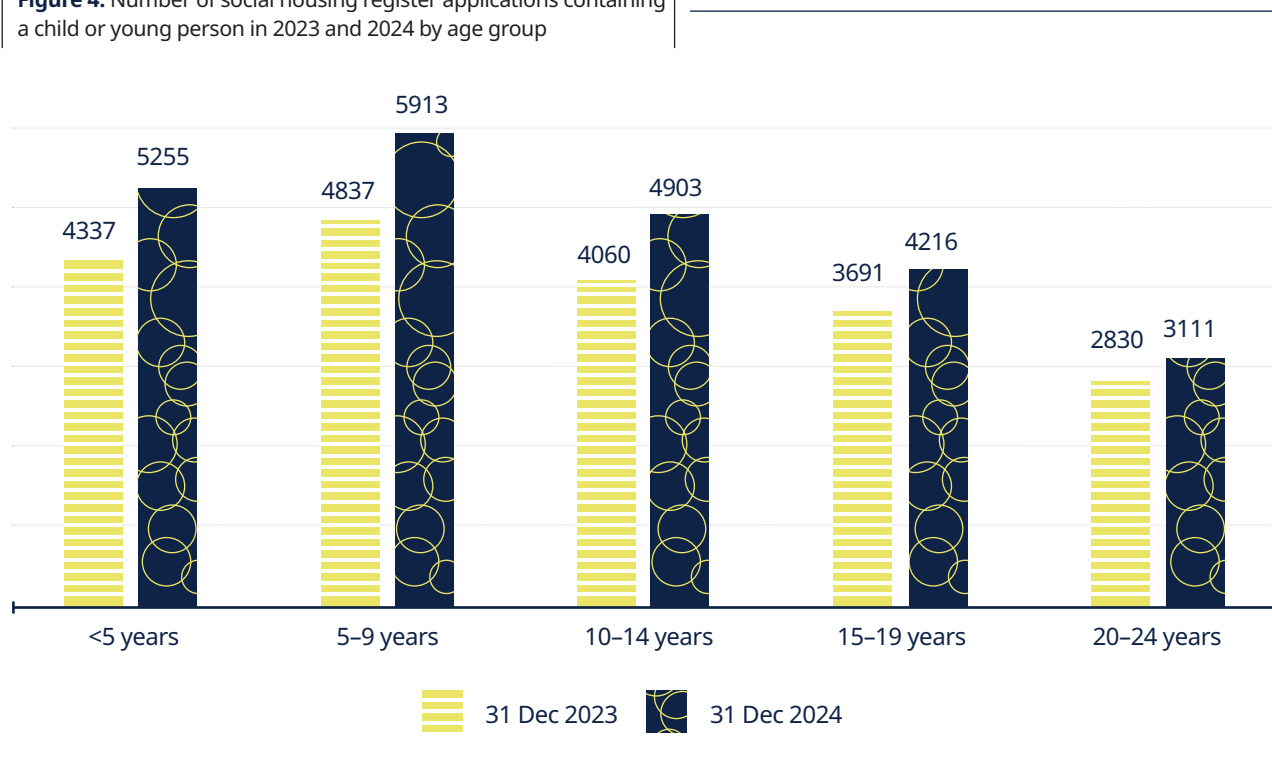
Referrals to family support services with ‘housing, food, clothing, budgeting or basic household resources’ listed as a presenting concern remain common and increased from 29.5 per cent in June 2020 to 34.6 per cent of all referrals in December 2024. The growth was driven by a 25.6 per cent increase in the number of referrals for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Referrals for non-Indigenous families decreased slightly by 0.7 per cent over the same time period.

The Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (DFSDSCS) has not recorded data specific to homelessness or the risk of homelessness in child protection interventions since the cessation of the Structured Decision Making family risk evaluation tool in August 2022. Data on housing assistance delivered through family support services is not currently collected or available at a corporate level.²⁹

Increasing numbers of families on the social housing register

The number of children and young people on the social housing register increased in 2024. The greatest year-on-year increases were in the number of children under 10 years of age. There was a 21.1 per cent increase in children under five years, and a 22.2 per cent increase in children aged five to nine years.

Figure 4: Number of social housing register applications containing a child or young person in 2023 and 2024 by age group



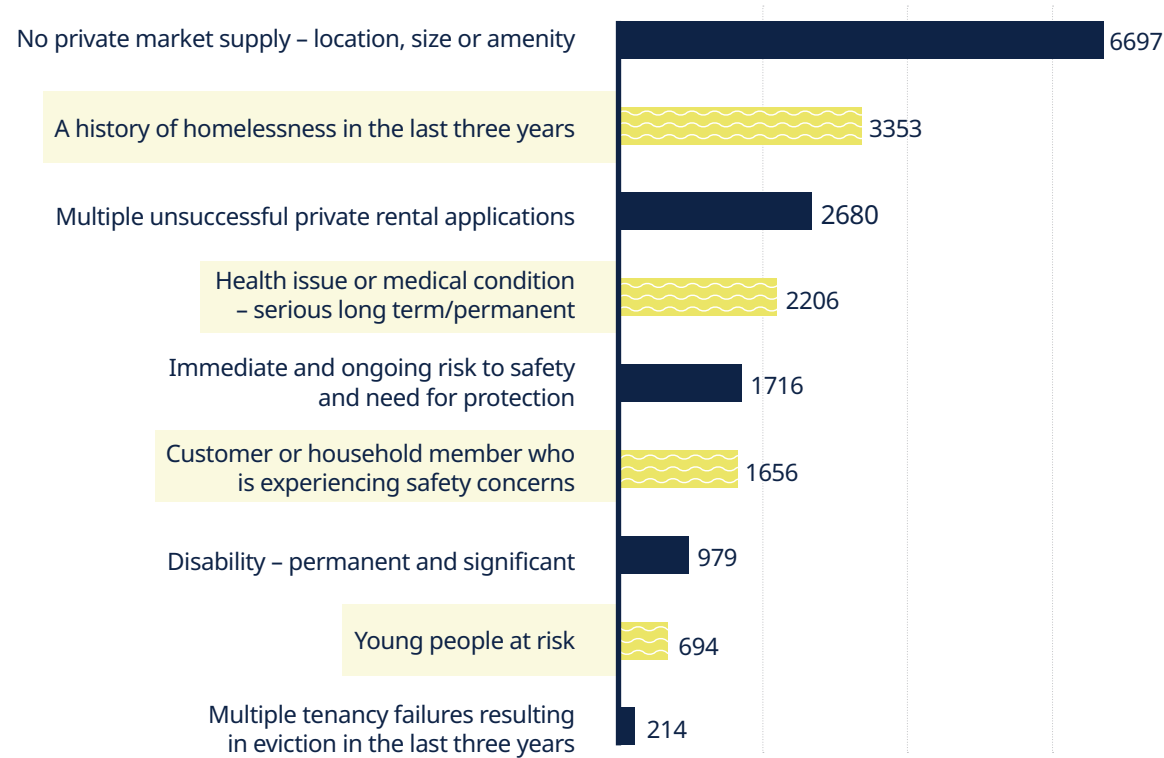
Source: Department of Housing and Public Works. (2025). Unpublished data request

Limited private market supply is a leading cause for social housing applications among Queensland families with at least one child. In 2024, 74.3 per cent of applications listed 'no private market supply-location, size or amenity' as a complex non-financial indicator of need. Other frequently identified indicators include 'a history of homelessness within the last three years', 'multiple unsuccessful private rental applications' and 'health issue or medical condition – serious long term/permanent'.

Nearly 20 per cent of applications cited one or more domestic and family violence related indicators, including 'immediate and ongoing risk to safety and need for protection' and 'customer or household member who is experiencing safety concerns related to risk of violence, stalking, sexual assault, sexual violence, abuse or harassment other than domestic or family violence'.



Figure 5: Number of social housing register applications including at least one child by complex non-financial indicators listed



Source: Department of Housing and Public Works. (2025). Unpublished data request

As at 31 December 2024 there were 9016 applications on the social housing register from households including at least one child. Of those, approximately 5118 (around 57%)^a were in the Brisbane and Moreton Bay, South East and South West Child Safety regions.³⁰ This aligns approximately with the Southern Queensland region analysed in Anglicare’s Rental Affordability Snapshot (with the exception of Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast), where zero per cent of private rental properties were appropriate and affordable for families on income support.

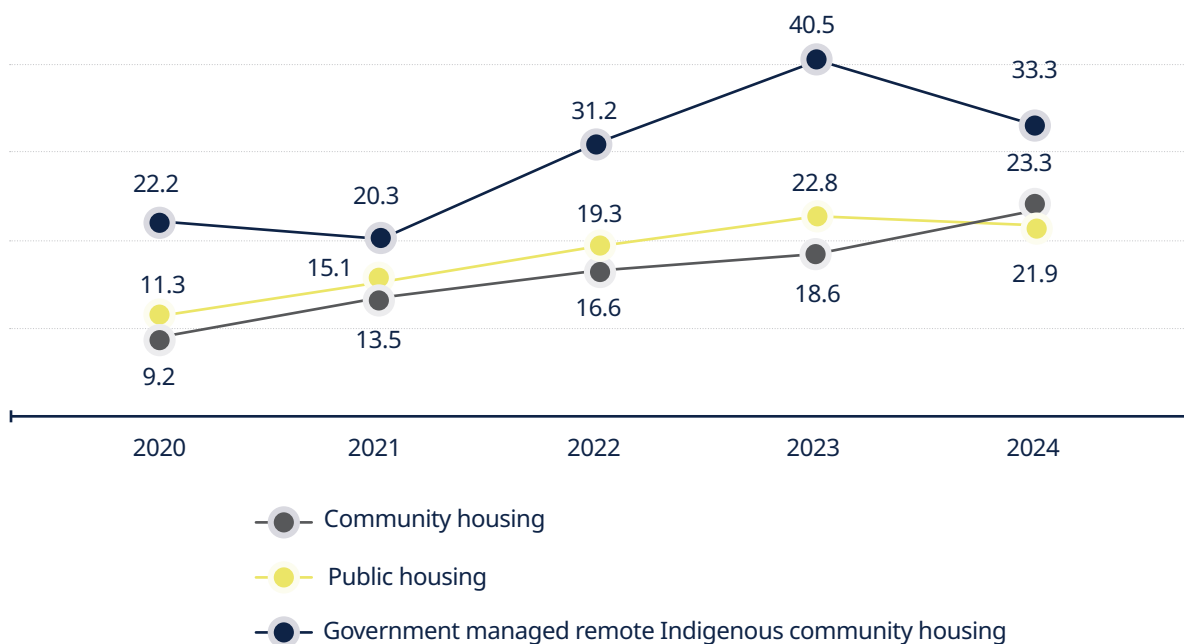
^aNumbers are based on applicant household’s first locational preference and are approximately mapped to corresponding regional boundaries according to SA2.

Long waitlists for social housing

In 2023–24, 99.7 per cent of new public and community housing was allocated to households assessed as having the greatest need. Despite this, only 15.3 per cent of households classified as having the greatest need were allocated housing within three months. Another 34.7 per cent of households assessed as having the greatest need waited over two years.³¹

Between 2020 and 2024, for families with at least one child under the age of 18 the average wait time between applying for and receiving a tenancy more than doubled for community housing (from approximately nine months to two years) and doubled for public housing (from approximately nine months to two years) and doubled for public housing (from 11 to 22 months). The average wait time for government-managed remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing grew from just under two years to almost three years. While the year-on-year reduction in wait time for government-managed remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing represents an improvement from 2023, when families waited an average of more than three years and four months, families seeking housing through this program were still waiting almost a year longer than those accessing other programs in 2024.

Figure 6: Queensland: average months between 'application received date' and expected tenancy start date for applications including at least one child aged under 18, by year and housing program



Source: Department of Housing and Public Works. (2025). Unpublished data request

Parental mental health and drug use

Queensland families commencing family support services frequently present with concerns related to parental mental health and substance misuse.

In the year ending 31 December 2024, 42.5 per cent of families referred to, or commencing, a FaCC, FWS or IFS service presented with concerns of ‘parent/carer mental or emotional health including anxiety, depression and self harm’, an increase of 3.1 per cent in the overall proportion since 30 June 2020.³² The number of families referred who do not identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decreased by 6.6 per cent between 30 June 2020 and 31 December 2024, while referrals for those families who did identify increased by 17.5 per cent in the same period.³³ This increase coincided with increased investment in funding allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations (ATSICCOs), particularly Indigenous health organisations) for delivery of family support services, which is likely to have improved the accuracy of assessments of mental health for First Nations parents.³⁴

Between 30 June 2020 and 31 December 2024, concerns of ‘parent/carer alcohol and/or drug misuse’ decreased by 6.6 percentage points as an overall proportion of referrals, comprising 17.4 per cent of all referrals in the year ending 31 December 2024.³⁵

An estimated 29.7 per cent of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders over the age of 18 experience high or very levels of psychological distress according to the modified Kessler Psychological Distress Scale, almost double the proportion of non-Indigenous Queenslanders (16.3%).^{36,37} The proportion is higher for First Nations people living in non-remote areas (32.3%) than for those living in remote areas (19.2%).

In 2023–24, there were 4892 consumers with children aged 0–17 years who received mental health treatment services and 1944 who received alcohol and other drugs treatment services through Queensland Health.³⁸ Consumers who identified as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander represented 17 per cent of both treatment types.

Table 4: Percentage of families commencing a family support service in the 12 months ending 31 December 2024 who present with concerns relating to mental health or alcohol and/or other drugs misuse, by presenting concern and family support service

Service type	Number of families commencing a service	Concerns relating to parent/carer alcohol and/or drug misuse (%)	Concerns relating to parent/carer mental or emotional health including anxiety, depression or self-harm (%)
FaCC	15,782	15%	39%
FWS	5715	23%	38%
IFS service	6478	17%	55%

Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance data*

Twenty-nine per cent of the Commission's Community Perceptions survey respondents in 2025 disagreed with the statement "parents in my community have good physical and mental health." Agreement was lowest among respondents in the Far North Queensland, North Queensland, and Sunshine Coast and Central regions.³⁹ Forty-one per cent of respondents agreed that rates of parental drug use are low in their communities, with lower levels of agreement in the Far North Queensland, North Queensland, and the Sunshine Coast and Central regions.⁴⁰

Disability and carer support services

As at 30 September 2024, 28.7 per cent (3493) of all children and young people living in foster care, kinship care and residential care in Queensland had a recorded disability.⁴¹ By comparison, the estimated national proportion of disability among 0–14-year-olds is 11 per cent for non-Indigenous young people and 18.8 per cent for First Nations young people.^{42,43}

According to the 2024 Youth Justice Census, 71 per cent of young people in youth justice custody had been either diagnosed or suspected to have a disability. The most common disability was Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (53%), followed by cognitive/intellectual disability (38%) and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) (25%).⁴⁴ As a baseline for comparison, the estimated national prevalence in the general population of children and adolescents with ADHD is between six and 10 per cent,⁴⁵ with an intellectual disability present in approximately four per cent,⁴⁶ and with FASD present in between two and five per cent.⁴⁷

Table 5: Prevalence of disability in the national population of children and young people compared to the population of young people involved with the youth justice system in Queensland

Disability	Prevalence among general population of children and young people – Australia	Prevalence among young people under youth justice supervision – Queensland	Prevalence among young people in youth detention – Queensland
ADHD	6–10%	41%	53%
Cognitive/ intellectual	4%	24%	38%
FASD	2–5%	13%	25%

Sources: Department of Youth Justice. (2025). *Youth Justice Census 2024*.; Australasian ADHD Professionals Association. (n.d.). *About ADHD*.; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *People with Disability in Australia*.; Queensland Health. (n.d.). *Queensland Child and Youth Clinical Network Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Position Statement*

The proportion of referrals to family support services with a presenting concern of 'child physical health including health conditions, disability' increased by 6.8 percentage points overall between 30 June 2020 and 31 December 2024. The number of referrals increased by 60.9 per cent for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and by 31.8 per cent for non-Indigenous families.

Nationally, 69.4 per cent of primary carers of children aged 0–14 years with disability provided an average of over 20 hours of care per week, and two-thirds were employed in addition to their caring duties. Over 70 per cent of primary carers of children aged 0–14 said that their income had decreased or that they had extra expenses due to their caring role. Approximately a third of those who had a partner or spouse said their caring role had strained their relationship.⁴⁸

In 2025 in Queensland, approximately two-thirds of primary carers of people with disability (aged 0–64 years) were unsatisfied with the range of organised and formal service options available to help them in their caring role.⁴⁹ Over half reported frequently feeling worried, depressed, angry or resentful, weary or lacking energy, or had been diagnosed with a stress related illness due to their carer role, with female carers experiencing higher levels of negative impacts to their wellbeing than males.⁵⁰ Compared to the general Queensland population in 2023–24, primary carers of people with disability were 3.5 times more likely to report being lonely and 2.3 times more likely to report being in fair or poor health.⁵¹

In 2024, 411,000 carers received an annual Child Disability Assistance Payment.⁵² In the second quarter of 2024–25, there were 80,226 active National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants aged 0–18 years in Queensland. Of all active NDIS participants, 10.6 per cent identified as First Nations and 5.2 per cent identified as culturally and linguistically diverse.⁵³

In 2024, less than half (49.7%) of Queensland NDIS participants were satisfied with the plan approval process, and 58.5 per cent were satisfied with the plan implementation process.⁵⁴ This suggests further improvements may be required to connect parents of children with disability to appropriate supports, particularly for First Nations families who experience a higher burden of disability, are increasingly coming into contact with family support services due to concerns related to child physical health and disability, and who are not proportionately represented in the number of active NDIS participants.

Improving access to education

Early childhood education access and enrolment rates

In 2024, Queensland began offering free kindergarten to all children in the year prior to entering primary school. Eligibility is limited to children ages four and over and is delivered for 15 hours per week for 40 weeks per year in approved childcare centres and stand-alone services.⁵⁵

Between 2021 and 2023, the number of children enrolled in a preschool program increased only slightly by 0.2 per cent. Following the free kindergarten policy came into effect in 2024, there were 64,507 four- and five-year-old children enrolled. This represented a 2.2 per cent increase from the prior year.^{56,57,58,59}

School attendance rates and disciplinary absences

Over the past four years, state school attendance rates have declined, particularly among secondary school students.⁶⁰ In 2024, the attendance rate was 88.9 per cent for primary students and 83.9 per cent for secondary students. In 2021, the attendance rate was 90.5 per cent for primary students and 86.5 per cent for secondary students. This reflects a decrease of 1.6 and 2.6 percentage points respectively.

Attendance rates among First Nations students have also declined across all year levels, from 80.3 per cent in 2021 to 77.6 per cent in 2024. This reflects a decrease of 2.7 percentage points.

In 2024, there were 73,188 school disciplinary absences in the cohort of 568,129 enrolled state school students.⁶¹ Most disciplinary incidents (93.2%) resulted in a short suspension, with an average absence of four days per incident. In 3.4 per cent of incidents, students were subject to a long suspension and lost an average of 16 school days. In the remaining three per cent of incidents, students faced lengthy disciplinary absences, including 929 incidents resulting in a cancellation of enrolment, 876 incidents resulting in students not re-engaging in the 2024 school year, and 433 incidents of overturned exclusions converted to long suspensions.

Students who were excluded and did not re-engage at a state school in 2024 lost an average of 87 days per incident. Students who were excluded and re-engaged in the state schooling sector lost an average of 41 days per incident.

Almost half (45%) of all statewide incidents involving exclusion or cancellation occurred in the South East and Metropolitan South education regions and Metropolitan South education regions, proportionate to these regions comprising of 42 per cent of all state school enrolled students.⁶² Across the state, school disciplinary absences were most common among children in Years 7–10.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with a disability were disproportionately likely to be subject to a school disciplinary absence.

Table 6: Students subject to a disciplinary absence as a proportion of enrolled students, 2025 |

School disciplinary absence type	All students	Students with disability	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
Short suspension	6.5%	13.2%	12.9%
Long suspension	0.4%	0.8%	1.1%
Exclusion	0.3%	0.4%	0.7%

Source: Queensland Department of Education. (2025). Unpublished data request

There is increasing understanding of the prevalence of child sexual abuse

National data from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study provides insights into disclosure patterns of child sexual abuse based on a representative sample of 8503 individuals aged 16 and over. Of those surveyed, 28.5 per cent (n=2348) reported experiencing child sexual abuse and provided disclosure information.

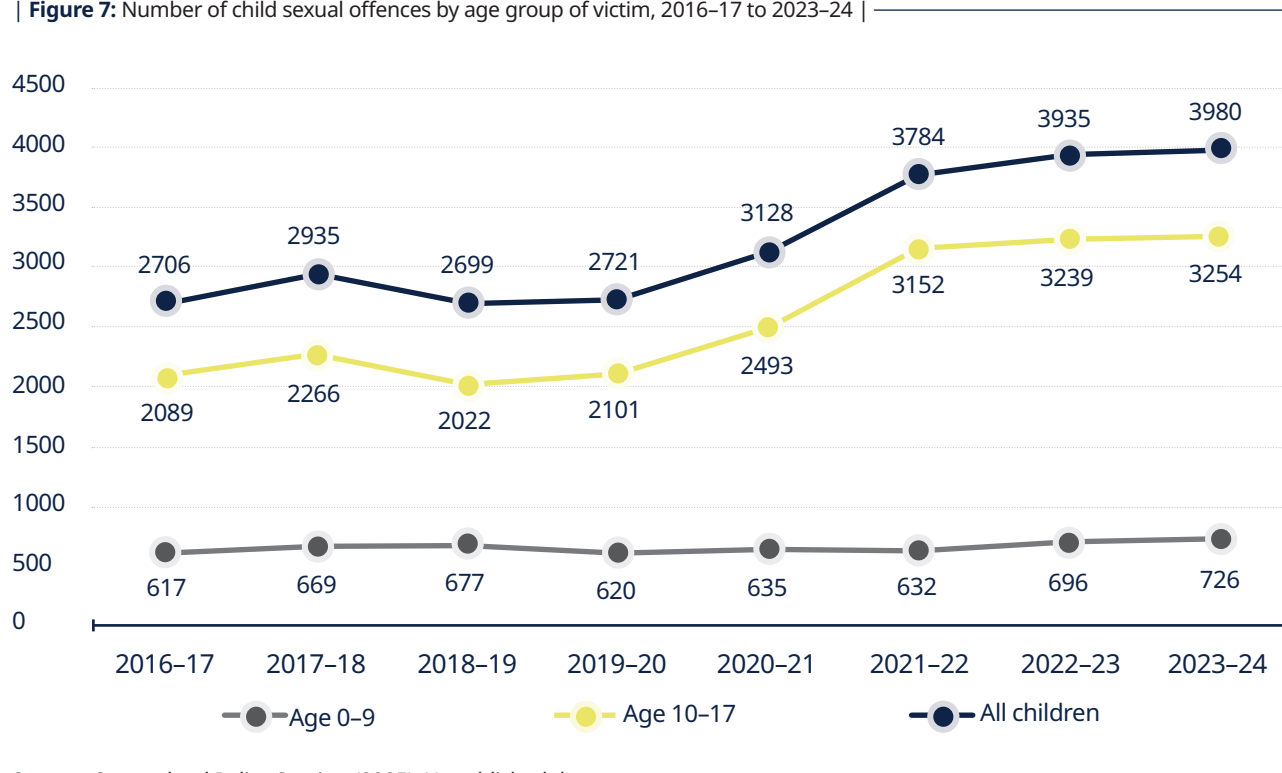
Overall, 45.2 per cent of respondents who experienced child sexual abuse reported they had never disclosed, highlighting the significant number of cases that remain unaddressed. Men and older adults were less likely to disclose child sexual abuse, highlighting greater barriers for these groups, such as stigma and a lack of support.

Young people were more likely than older adults to disclose child sexual abuse, with a disclosure rate of 70.5 per cent among those aged 16–24, compared to 46.2 per cent among those aged 45 years and over. Differences in disclosures by age group were greatest in instances where the perpetrator was an institutional caregiver. Almost 97 per cent of young people aged 16–24 reported child sexual abuse perpetrated by an institutional caregiver, compared to only 45.9 per cent of those aged 45 years and over. This finding may be attributed to increased public awareness about child sexual abuse and greater confidence that disclosure will be believed, due to generational norms and the focus on this issue that was provided by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Across all age groups, disclosure rates were highest in instances where the perpetrator was an unknown adult, at 66.2 per cent. Disclosure rates were lower in instances where the perpetrator was a known adult, including a parent or other family member (54.0%), and other known adults (51.8%). The lowest rate of disclosure was in instances where the perpetrator was a sibling, at 33.8 per cent. These findings highlight the complexity of disclosing child sexual abuse within family relationships.

In Queensland there has been a significant increase in the number of child sexual offences reported to police over the last five years.⁶³ This was largely driven by a 54.9 per cent increase in the number of reported child sexual offences against victims aged 10–17 years between 2019–20 and 2023–24. Offences against children aged under 10 years increased by 17.1 per cent in the same period.

Figure 7: Number of child sexual offences by age group of victim, 2016–17 to 2023–24



Source: Queensland Police Service. (2025). Unpublished data request

The sharp increase in child sexual offences between 2019–20 and 2021–22 coincides with the introduction of laws on 5 July 2021 that make it an offence for any adult to fail to report sexual offending against a child by another adult to police, or to fail to protect a child from a sexual offence in an institutional setting.⁶⁴ Since the laws came into effect, there were a total of 18 reported offences for ‘failure to report sexual offences against children’ between 2021–22 and 2023–24, and no reported offences for ‘failure to protect a child from sexual abuse’.⁶⁵

Victims of child sexual offences were predominantly female, at a range of 80.9 to 85.9 per cent of all victims between 2016–17 and 2023–24. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people were also over-represented at a range of between 13.3 per cent and 15.7 per cent of victims.

In 2023–24, 46.0 per cent of victims of child sexual offences had been perpetrated by a known adult such as an acquaintance or relative other than a parent. In 30.2 per cent of offences, there was no relationship between the offender and victim, or the relationship was unknown or not stated. A friend or child was the offender in 13.2 per cent of offences, and a parent in 8.2 per cent. Professionals were offenders in 2.0 per cent of offences.

The number of children who were the subject of a substantiated child safety investigation where sexual abuse was the most serious abuse type increased by 32.1 per cent over five years, from 368 children in June 2020 to 486 children in June 2024. As a proportion, substantiations of sexual abuse increased from 5.6 per cent to 6.8 per cent of all substantiations.⁶⁶

The protection of children is **increasingly being transferred** from community to government

Queensland Working with Children Checks

The Blue Card system is Queensland’s screening process for working with children. It reviews applicants’ criminal history in Queensland and other relevant information to assess any potential risk to children.⁶⁷ The system provides ongoing monitoring to identify any changes in criminal history.

There were 1,006,791 Blue Card holders and 12,859 applicants in Queensland as at 31 March 2025. Between 1 July 2024 and 31 March 2025, 216,003 Blue Card applications were finalised, of which 2736, or 1.3 per cent, of applications were not approved. Since 1 July 2024, 92 per cent of applicants who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander have been approved.

Blue Card compliance checks are regularly conducted with organisations and businesses. Between 1 July 2024 and 31 March 2025, enquires were made regarding 1794 potential compliance issues within 1572 organisations and businesses. There were 784 checks regarding individuals prohibited from working with children. Eighty-three matters involving 215 potential breaches were referred to the QPS for investigation.

Growth in **early child care**

Between 2020 and 2024, the total number of children aged 0–6 enrolled in early childhood education and care (excluding outside school hours care) increased by 7.5 per cent, from 208,123 to 223,816. Most of this increase was in long day care enrolments.

