



# Queensland Child Protection Reform Program (2014–24) Implementation Evaluation

SUMMARY REPORT

Queensland  
**Family & Child**  
Commission





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October 2019



## About the reforms

The Queensland Government is transforming our child protection and family support system to help families care for their children and make Queensland the safest place in Australia to raise a child.

Supporting Families Changing Futures is a 10-year reform program which commenced in July 2014. It is based on the 121 recommendations made by the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry.

There are many activities happening to monitor how the reform program is going and whether it is achieving its outcomes. The Queensland Family and Child Commission is leading evaluations of the reform program as a whole. Other agencies delivering reform activities are also evaluating their work.



## Evaluation purpose

The Queensland Family and Child Commission will conduct evaluations of the reform program at three time points:

1. Implementation Evaluation (looking at the first three years—this evaluation)
2. Outcomes Evaluation (looking at the first five years—to start after July 2019)
3. Impact Evaluation (looking at the full 10 years—to start after July 2024).

The diagram at the bottom of the page shows when we will conduct evaluations and what they will focus on.

The Implementation Evaluation aimed to:

- add to what we know about Queensland's child protection and family support system
- improve our understanding of how the reform program is being implemented and consider early evidence of effectiveness to track progress towards our goals
- provide information to help:
  - government to make decisions about how we continue the reform program
  - the sector to improve the services they provide for children and families.





## Discussion of key findings

The Implementation Evaluation found that we are making good progress implementing the reform program—to an extent we would expect after three years.

There is a lot to be done, and reform partners have been working together to put all of the reform program changes in place. As a result, significant changes have occurred in the first three years.

We found evidence that the new policies, practices and services are generally working as planned. In cases where things haven't gone to plan, or we're not seeing the change we had hoped, reform partners have come up with ideas about how to improve and have started making these changes.

**We are starting to see the benefits of these changes. There has been a big increase in support services available for families. These services are seen as key successes of the reform program so far.**

We are seeing increases in the number of families using community-based services, and increases in the number of families referred to these services. This gives families an opportunity to get the help they need before things escalate to involve Child Safety Services.

**We are seeing improvements in the frontline workforce. They are more available to help families, and there has been more focus on building the skills needed to help families with the issues they are facing.**

The evaluation found some areas that need more attention and focus if we are going to achieve the reform program outcomes.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to be over-represented across all stages of the child protection system. In fact, over-representation is increasing. This needs urgent attention.**

New services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families look promising. For example, the Family-Led Decision Making trials and Family Wellbeing Services are seen as good practice. These need time to embed so we can be sure they are working.

Evaluation participants think the Our Way strategy is promising. They think working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, communities and organisations is the right way to address over-representation. It is seen as a great example of 'sharing responsibility' for improving outcomes.

**We can continue to improve how the reform program is being managed, how we work together and how we share information.**

Evaluation participants think we can improve reform program governance groups to help us to work together to support children and families.

Information sharing is still an issue that can make it difficult to give families the best support, but this continues to be an area of focus.



Major reform takes time. There is no evidence to suggest that we aren't on the right track. There is optimism about the reform program, and agreement that we should continue and allow time for the benefits of the changes to be realised.



## Recommendations

The Implementation Evaluation aimed to provide information to help government make decisions about how we continue the reform program. We recommend that reform partners:

1. build on our success to date and keep working together to fully implement the reform program. This will give enough time for the benefits of the changes to show.
2. think about where things aren't going as well (like how the reform program is managed, the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, how we work together and how we share information) and make changes to fix these issues.

Reform program activities are still being implemented. Where changes have been made, they have only been in place for a short time. It is therefore too early to expect strong evidence of outcomes in this evaluation, which looked at the first three years of the reform program.

Once the reform program has been fully implemented, we need to do an Outcomes Evaluation to see whether the reform program has achieved its goals. However, we know that other changes are happening which will also affect children and families. We recommend that:

3. reform partners work together to decide which outcomes should be looked at in the Outcomes Evaluation. It should start after the reform program has been going for five years.
4. reform partners should keep collecting data and evaluating their work. These should be provided to the Queensland Family and Child Commission for our evaluations of the whole reform program.
5. the next evaluations look at outcomes for children, young people and families by tracking them as they move through the child protection and family support system, and hearing directly from them about their experiences.

