

CHAPTER 9

Child death prevention activities

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

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

During 2015 – 16 the QFCC continued to concentrate its efforts on maintaining the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the child death information in the register and meeting the legislated requirement to report annually. Collecting, analysing and publishing information on the causes of child deaths is an important step in preventing child deaths and serious injuries.

With the release of this year's Child Death Annual Report, the QFCC will release new factsheets in order to raise community awareness of risks and prevention messages, and support prevention initiatives by identifying risk factors, trends and emerging safety hazards.

In 2016 QFCC's child death prevention team members undertook a five day specialised mortality coding training course provided by the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) National Centre for Health Information Research and Training. Clinical coding of health data is a key activity in order to correctly classify causes of child deaths. Coded data can be used for statistical, administrative, research and clinical purposes to describe major causes of death and to identify potential prevention and public health strategies.

QFCC responds to researcher requests for child death data, contributes to death and injury prevention initiatives and maintains involvement in relevant advisory bodies. Several partnerships with researchers have also been established.

RESEARCHER ACCESS TO CHILD DEATH DATA

The QFCC, through its strategy of providing access to data from the Queensland Child Death Register, supported a range of researchers and stakeholders during the reporting period in the development and implementation of programs, policies and initiatives or research programs that require a solid and contemporary evidence base. The overarching aim of this strategy is to promote the information collected in the Queensland Child Death Register to stakeholders (at both the state and national levels), identify opportunities to engage with stakeholders and share the child death dataset and key findings to inform ongoing prevention efforts.

The Queensland Child Death Register may be accessed at no cost to organisations or individuals conducting genuine research.⁴⁹ Stakeholders wishing to access the register to support their research, policy or program initiatives can email their request to child_death_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au.

During 2015 – 16, the QFCC responded to 31 requests for access to the Child Death Register from external stakeholders. Table 9.1 provides an overview of the type of data requested in 2015 – 16 and the purpose for which it was used. Examples of the projects provided with information include the following:

- A University of the Sunshine Coast study examining SUDI records in order to better understand contributing risk factors and identify ways to better support vulnerable, marginalised, difficult-to-engage groups through risk-reduction education.
- The Royal Life Saving Society of Australia publishes the *National Drowning Report* and provides related drowning prevention activities and information.
- A study by Mission Australia on the suicide deaths of Indigenous young people in specific regions for prevention and early intervention purposes.
- The Department of Education and Training used information provided to determine whether gender diversity issues were present in suspected suicide deaths of young people in Queensland State Schools.
- Coronial investigations of deaths of young children from drowning and other accidental causes, where active supervision by a carer plays a role.
- Ongoing research by the Centre for Children’s Burns and Trauma Research in relation to pedestrian and bicycle-related deaths of children.

Table 9.1: Purpose of data request by type of data requested 2015 – 16

Type of data requested	Purpose of data request			Total <i>n</i>
	Research	Public education/ reporting	Policy/ program development	
Diseases and morbid conditions	1	0	0	1
Sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI)	2	0	0	2
Drowning	0	2	5	7
Transport	5	0	0	5
Suicide	0	2	2	4
Accidental deaths	1	0	0	1
All non-natural causes	1	0	0	1
All deaths	1	2	1	4
Domestic and family violence	0	0	1	1
Interstate residents	0	2	0	2
Known to the child safety system	1	0	2	3
Total	12	8	11	31

Data source: QFCC Register of child death data requests (2015 – 16)

⁴⁹ Genuine research is defined as research relating to childhood mortality or morbidity with a view to increasing knowledge of incidence, causes and risk factors relating to same. Genuine research includes policy and program initiatives to reduce child death or injury.

Drowning deaths and pool fencing laws

During the period QFCC supported the December 2015 introduction of the pool fencing laws in Queensland by providing information to the Department of Housing and Public Works on the number of drowning deaths of children under the age of five in swimming pools. Information was also provided on drownings in dams and natural water hazards, to inform development of policy and prevention initiatives in rural areas.

Smoke alarm laws

The QFCC provided a submission: *Smoke Alarms Inquiries—Fire and Emergency Services (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2016* to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. The submission provided pertinent facts and advice in relation to deaths of 32 children in 20 separate house fires in the 12 years from 2004 to 2015, in order to support the Committee’s consideration of the *Fire and Emergency Services (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2016*.

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

The QFCC has established several partnership to progress child death prevention initiatives:

- **Low speed vehicle run-over promotion and prevention** – in partnership with the Children’s Hospital Foundation and the Queensland Paediatric Trauma Service, this project will use a gamification strategy to improve knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of Queensland parents through targeted social media and evidence.
- **Research on childhood suicides** – in partnership with The University of Queensland Centre for Clinical Research, this study will examine the characteristics and risk factors present in childhood suicides.
- **Reviewing and classifying SUDI autopsies** – in partnership with the University of the Sunshine Coast this project will involve expert review of SUDI autopsies in order to inform the investigation and certification of infant deaths.
- **Workflow diagram for mortality coding** – with the QUT’s National Centre for Health Information Research and Training. The QFCC developed a workflow diagram to supplement the instructions provided in the World Health Organization’s (WHO) ICD-10. The workflow diagram is designed to assist mortality coders in identifying the underlying cause of death from the conditions listed on cause of death certificates. The workflow diagram has been submitted by QUT for discussion at the next WHO Mortality Reference Group meeting in October 2016.

ADVISORY BODIES

The QFCC participated on a number of advisory bodies including:

- **Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group (ANZCDR&PG)** which aims to identify, address and potentially decrease the number of infant, child and youth deaths by sharing information on issues in the review and reporting of child deaths. The group is also working together towards achieving national standardised reporting.
- **Consumer Product Injury Research Advisory Group** who provide an evidence base to support product safety policy decisions which may include: recommending new mandatory standards or Australian Standards be developed; recommending certain unsafe products be banned; developing consumer or business education campaigns; and supporting research opportunities. This group also provides advice to relevant government/ private/community agencies, media and the larger community on product safety issues either proactively or as requested.
- **Queensland Suicide Prevention Reference Group** which supports the implementation of the *Queensland Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2015 – 17* and provides leadership, oversight and coordination of suicide prevention and risk reduction activities undertaken across the State.
- **Queensland Advisory Group on Suicide Information and Data** who are an expert group on systemic issues, data and other relevant evidence.
- **Queensland Government Births and Deaths Working Group** which is a forum for discussing statistical and other issues around Queensland births and deaths registrations and assists in improving the quality and reliability of Queensland population statistics.