The growth in the number of children enrolled in early childhood education in Queensland aligns with longer-term national trends. Between March 2012 and March 2022, the total number of families using children’s education and care services increased from 689,790 to 948,340 nationally.⁶⁸

An increase in enrolment numbers has necessitated a larger workforce, resulting in a greater proportion of less experienced staff. Across all service types, the national proportion of workers with less than a year of experience doubled from 3.5 per cent to 7.0 per cent between 2010 and 2021.⁶⁹ Adequate training is needed to ensure that early childhood educators have the requisite skills and knowledge to identify and report suspected child sexual abuse.⁷⁰

| **Table 7:** Early childhood education and care enrolments in Queensland by service type, 2020–24 |

Service type	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	% 5 year change
Family day care	19,133	18,156	15,383	14,176	13,805	-27.8%
Kindergarten	20,592	20,115	20,079	20,452	20,194	-1.9%
Long day care	166,281	179,064	182,378	188,261	187,472	12.7%
State-delivered services	2117	2016	2214	2404	2345	10.8%
Total	208,123	219,351	220,054	225,293	223,816	7.5%

Source: Queensland Department of Education. (2025). *ECEC Services, 2020–24*

Queensland children **continue to experience harm**

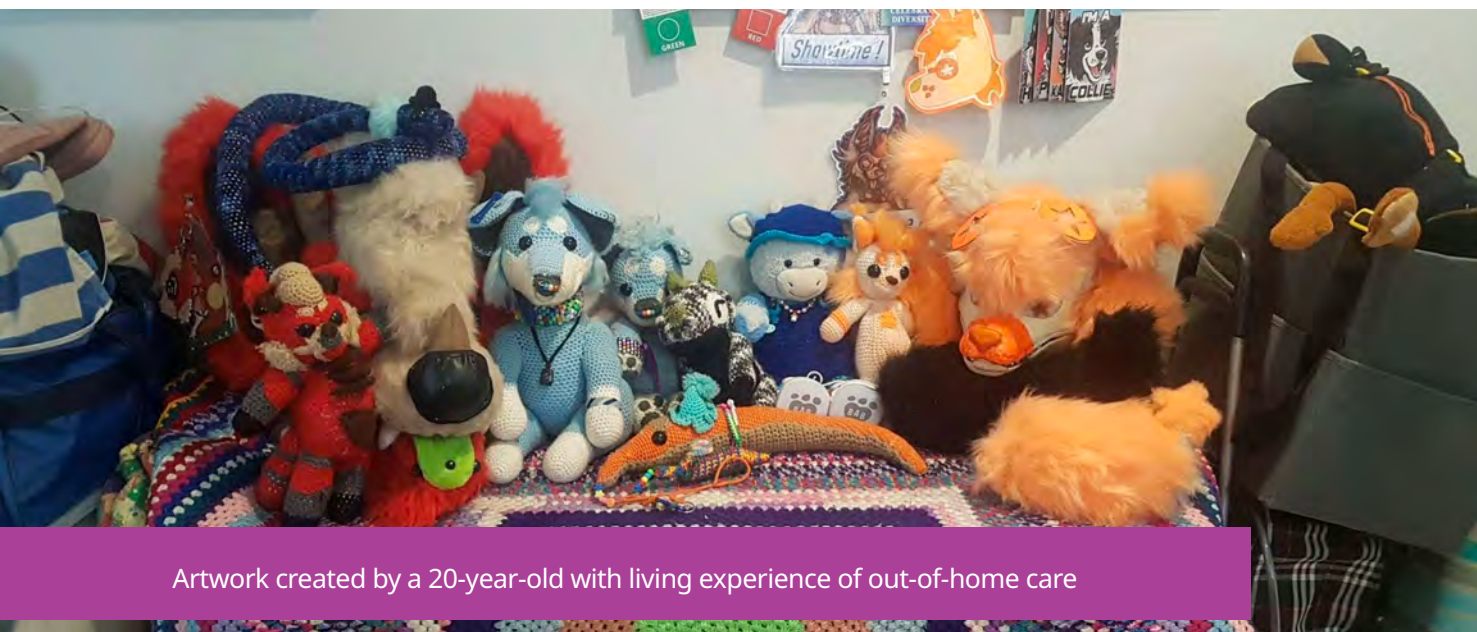
The number of children subject to a substantiation for all types of child harm have increased, as well as the overall total.⁷¹ The greatest increase as at 31 December 2024 was in substantiations for sexual abuse, which increased by 11 per cent since 31 December 2023 and by 34.5 per cent since 30 June 2020.

| **Table 8:** Number of distinct children subject to a substantiation, by abuse type, 2020–24 |

Most serious abuse type	30 Jun 2020	31 Dec 2023	31 Dec 2024	1 year change (%)	Change since Jun 2020 (%)
Physical	1087	937	1021	9.0%	-6.1%
Sexual	368	446	495	11.0%	34.5%
Emotional	3033	3533	3550	0.5%	17.0%
Neglect	2063	1884	1957	3.9%	-5.1%
TOTAL	6551	6800	7023	2.1%	7.2%

Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance*

Between 30 June 2020 and 31 December 2024, trends in the number of children substantiated by harm types other than sexual abuse have varied.⁷² There was a considerable increase (17.0%) in children substantiated for emotional abuse since 30 June 2020, though only a small increase (0.5%) over the recent 12 months. Children substantiated for physical abuse and neglect decreased since 30 June 2020 (by 6.1% and 5.1% respectively) but increased over the most recent 12 months 9.0 per cent for physical abuse and 3.9 per cent for neglect.



Artwork created by a 20-year-old with living experience of out-of-home care

A young child with curly hair is swinging on a swing set in a park. The child is wearing a blue denim jacket and pink sleeves. The background is a blurred green park with trees. The text '2.' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

2.

PREVENTION AND EARLY SUPPORTS

Prevention and early supports

To prevent harm to children and reduce their involvement with statutory systems, society must invest early in the services and supports that address the root causes of vulnerability. This includes ensuring timely, accessible responses to issues such as domestic and family violence, homelessness, poverty, disability, mental health challenges, substance use, and disengagement from education. These factors—particularly when they intersect with one another—significantly increase the risk of families having contact with the child protection and youth justice systems.

Early, targeted investment in support services can break this trajectory, supporting families to stay together and keep their children safe. The current disconnected system of service delivery is ineffective in ensuring positive outcomes, and it is not significantly reducing engagement with statutory systems. Services that provide child-focussed, universal wrap-around services have shown success in reducing the demand on statutory systems, by providing coordinated, culturally safe support that meets the unique needs of children and families early.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, who are over-represented across all these risk indicators, early intervention must also address the ongoing impacts of systemic inequity and structural disadvantage. A society that prioritises early support and equity lays the foundation for safer, healthier futures for all children.

Community confidence in Queensland's support services

Most respondents to the Commission's Community Perceptions survey in 2025 agreed that they can access services to help with their parenting if they need it. When asked, "I feel confident that I would be able to access services if I need support with my parenting", a sub-total of 75 per cent of parents agreed. Similar confidence was expressed with the ability to access help from teachers or other school staff (82% agreement), and access to health services if their child should require this (84% agreement). However, only 64 per cent of respondents responsible for a child under 18 years agreed that children and young people are supported to live safely at home with their families, with lower levels of agreement that children and young people are protected from abuse and neglect (51%) and receive appropriate support for their mental and emotional health needs (54%). There were also lower levels of agreement that parents in their community had good physical and mental health (54%), that parental use of illicit drugs was low (45%), and that families have sufficient income to provide necessities for their children (43%).⁷³

Improved response to the risk of homelessness among priority cohorts

Between 2018–19 and 2023–24, the proportion of specialist homelessness services support periods that resulted in clients avoiding homelessness increased across several key demographic groups.

These included:⁷⁴



women and children affected by domestic and family violence (from 82.7% to **91.3%**)



children and young people (from 86.6% to **89.5%**)



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, from (88.7% to **91.9%**).

In 2024–25, the Queensland Government allocated \$32.4 million towards housing and homelessness responses for young people. In 2025–26, the amount budgeted has increased to \$40.5 million. The funding will contribute to initiatives that improve access to safe accommodation, strengthen support services and help young people achieve stable and sustainable housing outcomes.

Youth foyers help address youth homelessness by providing safe accommodation and integrated supports to young people at risk.⁷⁵ The Queensland Government's *Securing Our Housing Foundations Plan* promises to deliver eight new youth foyers across the state for young people aged 16–25 who are at risk of, or currently experiencing, homelessness. Three new foyers will be delivered in Cairns, Hervey Bay and Moreton Bay with five locations to be determined. The foyers will provide wrap-around support while young people complete their education or enter the workforce.⁷⁶

Investment in domestic and family violence services

DVConnect is a helpline and support service for individuals experiencing or perpetrating domestic and family violence in Queensland. The rate of calls for assistance to DVConnect have increased by one third in the past 12 months. The Queensland Government has committed to investing \$31.25 million to expand DVConnect services under the Safer Families, Safer Communities policy, including the establishment of a new North Queensland hub in Townsville. The funding also provides for the first review of DVConnect since 2017, which will assess demand, future service models, and enhanced accountability and transparency. As at June 2025, the seven-member board of DVConnect included just one person who identified as Aboriginal.

In 2024, the Queensland Government committed to investing \$22.9 million into a co-response pilot program enabling specialist domestic and family violence workers to accompany QPS on domestic and family violence call-outs to provide immediate support to victim-survivors.⁷⁸ The aim of the co-response pilot is to improve the safety of victim-survivors and their children by connecting them to services and supports sooner and assisting police to identify the person most in need of protection. The pilot began in Cairns in July 2024, with a second trial location in South Brisbane announced in September 2024. The pilot program will run until 30 September 2026.

There have been no major funding announcements or service delivery commitments made to specifically address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families in domestic and family violence rates.

Brisbane Youth Service identified that in 2023–24, 75 per cent of young people accessing support through their service had experienced past family violence, and 46 per cent had experienced past relationship violence.⁷⁹

While illustrating the intersectionality of domestic and family violence and youth homelessness, Brisbane Youth Service also identified that a lack of targeted interventions for young people experiencing domestic and family violence, specifically calling for additional investment in crisis response, early interventions and recovery and wrap-around, holistic support for young people.

In 2023–24, there were 9105 young people under the age of 18 who received mental health treatment services through Queensland Health.⁸⁵ This represents less than one per cent of the estimated Queensland population under the age of 18. Twenty-one per cent of young people who received mental health treatment identified as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.^{86, 87}

Youth mental health support services

Over 17 per cent of Queensland young people who responded to the 2024 Mission Australia Youth Survey (n=3782) reported mental health as their biggest personal challenge. However, only 14.1 per cent of respondents identified as a person with a mental health condition, which was slightly lower than the national rate of 15.9 per cent.⁸⁰



A Health and Wellbeing Queensland survey identified that 53 per cent of young adults are feeling more stressed or anxious.^{81,82} The most recent Report of the Chief Health Officer identified that 15 to 24 year olds in Queensland were experiencing the highest prevalence of long-term mental and behavioural conditions compared to any other age group; particularly young women, with a 50.8 per cent prevalence of mental or behavioural conditions.⁸³

9105

9105 young people under the age of 18 who received mental health treatment services

As at December 2024, 11,016 families had commenced or been referred to a family support service due to concerns of 'child mental or emotional health including anxiety, depression, or self-harm'. The proportion of referrals was higher for non-Indigenous families at 44.3 per cent compared to 30.7 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Between June 2020 and December 2024, the proportion increased for both non-Indigenous families (9.4 percentage points) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families (7.1 percentage points).⁸⁴

Intensive Education Case Management to support re-engagement with education

The Department of Education's Intensive Education Case Management Service commenced operating in July 2024. The service provides holistic case management to students facing school disciplinary absences through Intensive Education Case Managers (IECMs), who work collaboratively with students, families and school principals to support engagement with schooling and improve educational outcomes. The priority cohort for IECMs is students who face 20-day suspensions, pending exclusion. When there is case load capacity, IECMs also provide support for other types of school disciplinary absences. The first tranche of the program in 2024 consisted of 40 IECMs across Queensland. A total of 78 IECMs have been deployed, with the second tranche progressively rolled out over the course of 2025.⁸⁸

Better regulation of home education

Children who are registered for home education and who are living in a high-risk home environment are less visible to secondary and tertiary systems than their school-based peers, in part because there are no legislative requirements for the regulatory authority—Queensland Home Education (QHE)—to conduct regular home visits or formal discussions with children or parents/educators.

Recommendations from the Board's 2022–23 annual report regarding data sharing and oversight have yet to be implemented. In response to Recommendation 1.1, the Department of Education advised of its intention to work with DFSDSCS and QPS to examine options for ongoing data sharing. In its response to the Home Education Unit Review, the Queensland Government has acknowledged the need for further consideration and consultation regarding matters identified by the independent reviewer that were outside the scope of the original review. These matters include monitoring student transitions between state, non-state and home education settings, as well as engagement with families who are not registered but provide home education.

The Home Education Unit has been renamed QHE. A consultative group is being established to support regular communication between QHE and home education families, with the intention of informing current and future policy developments.⁸⁹

Between 2020 and 2024, home education registrations in Queensland increased by 122 per cent (from 2522 in 2020 to 5604 in 2024) in primary year levels and by 222 per cent (from 1775 in 2020 to 5710 in 2024) in secondary year levels between 2020 and 2024. The sharpest increases were in the Central Queensland and North Queensland education regions, where registrations roughly trebled.⁹⁰

A clearer understanding of the factors driving the increase in home education registration in Queensland, along with a clearer demographic profile of this cohort, would help agencies to undertake informed policy planning and more accurately model future trends to better safeguard children's safety and wellbeing. Additionally, removing legal barriers to data linkage would enable more proactive identification, outreach, and support to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children engaged in home education.

Preventing youth justice involvement

Impacts of family and domestic violence and instability

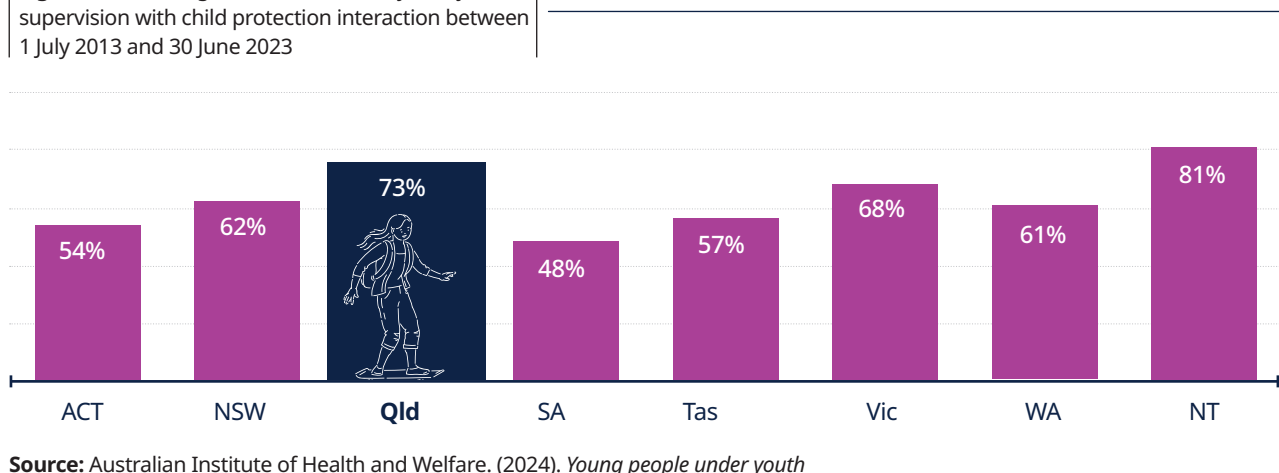
Exposure to domestic and family violence is a predictor of poor social, behavioural and academic outcomes for young people,⁹¹ and is a strong predictor of youth offending.⁹² The 2024 Youth Justice census revealed that many young people under youth justice supervision (59%) and the majority of those in custody (70%) had previously experienced or been impacted by domestic and family violence, and approximately one-third of young people had experienced parental incarceration. Children and young people who are exposed to domestic and family violence normalise violence as a coping or conflict resolution strategy, experience trauma-related behavioural issues,⁹³ and face housing instability, particularly when fleeing violent homes which may lead to survival-based offending.⁹⁴ These factors highlight the need for adequate support for children who experience domestic and family violence to prevent youth justice involvement.

A high proportion of young people involved with youth justice had prior contact with child protection

There is a high level of overlap between youth justice and child protection involvement among young people in Queensland. In Queensland, 73 per cent (1863) of young people involved with youth justice in 2022–23 also had child protection involvement in the prior 10 years. This reflects the second highest proportion of any Australian jurisdiction, and the highest number in the nation.⁹⁵

Females and First Nations young people were disproportionately represented. The majority of First Nations females (89.6%), First Nations males (78.1%), non-Indigenous females (75.3%) and non-Indigenous males (57.9%) under youth justice supervision in 2022–23 had contact with the child protection system in the prior 10 years.⁹⁶ Based on age, over-representation was highest among young people aged 10–13 years. In 2022–23, 686 Queensland children aged 10–13 under youth justice supervision had previous interactions with the child protection system.⁹⁷ Of those, 78.6 per cent (539) were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

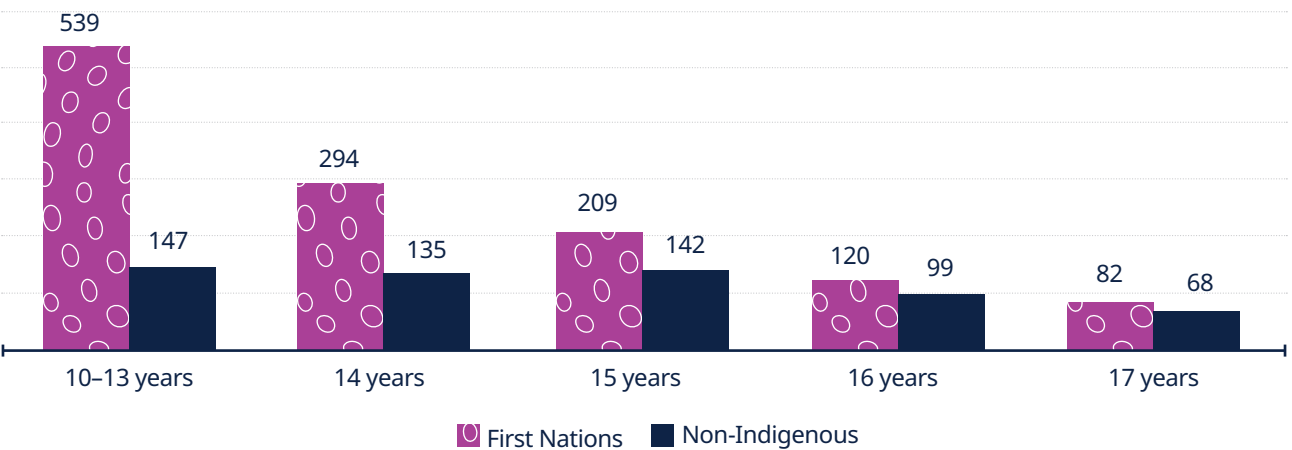
Figure 8: Percentage of children under youth justice supervision with child protection interaction between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2023



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *Young people under youth justice supervision and their interaction with the child protection system 2022–23* – Table S2

Children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) are significantly more likely to have contact with the youth justice system. In 2022–23, 721 children and young people who had contact with the youth justice system experienced OOHC in the 10 years from 1 July 2013–30 June 2023, representing 28.2 per cent of all children and young people under youth justice supervision.⁹⁸

Figure 9: Number of children in Queensland aged 10–17 under youth justice supervision with child protection interaction between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2023



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *Young people under youth justice supervision and their interaction with the child protection system 2022–23* – Table S4b

Many young offenders are victims of crime themselves

Data from QPS shows that 34.8 per cent of young people aged 10–17 who had committed offences between 2020 and 2024 had been a victim of crime at some point in their life prior to offending.

The proportion was higher for females (44.2%) and First Nations young people (43.3%). The greatest level of over-representation was among First Nations females, of which 52.2 per cent had been a victim of crime prior to becoming an offender, almost double the proportion of non-Indigenous males (27.1%). The proportions were highest in the Mount Isa and Townsville police districts, with over half of young offenders in those districts having been a victim of crime prior to offending.⁹⁹

Although significant, the extent of crossover between youth offending and prior victimhood is likely under-represented in this data, as the proportions are calculated based on victims that are known to QPS.

Youth justice prevention and intervention programs

The Queensland Government's *Making Queensland Safer Plan* includes funding for initiatives aimed at reducing youth justice system involvement, including:

- > **\$225 million** – Staying on Track
- > **\$115 million** – Gold Standard Early Intervention
- > **\$80 million** – Circuit Breaker sentencing
- > **\$50 million** – four Crime Prevention Schools
- > **\$40 million** – two new Youth Justice Schools
- > **\$50 million** – nine Regional Reset Programs.¹⁰⁰

The Regional Reset programs, intended as a one-to-three-week program for young people who are at risk of entering the youth justice system, is currently subject to a tender process and has not yet commenced. It is designed to encourage young people to engage with education and training to prevent future engagement with statutory systems.



The Men of Business (MOB) Academy located on the Gold Coast, was announced as the first organisation to be funded using the \$50 million allocated for 'Crime Prevention Schools'. MOB will receive \$10 million in funding to expand its existing academy to operate for children in grades 7–12. It is unclear if the program will also be expanded to include young women. The remaining \$40 million will be used to develop new schools in Ipswich, Townsville and Rockhampton. While being identified as the location for one of the two Youth Justice schools, there are no Crime Prevention Schools planned for Far North Queensland.¹⁰¹ This suggests an opportunity to strengthen the Crime Prevention School program for Far North Queensland.

Evidence of success in reducing youth crime through Brisbane-based early intervention and education program trial

Longitudinal research published by the Australian Institute of Criminology in October 2024 demonstrated effective strategies to prevent youth crime through early education programs and family supports.

The *Pathways Project* was delivered to children and families in a disadvantaged region of Brisbane between 2002 and 2011, through a partnership between Griffith University, Education Queensland and Mission Australia.

A key feature of this program was the delivery of an enriched preschool communication program, with the intention of improving children's oral language and communication skills so they would be more likely to engage in positive interpersonal relationships and be less likely to engage in disruptive behaviour in the classroom. The program also examined the effects of a family support program, open to all families, which incorporated a range of services such as counselling, education, crisis care, practical assistance, parent groups, advocacy and referrals to professional services.

Using 20 years of data on offending, the study found that participation in the enriched preschool communication program reduced the number of young people involved in later offending behaviour by 50 per cent. Participants in the communication program whose family were also supported through the complementary program did not commit any offences. While the family support program on its own did not reduce youth crime, the overall rate of offending in communities where it was offered was 20 per cent lower than comparable regions, suggesting that it may have contributed to a reduction in youth crime at the aggregate community level.¹⁰²



Artwork created by a 5-year-old child with living experience of out-of-home care



3.

INTERVENTION AND DIVERSION

Intervention and diversion needs of children, young people and families at risk of entering statutory systems

Preventing children and families from entering the child protection and youth justice systems requires early, intensive, and targeted intervention. This includes ensuring the availability and adequacy of family support services that are integrated, child-focused, and adaptable to the unique needs of families at risk of entering these statutory systems. Current referral numbers and outcomes from Child Safety's family support services point to the need for expanded reach and effectiveness, particularly in communities facing entrenched disadvantage. While there have been positive investments in community intervention programs and targeted support for ATSIACCs, overall funding for early intervention remains comparatively low. Promising initiatives, such as the Townsville early intervention program and youth co-responder teams show the value of collaborative, place-based approaches. However, police responses to young people remain inconsistent, with evidence suggesting that actions taken against young offenders can be inequitable and ineffective. A greater focus on diversionary practices, supported by strong partnerships between community, police, and service providers, is essential to keeping children safe and families together.

As early intervention needs intensify in both volume and complexity, services must adapt to collectively centre the needs of at-risk children and families if they are to effectively respond to issues before they escalate.

EARLY, INTENSIVE AND TARGETED INTERVENTION

INTEGRATED, CHILD-FOCUSSED,
AND ADAPTABLE FAMILY
SUPPORT SERVICES

COLLABORATIVE,
PLACE-BASED APPROACHES

STRONG PARTNERSHIPS
BETWEEN COMMUNITY,
POLICE, AND SERVICE
PROVIDERS

CHILD AND FAMILY
AT THE CENTRE



Children entering care and custody have significant unmet needs

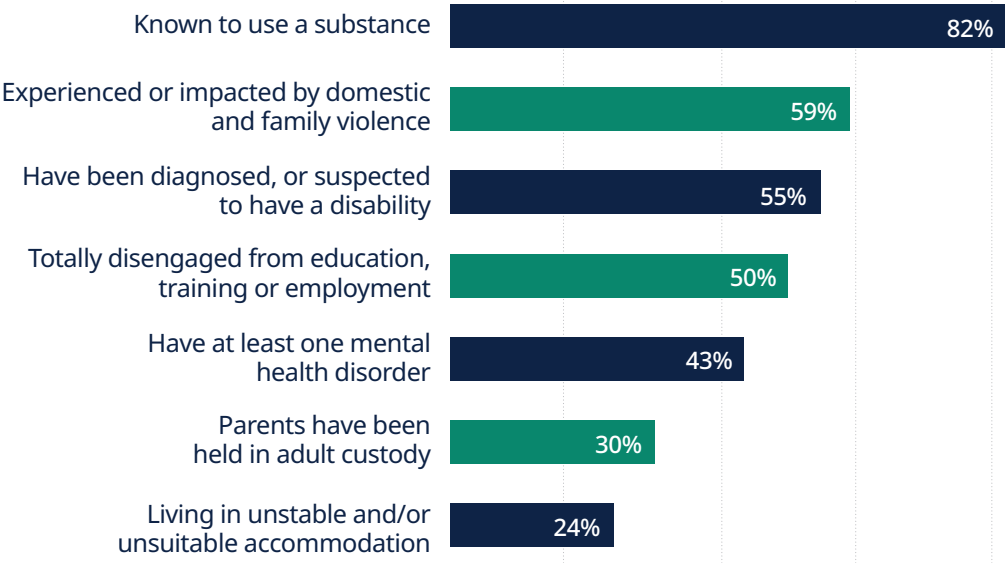
Youth Justice Census

The *Youth Justice Census* collects point-in-time data pertaining to the life circumstances of young people currently under youth justice supervision or in custody.

In the 2024 census, 59 per cent of young people under youth justice supervision and 70 per cent who were in custody had experienced or been impacted by domestic and family violence. Unstable and/or unsuitable accommodation was an issue for 24 per cent of those under supervision in the month prior to the census, and for 33 per cent of those in custody in the month prior to entry. At least one diagnosed or suspected disability was present for 71 per cent of young people in custody, and for 55 per cent of those under supervision.

At least one mental health disorder was present for 43 per cent of those under supervision and for 47 per cent of those in custody. Half of young people under supervision and 55 per cent in custody were totally disengaged from education, training or employment. Thirty per cent under supervision and 38 per cent in custody had a parent who had been held in adult custody.

Figure 10: Youth Justice Census results for all young people under youth justice supervision, 2024



Source: Department of Youth Justice. (2025). *Youth Justice Census Summary – Youth Justice Supervision*

Children in Care Census

The 2024 Children in Care Census identified a high rate of complex life challenges among a representative sample of 2413 children and young people in OOHC.¹⁰³ Half of this group (49.0%) were identified as having limited relationships or significant relationship problems with family – a considerable increase from 40 per cent in 2023. Nearly a third (31.0%) were identified as having limited to severely limited intellectual functioning or developmental delay.