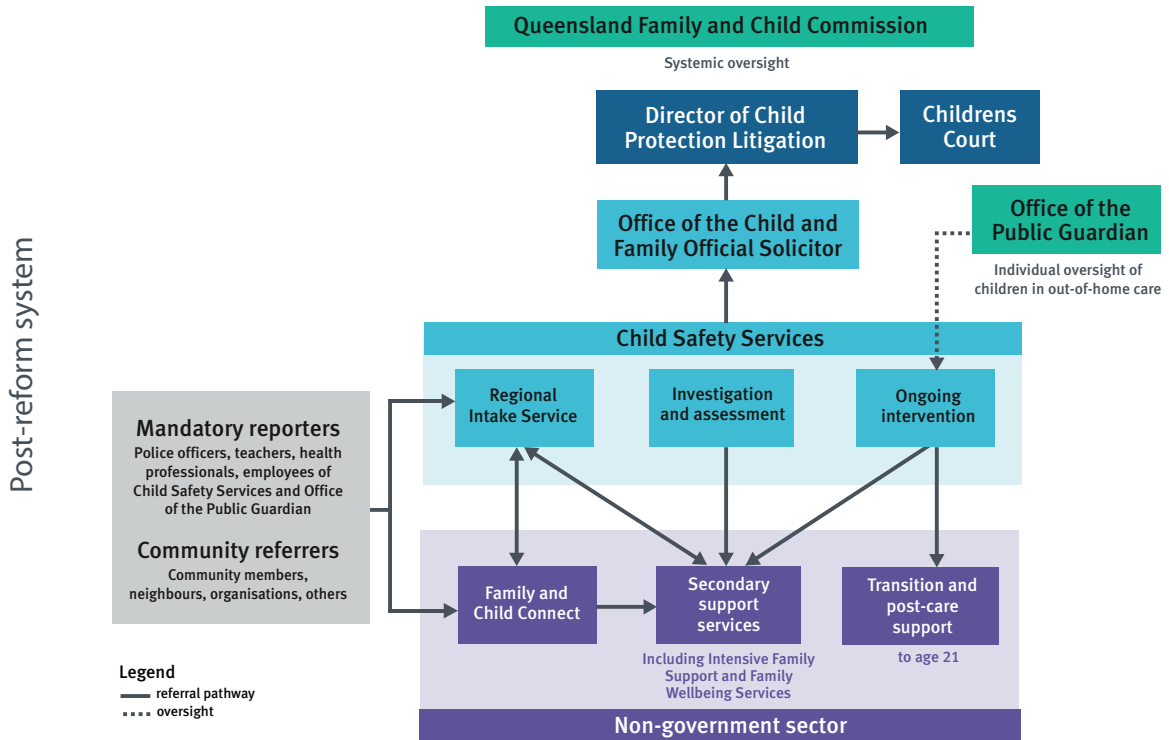
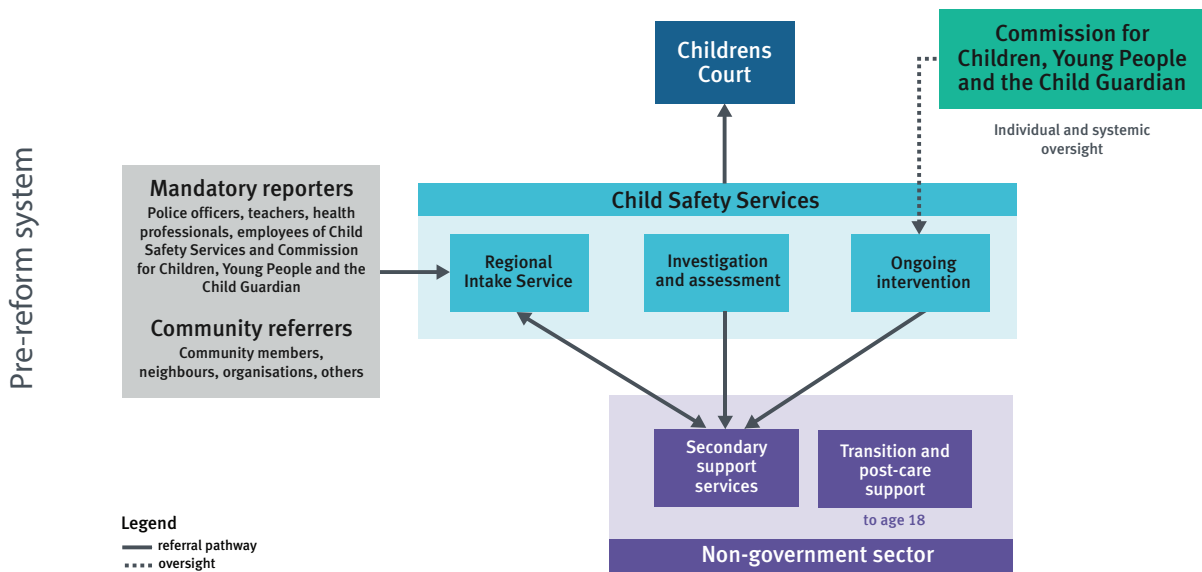
The following pages describe the key findings from the different parts of our evaluation.

We looked at the impact of the reform program on the child protection and family support system, whether the foundations for success are in place, the overall process of implementing the reform program, and early evidence of progress towards outcomes. We also did some place-based studies to look at how the local context is affecting reform program progress.