High rates of mental health concerns were identified, including:

20%

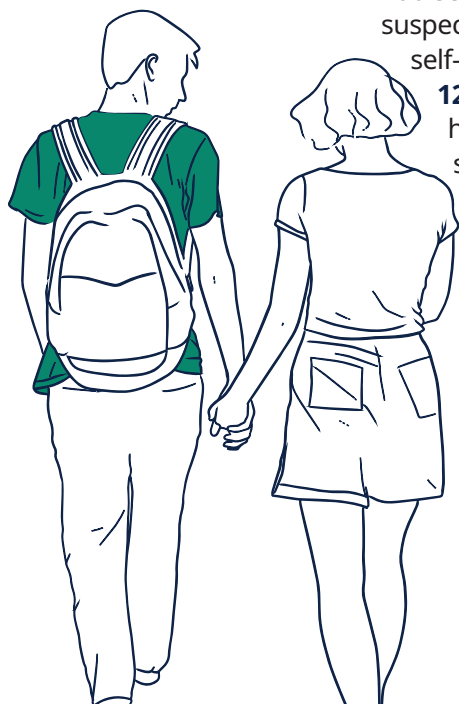
20 per cent of respondents with a diagnosed or suspected mental illness

28%

28 per cent with extreme instability and/or extreme emotional responses that limit functioning

28%

Among children and young people aged 10 and older, 28 per cent had self-harmed or were suspected to have self-harmed, and 12 per cent per cent had attempted suicide.



Children and young people in OOHC on youth justice orders were more likely to have experienced physical abuse, emotional abuse, and chronic neglect prior to entering OOHC. They also had an increased likelihood of attempted suicide, self-harm and developmental delay.

This cohort also had more negative experiences while in OOHC. This included an increased likelihood of school exclusions, being 'absent from care', and more than four placements.

High rates of unmet needs were identified among young people transitioning from OOHC within 12 months. Application forms for NDIS home and living supports have not yet been filed for 58 per cent of young people that require NDIS support and 29 per cent who will require public housing. Almost two-thirds were not yet registered with Centrelink, and 11 per cent did not have a leaving care plan.

Adequacy of Intensive Family Support services

Number of referrals

The overall number of enquiries or referrals to family support services including (FaCC, FWS and IFS services) decreased by 8.8 per cent between June 2020 and December 2024, from 43,681 to 39,856. This decrease is largely the result of a 22.9 per cent reduction in referrals made by Child Safety as referrals from all other sources decreased by only 1.6 per cent during this period. The Department attributes the decrease to the relinquishment of seven service outlets in 2023–24 and the window of time required to commission and establish new providers to support a full caseload of families. In addition, long wait lists for IFS services are drawing resourcing away from service provision due to the administrative burden of maintaining accurate list prioritisation and the commitment of families to engage with the service.

The number of referrals to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander FWS increased from 4465 to 5715 with a 46.5 per cent increase in referrals made by Child Safety.¹⁰⁴

Outcomes of Child Safety's family support services

Most families who engaged with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander FWS had positive outcomes. As at December 2024, 66 per cent of families engaged with FWS were reported as having at least some of their needs met, with 51 per cent having the majority or all of their needs met.¹⁰⁵ Eighty-six per cent of families with the majority or all of their needs met did not have an investigation in the six months following the closure of their case, similar to the previous year.¹⁰⁶

As at December 2024, 73 per cent of families had all or the majority of case plan goals achieved through IFS services, a decrease from 79 per cent in December 2023.¹⁰⁷ During the same period, case closures due to service termination, disengagement and refusals increased from 22 to 27 per cent.

The proportion of families who did not have a Child Safety investigation within six months of their IFS service closure decreased from 91 per cent in 2019–2020 to 86 per cent in December 2024.¹⁰⁸

Investments in community intervention programs

Comparatively low investment in early intervention

Queensland is investing an increasing amount into early intervention, however rates of entry into statutory systems are not dropping. Between the 2022–23 and 2023–24 financial years, the cost per child receiving an IFS service increased from \$8735 to \$9667. However, this rate is still below the national average expenditure per child of \$11,403 in 2023–24.¹⁰⁹ Despite this growth in investment per child, there has not been a drop in the rates of children subject to substantiations, subject to care and protection orders, or in OOHC,¹¹⁰ suggesting insufficient or ineffective investment in early intervention programs.

Overall funding for early intervention as a proportion of all child protection expenditure in Queensland has decreased over the past five years. Queensland had the second lowest rate in the nation of investment in early intervention, as a proportion of child protection funding in 2023–24.¹¹¹ The DFSDSCS has indicated that this is likely due to the increased use of, and expenditure on residential care due to the lack of available kinship and foster carer placements and increasing number of children requiring OOHC.¹¹²

In the 2025–26 budget for the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support (DYJVS)*, a total of \$215 million will be invested in early intervention programs over five years, with funding of \$25 million per annum ongoing. Funded programs intend to reduce crime, boost education, training and employment.¹¹³ This funding forms part of DYJVS's controlled budget of \$770.9 million.¹¹⁴ This represents a considerable increase in five years in overall departmental budget, with the department allocated a total budget of \$246 million in 2019–20,¹¹⁵ and \$281.5 million in 2020–21.¹¹⁶ Noting this there is no directly comparable publicly available data on the expenditure of the department on early intervention services to prevent young people becoming engaged in the youth justice system.

Investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations

ATSICCOs help address structural inequalities by providing holistic, culturally safe service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Queensland is increasingly investing in ATSICCOs to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

*Prior to the machinery of government changes in October 2024, this department was known as the Department of Youth Justice. For the purpose of this report, all references to this department will reflect the current name - Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support (DYJVS).

Overall in 2022–23, 4.2 per cent of recurrent child protection expenditure in Queensland is directed to ATSICCOs.¹¹⁷ Nationally, Queensland has the highest proportion of investment in family support services and IFS services through ATSICCOs, at 22.2 per cent of recurrent expenditure.

In 2022–23, 51 per cent of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland who accessed an FWS or IFS services were delivered by an ATSICCO. This was the second highest rate in Australia, behind Victoria at 57 per cent.¹¹⁸ However, although Queensland has a comparatively high rate of funding, research examining the delivery of wellbeing care for First Nations young people delivered by ATSICCOs in Far North Queensland identified mismatches between funding and community needs. The May 2025 study found that funding for service delivery through ATSICCOs was primarily directed towards crisis-driven responses relating to youth justice, child safety, homelessness, acute mental health and disengagement from education. Less than a third of services provided by ATSICCOs were directed toward prevention and early intervention through culturally appropriate psychosocial wellbeing support. Of all providers delivering wellbeing care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, ATSICCOs delivered less than a quarter of services, despite evidence demonstrating their efficacy and cultural appropriateness.¹¹⁹

Support for Townsville early intervention program

The government has committed \$1.8 million to Community Gro to ensure its operations through to 2028. This provider offers after hours services to young people in the Townsville region at risk of offending, by providing access to education, mental health support and assistance with developing social and life skills.¹²⁰

Police actions and commitment to diversionary processes

Actions taken against young offenders may be inequitable and ineffective

In 2024, the most common type of police action taken against First Nations young people who had offended was arrest, representing 54 per cent of police actions taken against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. The most common type of police action taken against non-Indigenous young people who had offended was a caution at 35 per cent.¹²¹

The top three offence types for both First Nations and non-Indigenous young offenders were motor vehicle theft, burglary (with breaking) and shop stealing.

Of the young people who had offended in 2024 and had also previously committed an offence within the preceding 12 months of their 2024 offence, 29 per cent had received a caution, 28 per cent had been arrested and 24 per cent had received a notice to appear in relation to their previous offence (totalling 81% of all police actions taken in relation to prior offences).¹²²

Taskforce Guardian deploys specialist police and youth justice officers to work alongside local police in districts across Queensland to target youth offending. In over 100 deployments between May 2023 and 14 October 2024, over 2000 young people were charged. The overall proportion of young people charged through deployments was greater (68.1%) than the proportion of young people diverted from the youth justice system (31.9%). The highest proportion of young people charged was in the Far North District, where four in five young people were charged.¹²³

| **Table 9:** Taskforce Guardian deployments by district between May 2023 and 14 October 2024 |

District	Number of deployments	Number of young people charged	Number of young people diverted	Proportion of young people charged	Proportion of young people diverted
Far North District	13	389	98	80%	20%
Townsville District	19	431	245	64%	36%
Mount Isa District	5	113	67	63%	37%
Mackay and Whitsundays District	2	37	31	54%	46%
Capricornia District	5	99	59	63%	37%
Wide Bay District	7	96	60	62%	39%
Sunshine Coast District	2	50	31	62%	38%
Moreton District	4	32	10	76%	24%
North Brisbane District	7	114	49	70%	30%
South Brisbane District	9	126	48	72%	28%
Logan District	9	168	76	69%	31%
Gold Coast District	4	59	34	63%	37%
Ipswich District	5	160	64	71%	29%
Darling Downs District	10	194	98	66%	34%
South West	1	25	10	71%	29%
TOTAL:	102	2093	980	68%	32%

Source: Queensland Police Service. (2024). *Taskforce Guardian marks 100th deployment*

Youth co-responder teams

Youth Co-Responder Teams (YCRT) are a joint initiative between the DYJVS and QPS, aimed at reducing crime by providing services to young people aged 10 to 18 who are in, or at risk of entering, the youth justice system.¹²⁴

According to an evaluation of YCRTs published in June 2024, as at 31 March 2024, YCRTs had engaged in approximately 3500 direct contacts with young people and 3700 interactions with family members and community organisations each month across 15 sites. Key strategies include transporting young people from risky places if they are engaging in anti-social behaviour, de-escalating conflict, liaising with support agencies, and providing support to better comply with court-ordered bail conditions and statutory orders.

The evaluation found that, on average, young people committed seven fewer offences in the six months following engagement with a YCRT. The greatest reduction in offending was among serious repeat offenders, reflecting a 73 per cent reduction in the number of offences committed six months post-engagement with YCRTs. In April 2024, the Queensland Government announced a \$13.55 million investment to extend YCRTs currently operating and expand the program to the Sunshine Coast and South West regions.¹²⁵





4.

STATUTORY SYSTEM INTERVENTION

Statutory system intervention

Queensland's child safety and youth justice systems play a critical role in protecting and supporting children, young people and their families, yet continue to face significant challenges. High rates of statutory intervention persist, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children consistently over-represented. The systems must ensure safe, stable placements, strong educational outcomes, and access to essential services for children in OOHC. However, ongoing concerns remain about placement disruptions, safety risks and inconsistent service delivery. In the youth justice system, elevated rates of harm, complaints and human rights breaches—particularly in detention—highlight the need for urgent reform, stronger oversight, and a greater focus on the wellbeing and rights of children and young people in statutory care.

Rates of **child protection involvement** are **increasing** despite national declines

In the 12 months since the Commission's last annual report, the number of children who interacted with the child protection and youth justice systems has continued to increase. A significant growth in the number of intakes resulting in a notification is diverting departmental resources towards investigation and assessment of notifications, despite the outcomes of these investigations remaining similar.

The number of child concern reports and children subject to concerns continue to grow. In the 12 months ending 31 December 2024, there were:

143,879

intakes

in relation to
88,945 children

11.4%

increase

in the number of
reports

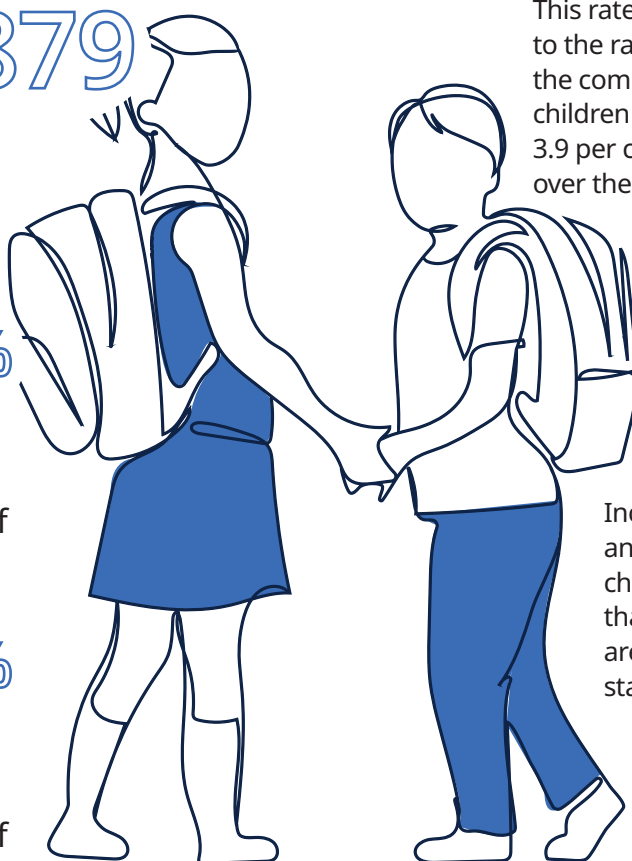
16.7%

increase

in the number of
children since 2019–20

This rate of increase is not proportionate to the rate of population growth, given the commensurate population of children in Queensland grew by 3.9 per cent (from 1,179,819 to 1,225,705) over the same period.¹²⁷

Increases in the number of children and young people entering the child protection system indicate that early intervention strategies are not impacting the demand on statutory systems.



| **Table 10:** Change in child safety engagement 2020–2024 |

Child safety engagement	Number 31 December 2024	Change in 1 year, 31 December 2023 to 2024	Change in 5 years 30 Jun 2020 to 2024	Change in proportion relative to intakes 30 Jun 2020 to 2024
INTAKES				
Total number	143,879	1.0%↑	9.7%↑	–
Number of unique children	88,945	3.3%↑	14.7%↑	–
CHILD CONCERN REPORTS				
Total number	99,870	-6.2%↓	-1.3%↓	-8.0%↓
Number of unique children	65,633	-4.2%↓	3.6%↑	-8.2%↓
NOTIFICATIONS				
Total number	44,009	22.2%↑	52.6%↑	8.0%↑
Number of unique children	38,806	21.3%↑	53.5%↑	10.3%↑
SUBSTANTIATIONS				
Total number	7448	3.4%↑	7.2%↑	-0.1%↓
Number of unique children	7023	3.3%↑	8.6%↑	-0.5%↓
ONGOING SUPPORT				
Children admitted to an order	4550	4.0%↑	0.3%↑	-0.7%↓
ENTRIES TO CARE				
Children entering care	3394	20.3%↑	-3.3%↓	-0.6%↓
CHILDREN LIVING AWAY FROM HOME				
Children of unique children living in an OOH placement	13,382	6.2%↑	14.4%↑	–

Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance*

| Table 11: Change in youth justice involvement 2020–2024 |

Youth justice involvement	Number 30 Jun 2024	Change in 1 year 30 Jun 2023 to 2024	Change in 5 years 30 Jun 2020 to 2024
COURT APPEARANCES			
Unique child defendants	3814	0.2%↑ (3805)	-5.5%↓ (4036)
CONVICTIONS			
Unique children	3281	-0.6%↓ (3302)	-3.8%↓ (412)
ADMISSIONS TO SUPERVISED ORDERS			
Unique children	1610	3.1%↑ (1562)	2.7%↑ (1568)
ADMISSIONS TO DETENTION CENTRES			
Unique children	863	-2.6%↓ (886)	-2.2%↓ (882)
REPEAT ADMISSIONS TO DETENTION			
Unique children – first admission	362	-1.9%↓ (369)	-18.3%↓ (443)
Unique children – prior admission history	501	-3.1%↓ (517)	14.1%↑ (439)

Source: Queensland Government Statisticians Office. (2025). *Justice report, Queensland*

Changing patterns in child concern intake reporting

Reporting patterns for child concern intakes are changing, with a substantial increase in the number of children subject to an intake by mandatory reporters between June 2020 and December 2024. Overall, there was a 30.6 per cent increase in the number of children subject to reports by mandatory reporters over this period. The largest percentage increase in the number of reports received was from early childhood personnel, which increased by 71.6 per cent, followed by school personnel at 30.8 per cent. While the number of reports received from police increased by 22.3 per cent over the same period, they were the only mandatory reporter to have an annual reduction (-13.1%) in the number of reports made between December 2023 and December 2024.¹²⁸

The number of reports received from non-mandatory reporters reduced by 8.5 per cent for non-Indigenous children and increased by 4.9 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. There were differences in the reduction of reports from 'child, family, friends and neighbours', which reduced by 7.8 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subject children and by 20.5 per cent for non-Indigenous subject children. Reports from non-government organisations increased by 27.1 per cent overall between June 2020 and December 2024.¹²⁹

Community trust and perceptions of the statutory system

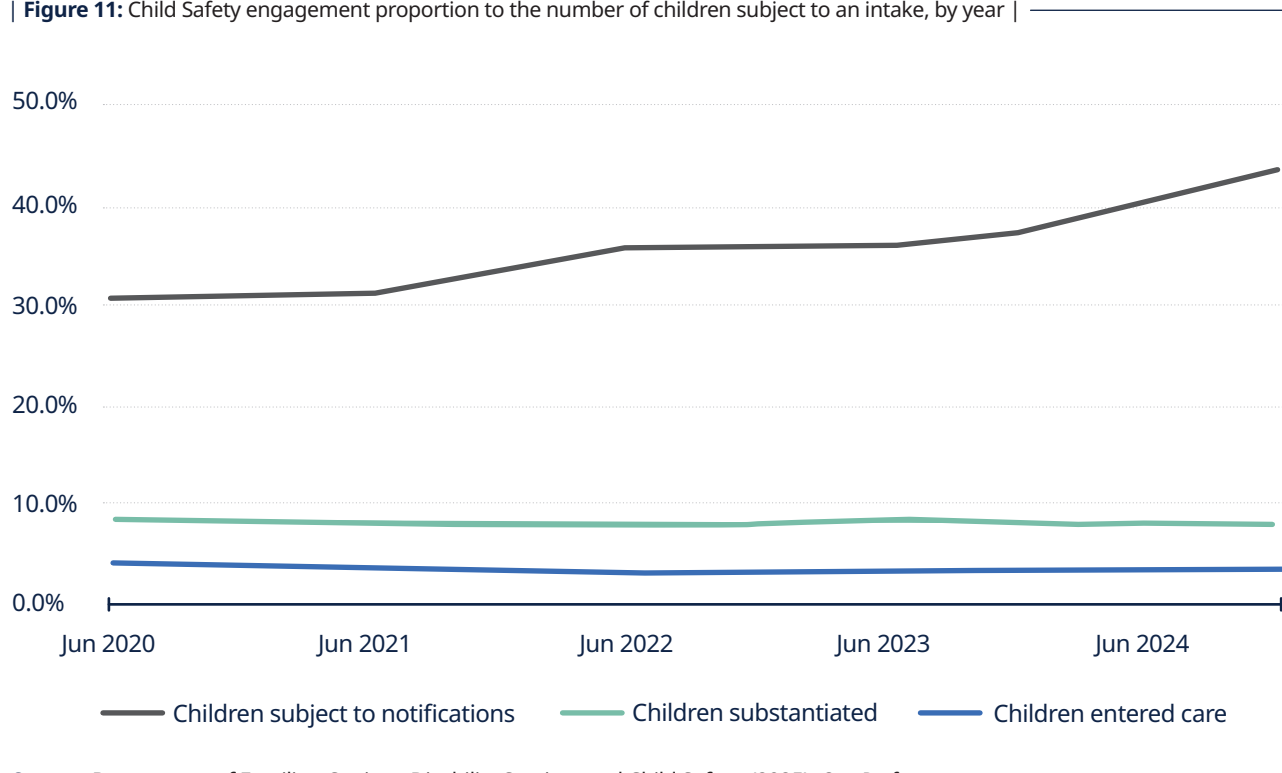
Results from the Commission's community perceptions survey indicate that overall, public trust in the child protection system is increasing. In 2025, 63 per cent of respondents agreed that they have 'confidence and trust' in the child protection system, compared to 58 per cent in 2024.¹³⁰ However, only one per cent of respondents to the Commission's 2025 statutory workforce survey agreed that the community has confidence in the child protection system.¹³¹ This disparity suggests that statutory workers underestimate public trust in the child protection system.

The demographics that reported the highest confidence in the child protection system were male, under 40 years old, in the Brisbane and Moreton Bay region, and identified as being culturally and linguistically diverse. Eighty per cent of culturally and linguistically diverse respondents reported trust in the child protection system, compared to 60 per cent of non-culturally and linguistically diverse respondents.¹³²

Rates of substantiations and children entering care are not increasing in line with intakes

Between June 2020 and December 2024, there was significantly greater growth in the number of children notified to Child Safety (66.7%)¹³³ than in the number of children whose notification was substantiated (7.2%)¹³⁴ and who entered OOHC (8.9%).¹³⁵ As a proportion of children subject to an intake, children subject to a notification increased from 30.5 per cent to 43.6 per cent, while the proportion of children substantiated decreased from 8.6 per cent to 7.9 per cent, and the proportion entering OOHC decreased from 4.1 per cent to 3.8 per cent.

| **Figure 11:** Child Safety engagement proportion to the number of children subject to an intake, by year |



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance*

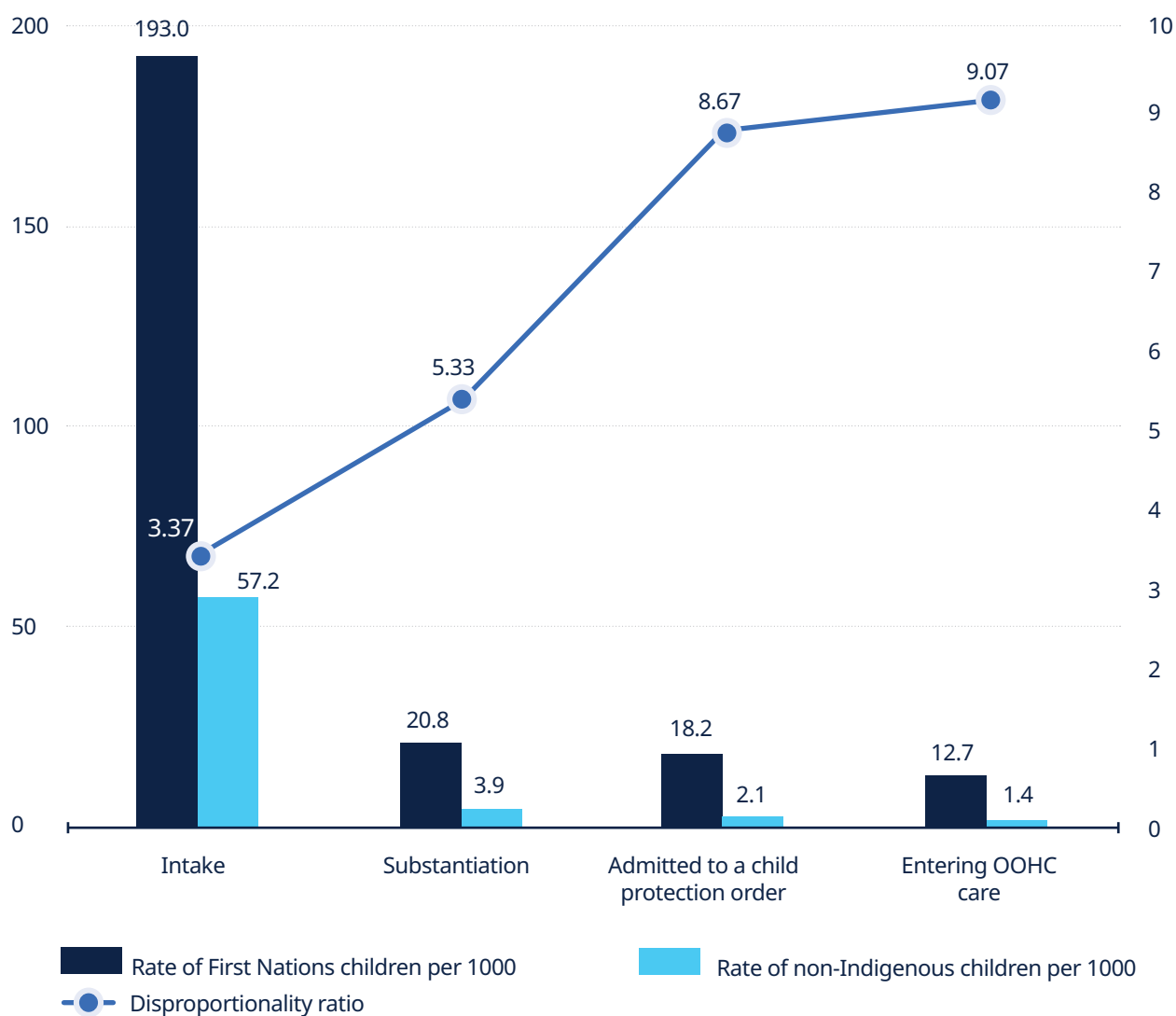
This trend indicates that a greater proportion of Child Safety's resources are invested in conducting and finalising investigations, while the outcomes of these investigations have remained at similar rates. The department advised this is a result of intake practices being corrected, which has resulted in an increase in matters being screen as notifications due to meeting the legislative threshold for reasonable suspicion.¹³⁶

Over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system

Over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people involved in the Queensland child protection system worsens with each level of engagement with the system. In 2023–24, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people were 3.37 times more likely to be the subject of an intake, 5.33 times more likely to have their notification substantiated, 8.67 times more likely to be admitted to a child protection order, and 9.07 times more likely to enter OOHC.

In 2023, Queensland had the second lowest rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in OOHC at 9.5 times increased likelihood, compared to a national rate of 10.8.¹³⁷ However, the rate of over-representation in OOHC in Queensland has increased by 13 per cent over the past three years. Furthermore, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering OOHC exceeds the number who have exited.

Figure 12: Rate per 1000 children and disproportionality ratio of children at different stages of the child protection system in 2023–24, by year and First Nations status

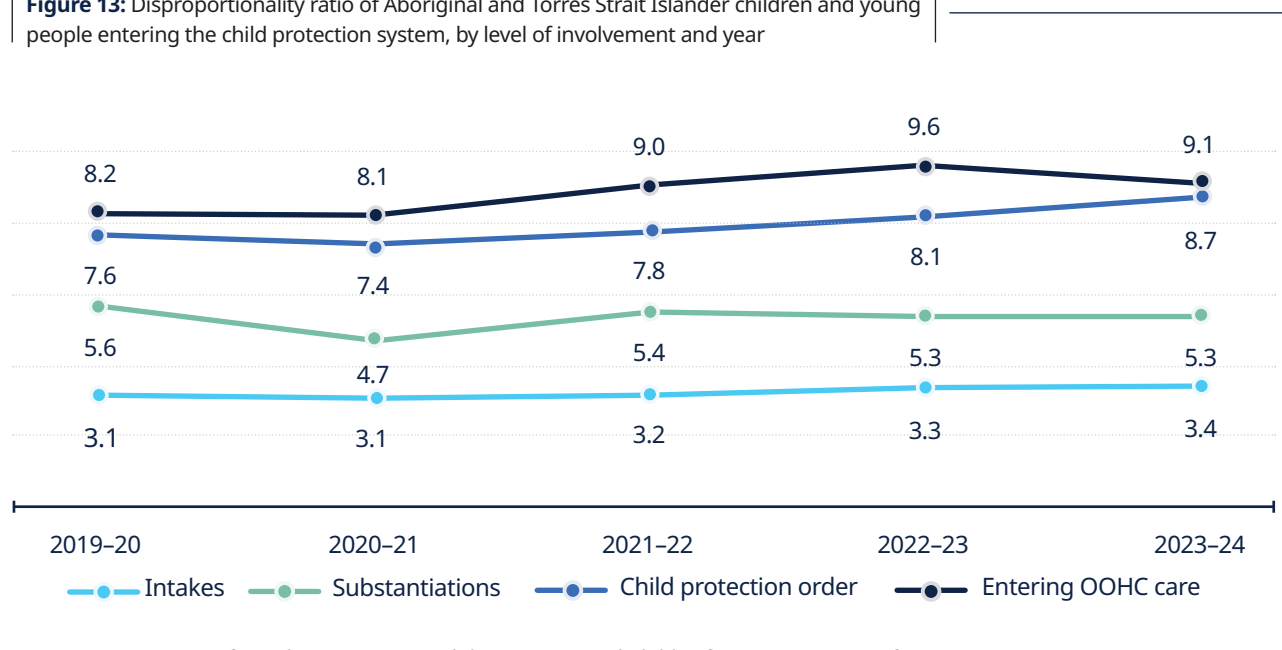


Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance*

Over the last five years, over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering the child protection system has increased for every level of involvement except substantiations of harm.

Although a lower proportion of notifications involving First Nations children and young people were substantiated in 2023–24 than in 2019–20, a greater proportion were subject to care and protection orders and entered OOHC.

Figure 13: Disproportionality ratio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering the child protection system, by level of involvement and year



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance*

Target 12 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is to reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC by 45 per cent by 2031. Disproportionality ratios have increased in every jurisdiction in Australia since 2019-20, with none on track to meet this target.

Table 12: Disproportionality ratios for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people aged 0-17 years in OOHC, by year jurisdiction.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
NSW	5.43	5.60	5.67	5.77	5.80
Vic	12.66	12.99	13.05	13.46	14.36
Qld	4.80	4.90	5.02	5.13	5.21
WA	7.67	7.85	7.94	8.16	8.18
SA	6.69	6.78	6.95	6.96	6.94
Tas	3.08	3.30	3.36	3.56	3.69
ACT	8.59	8.41	9.06	7.83	8.98
NT	2.12	2.18	2.20	2.17	2.15

Source: Productivity Commission. (2025). *Report on Government Services Part F Section 16 – Child Protection Data Tables – Table 16A.9*

Queensland First Nations children placed with kin less than the national average

As at 30 June 2024, 52.7 per cent of First Nations children and young people in OOHC in Queensland were placed in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP), compared to 63.1 per cent nationwide.¹³⁸ However, a slightly higher proportion of First Nations children and young people in Queensland were placed with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers.

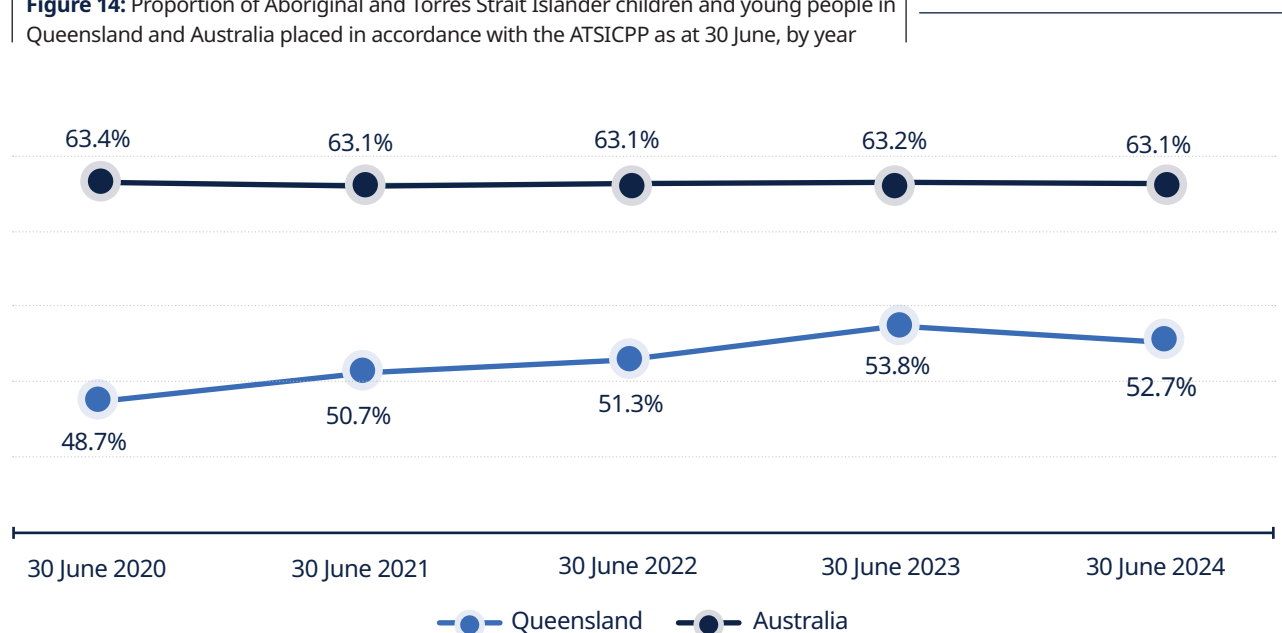
Table 13: Placement arrangements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, Queensland and Australia, 2024

	Queensland	Australia
Placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relative/kin	24.5%	32.1%
Placed with non-Indigenous relative/kin	18.1%	22.4%
Placed with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carer	10.1%	8.6%
Total placed in accordance with the ATSICPP	52.7%	63.1%
Placed with other non-Indigenous carer	29.3%	25.7%
Placed in residential care or family group home	18.0%	10.5%
Placed in Independent living/living arrangements unknown	-	0.7%
Total not placed in accordance with the ATSICPP	47.3%	36.9%

Source: Productivity Commission (2025). *Report on Government Services Part F Section 16*
– *Child Protection Data Tables – Table 16A.23*

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland placed in accordance with the ATSICPP slightly decreased between 2023 and 2024. However, there was an overall increase since 2020.

Figure 14: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland and Australia placed in accordance with the ATSICPP as at 30 June, by year



Source:Productivity Commission (2025). *Report on Government Services Part F Section 16*
– *Child Protection Data Tables – Table 16A.23*



Artwork created by a young person with living experience of out-of-home care

Commitments from the Queensland Government to support First Nations children and young people

The Queensland Government committed a total investment of approximately \$775.22 million between 2016–17 and 2026–27 to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in child protection.¹³⁹ This included \$167.2 million in the 2023–24 budget to be delivered over four years and \$20 million in ongoing funding from 2027–28.¹⁴⁰

Breaking Cycles 2023–25 is the third action plan under Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The Breaking Cycles 2023–25 action plan implemented collaboration between the Queensland Government, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP), and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation sector (ATSICCOs). Priority areas include expansion of Delegated Authority, transitioning service delivery for First Nations children and young people to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, and a whole-of-government approach to reducing over-representation.

Delegated Authority has been expanded to 15 ATSICCOs delivering 20 different service responses in Queensland. The support provided by delegated authority ATSICCOs has enabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to strengthen their connections with family, culture, country and community, supporting increased reunification. This is critical towards reducing rates of over-representation in OOHC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Two OOHC targets for First Nations children are to increase kinship care placements to 70 per cent by 2026 and reduce residential care to seven per cent by 2027. On 11 September 2024, the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 was passed. Based on recommendations from the Commission, it removed the Blue Card requirement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers and adult household members, as Blue Cards relate to suitability for employment to work with children rather than for family members to care for children (creating an unnecessary barrier to families who might otherwise take on kinship care).¹⁴¹ As of 16 April 2025, changes had not yet come into effect, meaning kinship carers and adult members of their household will still need a Blue Card until a different fit-for-purpose screening framework has been developed.¹⁴²

System capacity to meet demand

Investigation and assessment commencement and completion delays

Investigation response and completion timeframes in Queensland were longer than the national average in 2024. In Queensland, 54.7 per cent of investigations were not commenced within 29 days from the notification date, compared to 19.9 per cent nationally.¹⁴³ This was similar for investigations that were not completed within 90 days from the notification date, which represented 43.4 per cent of matters in Queensland compared to 31.6 per cent nationally.¹⁴⁴

Overall, the proportion of Investigation and Assessments (I&As) commenced within target response timeframes in Queensland in 2024 decreased from 49 per cent in June 2020 to 31 per cent in December 2024. During this period, I&As recorded as 'not yet finalised' increased by 324 per cent.

Investigations commenced within target response times of five or 10 days decreased from 40 per cent in June 2020 to 19 per cent in December 2024.¹⁴⁵ However, the proportion of investigations with a 24-hour response timeframe that commenced within the timeframe has remained consistent, at between 92 and 94 per cent.¹⁴⁶

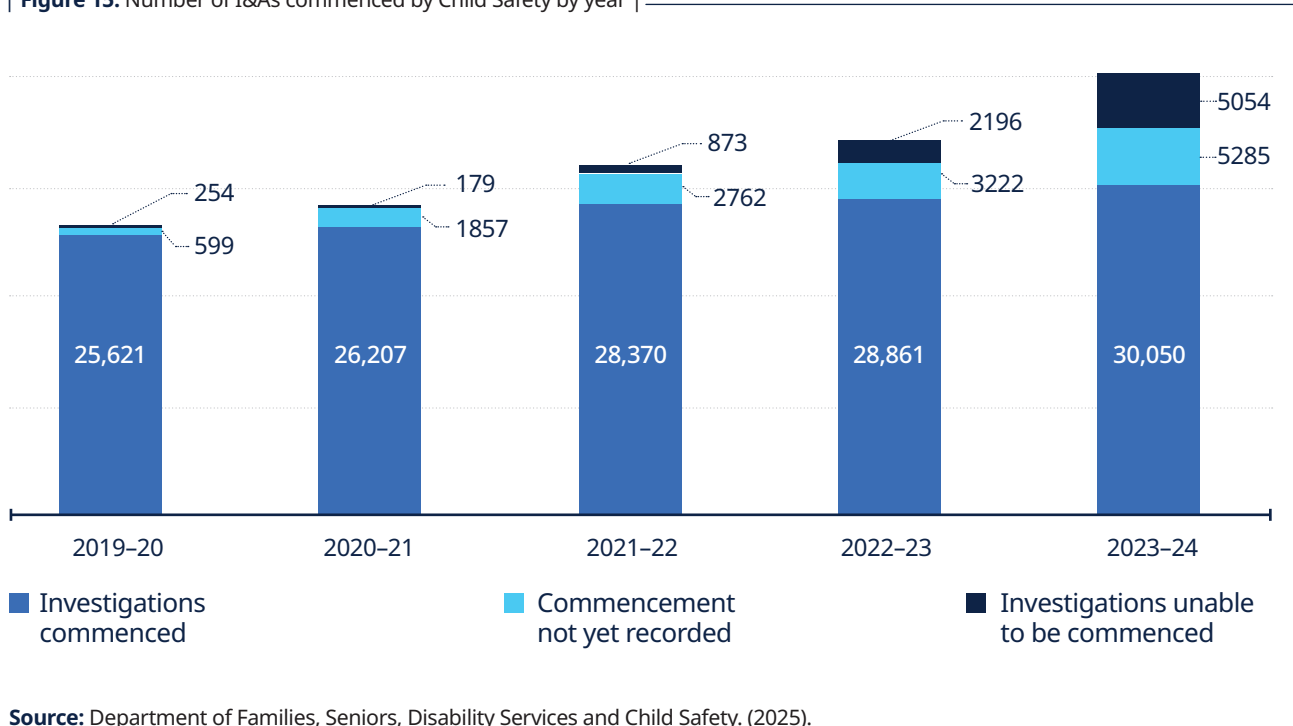
The number of I&As 'unable to be commenced' increased 1889 per cent between June 2020 and December 2024, from 254 to 5053.¹⁴⁷ Investigations are defined as 'unable to be commenced' when "despite all possible attempts, the department is unable to engage with the family due to circumstances beyond its control (for example, insufficient information has been provided and the family cannot be located; or the family has moved interstate)".¹⁴⁸ However, this characterisation is misleading.

The department advised that the increase could be accounted for by internal strategies,¹⁴⁹ including: the review and complete strategy (from October 2021) and the extended review and complete strategy (from October 2022), both of which give CSSCs the ability to finalise investigations that have been open for a period of time and no new or significant information had been reported to the Department;^b and enhancements to intake and assessment (from July 2024) which allow for investigations to be finalised as a "standard response" when an alternative response pathway to investigation and assessment is considered more proportionate in the circumstances. Greater transparency and disaggregation in the publicly reported data would enable evaluation of the efficacy of these strategies and practices, as well as identifying the actual prevalence of instances where the department is unable to engage with families due to relocation or lack of information provision.



^bThe review and completion strategy included the ability to finalise investigations where the original notified concerns were received more than four months prior, no new and significant information had been reported to the department since that time, and a review process had been undertaken by a panel to consider factors such as age, vulnerability, cumulative harm and previous intervention. The extended review and complete strategy included the ability to finalise investigations where the investigation and assessment was open for more than 100 days, had not commenced and where no new or significant information had been reported to the department.

| **Figure 15:** Number of I&As commenced by Child Safety by year |



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025).
Our Performance – Commenced Investigations

In 2023–24, the rate of children subject to substantiations was 5.8 per 1000 children. This represents a slight increase over the previous five years and is the highest rate since 2018–19. In comparison, the national rate is higher, at 7.3 per 1000 children, but is steadily decreasing.¹⁵⁰

| **Table 14:** Rate of substantiations of notifications in Queensland and Australia by year |

	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	Change in 5 years
Queensland	5.2	5.6	5.4	5.2	5.7	5.8	+ 0.6
Australia	8.5	8.7	8.8	8.0	8.0	7.3	- 1.2

Source: Productivity Commission (2025). *Report on Government Services Part F Section 16 – Child Protection Data Tables*
– Table 16A.1

The rate of children and young people in Queensland subject to care and protection orders at 10.9 per 1000 as at 30 June 2024 was higher than the national average of 10.3 per 1000. Over the past five years, rates have gradually increased in Queensland but remained stable nationwide.¹⁵¹

Table 15: Rate of children in Queensland and Australia subject to care and protection orders per 1000 as at 30 June, by year and jurisdiction

	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	Change in 5 years
Queensland	9.0	9.8	10.6	10.9	10.8	10.9	+ 1.9
Australia	10.6	10.8	10.9	10.7	10.5	10.3	- 0.3

Source: Productivity Commission (2025). *Report on Government Services Part F Section 16 – Child Protection Data Tables* – Table 16A.1

As at 30 June 2024, the OOHC rate in Queensland of 8.2 per 1000 children was slightly higher than the national rate of 7.7 per 1000 children. OOHC rates have steadily increased in Queensland since 2018–19 but have slightly decreased nationwide.

Table 16: Rate of OOHC per 1000 children and young people as at 30 June, Queensland and Australia, by year

	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	Change in 5 years
Queensland	6.9	7.6	8.0	8.0	8.1	8.2	+ 1.3
Australia	8.0	8.2	8.2	8.0	7.9	7.7	- 0.3

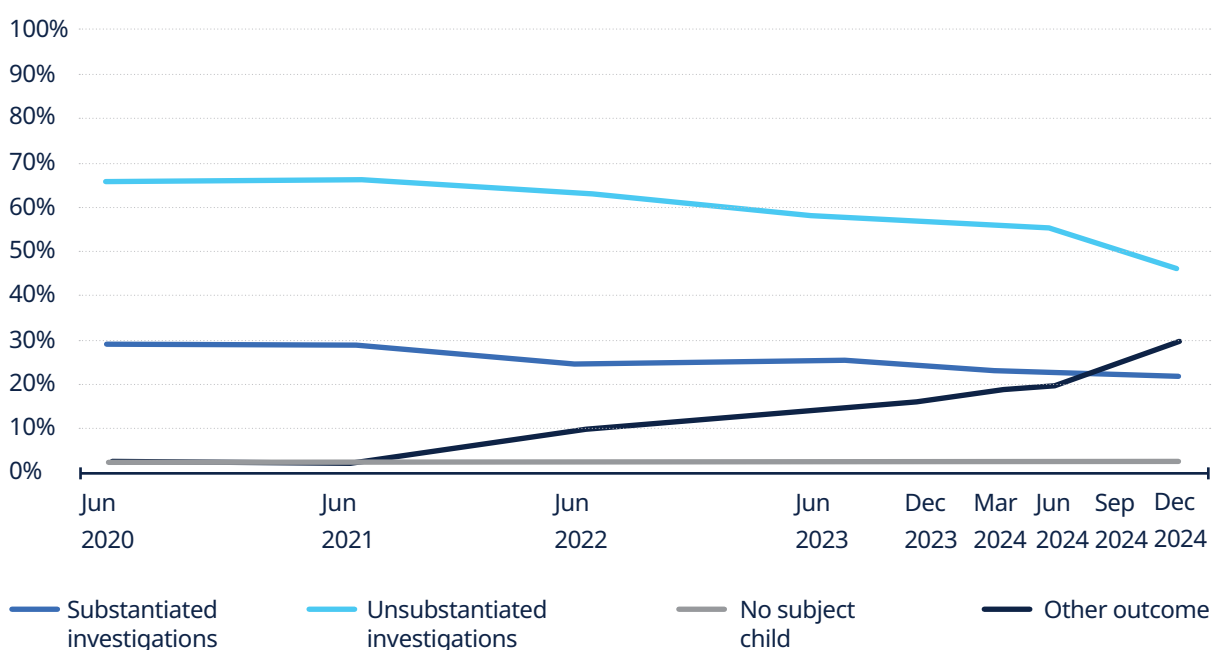
Source: Productivity Commission (2025). *Report on Government Services Part F Section 16 – Child Protection Data Tables* – Table 16A.2

The number of children on long-term guardianship orders to a relative or other suitable person or on a permanent care order have increased over time, driven largely by the growth in the use of permanent care orders. From 2019–20 to 2023–24, the number of long-term guardianship orders decreased by 1.5 per cent (1613 to 1588), while permanent care orders increased by 754.5 per cent (44 to 376).¹⁵²

Changes to Investigation and Assessment outcomes

Between June 2020 and December 2024 the number of I&As finalised as 'other outcome' increased by 1543 per cent, from 615 to 10,106.¹⁵³ This likely corresponds with the 1889 per cent increase in investigations that were categorised as 'unable to be commenced' in the same time period. As a proportion of all finalised I&As, investigations with 'other outcome' increased from 2.5 per cent to 29.5 per cent, while substantiated investigations decreased from 29.0 per cent to 21.7 per cent, unsubstantiated investigations decreased from 65.9 per cent to 46.1 per cent, and investigations closed with 'no subject child' increased only slightly from 2.5 per cent to 2.7 per cent.

Figure 16: Rate of OOHC per 1000 children and young people as at 30 June, Queensland and Australia, by year



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance*

Number of applications to courts for child protection orders

In 2023–24, the Department of Child Protection Litigation received 3572 matters, reflecting a 2.2 per cent increase from the previous year. Matters concerning children on emergency orders (court assessment orders or temporary assessment orders) increased by 14.2 per cent. This corresponds to the 17 per cent increase in the number of notifications Child Safety were required to investigate.¹⁵⁴

First Nations children represented nearly half of matters received by the Department of Child Protection Litigation in 2023–24, with 44.6 per cent of matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This was a slight decrease from 46.6 per cent of matters in 2022–23 relating to First Nations children.¹⁵⁵

Workforce capacity concerns in meeting system demand

In the Commission's 2025 statutory systems workforce survey, only three per cent of statutory workers agreed there is sufficient capacity to meet demand in the system they work in. Results were similar for secondary support service systems, where only four per cent of respondents agreed there was sufficient capacity to meet demand. Eighty-one percent agreed that child safety reports were likely to increase in the next 12 months, and 81 per cent agreed that numbers of children under youth justice supervision were likely to increase in the next 12 months.¹⁵⁶ The vast majority of respondents (94%) reported their work has become more complex, and 81 per cent reported that their clients are presenting with greater complexities than three years ago.

Continued staffing challenges in statutory systems

In 2023–24, the Child Safety caseworker vacancy rate was zero per cent because more full time equivalent (FTE) roles were allocated than budgeted.¹⁵⁷ This creates a potentially misleading perception about there being 'no vacancies', without breaking the data into the various different roles within Child Safety. There were 124.7 FTE allocations for casework positions other than Child Safety Officers than were budgeted for.^c However, the average yearly vacancy rate for Child Safety Officers in 2023–24 was 8.87 per cent, which is higher than the vacancy rate of 5.66 per cent in 2019–20, but a considerable decrease from 16.06 per cent in 2022–23.

Vacancy rates were higher in regional and remote Child Safety Service Centres (CSSCs) than metro CSSCs. All 10 CSSCs with the highest average vacancy rates in 2024 were in regional and remote areas, with the highest rate of 13.05 per cent in Fitzroy.¹⁵⁸

| **Table 17:** Queensland CSSC average vacancy rates, 2024 |

CSSC	Vacancy rate	CSSC	Vacancy rate
Fitzroy	13.05%	Mount Archer	12.66%
Edmonton	7.94%	Toowoomba North	7.67%
Mackay	6.95%	Toowoomba South	6.69%
Western Downs Intake and Assessment	5.67%	Roma	5.43%
Gladstone	5.02%	Mount Isa-Gulf	4.80%

Source: Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services. (2024). Unpublished data request

^cOther casework positions include Child Safety Support Officers, Cultural Practice Advisors, Family Group Meeting Convenors, Principal Specialist Services Clinicians, Specialist Services Clinicians, Senior Service Support Officers and Senior Team Leaders.

The South West region had a particularly high vacancy rate at specific times in the year. As at 19 April 2024, three CSSCs experienced vacancy rates between 25 and 40 per cent, and the highest vacancy rate in Queensland was in Roma CSSC, at 52.25 per cent.¹⁵⁹

DFSDSCS's *Strategic Workforce Plan 2023–2026*¹⁶⁰ includes actions to address increasing demand on the system, retention of staff, vacancies of Child Safety Officers and improving the cultural capability of the workforce. Each Child Safety region has a workforce plan with individual actions and metrics. These include:

- › reviews of workforce demands and priorities to ensure alignment to service demand
- › developing a retention strategy to reduce attrition and fill vacancies
- › using specific approaches to fill roles in regional and remote locations
- › designing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce strategy
- › working respectfully with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander peoples and acknowledge the identity and diversity of clients
- › working with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander peoples to reframe the relationship.

Findings from the 2024 Working for Queensland survey indicate that one in six, or 15 per cent of employees of the DCSSDS intend to leave their position within the next 12 months. Over a third of staff report their work is often or always demanding, and nearly a quarter report they are often or always emotionally overloaded with work.¹⁶¹

Wellbeing of the statutory systems workforce

Workers in government agencies were less likely to agree their organisation supports staff regarding stress, health and wellbeing compared to their peers in non-government agencies. In the Commission's 2025 statutory systems workforce survey, only 15 per cent of respondents from government agencies agreed their organisation supports staff with stress, health and wellbeing, compared to 53 per cent of non-government respondents agreeing with this statement.¹⁶²

Despite these reported difficulties, most respondents agreed their work serves an important purpose (96% agreement), gives workers a sense of satisfaction (65% agreement) and leads to positive change (52% agreement). There were differences in the responses from sub-groups, where only 53 per cent of respondents from government agencies reported a sense of satisfaction from their work, compared to 77 per cent of respondents from non-government agencies.¹⁶³

The Yangga Dahgu – Mekem Gen: Reframing the Relationship Roadmap was released by the Department of Families, Seniors and Disability Services in December 2023. The roadmap outlines the department's stated intention to reframe its relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This includes initiatives aimed at enhancing cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and building cultural capability across the department to support the development and delivery of culturally responsive policies, programs, services, and practices.

In December 2024, the department released its Cultural Safety Policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

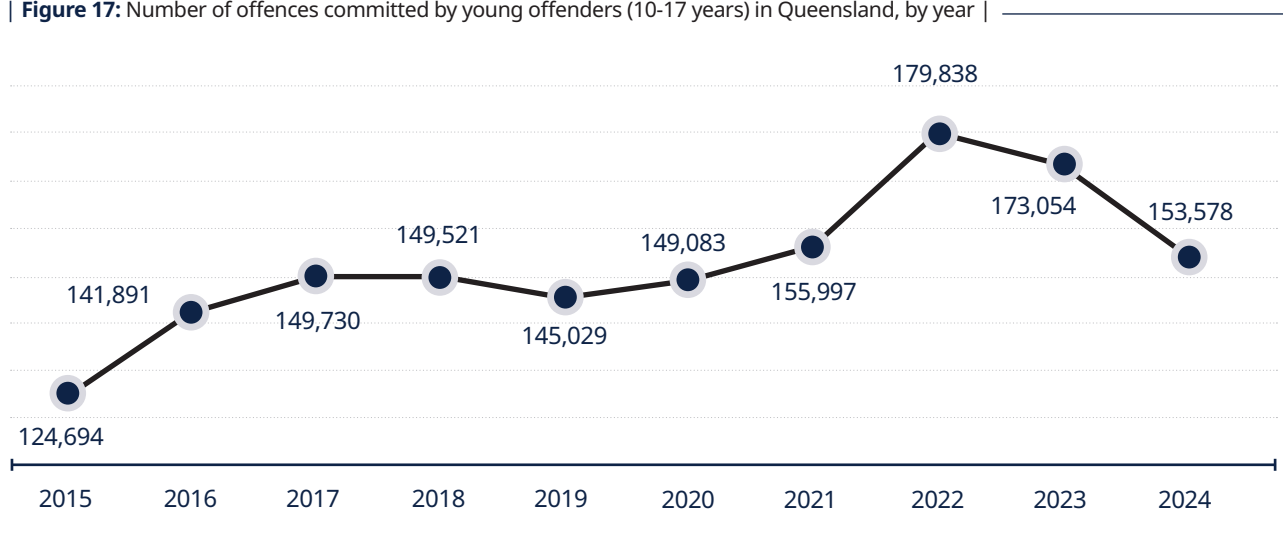
Youth crime in Queensland

Recent youth justice law and policy amendments have been shaped by a perceived increase in youth crime. This has resulted in punitive measures being supported by government as a method to address youth crime.

Youth crime rates continue to decline in Queensland, similar to other jurisdictions. The perceived increase in youth crime is framed by an overall increase in the number of offences committed by young offenders, rather than understanding it as a rate.

QPS data indicates that the total number of offences committed by young people increased over the past 10 years, from 124,694 charges in 2015 to 153,578 in 2024. However, these figures do not account for the significant population growth that Queensland has experienced over the last decade. Between 2014–15 and 2023–24, the rate of unique child offenders decreased by 30.4 per cent, from 2724.0 to 1896.8 per 100,000 persons.¹⁶⁴

Figure 17: Number of offences committed by young offenders (10-17 years) in Queensland, by year



Source: Queensland Police Service. (2025). Unpublished data request

There has also been a considerable decrease in offence rates over the past year. Between 2022–23 and 2023–24, the per capita offence rate decreased by 7.5 per cent, from 1215 to 1124 offences per 100,000 children and young people.¹⁶⁵ Without accounting for population changes, the total rate of offences committed by young offenders in Queensland decreased by 6.7 per cent.¹⁶⁶

‘Chronic’ or ‘repeat’ young offenders, with two or more police proceedings are increasingly responsible for youth offending. In 2023–24, repeat offenders accounted for 19 per cent of all children with finalised charges, were responsible for 51.6 per cent of proven offences, and accounted for 37.2 per cent of all young offenders.¹⁶⁷ The average number of charges per finalised appearance of a young defendant in 2023–24 was 6.8, representing a 9.7 per cent increase in one year.¹⁶⁸

Governments around Australia are responding to youth crime with punitive policies. In its submission to the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024, the Commission called for government to reprioritise restorative justice programs and increase rehabilitative measures. The Commission maintains its position that increasingly punitive policies will result in little-to-no improvement on the rate or impact of youth crime.