## System impacts

We looked at how the child protection and family support system has changed since the reform program started. We found that the reform program has resulted in large-scale, structural changes to the system. These changes are shown in the diagrams below.





This page summarises the major changes to each part of the system. We have provided key statistics comparing figures from 2012–13 (before the reform program) to 2016–17 (after three years of the reform program).

### Non-government sector

- A new referral pathway has been put in place so families that need support can go to non-government service providers to get help, rather than being reported to Child Safety Services.
- It is too early for clear evidence of whether this new pathway is working, but early trends show it is operating as intended. For example, families are being referred to, and are accessing, support from Family and Child Connect and Intensive Family Support services.
- Support for young people leaving care was increased from age 18 up to 21, and has since been increased to age 25.

**24,704**  
closed enquiries to FaCC

**1570**  
new referrals to IFS

**+3 years**  
additional support following transition up to age 21

### Child Safety Services

- Child Safety Services data suggests that some intended reform program impacts, such as an overall reduction in children subject to an intake, are occurring. However, the data suggest that change is being driven by reductions for non-Indigenous children.
- While intakes remain below pre-reform levels, these have recently increased.
- Numbers of children in out-of-home care have increased. This is the opposite of what the reform program aimed to achieve. However, it may take time for the reform program to have an impact on this.

**↓ 13.6%**  
all children subject to an intake

<p>Non-Indigenous</p> <p><b>↓ 15.6%</b> children subject to an intake</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</p> <p><b>↓ 6.2%</b> children subject to an intake</p>
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**↑ 9.6%**  
children in out-of-home care

### Court system

- Child protection matters are now brought to the court by an independent body, the Director of Child Protection Litigation. These changes were made to improve efficiency, transparency and the quality of evidence before the court.
- Despite the intended efficiency benefits of the court system changes, the backlog of cases has increased. However, the majority of matters are handled in the way recommended by Child Safety Services. This shows they are seeking appropriate court orders.

**82.5%**  
matters dealt with by applying for the order recommended by Child Safety Services

**Backlog**

<p><b>↑ 9.1% points</b> proportion of pending applications older than 6 months from date of lodgement</p>	<p><b>↑ 6.2% points</b> proportion of pending applications older than 12 months from date of lodgement</p>
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### Advocacy and oversight

- Advocacy and oversight have changed as a result of the reform program in order to strengthen community confidence in the system.
- The Queensland Family and Child Commission was set up to provide oversight of the system, and has (to date) conducted four reviews that aim to strengthen it and keep children more than safe.
- The Office of the Public Guardian visits children and young people in out-of-home care, and supports them in decision-making through a new legal advocacy function.

**32,749**  
visits to children and young people in care (2017)

**1318**  
child-related meetings attended by Child Advocate Legal Officers

**4**  
systemic reviews into aspects of the child protection and family support system



## Foundations for success

The Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry said nine foundations need to be in place for the reform program to work. For our evaluation, these were combined into five themes. We looked at whether these foundations were in place, how they affected the reform program and what could be improved. This page summarises what we found.

	To what extent is the foundation in place?	How is it affecting the reform program?	What could be improved?
<b>Governance and shared responsibility</b>	Governance groups have been set up. In some cases, regional and local governance groups have been modified to better meet local needs.	There were mixed views about how well these groups are working. Some groups have been good at sharing information but others haven't.	We need to turn our focus to outcomes so that everyone is on the same page and taking responsibility.
<b>Collaboration and information sharing</b>	Local staff and communities are working together. There are mechanisms in place to support information sharing.	Local governance groups are helping with collaboration. More training about legislation is needed so everyone knows when they can share information.	Awareness of policies and risk management processes could be improved. There needs to be a commitment to working together at all levels.
<b>Policy and legislative frameworks</b>	Policies and legislation are in place. A lot of effort has been made to communicate changes and increase awareness.	Frontline staff still face challenges working with complex legislation. The culture of referral behaviour still needs work.	Work is needed to make staff comfortable with referring families to new services, and raising awareness about these new services.
<b>Sector capacity and capability</b>	The workforce has expanded. Staff have been offered a range of training to learn about all of the changes from the reform program.	There has been a lot of work to change the culture and the way people work. With all of the changes, the right training hasn't always been available.	Training should be shared across the workforce. More specialised training is needed so staff can help clients with more complex needs.
<b>Service system linkages</b>	The dual referral pathway has been set up. Work is being done to improve how services are working together so families get the help they need sooner.	Staff are still getting used to referring to new services. If staff don't hear back, they are less likely to refer families to that service in the future. This is impacting on families getting help.	Promotion of the dual referral pathway and new services should be ongoing. Services need to improve the way they work together and communicate.