Increased use of incarceration

Queensland currently has the highest rate of youth incarceration in Australia. In 2024, an average of 5.1 out of every 10,000 young people aged 10–17 was held in detention each day, which was nearly double the national rate of 2.7 per 10,000.¹⁶⁹ This is a substantial increase from the 2019–20 Queensland youth detention rate of 3.6 per 10,000 young people. Comparatively, the national rate decreased from 2.8 per 10,000 children and young people during the same period.¹⁷⁰

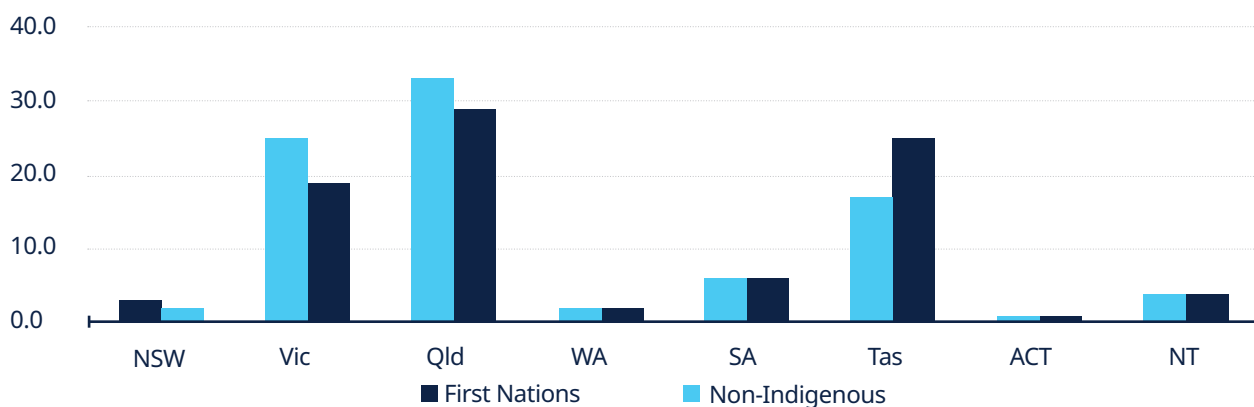
Alongside this increase in detention rates, the duration of detention in Queensland has also increased substantially. Between 2019–20 and 2023–24, the average length of time young people spent in detention rose from 74 to 104 days. In contrast, the national average remained stable at 66 days over the same period.¹⁷¹

In 2023–24, Queensland also reported the highest median length of completed detention period at 29 days, which was six times higher than the national median of five days. In 2023–24, First Nations children and young people in Queensland spent, on average, 16 more days in detention than their non-Indigenous peers. ‘Chronic’ or ‘repeat’ young offenders, with two or more police proceedings are increasingly responsible for youth offending. In 2023–24, repeat offenders accounted for 19 per cent of all children with finalised charges, were responsible for 51.6 per cent of proven offences, and accounted for 37.2 per cent of all young offenders.¹⁷² The average number of charges per finalised appearance of a young defendant in 2023–24 was 6.8, representing a 9.7 per cent increase in one year.¹⁷³



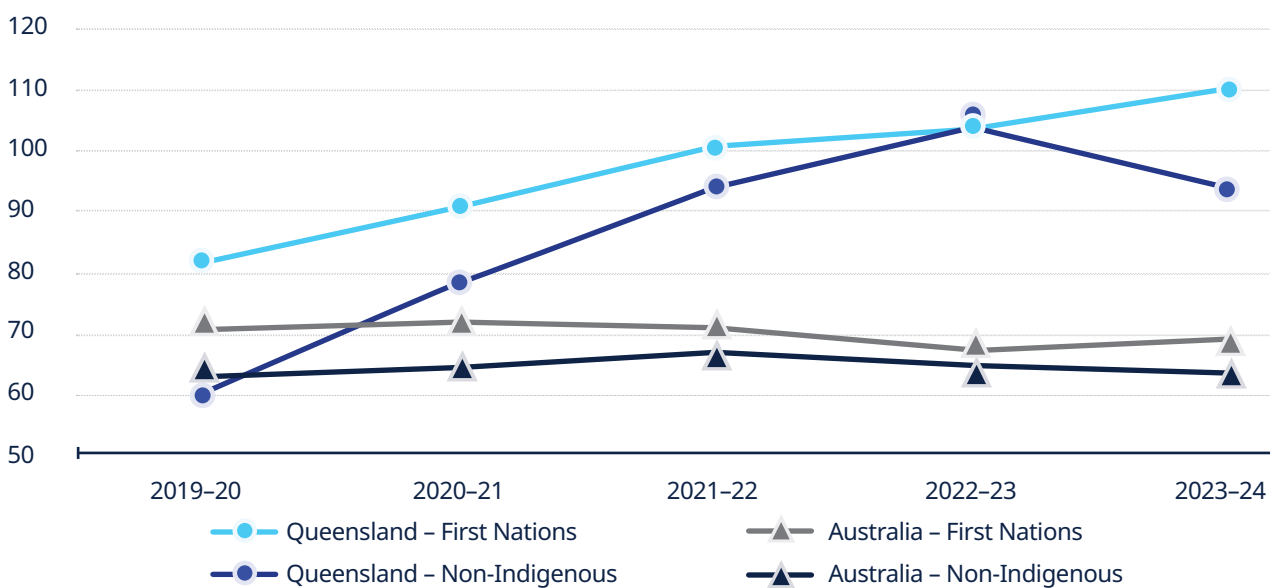
Artwork created by a 25-year-old with living experience of out-of-home care

Figure 18: Median length of completed periods of detention in days (10–17 years) in 2023–24, by jurisdiction



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *Youth Justice in Australia – Characteristics of young people in detention – Table S101*

Figure 19: Average number of days young people spent in detention centres in Queensland and Australia, by year and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *Youth Justice in Australia – Characteristics of young people in detention – Table S102*

Correspondence from the Director-General of the DYJVS showed that in the 12 months ending 31 August 2024, the average length of an episode in detention was 65 nights. The average episode length (in nights) for 10–13-year-olds was 32 nights.¹⁷⁴

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that Queensland is not only detaining more children and young people than any other jurisdiction, but also holding them in custody for longer.

Detention is not changing young people's behaviour

Queensland has high rates of recidivism compared to the rest of the nation. The proportion of young people who were released from sentenced supervision in 2021–22 and returned within 12 months was 65.8 per cent compared to 56.8 per cent nationally.¹⁷⁵

Figure 20: Proportion of 10–16-year-olds released from sentenced supervision in 2021–22, who returned to sentenced supervision within 12 months, by jurisdiction



Source: Productivity Commission. (2025). *Report on Government Services Part F Section 17 – Youth Justice Services – Table 17A.26*

There was a 15.3 per cent increase in finalised charges between 2022–23 and 2023–24 to a total of 49,612. This increase is largely attributable to the introduction of breach of bail charges, legislated and commencing in March 2023. There were 6697 convictions for breach of bail in 2023–24, compared to 938 breach of bail charges in 2022–23.¹⁷⁶

In contrast, referrals to restorative justice processes increased by only 5 per cent between 2022–23 and 2023–24.¹⁷⁷ Restorative justice processes include group conferencing when the offence involves a victim, and alternative diversion processes for offences without victims.

In 2022–23 and 2023–24, 2246 young people were referred to a restorative justice process, and 1,462 young people participated. In 2023–24, 43 per cent of young people who participated in a restorative justice process identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, compared to 39 per cent in 2022–23.

Research conducted in Victoria identified that group conferencing reduces the likelihood of recidivism.¹⁷⁸ Overall, completion of group conferencing reduced the likelihood of recidivism by 40 per cent while referrals alone reduced the likelihood of recidivism by 26 per cent. Conferences attended by a secondary victim and primary police officers were associated with the greatest reduction in recidivism, followed by conferences in which primary and secondary victims attended.

However, there was no difference in the likelihood of recidivism where the conference was attended by the primary victim only, or no victim. The presence of familial support for young people was associated with lower rates of recidivism in crimes against the person, but higher rates for property crime. These findings demonstrate the value of group conferencing as an effective alternative to sentenced supervision in reducing recidivism, particularly when careful consideration is made regarding who participates.

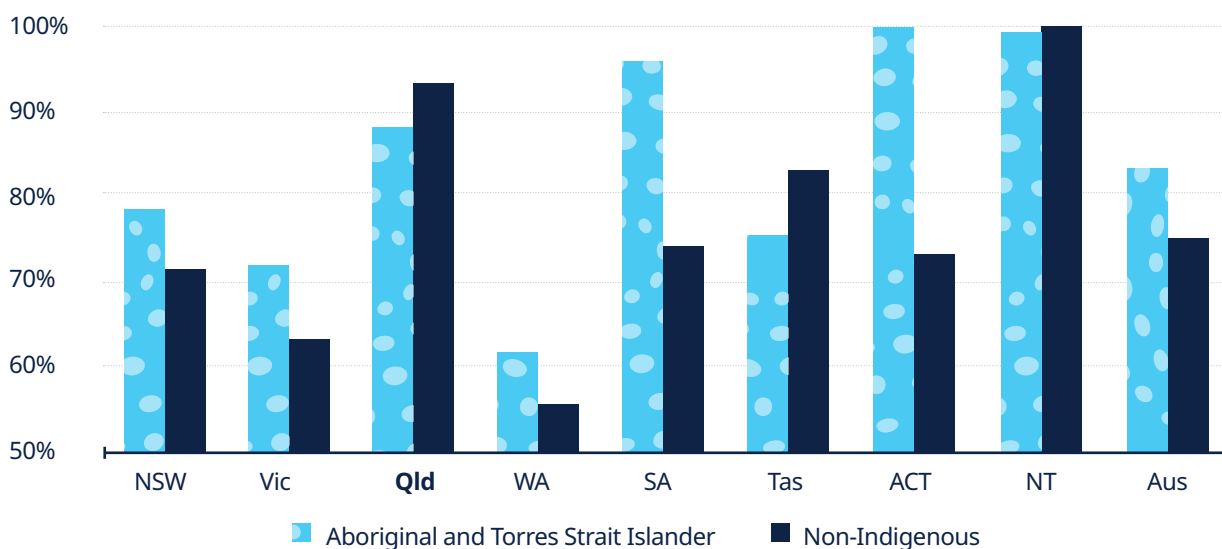
Most young people in detention are unsentenced

Young people awaiting the outcome of their court matter, or who had been found guilty and were awaiting sentencing, accounted for 9 in 10 young people in detention in Queensland in 2023–24.¹⁷⁹ The number of young people in detention on an average day in Queensland who were unsentenced increased by 54 per cent from 186 in 2019–20, to 286 in 2023–24.

The average length of time a child spent in detention per unsentenced episode was 48 nights, which is three nights longer than the previous year. Following sentencing, 37.8 per cent of children in detention were immediately released with no remaining time to serve.

Queensland had a high proportion of children and young people in unsentenced detention, for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and non-Indigenous children. In 2023–24, of the total number children and young people in detention in Queensland, 89.8 per cent were unsentenced.

Figure 21: Proportion of children and young people incarcerated in a detention centre who were unsentenced, by jurisdiction, 2023–24



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2025). *Youth Justice in Australia 2023–24 – Characteristics of young people in detention – Table S112a*

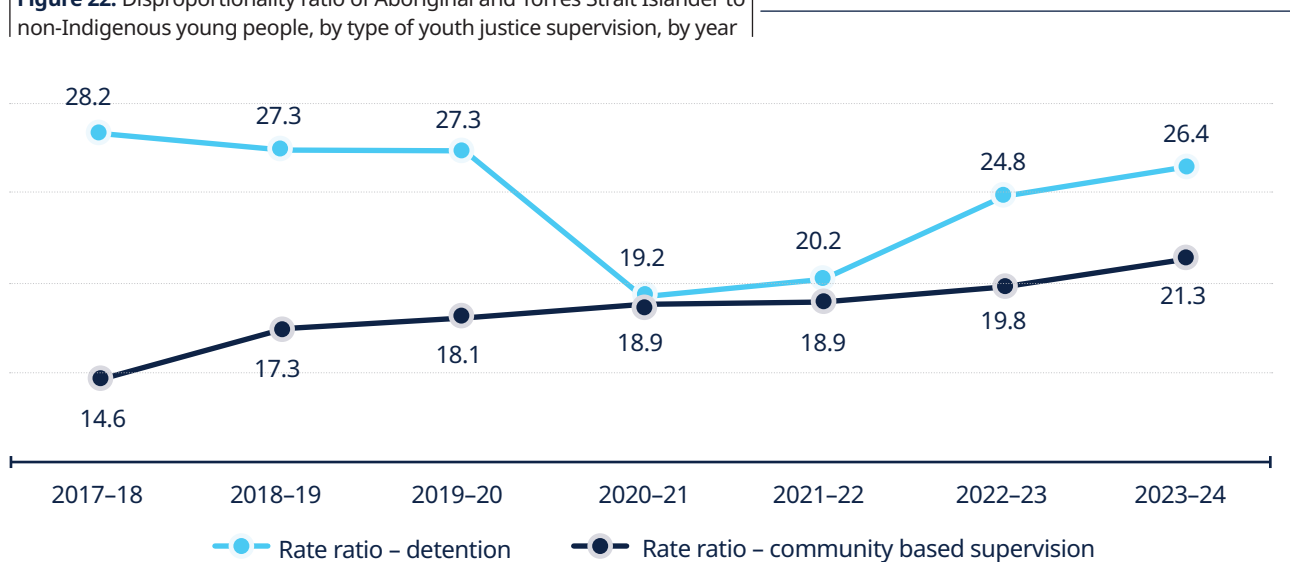
Youth justice funding is predominantly for internal programs and services

In assessing programs delivered by the DYJ between 2018–19 and 2022–23, the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) found that approximately 90 per cent (\$1.25 billion) of DYJVS expenditure went to internal departmental programs and services. Only seven per cent went to non-government organisations (approximately \$92 million), and three per cent to First Nations-led initiatives (\$42 million) which deliver rehabilitation and family support programs to young offenders and their families.¹⁸⁰ The QAO found this investment had not been appropriately evaluated against youth crime trends to ensure its strategic efficacy.

Over-representation of First Nations children and young people in the youth justice system

Over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the youth justice system continues to increase. In 2023–24, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland represented 55.4 per cent of all convictions of young people.¹⁸¹ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people were 15 times more likely to have a finalised charge and 29.1 times more likely to be held in detention. This reflects worsening rates of over-representation between 2022–23 (13.9) and 2023–24 (27).

Figure 22: Disproportionality ratio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to non-Indigenous young people, by type of youth justice supervision, by year



Source: Productivity Commission. (2025). *Report on Government Services Part F* Section 17 – Youth Justice Services – Table 17A.7, Table 17A.8

In 2023–24, Queensland had the highest rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people under community-based supervision. Queensland also had the highest number nationally of First Nations 10–13-year-olds in detention and under community-based supervision.¹⁸²

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children accounted for 82 per cent of convicted 10- to 11-year-olds, and 71 per cent of all children in detention on an average day, but only 46 per cent of restorative justice orders.¹⁸³

Target 11 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap aims to reduce the rate of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people in detention by 30 per cent by 2031. Nationally, there has been no change in progress towards this target.¹⁸⁴ However, over-representation is increasing in Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory, and the Northern Territory. The rate per 10,000 First Nations young people increased from 30.9 in 2016–17 to 41.1 in 2023–24 in Queensland.¹⁸⁵

Queensland Government responses to youth crime continue to disadvantage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Both tranches of the Queensland Government's Making Queensland Safer Bills amendments included a Statement of Compatibility with human rights, which directly acknowledged the Bills would have a disproportionate effect on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, with the amendments likely to result in higher numbers of First Nations children being incarcerated, and for longer periods of time.¹⁸⁶ The Statement of Compatibility for the second tranche of amendments to the *Youth Justice Act 1992* (Qld) noted that the amendments will "lead to sentences that are more punitive than necessary to achieve community safety."

Commissioner Natalie Lewis' submission to the inquiry into the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 stated that any systemic interventions that have inequality in effects, impacts or outcomes are discriminatory, regardless of their motivations or intentions.¹⁸⁷

Effectiveness of custody on youth crime rates and repeat offence rates

Non-Indigenous children and young people experience lower recidivism rates compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people following periods of detention, illustrating how detention and the programs delivered while incarcerated are not delivering positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.¹⁸⁸

Table 18: For young people released between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023, percentage decrease in number of offences committed in the 12 months prior to Youth Justice custody, and the 12 months following Youth Justice custody

	Decrease in offending	Decrease in serious offending
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people	13%	2%
Non-Indigenous children and young people	42%	54%

Source: Queensland Parliament. (2024, December). *Answer to Question on Notice No. 1177–2024*

The DYJVS has not conducted an independent evaluation of several of the eight core rehabilitation programs including programs designed to be delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

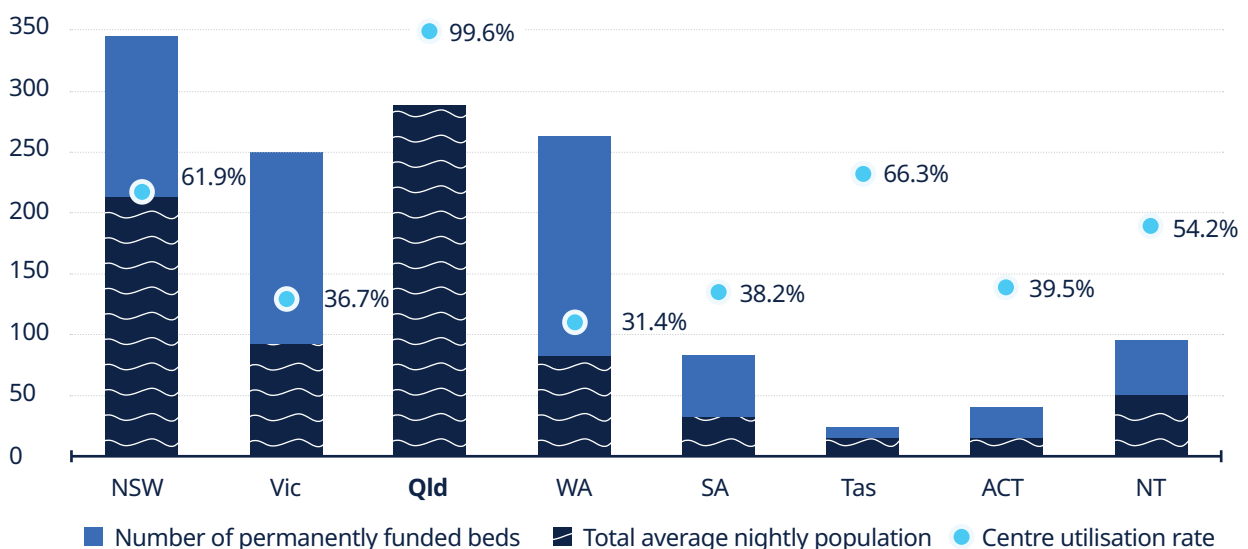
Youth detention centre capacity

For the past three years, youth detention centres have routinely operated over safe capacity, defined as 85 per cent of the capacity a centre was built to accommodate.¹⁸⁹ Queensland youth detention centres have a capacity of 288 permanently funded beds, which is the largest number in Australia. But due to a high rate of incarceration, Queensland has the highest centre utilisation rate of any state or territory in the country and is the only state to be operating above safe capacity.

In 2023–24, Queensland youth detention centres were operating at 99.6 per cent capacity, with an average nightly population of 286.8 children and young people.¹⁹⁰ In 2022–23, all three of Queensland's youth detention centres were operating above safe capacity by an average of 23 young offenders each day.

Staffing issues are a related concern.^d Vacancy rate for Regions and Statewide Services, which includes Youth Justice Service Centres, was 7.4 per cent. Furthermore, the permanent separation rate for youth detention centres and Youth Justice Service Centre staff increased from 20.6 per cent in 2020–21 to 22.6 per cent in 2023–24.¹⁹¹ In 2022–23, staffing shortages were the cause of 81 per cent of all lockdowns, with Cleveland Youth Detention Centre under lockdown for 293 days of that year.¹⁹² DYJVS has advised that it continues to implement workforce strategies to minimise staffing shortfalls, plan and manage staff needs, and action system improvements.¹⁹³

Figure 23: Utilisation rates, numbers of permanently funded beds and average nightly population of detention centres, by jurisdiction and year



Source: Productivity Commission. (2025). *Report on Government Services 2025 Part F, Section 17 Youth Justice services, Table 17A.2*

^d Other casework positions include Child Safety Support Officers, Cultural Practice Advisors, Family Group Meeting Convenors, Principal Specialist Services Clinicians, Specialist Services Clinicians, Senior Service Support Officers and Senior Team Leaders.

Youth justice case plans and risk assessments

Young people in the youth justice system are experiencing case plan delays, with 83.5 per cent of children and young people sentenced to community-based orders having case plans prepared or reviewed within six weeks of commencing an order,¹⁹⁴ compared to 88.5 per cent nationally.¹⁹⁵

There has been an improvement in the proportion of risk assessments being completed within the timeframe. A case worker is required to assess the risk and needs of serious repeat young offenders within six weeks of receiving a court order. The percentage of risk assessments completed on time has increased from 45 per cent (155 assessments) in 2018–19 to 83 per cent (571 assessments) in 2022–23.¹⁹⁶

Between 2018–19 and 2022–23, 1054 risk assessments were not completed on time, with 18 per cent of these (n=186) not completed in three or more months after the due date. Without these assessments to inform case planning, it is possible that the delivery of programs and services to young people in detention were not specific to their needs or addressing the root causes of their offending.¹⁹⁷

Children held in watch houses

Watch houses are unsuitable places for detaining children, however the QPS states there is no current alternative.

In 2023–24, the number of children aged 10–13 years who had spent a night in a QPS watch house increased by 50 per cent over the previous year, from 80 in 2022–23 to 120 children in 2023–24.¹⁹⁸

As of 30 June 2025, the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) reported that 1349 individual children had been held in QPS watch houses in 2024–25. Of the 2838 custody events, 52 per cent were 24 hours or longer in duration, and 12 per cent were 6 days or longer.¹⁹⁹ Ongoing reporting showed multiple instances of extended incarceration of children and young people, including:

- 47 custody events over 15 days in duration: 27 (57%) incarcerating First Nations children; 41 (87%) occurring at Caboolture watch house; and three experienced by children under the age of 14;
- one child held in Caboolture watch house for 27 days and 19 hours, and one held at Townsville watch house for 26 days and 20 hours;
- 177 children aged under 14: 59 per cent of whom were First Nations; 56 per cent of whom were held for longer than 24 hours.

Media reports from February 2025 allege that police watch house staff expressed concerns they are at risk of a death in custody, with watch houses on the Gold Coast and Logan reaching capacity “almost every day”.²⁰⁰

Public availability of watch house data

In August of 2024, QPS announced a review into the use of watch houses to detain children and young people and committed to increased transparency about the use of watch houses for young people. Since August 2024, the QPS has published data held for every watch house in Queensland, reporting twice daily on numbers of adults and children incarcerated, and their length of stay. No other state or territory makes this level of information publicly available.²⁰¹

Wacol Youth Remand Centre (WYRC) was purpose built as an adult watch house and is temporarily being operated by the DYJVS to function as a youth remand centre. As this is not considered a QPS watch house, the number of children and young people held in this centre is not publicly reported on, meaning there is an under-count of the number of children and young people being held in a facility designed for short-term custody.

Fast track sentencing pilot

In March 2023, the Fast Track Sentencing pilot program commenced with the aim of hastening court processes for young people to limit the amount of time they spend on remand.²⁰²

The Fast Track Sentencing pilot continued operating in Cairns, Southport, Brisbane and Ipswich. There were early signs of success in improved clearance rates and reduced duration of time to finalise court proceedings.²⁰³

Throughout Queensland, the average time taken to finalise proceedings decreased by seven days from the previous year to 85 days. The average time taken to resolve matters from the date of first mention in Children's Court decreased by 12 days from the previous year, to 307.

An independent review of the program is due to be completed at the conclusion of the pilot in 2025.²⁰⁴





Artwork created by a 11-year-old child with living experience of out-of-home care

A photograph of two children, a boy and a girl, looking into a large aquarium tank. The girl, on the right, is pointing her finger at a fish. The tank is filled with various fish, including several striped fish and a large blue fish on the left. The lighting is bright, creating a vibrant underwater scene.

5.

EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Experiences of children and young people in the care of statutory systems

Queensland's statutory systems have a responsibility to ensure that children and families receive safe, responsive and appropriate support throughout their involvement with their services. To do this, the system must be responsive to the needs and experiences of children. The system must provide carers with the resources, training and support they need while building a capable statutory workforce that prioritises child safety and wellbeing. Investment in OOHC must be matched with strategies to grow and retain a diverse pool of foster and kinship carers, reducing an over-reliance on residential care and increasing access to stable, home-based placements.

Greater effort is needed to monitor and support children who are absent from placement, and to ensure every child has access to therapeutic, disability and mental health services, education and opportunities for connection to family, culture and community. In youth justice, the system must provide culturally safe, trauma-informed responses and address safety risks in detention such as self-harm and assault. Adult watch houses should not be routinely used as custodial options for children. Programs must be rigorously assessed for effectiveness, and investment directed at delivering evidence-based, child-centred solutions. The system must shift from reactive crisis management to proactive, sustained care that delivers better long-term outcomes.

Child protection

Inadequate data collection limits visibility of issues affecting children in the system

Child Safety's previous case management system, the Integrated Client Management System (ICMS), had limited capability to generate corporate-level reporting. This constrained Child Safety's ability to understand the breadth of issues affecting the child protection system and to evaluate the effectiveness of programs.

Child Safety has advised that the implementation of ICMS's replacement system – Unify – will improve data linkage and reporting, allowing more time for service delivery through improved system usability and information access.²⁰⁵ The Unify program was implemented in 2025, with the program rolled out to all intended users statewide on 15 April 2025.²⁰⁶ The Commission notes that its data collection and reporting capacity is yet to commence, and there are concerns limited reporting is coinciding with increased scrutiny.

Investment in out-of-home care

Queensland Government expenditure on OOHC care services has increased by 51.3 per cent in five years, with expenditure per placement night increasing by 67.3 per cent.²⁰⁷

| **Table 19:** Queensland government expenditure on OOHC care services |

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
Real expenditure	\$ 0.857bn	\$ 1.118bn	\$ 1.328bn	\$ 1.500bn	\$ 1.672bn
Expenditure per placement night	\$ 233.27	\$ 283.17	\$ 323.80	\$ 357.40	\$ 390.17

Source: Productivity Commission. (2025). *Report on Government Services 2025 Part F, Section 16 Child Protection, Table 16A.36*

New investment for OOHC reforms was announced during the first sitting of the 58th Queensland Parliament.^{208,209}

These commitments include:

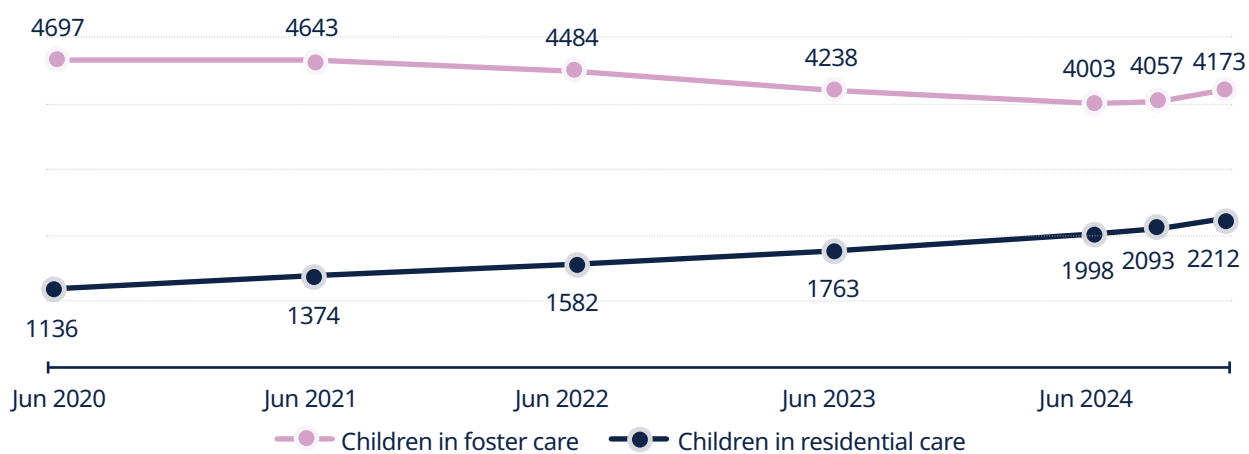
- funding to boost the number of frontline child protection staff by 20 per cent
- implementing a dual-carer model for residential care by 2030, providing two carers rostered on 24/7 in residential care facilities to enhance safety, reinforce behavioural accountability and support children’s school attendance and participation in extracurricular activities
- piloting a new professional foster care program for children with disability and complex needs who are currently in the residential care system
- increasing the allowance for extracurricular activities and education support for children in OOHC.

Insufficient foster carers resulting in over-reliance on residential care

Over the 12 months ending 31 December 2024, the number of foster and kinship carer families increased by 5.3 per cent, while the number of children living away from home increased by 6.2 per cent.²¹⁰ During the same time period, the number of children in residential care increased by 20.9 per cent, from 1829 to 2212.

The need for foster and kinship carer families has not kept pace with demand, with the number of children and young people placed in residential care having grown by 94.7 per cent between June 2020 and December 2024. Young children aged 0–4 are the fastest growing cohort now being placed in residential care.²¹¹

Figure 24: Number of children in OOHC by type of living arrangement, by year |



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance – Living arrangements of children.*

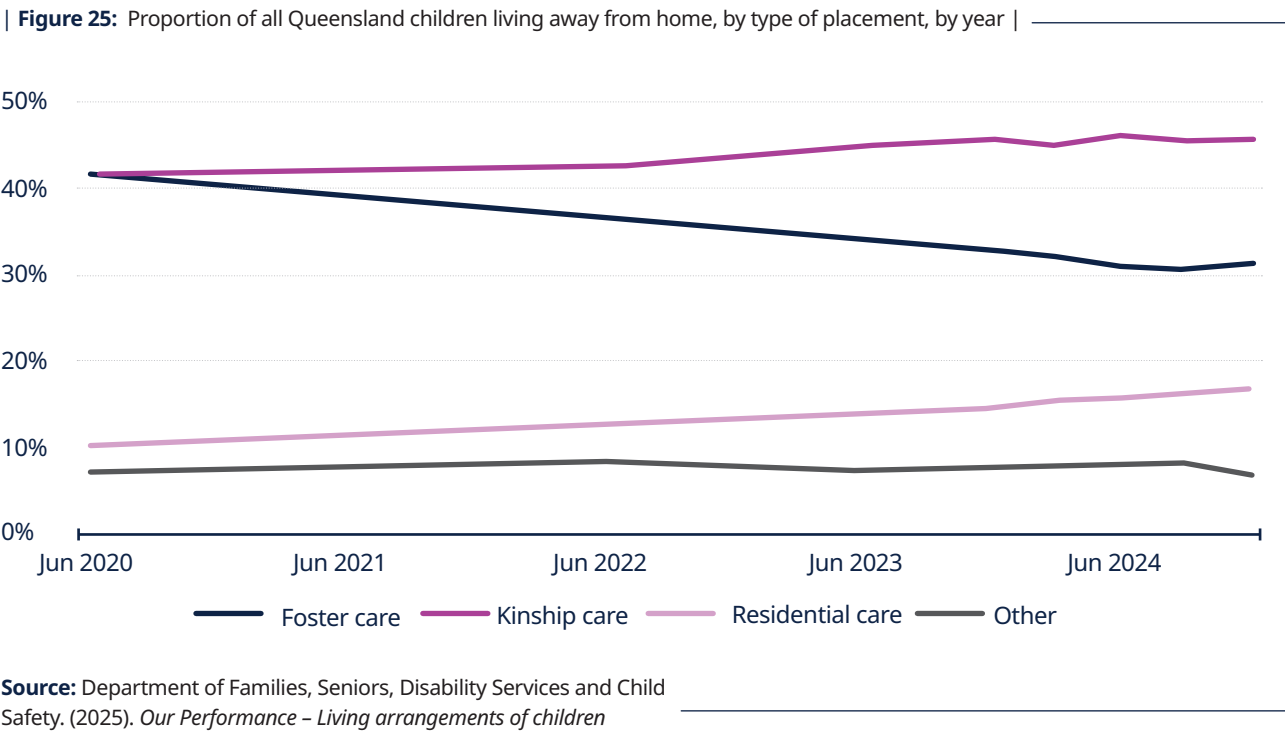
Table 20: Number of children in residential care in Queensland by First Nations status, between 30 June 2020 and 31 December 2024 |

Age group		30 Jun 2020	31 Dec 2024	Change
0–4 years	First Nations	13	56	+ 330.8%
	Non-Indigenous	3	21	+ 600.0%
5–9 years	First Nations	75	189	+ 152.0%
	Non-Indigenous	84	168	+ 100.0%
10–14 years	First Nations	220	436	+ 98.2%
	Non-Indigenous	280	503	+ 79.6%
15–17 years	First Nations	174	335	+ 92.5%
	Non-Indigenous	287	504	+ 75.6%
Total:	First Nations	482	1016	+ 110.8%
	Non-Indigenous	654	1196	+ 82.9%

Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance – Living arrangements of children*

As at 30 September 2024, 99 per cent of the 1050 children aged two to four years who had been in care for two or more years were in home-based care settings, with nearly half of these children living with kin.²¹²

In June of 2024, of the children under five years old in residential care across the state: 67 per cent were placed with siblings in care, 11 per cent had extreme medical or disability needs, nine per cent had complex behaviour issues and nine per cent were relocated due to a high level of community conflict and/or violence.²¹³

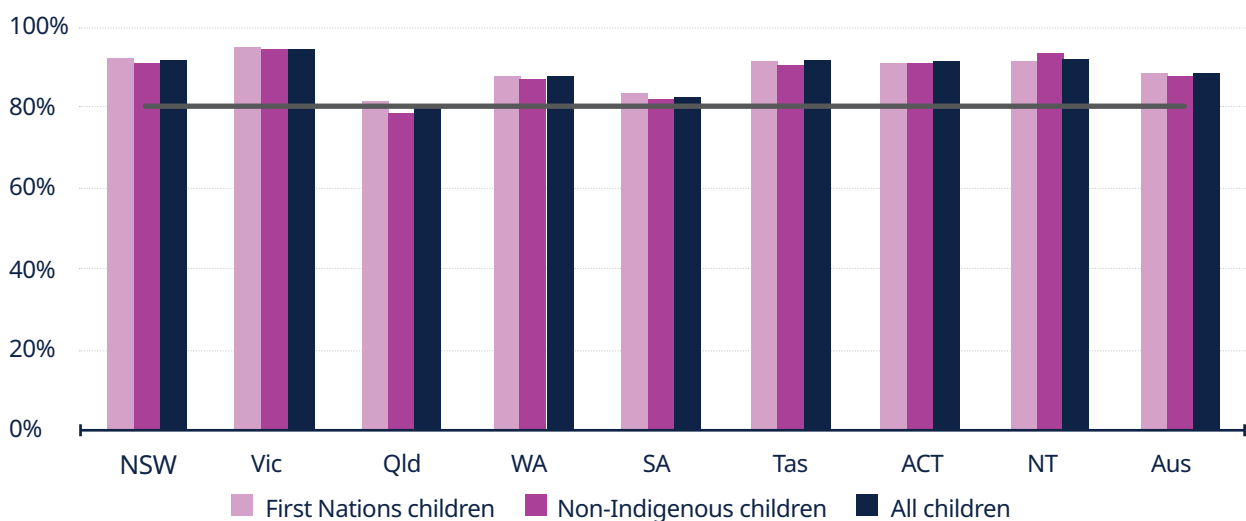


Low rates of home-based care

Queensland had the lowest rate of home-based care placements in Australia as at 30 June 2024. First Nations children and young people were placed in home-based care at slightly higher rates than their non-Indigenous peers (81.8% to 78.7% respectively). Children aged under 12 were placed in home-based care at significantly higher rates than those aged 12 to 17, with 9 out of 10 children under the age of 12 living in this type of placement.²¹⁴

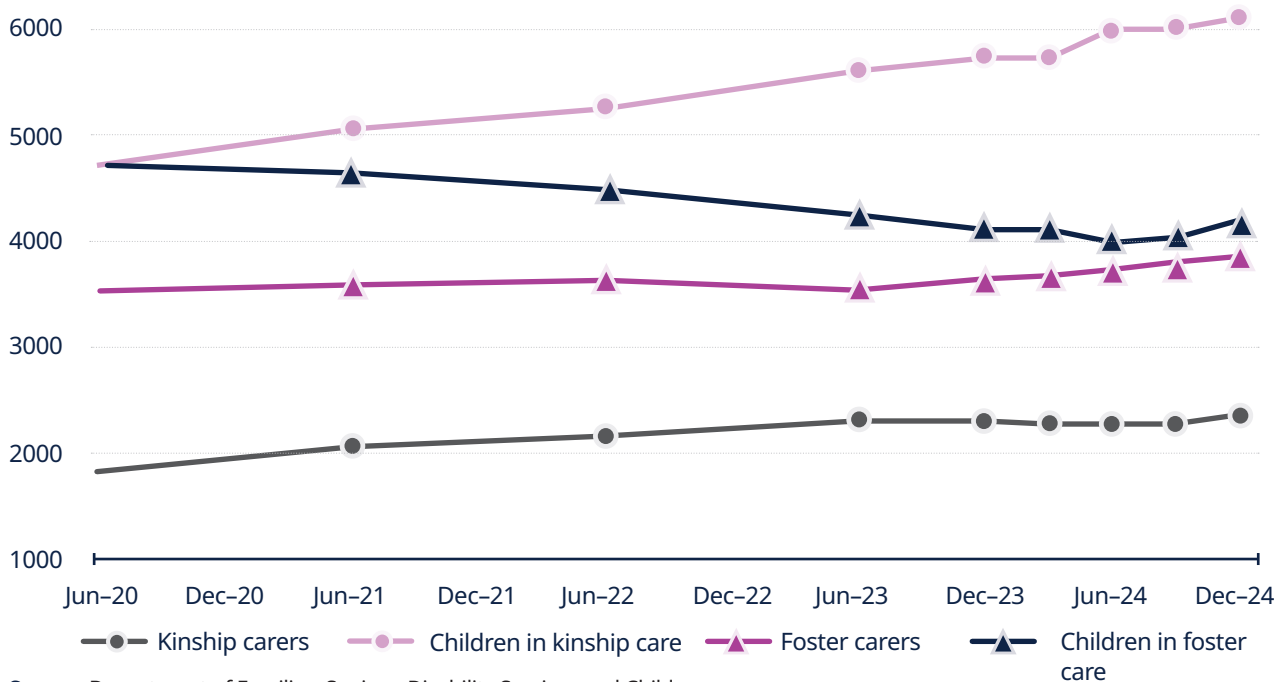
As at 30 June 2024, 80.2 per cent of Queensland children and young people in care were in a home-based placement, reflecting a decrease from 88.2 per cent on 30 June 2019.

Figure 26: Proportion of children in care in a home-based placement, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and jurisdiction as at 30 June 2024



Source: Productivity Commission. (2025). *Report on Government Services 2025 Part F, Section 16 Child Protection, Table 16A.20.*

Figure 27: Total numbers of children and carers in foster and kinship care, by year and placement type



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance – Living arrangements of children*

In the 12 months prior to 31 March 2024, 1843 carer families exited the system, which was an increase of 3.7 per cent from the year prior. In the same period, there were 1958 carer family commencements, an increase of 5.0 per cent from the previous year. The majority (87%) of these families were first-time carers. Overall, this was a net increase of 115 carer families.

Needs of Queensland foster and kinship carers

A study published in May 2025 explored the social needs of foster and kinship carers in Queensland.²¹⁵ The study found that carers often lost informal social support (such as from family, friends and community members) due to the time constraints of their caring role and children's challenging behaviours. Formal support available from agencies varied and was largely dependent on carers' relationships with caseworkers, with those caring for children with complex needs relying on support from NDIS-funded professionals.

Carers struggled with service coordination, with bureaucracy and financial issues leading to strained relationships with care agencies. Many carers reported unmet training needs, especially in child development, attachment, and managing birth family relationships. The study found that a lack of integrated formal supports, combined with the loss of informal social support created an additional, invisible workload for kinship and foster carers.²¹⁶

Perceptions of statutory workforce capability

Respondents to the Commission's statutory workforce survey have consistently self-reported high levels of perceived workforce capability. Over the past five years, at least 90 per cent of statutory frontline workers reported that they have a clear understanding of their current role and responsibilities.²¹⁷ Since 2022, over 70 per cent of statutory workers have reported that they keep up with the latest evidence about child and adolescent brain development.

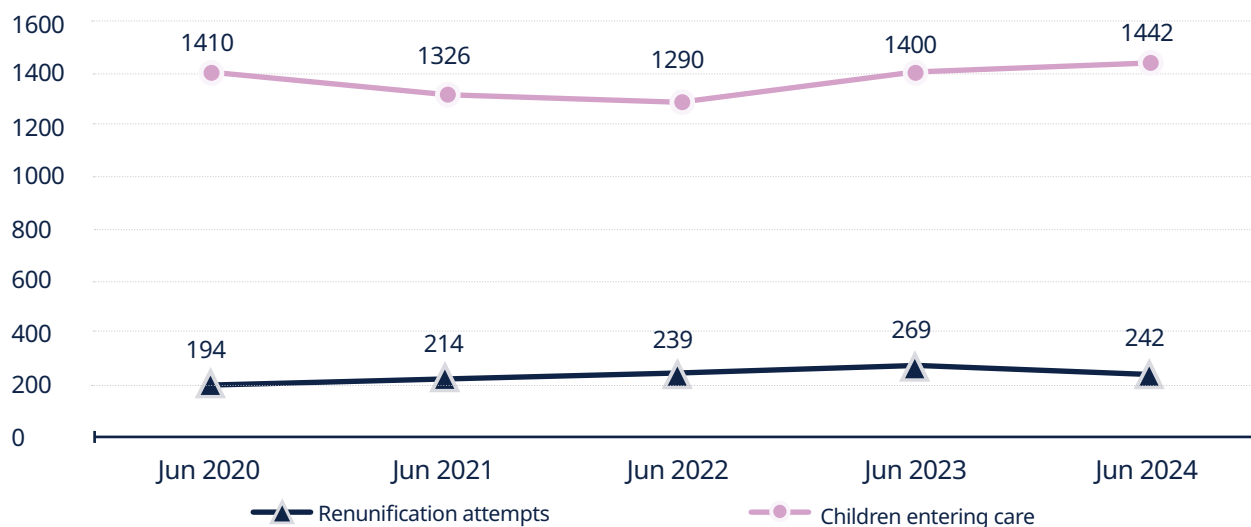
The residential care market

Two types of support plans are available to young people placed in residential care, including Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Outsourced Service Delivery (OSD). OSD requires a service provider to be licensed to provide residential care services. IPS providers are not necessarily required to hold a licence because the DFSDSCS determines if an IPS supplier is deemed to be in scope of licencing. There has been a significant growth in the number of IPS placements in recent years, resulting in considerably higher expenditure being directed towards unlicensed providers of residential care. In 2022–23, there were 5816 places provided under IPS agreements, and 893 places contracted through OSD providers.²¹⁸ Total expenditure was \$531.9 million for IPS contracts and \$241.5 million for OSD.²¹⁹ The Queensland Government announced the 2024–25 figure will be \$766 million for IPS contracts and \$354 million for OSD contracts.²²⁰

Aboriginal families concerned that the system does not prioritise reunification

In Queensland, the number Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering care continues to exceed the number of reunifications. As at 30 June 2024, six children entered care for every one child who was reunified. The number of entries increased by 2.3 per cent over five years between 30 June 2020 and 30 June 2024 (from 1410 to 1442), and by 3.0 per cent between 30 June 2023 and 30 June 2024.²²¹ The number of attempted reunifications increased by 24.7 per cent from 194 to 242 over five years, however decreased by 10.0 per cent over the 12 months ending 30 June 2024.

| **Figure 28:** Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering care and number of attempted reunifications |



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance- Improving care and post care support*

Research conducted with Aboriginal families navigating the OOHHC system in New South Wales identified instances of systematic oppression embedded in a parent-deficit, punishment-based approach to child protection practice.²²² Aboriginal families indicated that the system was not designed to return children home or maintain family relationships.

Aboriginal families described the restoration process as a game where the odds were stacked against them due to power imbalances. They felt judged and dehumanised by child protection workers who they perceived as engaging in administrative compliance rather than providing genuine support.

Further studies found that 'permanency' reforms in the child protection system often resulted in First Nations children being permanently disconnected from their families and cultures, which resembled historical assimilationist practices akin to the Stolen Generations.²²³ Researchers found that despite policy rhetoric, permanency and a lack of prioritisation of reunification resulted in continued cultural disconnection and illustrated the need for genuine First Nations self-determination in the Australian child protection sector, as well as family support services that fostered cultural connectivity.

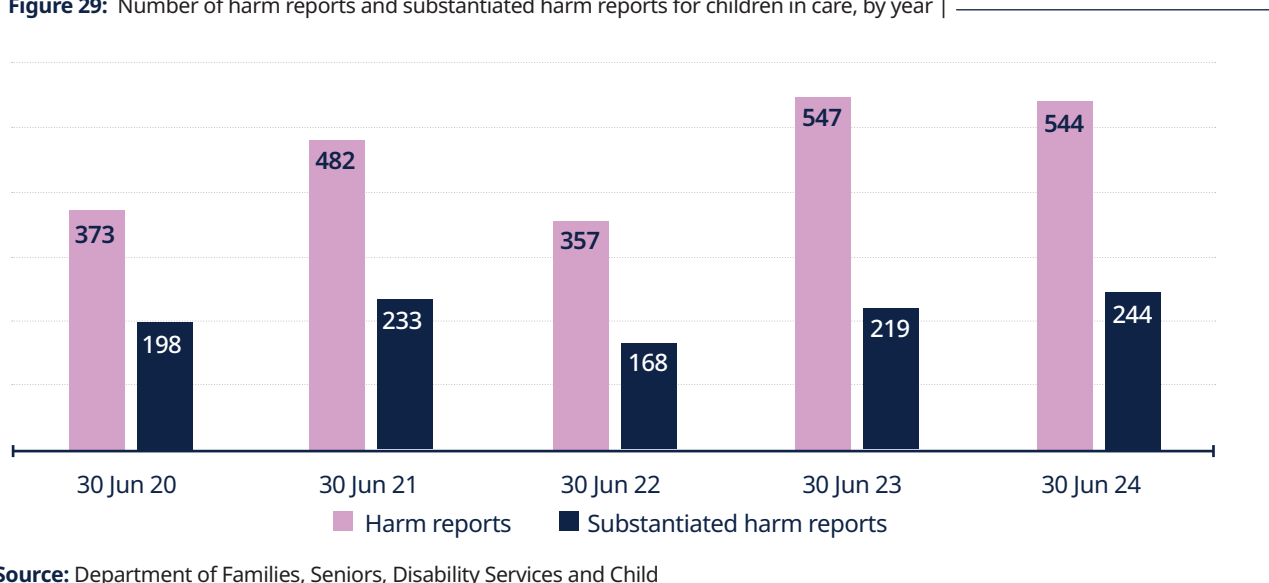
Findings from these studies attest to the importance of delegated authority investment, and increased funding for ACCO-delivered services directed toward prevention and early intervention.²²⁴

Safety of children and young people in out-of-home care

Number of harm reports and substantiations

Over the past five years, the number of harm reports and substantiated harm reports of children in OOHC have fluctuated, with an overall increase from 198 in 2019–20 to 244 in 2023–24. During the same period, the proportion of children in OOHC subject to a harm report has remained at approximately two per cent.

Figure 29: Number of harm reports and substantiated harm reports for children in care, by year |



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025) *Our Performance – Safe Living Arrangements*

Monitoring and support for children in care who are absent from their approved placement (or ‘self-placing’)

Child Safety does not currently report on the number of children and young people who are absent from their care placement while in OOHC.

Children and young people who are not counted as living at their approved foster, kinship or residential care placement are categorised as having an ‘other’ living arrangement, which “includes locations such as hospitals, boarding schools, Queensland youth detention centres and all other locations”. In a July 2025 statement, the Queensland Government reported that 871 children were ‘self-placing’ in March 2024.²²⁵ This would comprise 89.3 per cent of the 975 children living in an ‘other’ living arrangement in March 2024.²²⁶

A small study involving interviews with 11 young people in South East Queensland who had been absent from their approved OOHC placements identified that the decision to ‘self-place’ was consistently based on young people’s perception that their approved placement was not meeting their needs.²²⁷ Young people reported that absence from their approved placement often reduced their access to essential resources and further limited their ability to have input into decisions made about their lives. A follow-up study is underway that aims to include 100 case studies of self-placing young people throughout Queensland to address the gap in knowledge about the safety and wellbeing of this cohort.²²⁸

Child Safe Organisations

The Legislative Assembly passed the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* last September. Queensland is the fifth jurisdiction to establish legislation to introduce Child Safe Standards and a Reportable Conduct Scheme since the National Principles were established in 2019.²²⁹

In Queensland, implementation of the Child Safe Standards will commence in a staged approach from 1 October 2025, with the Commission as the oversight body responsible for implementation and administration of the schemes.²³⁰ Entities subject to Child Safe Standards compliance commencing in Phase 1 includes child protection, youth justice and detention, government organisations, and disability service providers. Compliance for other organisations will commence in January and April 2026. The implementation of the Reportable Conduct Scheme will commence from 1 July 2026.

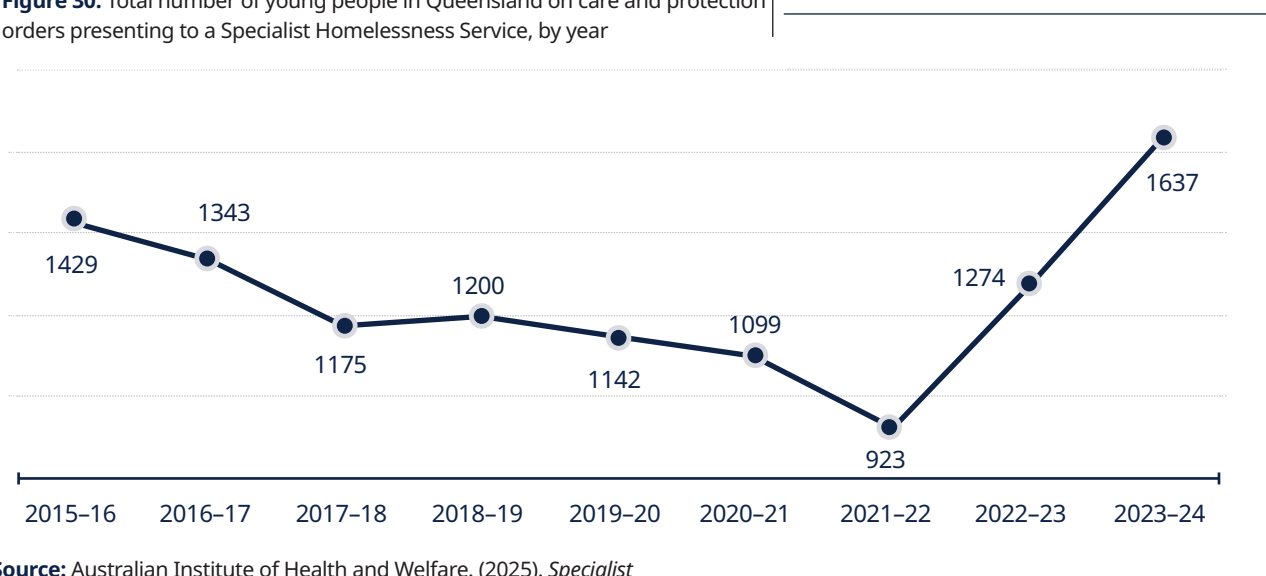
Implementation of this legislation reflects ongoing progress towards a nationally consistent approach to child safeguarding. Other jurisdictions have already introduced Child Safe Standards, including Victoria in 2016,²³¹ New South Wales in 2022,²³² Western Australia in 2023,²³³ and both Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory in 2024.^{234,235} This legislation will improve the safety of children in care by increasing oversight and accountability of organisations delivering services to children in OOHC.

When asked if their organisation is a 'child safe organisation', 75 per cent of statutory workers agreed with this statement in 2025, a decrease from 83 per cent in 2024.²³⁶

Children on care and protection orders presenting to homelessness services

While the total number of young people on care and protection orders presenting to specialist homelessness services declined between 2015–16 to 2021–22, there was a sharp increase of 77.4 per cent between 2021–22 and 2023–24.²³⁷

Figure 30: Total number of young people in Queensland on care and protection orders presenting to a Specialist Homelessness Service, by year



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2025). *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2023–24 – Table HIST.CPO*

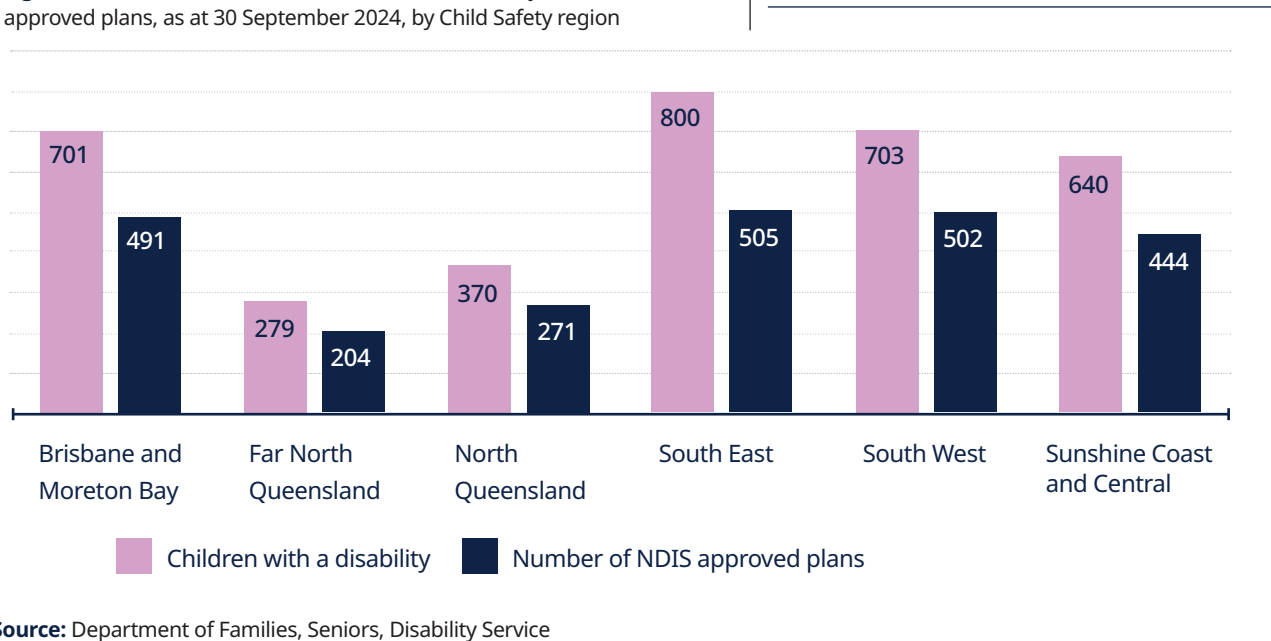
Supports for children and young people in out-of-home care

Limited access to disability support

As at 30 September 2024, there were a total of 3493 children and young people in OOHC with a recorded disability.²³⁸ Overall, only 69.2 per cent were recorded as having an approved NDIS plan. NDIS plans were most frequently identified among children and young people in foster placements, at 86.0 per cent, and lowest for those in kinship placements, at 50.3 per cent. Approved NDIS plans were recorded for 77.6 per cent of children and young people with a diagnosed disability in residential placements, which are typically used for those presenting with more complex support needs.²³⁹

South East Queensland recorded the highest number of children and young people in OOHC with a diagnosed disability, and the lowest proportion of those with an approved NDIS plan, at 63.1 per cent.²⁴⁰ The lowest number of children and young people in OOHC with a diagnosed disability and the highest proportion of those with an approved NDIS plan were in North Queensland at 73.2 per cent and Far North Queensland, at 73.1 per cent.

Figure 31: Number of children in OOHC with a disability and number of NDIS approved plans, as at 30 September 2024, by Child Safety region



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Service and Child Safety. (2025). Unpublished data request

High need for mental health support and therapeutic services

High rates of mental health concerns were identified in the 2024 Children in Care Census, which included a statewide representative sample of 2413 children and young people in OOHC.²⁴¹

A study published in March 2025 identified that a specialist therapeutic program for children and young people in OOHC led to improved mental health and overall functioning.²⁴² Evolve Therapeutic Services is delivered by Child and Youth Mental Health Services to children and young people in OOHC with complex psychological and/or behavioural concerns. Evolve Therapeutic Services, typically delivered over a period of 18 months, consists of wrap-around therapeutic support including individual grief and loss therapy, dyadic work with the carer and child or young person, and carer training.

Younger children demonstrated greater improvements, notably in overall functioning, scholastic and language skills, emotional symptoms, peer relationships, self-care/independence and school attendance. Non-Indigenous children and young people showed greater improvement through the program than First Nations participants, suggesting that adaptations may be needed to appropriately address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.²⁴³

Young people's connection to family and culture

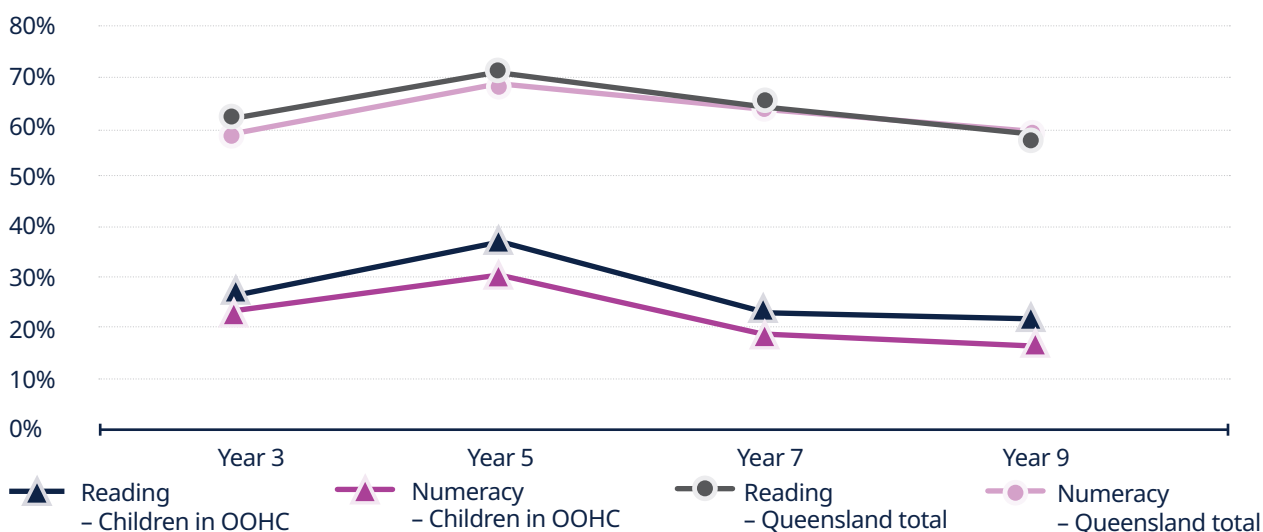
As at 30 June 2024, 80.0 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people subject to an Intervention with Parental Agreement or child protective order had a current cultural plan. This is a decrease from 90.1 per cent as at 30 June 2020.²⁴⁴

The SNAICC report, *Reviewing implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle*, reiterated the Commission's finding that cultural plans lacked detail and failed to document how the child or young person would maintain connection with kin, country and culture.²⁴⁵

Educational outcomes for young people in out-of-home care

The 2024 Children in Care Census identified that 28 per cent of children and young people in OOHC struggle with emotional responses that limit their day-to-day functioning, with 68 per cent experiencing limited education participation.²⁴⁶ The most recently available NAPLAN data indicates that children and young people in OOHC are less likely to meet or exceed proficiency standards, with the achievement gap increasing with each year level.

Figure 32: Proportion of Queensland students who met or exceeded NAPLAN proficiency standards by OOHC status in 2023



Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Service and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance – Improving care and post care support*

Students in OOHC who have experienced a school disciplinary absence face multiple, intersecting risk factors that contribute to educational and social disadvantage. Twenty-six per cent of children and young people in OOHC aged 6–16 have experienced a suspension or exclusion from an educational facility.²⁴⁷ School disciplinary absences are more common among male and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in OOHC. Nearly three-quarters of students in OOHC who are also on youth justice orders had a history of being suspended or excluded from school.

| **Table 21:** History of school disciplinary absences among Queensland students in OOHC, by demographic characteristics |

Demographic	Proportion who had been excluded or suspended
Male	33%
Female	20%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	28%
Non-Indigenous	25%
Total	26%

Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Service and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance – Children in Care Census 2024*

School disciplinary absences were also more prevalent among students with limited to severely limited intellectual functioning or developmental delay, and for those diagnosed with, or suspected to be living with, mental health conditions. OOHC factors associated with school disciplinary absences included histories of residential care placement, being absent from an approved placement, frequent placement changes, late entry into care, repeated reunification attempts, and separation from siblings.²⁴⁸

Artwork created by a 2-year-old child with living experience of out-of-home care



| **Table 22:** Profile of Queensland students in OOHC with a history of school exclusions |

Demographics of children and young people in OOHC age 10 years and over		Proportion who have been excluded or suspended
Dual orders (in OOHC and youth justice orders)*		72%
Diagnosed or suspected mental illness or behavioural disorder		54%
Self-placed at least once		64%
Placement type:	Kinship	30%
	Foster	25%
	Residential	63%
School age children 6–16 years in OOHC who have been excluded or suspended in the past		Proportion
Have been in care more than five years		64%
Have experienced four or more placements		62%
Have limited to severely limited intellectual functioning or developmental delay		40%
Have experienced more than one reunification attempt		33%
Have siblings that are not in care		25%
Were aged 10 years or over when they entered care		24%

Source: Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Service and Child Safety. (2025). *Our Performance – Children in Care Census 2024*

* findings subject to variability due to small sample size

Extra-curricular activities for children in care

Social engagement can mitigate the impact of trauma by providing a sense of belonging, allowing young people to develop essential life skills and to explore their individual goals and identity.²⁴⁹ Young people with youth justice involvement indicate that having positive activities such as sports, music and art are crucial in keeping them on the right path.²⁵⁰

The Queensland Government committed \$1500 annually to each child in OOH to support their engagement in extra-curricular activities.²⁵¹ The aim of this commitment is to enable greater participation in tutoring, sports, arts, culture, and citizenship organisations. This investment will build the social capital surrounding and supporting children in care.

Inadequate progress made in Queensland's residential care roadmap

The Commission's *'Too little, too late'* report on the progress made against Queensland's residential care roadmap found that Child Safety had not taken sufficiently bold or broad ranging action to implement the changes required to the sector. The action that had been taken failed to recognise the impact of the delay of reform on young people living in the system. The report found a culture of fear and defensiveness had impacted transparency and skewed priorities. Young people remained excluded from the reforms and continue to live in substandard homes.²⁵²

During the development of Queensland's Residential Care Roadmap, the Commission, PeakCare and QATSICPP visited each regional Child Safety office and reviewed information from senior leaders explaining their use of residential care services. These reviews resulted in over 140 children and young people exiting residential care. This reduction in the use of residential care is due to external accountability shifting behaviour and thus may be temporary.²⁵³

The department has advised that following the announcement of the Child Safety Commission of Inquiry (the Inquiry), the Director-General approved the formal closure of the Roadmap for Residential Care in Queensland. The department reports that commitments under the Safer Children, Safer Communities plan will proceed, alongside progress of the Inquiry.²⁵⁴

Inquiry announced into Child Safety in Queensland

In May 2025, the Queensland Government announced the Inquiry, to commence on 1 July 2025 and deliver a report by 30 November 2026. The 18-month review is to be led by former Federal Court judge, Paul Anastassiou KC.

The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry involves investigation into:

- > residential care system reform
- > the effectiveness of Queensland's Child Safety system
- > systemic and policy failures that have impacted the ability for Child Safety to provide support and protection to children at risk of harm
- > the effectiveness of Child Safety as a corporate parent and its ability to meet community expectations about parenting
- > Queensland's legislation for the protection of children including the *Child Protection Act 1999* and *Adoption Act 2009*
- > any other matter relevant to the Inquiry.



The current Child Safety system structure is the result of the 2003 Crime and Misconduct Commission Inquiry into abuse in foster care. The Inquiry found that the then Department of Families was hampered by poor information sharing, crisis-driven decision making, lack of transparency, poor information technology systems and record-keeping practices, and a high proportion of inexperienced staff combined with demanding workloads, among other concerns.²⁵⁵ Several of these issues remain a concern in 2025, some of which are identified earlier in this report.

Some peak organisations have queried the necessity of an Inquiry. PeakCare's Chief Executive Officer, Tom Allsop, stated that the failures of the child protection system are not due to a lack of recommendations, that solutions are known, and that the failures in the system are due to a lack of government will and action.²⁵⁶ The National Children's Commissioner, Anne Hollonds, stated that the issues with the system have already been examined, and that it was time to act on evidence already known by the sector.²⁵⁷ The Queensland Family and Child Commission welcomed the review and the opportunity to produce transformational reform to the child protection system, particularly in how the Inquiry will be able to compel action on recommendations made on many outstanding inquiries, reports and inquests to date.²⁵⁸

Children in care seek better outcomes

Queensland's Community Visitor Program conducts visits to inspect accommodation services, reports observations and educates children, young people and adults about their rights.²⁵⁹

Operated by the OPG, the program involves community visitors who monitor and advocate for services to be provided in accordance with the standards of care and charter of rights.²⁶⁰

Since 2019, there has been a 60 per cent increase in the number of sites for mandatory visits to adult NDIS participants. As a result, visits to children and young people in OOHC have decreased, and the most vulnerable children and young people have been prioritised. Visits are also conducted for children and young people who request a visit from a community visitor (55 children and young people requested a community visitor in 2023–24). In 2023–24, there were 18,741 visits to 9338 children and young people. This reflects a 21.1 per cent decrease in visits compared to 2022–23, when 23,789 visits were conducted with 9909 children and young people.

Between 2022–23 and 2023–24, the proportion of visits to homes decreased due to a focus on mandatory sites.^e There was an eight per cent increase in the number of visits to residential care services, and a two per cent increase in visits to young people in police watch houses.



Artwork created by a 2-year-old child with living experience of out-of-home care

^eMandatory sites refer to a residential care service, youth detention centre, police watch house, or externally supported site (ie. Youth homelessness shelters).

Table 23: Location of visits to children and young people by Community Visitors, 2022–24 |

Location type	2022–23	2023–24
Visitable home (ie: kinship, foster)	64%	53%
Residential care service	23%	32%
Youth detention	6%	7%
Police watch house	4%	6%
Externally supported site (ie: youth homeless shelter)	3%	2%

Source: Office of the Public Guardian. (2024). *Annual Report 2023–24*.

Despite the decrease in the number of visits, there was an increase in the volume of advocacy on behalf of children and young people. In 2022–23, there were 12,993 issues raised by Community Visitors on behalf of children and young people, which increased by 16.4 per cent in 2023–24 to 15,122 issues. This illustrates that despite the increasing demand for OPG’s visiting functions, there were increases in the number of children and young people seeking better outcomes in statutory systems.

The issues Community Visitors most commonly raised on behalf of children and young people in 2023–24 related to youth justice, including those associated with the risk of entering youth detention (15%) and issues with youth detention centres (13%). Other main issues related to contact arrangements with family or other significant people (13%), placement in the child protection system (11%), transitioning from care (10%), and health needs (10%).

Children and young people subject to care agreements or orders may also request support from a Child Advocate, who can participate in proceedings or seek a review of decisions. In 2023–24, Child Advocates received 451 referrals, the majority (82%) of which were made by external agencies in 2022–23. Referrals can also be made by Community Visitors, government departments, and directly from children and young people.

Table 24: Child Advocate Support in 2023–24 |

Total number of referrals	451
Total number of children and young people supported	453
Proportion of young people supported who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	22%
Number of court, tribunal, mentions and hearing attended	1195
Total number of meetings attended	351
Types of meetings attended	
Court-ordered conferences	36%
Family group meetings	36%
Stakeholder meetings	26%

Source: Office of the Public Guardian. (2024). *Annual Report 2023–24*.

Culturally appropriate supports during incarceration for First Nations young people

DYJVS released its plan *Come Together, Talk Together, Walk Together: Reframing the Relationship Plan 2023–2025* in September 2024.²⁶¹ This plan aims to strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, promoting self-determination, cultural authority, and the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in youth justice services. Key actions include building cultural capability within the workforce, increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, and supporting community-led, place-based initiatives. The plan emphasises accountability through performance tracking and aligns with broader commitments like the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld).

Queensland youth detention centres have established cultural units that work with Elders and community leaders to support young people and guide staff. Programs help young people connect with their culture through visits, mentoring, and events like National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week. Family engagement is supported through transport assistance and video calls for remote families. The centres are increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and providing cultural awareness training to all employees. Service delivery is informed by a First Nations Action Board and cultural advisors, with input from ATSICCOs organisations.

A study published in 2025 into the development of a growth and empowerment tool through codesign with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Queensland illustrated the efficacy of this approach to program design. The study examined the codesign of the Growth and Empowerment Measure-Youth, a culturally adapted tool for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people experiencing youth detention. Developed through a strengths-based, trauma-informed process with 103 young people and guided by a Cultural Governance Group, the tool was adapted for language, relevance and visual appeal. The Growth and Empowerment Measure-Youth tool provides a promising, culturally grounded measure for social and emotional wellbeing and empowerment, addressing an existing vacuum in the available tools used to measure wellbeing specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. It offers both therapeutic and research value and its codesign process serves as a model for developing culturally safe, strengths-based instruments for young people from diverse backgrounds.²⁶²

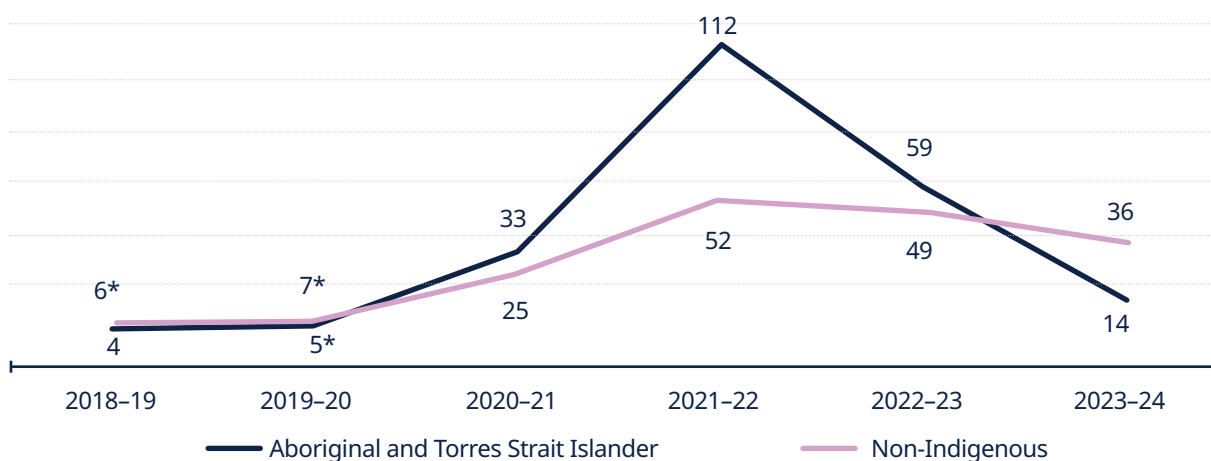
There is currently no legislative requirement in Queensland for decisions relating to youth detention to prioritise the best interests of children and young people, including considerations for culturally appropriate supports.²⁶³

Harm in detention

Rates of self-harm and assaults in custody

Rates of self-harm and attempted suicide among young people in detention have decreased since 2021–22 but remain higher than in 2018–19.

Figure 33: Number of incidents of self-harm and attempted suicide in custody requiring psychological or medical treatment or hospitalisation, by year

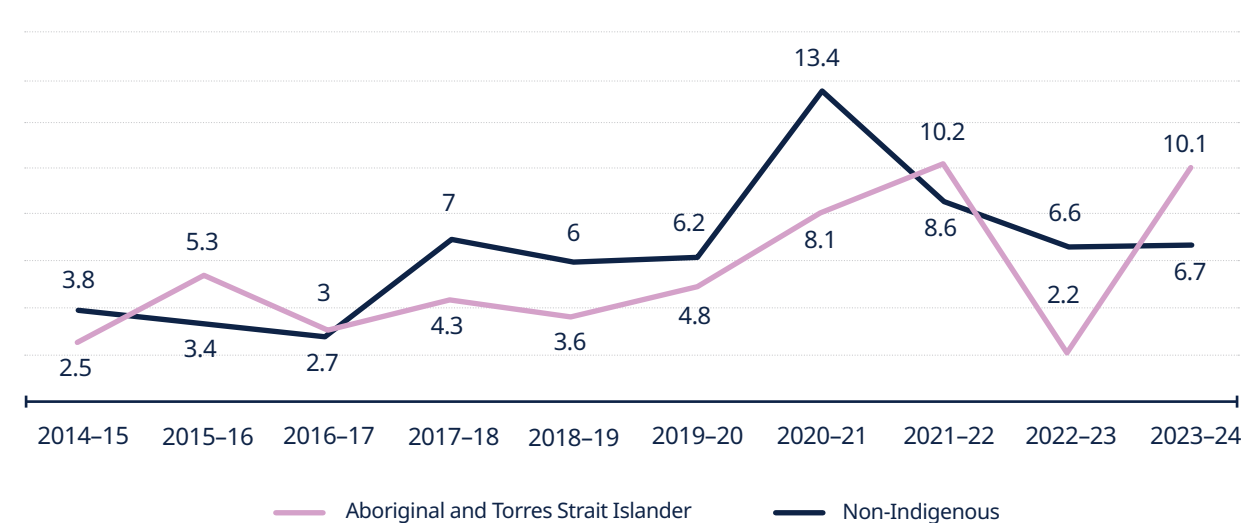


Source: Productivity Commission. (2025). *Report on Government Services 2025 Part F, Section 17 Youth Justice, Table 16A.23*

* Indicates hospitalisations in custody

There was also an increased number of injuries from assaults in custody in 2023–24. The rate of injuries from assaults in custody increased from 3.6 injuries per 10,000 custody nights in 2022–23 to 6.7 injuries per 10,000 custody nights in 2023–24.²⁶⁴

Figure 34: Rate of injuries from assaults in custody per 10,000 custody nights, by year and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status



Source: Productivity Commission. (2025). *Report on Government Services 2025 Part F, Section 17 Youth Justice, Table 16A.23*

The increase in injuries and assaults in custody coincides with increased numbers of incarcerated children and young people, and increased utilisation of detention centres above safe operating capacity.

Watch house complaints and length of detention for children and young people

In a decision published in June 2024, the Queensland Coroner recommended the maximum time for adult detainees in watch houses be decreased to 72 hours from the current maximum time of 21 days. There is no analogous time limit in the *Youth Justice Act 1992* (Qld) to limit the maximum time a young person can be held in a watch house.

The standard for adults held in police watch houses is 24 hours, 48 hours if a detainee comes into a watch house after court finishes on a Saturday, or 72 hours for when the following Monday is a public holiday and court recommences on the Tuesday.²⁶⁵

Of the 7806 admissions of children into adult watch houses in 2023–24, 25 per cent of the admissions were for longer than 24 hours. There were 259 occasions where the young person spent 15 or more days detained.²⁶⁶ The Queensland Ombudsman's inspection of the Cairns and Murgon watch houses found significant concerns relating to the facilities in the watch houses, and how this may negatively impact the wellbeing of children and young people.²⁶⁷

Some of these concerns included:

- > lack of privacy
- > assessment of risk and harm
- > children being detained in watch houses for extended periods of time
- > limited access to fresh air and overcrowding
- > isolation practices
- > lack of guidance and specialist training for staff
- > no organised activities for detained children.

In the last financial year, there were considerably more complaints raised by the OPG on behalf of children and young people detained in police watch houses than in the previous year. In 2023–24, there were 2254 issues raised; an increase of 76 per cent on the number of issues raised in the previous year. The increase in complaints was largely attributed to higher numbers of children in police watch houses, with the most common issue being prolonged length of detention in a QPS watch house (a large proportion of these children were subject to dual orders).²⁶⁸

The OPG made 90 formal complaints in 2023–24 on behalf of children and young people relating to watch house issues, including overcrowding, staff conduct and lack of access to appropriate services such as health, mental health, legal and youth justice supports.²⁶⁹

The Queensland Human Rights Commission investigated a complaint from a 16-year-old boy who was held in a watch house for 28 days while awaiting transfer to youth detention, highlighting broader concerns about the conditions in these facilities. Reviews found that QPS watch houses fail to meet international and local legal standards, including the Human Rights Act.²⁷⁰

New Wacol Youth Remand Centre purpose built as an adult watch house

The WYRC opened in April 2025, with the Queensland Government stating that the remand centre will have “access to education and vocational training, rehabilitation programs, health care and support services” in line with the government’s ‘Detention with Purpose’ policy.²⁷¹

The facility was built as an adult watch house and remand centre for the QPS and agreed to be loaned to the DYJVS until 2027, at which point Woodford Youth Detention Centre is due to open.²⁷² The department claims that WYRC is designated as a detention centre under the *Youth Justice Act 1992*. However, the Commissioners conducted a site visit to the facility and identified several aspects that were inconsistent with the characteristics of a rehabilitation-focused environment. The department has responded to a number of these observations.²⁷³

- The size of the rooms for education and rehabilitation programs were inadequate for the facility’s capacity.
- There was an absence of an in-person visitation space and minimal video-conferencing facilities. The department advised that there are 10 non-contact suites for private family and legal visitation, and to enable phone and video calls. The provisions for family, friend and kinship visits were noted as being available on weekends, with additional midweek arrangements for children from Far North Queensland.
- Only one outdoor area was observed, which was of an inadequate size to allow outdoor activities.
- The facility had inadequate access to fresh air and natural light.
- While two state-of-the-art body scanners have been installed at the centre, Youth Justice staff advised that ‘partially clothed searches’ would continue to occur due to the volume of young people expected to be entering the centre. In correspondence, the department advised that while ‘partially clothed searches’ of children’s upper and lower body may occur, the searches do not involve touching and completely unclothed searches are prohibited. The body scanners installed to negate the use of the searches are currently unable to be used, as radiation use licences (required under the *Radiation Safety Act 1999*) have yet to be granted to staff operating the scanners.
- There was a lack of privacy for young people subjected to ‘partially clothed searches’ in the admission process, which would occur in clear cells visible to other young people.
- The six holding cells lacked privacy, did not contain a toilet, and would be visible to other young people.
- A number of cells inspected contained CCTV cameras directed at toilet areas. The department confirmed that rooms for children with a disability contained showers and toilets that were fitted with CCTV. It was advised that these areas had been ‘obscured’ to maintain privacy while enabling wellbeing checks, however did not specify how this had been achieved.

The facility’s features, as observed by the Commissioners, are inappropriate for children and young people. They are unlikely to address the criminogenic drivers of detention and will result in further trauma to young people incarcerated at the facility.

As noted earlier in this chapter, QPS publishes data on individuals detained in QPS watch houses, including children and young people. However, data on children and young people held in youth remand centres or detention centres is not publicly available as the centre is operated by the DYJVS. This reduces public awareness and visibility.

Mental health support access for young people in custody

In 2024, 43 per cent of young people under youth justice supervision and 47 per cent of those in custody had been diagnosed with, or suspected to have, at least one mental health disorder.^{274,275}

In 2023–24, of the 1144 young people held in detention,²⁷⁶ Queensland Health provided 5076 occasions of mental health service to 157 young people aged under 18 in a youth detention facility.²⁷⁷ Between 2022–23 and 2023–24, mental health treatment access in Queensland youth detention centres rose by 3.3 per cent. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people accessed mental health services at higher rates, reflecting their over-representation in detention.²⁷⁸

Recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission

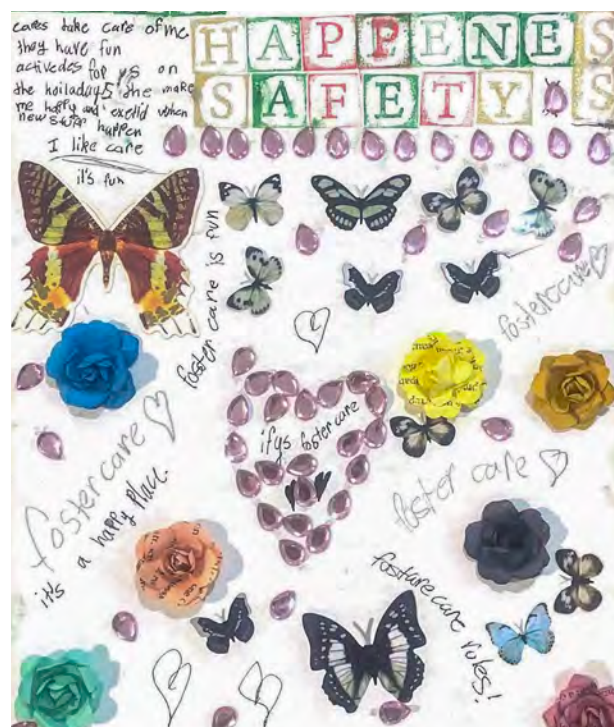
The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission) established in 2019, made several recommendations which directly relate to the youth justice statutory system, including:²⁷⁹

- Recommendations accepted: Disability training for staff in youth detention; National practice guidelines for screening in custody.
- Recommendations accepted in principle: Review of national agreements, strategies and plans; Improved data collection and reporting for advocacy programs; conditions in custody for people with disabilities; prohibiting solitary confinement for youth in detention; Screening and assessment for disability in youth detention; Support by First Nations organisations to people in custody; Diversion of people with cognitive disability from criminal proceedings; Cultural safety of First Nations people in criminal justice settings.
- The only recommendation to be rejected was to raise the age of criminal responsibility.

DYJVS has advised it is supporting the Department of Justice (DoJ) in the Cultural Safety Review in response to the Royal Commission's Recommendation 9.3, and will review existing cultural safety strategies for First Nations children with disabilities who are engaged with the youth justice system.

In response to Recommendations 8.1, 8.4 and 8.5, the *Youth Justice Act 1992* was amended in 2024 to articulate that a child in detention with a disability should have access to the disability services necessary to meet their needs.

DYJVS has also advised that disability identification and supports have been embedded in the development of the Staying on Track, Regional Reset and Youth Justice Schools with the intention of improving the accessibility of programs, increase engagement and promote better outcomes. The department noted the success of this requires whole-of-government support, including the Department of Education, Queensland Health, the DFSDESCS, and non-government organisations.

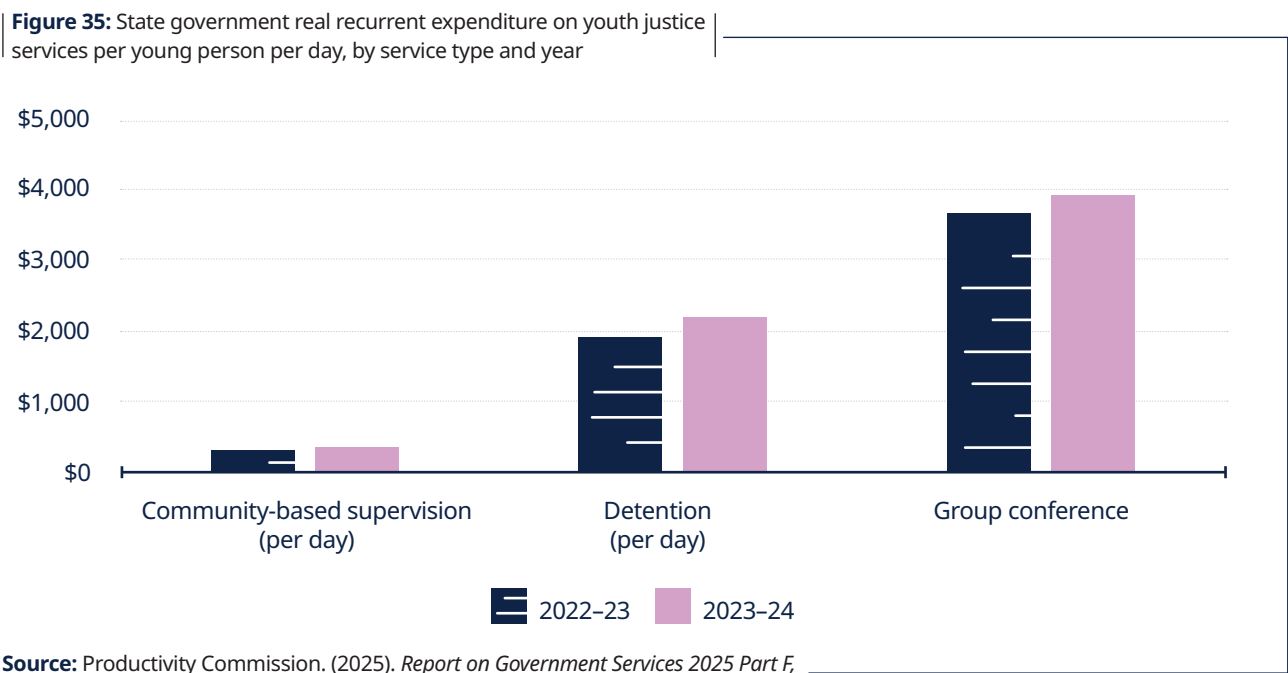


Artwork created by a 9-year-old with living experience of out-of-home care

Increasing costs in the youth justice system

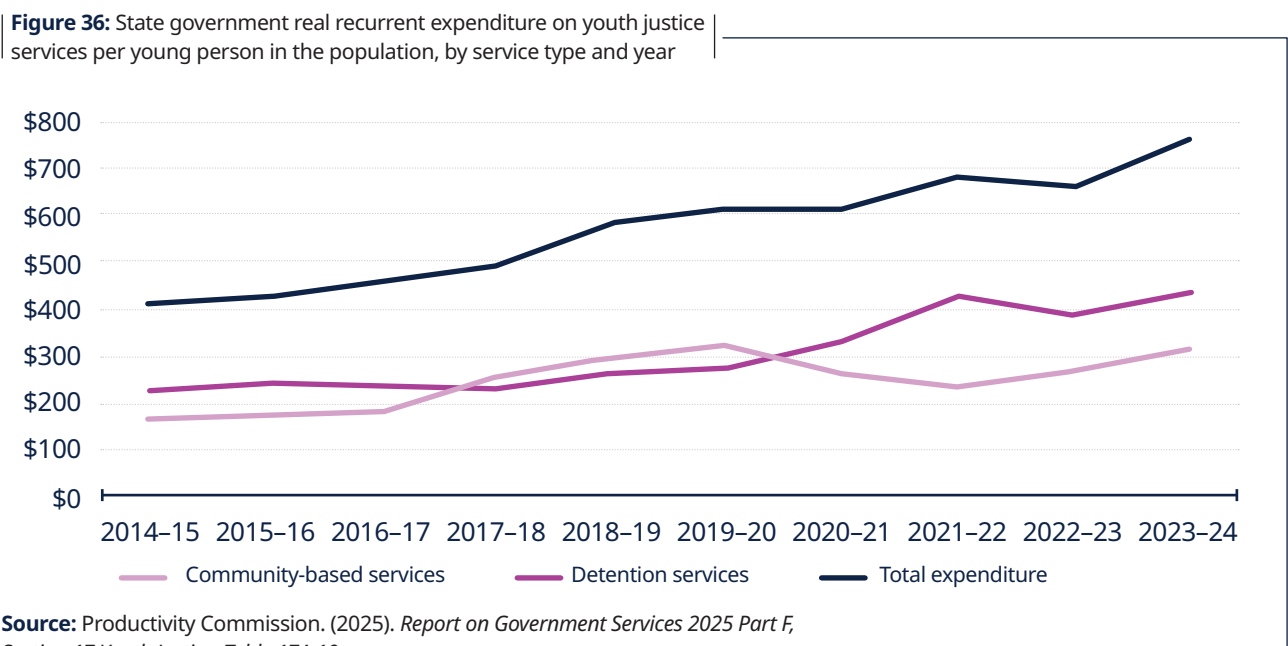
The cost of the youth justice system is increasing in all sectors.²⁸⁰

Between 2022–23 and 2023–24, the average cost day per young person increased by 19 per cent for community-based supervision and by 13 per cent for detention. The cost per concluded group conference increased by seven per cent.



Source: Productivity Commission. (2025). *Report on Government Services 2025 Part F, Section 17 Youth Justice, Table 17A.10*

Queensland had a greater total expenditure on youth justice services than any other state or territory. In 2023–24, Queensland spent \$438,834,000 on youth justice services, a 123.7 per cent increase since 2014–15.



Source: Productivity Commission. (2025). *Report on Government Services 2025 Part F, Section 17 Youth Justice, Table 17A.10*

The increase in costs in the youth justice system are likely diverting resources away from prevention and early intervention, which can better address the root causes of offending and reduce long-term costs. Peak organisations have argued that this investment would be more effective if invested in community-based programs, mental health services and family support services. In a pre-budget submission, the Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS) stated: “Community service providers, particularly those operating in the community-controlled sector, are best equipped to deliver effective programs that address the root causes of offending and provide critical supports to some of Queensland’s most disadvantaged children and their families”.²⁸¹

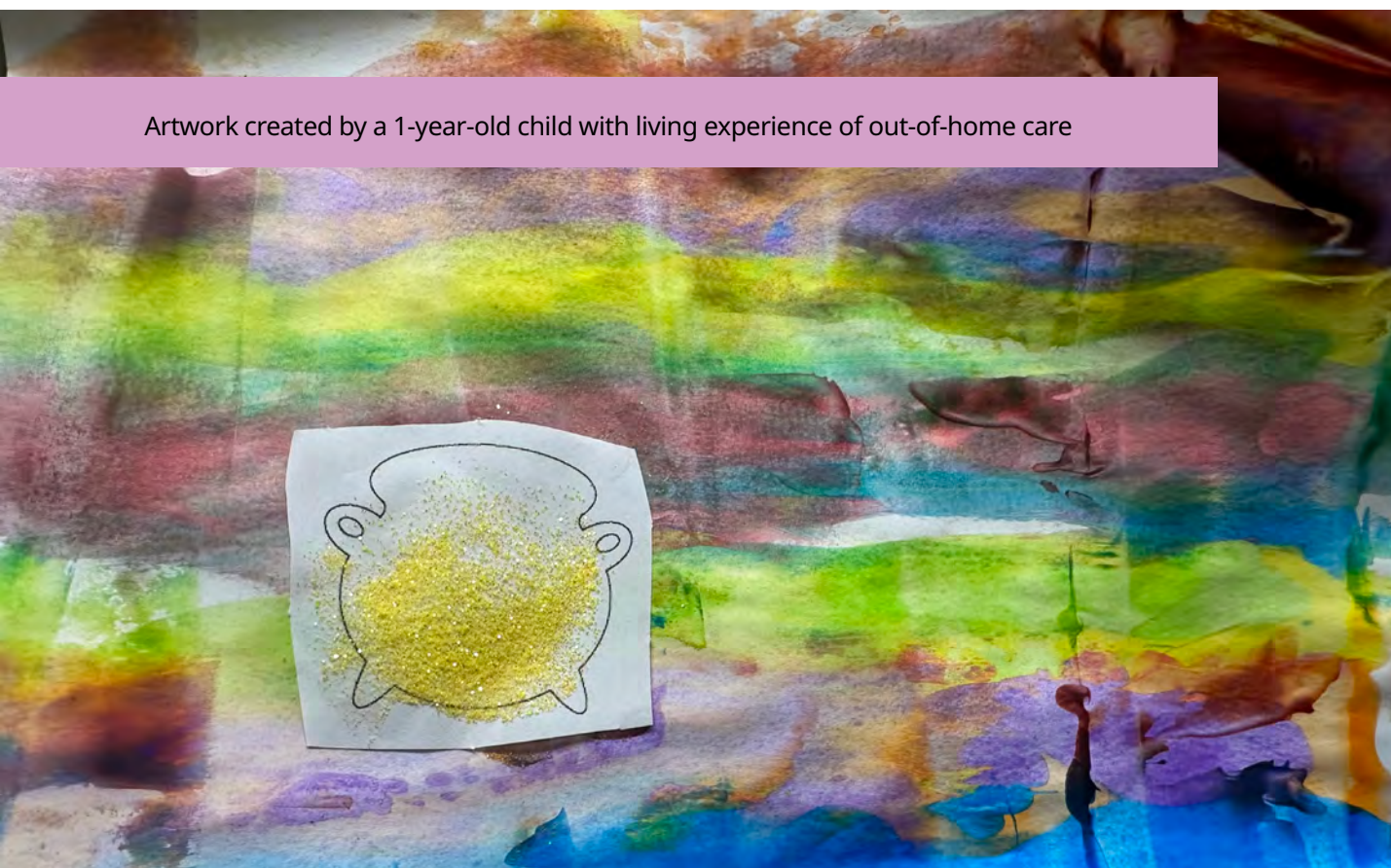
Not all youth justice rehabilitation programs offered to young offenders have been evaluated for efficacy

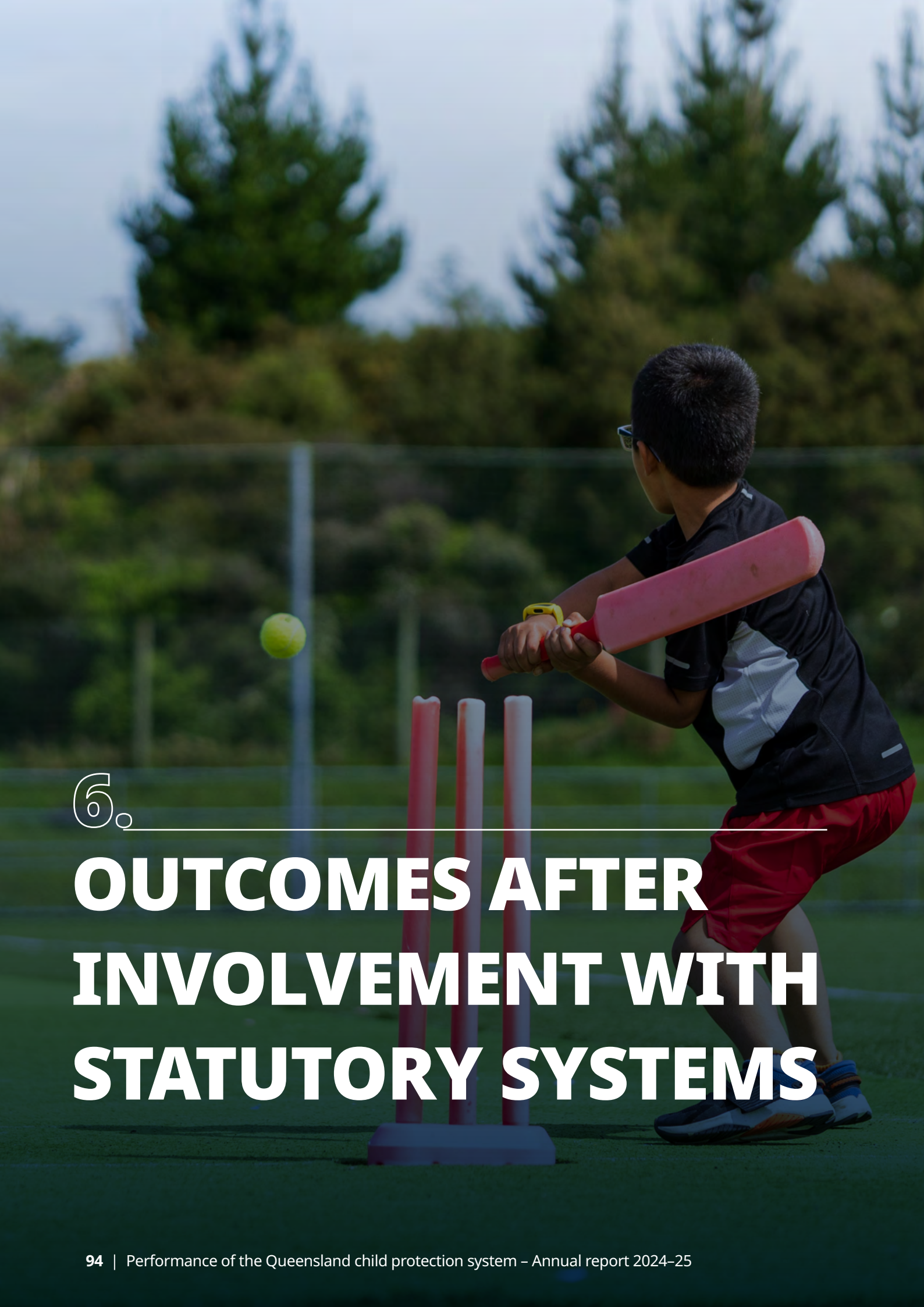
The QAO audited 50 files of serious repeat young offenders, which found that 34 per cent (17 young people) were not offered Changing Habits and Reaching Targets program (CHART) and 18 per cent (nine young people) with no record of participation in any rehabilitation programs at all.²⁸²

The QAO found that of the eight core rehabilitation programs offered to young offenders in the youth justice system, only four had been independently assessed, with poor data collection identified as a critical issue. The department lacked formal data collection and storage procedures for case managers, with some Youth Justice staff using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and other staff using ICMS.²⁸³

The department had noted that the Unify case management system was being implemented to allow for better data capture.²⁸⁴

Artwork created by a 1-year-old child with living experience of out-of-home care





6.

OUTCOMES AFTER INVOLVEMENT WITH STATUTORY SYSTEMS

Outcomes after involvement with statutory systems

To ensure young people thrive after leaving the child protection and youth justice systems, we must take responsibility for supporting their transition into adulthood. This includes providing safe housing, mental health care, education and employment opportunities, and sustained relational support. Without these foundations, young people exiting care or detention face significantly higher risks of homelessness, poor mental health and early mortality. The challenges are even more pronounced for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, whose outcomes reflect the long-term impacts of structural disadvantage and systemic inequality. By investing in culturally safe, coordinated transition programs and ensuring continuity of care beyond statutory involvement, we can help break cycles of harm and create pathways to stable, meaningful lives.

Leaving child protection and youth justice custody

Exits and numbers of children remaining in the system

In the 12 months to 31 December 2024, 2227 children had exited OOHC, with 45.6 per cent identifying as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Just under half (47.6%) had been in care for less than two years, 28.4 per cent had been in care for five years or more, and 24 per cent had been in care for between two and five years. The majority (72.3%) had experienced between one and three placements during their time in care, with over a quarter (27.7%) experiencing four or more placements. One in 10 children exiting care (10.2%) had experienced seven or more placements, a slight improvement from 12 per cent in the 12 months ending 30 June 2020.²⁸⁵

In a positive trend, the number of reunifications increased by 29.6 per cent, from 467 in the 12 months ending 30 June 2020 to 605 in the 12 months ending 31 December 2024. During this time, the proportion of 'safe reunifications' (where the child or young person did not return to care within 12 months) increased from 82.1 per cent to 86.8 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and from 91.5 per cent to 94.1 per cent for non-Indigenous children and young people.²⁸⁶

There were 13,382 children still living away from home^f on 31 December 2024, with 48.5 per cent identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This was a 6.2 per cent increase overall from 12,601 on 31 December 2023, equating to an additional 781 children living away from home.²⁸⁷

^fIncludes foster care, kinship care, residential care, and all other locations such as hospitals, boarding schools, supported independent living and Queensland youth detention centres.

Disproportionate mortality rates among children known to Child Safety

The Commission's annual report on the deaths of children and young people in Queensland identified that 53 children who died in 2023–24 were known to Child Safety, meaning they were in the custody or guardianship of Child Safety, or the subject of an intake in the 12 months prior to their deaths.²⁸⁸ This was a decrease from a peak of 72 deaths in 2022–23 and is equal to the number of deaths in 2019–20 and 2020–21. Nearly half of these children (43%) died from natural causes, another third (36%) from external causes and the deaths of two children were from unexplained causes. At the time of reporting, nine deaths were pending a cause.

Table 25: Number of deaths of children known to Child Safety, 2019–20 to 2023–24 |

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
Deaths of children known to Child Safety	53	53	69	72	53

Source: Queensland Family and Child Commission. (2025). *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people 2023–24*.

Over the past five years, the average mortality rate for children known to Child Safety was almost twice the Queensland child mortality rate, at 60.4 deaths per 100,000 compared to 34.5 deaths per 100,000 in the overall population. Over-representation of deaths among children known to Child Safety has been even higher for external and unexplained causes.

Table 26: Deaths per 100,000 among Queensland children from external and unexplained causes, by child protection system status, 2019–24 |

	Fatal assault and neglect	Other non-intentional injury	Drowning	Suicide	Unexpected infant deaths	Unexplained causes
All children	0.6	1.1	0.9	1.9	0.6	2.6
Children known to Child Safety	4.4	6.2	3.8	6.0	2.3	8.1
Rate of over-representation	7.3	5.6	4.2	3.2	3.8	3.1

Source: Queensland Family and Child Commission. (2025). *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people 2023–24*

Of the total number of children known to Child Safety who died between 2019–20 and 2023–24, 11 per cent (35 of these children) were subject to child protection orders at the time of their death and 46 per cent (170 children) had no involvement or ongoing intervention.

These statistics bring to life the findings of a Western Australian study published in November 2024, which found that care-experienced young people had the poorest outcomes in all life domains, followed by young people with child protection experience only. The poorer life outcomes included factors such as:

- › physical and mental health issues, including preventable hospitalisations
- › higher rates of disability, particularly intellectual and psychosocial disability
- › greater school instability, with lower attendance and more suspensions
- › larger numbers of public housing applications and tenancies
- › more frequent police contact, higher rates of offending, and greater time in custody as young people and adults.²⁸⁹

Programs to support young people who have **aged out of care**

Transition to adulthood for care leavers

As at 31 December 2024, there were 1526 young people aged 16 years or older under the custody/guardianship of the chief executive. Of those, one in five were yet to commence a transition to adulthood planning process. The majority (92.5%) who had a commenced planning had participated in the process.²⁹⁰

Just over half (54%) of children transitioning to adulthood in the next 12 months will require public housing, yet only 71 per cent of those were on a waitlist.²⁹¹ Separately, a third (32%) will require NDIS support, but only 42 per cent of those had a NDIS Home and Living Options form submitted.

Of those young people who will transition to adulthood within 12 months, 40 per cent were classified as having extreme instability or emotional responses that limited functioning.

These young people were expected to have limited capacity to participate in further education or the workforce, including 82 per cent unable to fully participate in schooling and 66 per cent with limited employment capacity.

These findings illustrate the need for more holistic and effective supports to ensure that young people are adequately prepared for their lives post-care.

Programs to prevent care leavers experiencing homelessness

The Transition and Post Care Support program commenced on 1 October 2023 to support care leavers with complex disability, mental health or high-risk behavioural needs who are at risk of homelessness. As part of this program, Transition Officers support young people between the ages of 15 to 21 to identify and maintain accommodation, build relationships and remain connected to their community. In its first year of operation, the program supported 411 young people.²⁹² This program has been funded through Commonwealth Government's National Agreement for Social Housing and Homelessness until June 2029.²⁹³

The Extended Post Care Support program commenced with 18 service providers on 1 July 2023 and offers casework support to care leavers between the ages of 18 and 20, and financial support funding of up to \$16,000 to young people who are living independently.²⁹⁴ As of 31 December 2024, 848 young people were receiving support, including 447 who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.²⁹⁵

To date, neither of these programs have been evaluated.

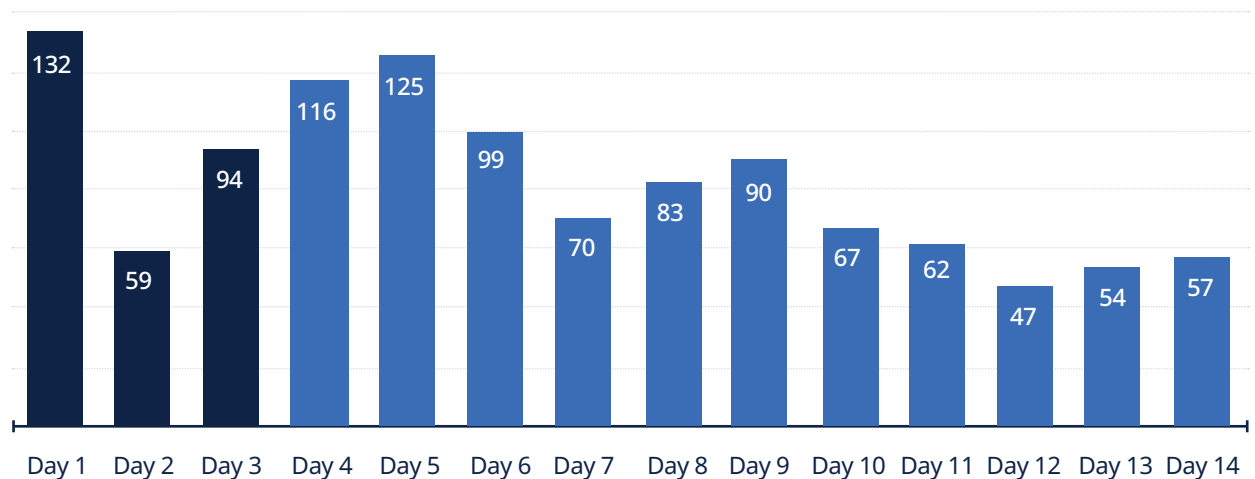
Post-release supports for youth justice

72-hour exit from custody orders

Appropriate support is crucial for young people immediately after they are released from custody, given this is when they are most likely to reoffend.²⁹⁶ The 72-hour Transition Support program provides additional hours of support during weekends and evenings with the aim of reducing reoffending by newly released young people through community-based, culturally safe and trauma-informed support. Participation in the service is voluntary.²⁹⁷

A 2024 report conducted by the QAO identified a lack of evidence or rationale for the 72-hour timeframe for this program. Available data indicates that although the risk of reoffending is highest in the first day post-release, the risk remains high for at least 14 days.²⁹⁸ The report found that in 260 exits from custody among 77 serious repeat offenders, in 73 instances (28%) young people were released from custody without a 72-hour plan. The report also identified inconsistencies in plan quality.²⁹⁹

Figure 37: Number of young people who reoffended within 2 weeks after release from detention between 2018–19 and 2021–22, by number of days post-release



Source: Queensland Audit Office. (2024). *Report 15: 2023–24 – Reducing Serious Youth Crime – Figure 6F*

The use of the 72-hour plans ceased on 1 July 2025. DYJVS have advised that the 72-hour plans will be replaced by transition plans under the Staying on Track program.³⁰⁰

Transition2Success

Transition2Success is an ongoing program that aims to support employment and training for young people at risk of entering, or already involved with the youth justice system. In 2024, 51 businesses, 62 local governments, 108 not-for-profit organisations and 31 registered training organisations participated in Transition2Success.³⁰¹ An independent evaluation identified positive outcomes for young people who completed the program, including lower levels of reoffending, lower average custody nights, and greater levels of community cohesion.³⁰²

New programs to support young people at risk of reoffending

The Queensland Government is currently tendering for providers to deliver two programs aimed at supporting rehabilitation and reducing the risk of reoffending for young people leaving the youth justice system:

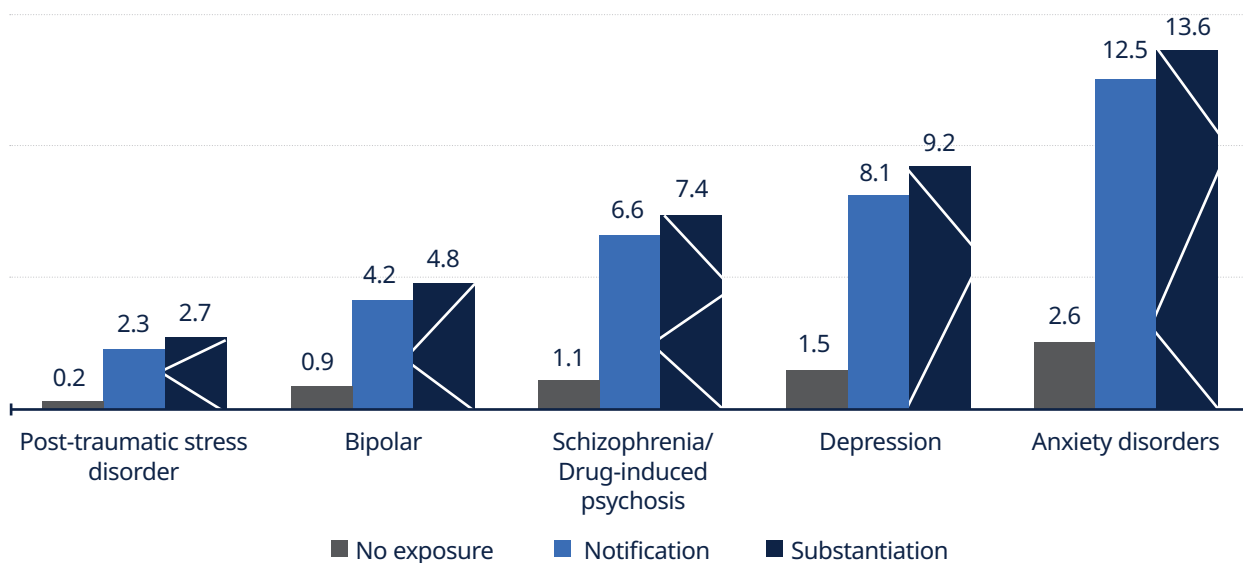
- The Staying on Track program, which has \$225 million funding allocated, is intended to offer comprehensive rehabilitation support for children and young people exiting detention to manage at-risk behaviours and re-engage young people with education, training or employment. The program will offer support for up to 12 months post release, including up to 6 months of intensive support to manage at-risk behaviours and re-engage young people with education, training or employment.
- The Circuit Breaker Sentencing program, funded at \$80 million, is intended to act as an alternative to detention centres, where young offenders are engaged in a three to six month rehabilitation program as an alternative to detention.³⁰³

Long-term outcomes for young people with statutory system involvement

Greater likelihood of poor mental health outcomes

A longitudinal study published in November 2024 identified that child protection history is associated with a three to eightfold risk of psychiatric hospitalisation before the age of 30.³⁰⁴ The study analysed child protection and hospital administrative data for a population-level sample of adults in Queensland born between 1983 and 1984. The association between child protection history and a psychiatric condition was strongest for post-traumatic stress disorder.

Figure 38: Prevalence of psychiatric hospital admissions (as a percentage) by age 30, by Child Safety contact



Source: Kisely et al. (2024). *A longitudinal birth cohort study of child maltreatment and mental disorders*

People with prior youth justice engagement more likely to experience early death

A longitudinal study published in April 2024 identified that young people in Queensland with youth justice involvement are more than four times more likely to experience an early death.³⁰⁵ The study followed 48,670 young people with at least one juvenile criminal offence for an average of 13.5 years.

Most deaths occurred under the age of 25 and were from preventable causes, primarily suicide and drug overdoses. The risk was highest among those with a history of youth detention, at 6.4 times increased likelihood, and lowest among those with only charges recorded at 3.5 times increased likelihood. Death rates were highest among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females.

Findings from this study suggest that youth justice involvement is a marker of pre-existing risk for early mortality. It underscores the need for increased investment in mental health and other interventions for youth-justice involved young people which are gender and culturally appropriate.



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Artwork created by a 15-year-old with living experience of out-of-home care



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