## Overall process of implementing the reforms

Overall, the reform program has been implemented the way it was planned. Out of the 121 recommendations, most have happened or are happening and only a small number are at risk of not being done on time.



Since the reform program began, the context has changed, and the child protection and family support system has changed along with it.

**‘The environment in which the reforms are being delivered is a rapidly changing environment. The pace of change has been dramatic.’**

There are many parts of the reform program that were carried out as planned.

• The way the reforms are being managed has changed in response to other changes to the system and broader human services sector.

• Some parts of the reform program have had more emphasis than others. Some people we spoke to said that work related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families had been slow to roll out.

• Others said that it was important to consult and engage widely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities before rolling out these changes.

### What was implemented as planned?

- Rolling out the reform program over five years.
- Focussing on the most important parts first, such as changing the laws.
- Focussing on working together.

### What had to change in response to the changing context?

- Reform governance changed after a review in 2015 and continues to evolve.
- Other reviews have been done, which has widened the scope of the reform context.



## Progress towards achieving outcomes

There are four Supporting Outcomes identified for the reform program, which support the primary outcome that ‘children and young people live in safe and supportive communities’. We looked at early evidence of progress towards these outcomes. As our evaluation focussed on the first three years of the reform program, we didn’t expect these outcomes to be fully achieved yet.

### Timely access to high-quality services

- Reform stakeholders have mixed views about the progress towards achieving this outcome.
- While they acknowledged that there had been considerable effort and investment made to achieve it, there is still more to be done.
- Access to services and service quality has improved, but timeliness of responses was mixed.
- There is an opportunity to further streamline how families move through the system to help them get the right help at the right time.

### System is efficient, effective, client-centred and focussed on prevention

- There were mixed results about system efficiency and effectiveness.
- Stakeholders say that the reform program needs to be fully rolled out to improve the effectiveness of the system. There is agreement that we need to stay on track and give the changes time to mature.
- There are challenges with new referral pathways which can slow things down. This needs more work.
- The client-centred approach used by staff was praised. Reform stakeholders say families have:
  - more of a role in decisions and planning
  - better representation and procedural fairness in court processes
  - better service responses supported by strengths-based practice.

### Reduced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation in the child protection system is an important issue.
- Over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at various stages of the tertiary child protection system has increased. This is an area in need of urgent attention.
- Reform stakeholders think Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific initiatives, such as Family Wellbeing Services and the Family-Led Decision Making trials, will be successful over time.

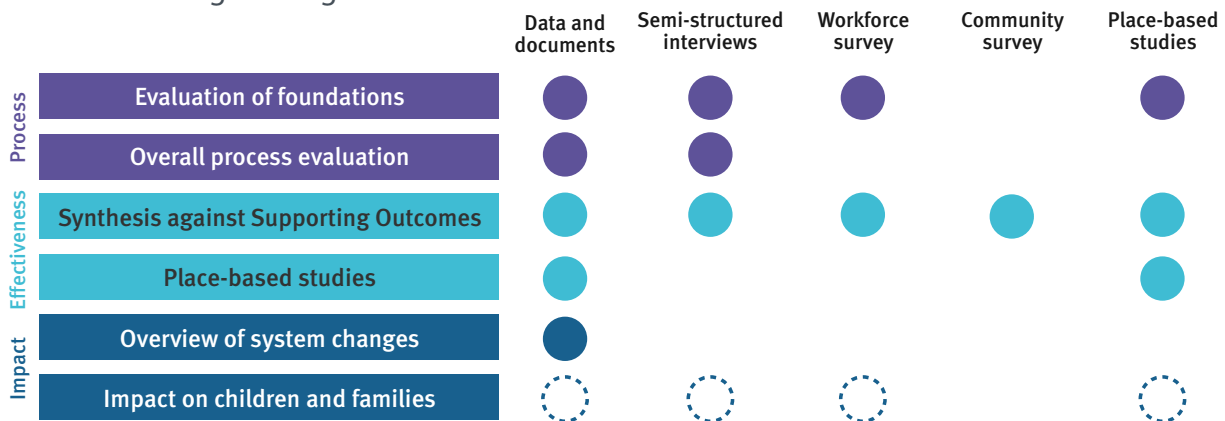
### Community confidence in the system

- Gaining the community’s confidence in the child protection system will take time.
- Confidence can be fleeting, especially after a tragedy involving a child or young person. A unified front from government is essential to gaining ongoing public confidence.
- Many factors can influence public confidence and trust, such as being open about how well the system is working, and having good complaints processes.
- Community awareness about the child protection system is low. People who know more about the system and the reform program have more confidence in the system.
- Agencies with child safety responsibilities have had their complaints management processes reviewed and make complaints information available to the public.



## Method

We used five methods in our evaluation. The figure below shows the different evaluation components using each method. Using multiple methods makes the evaluation design stronger.

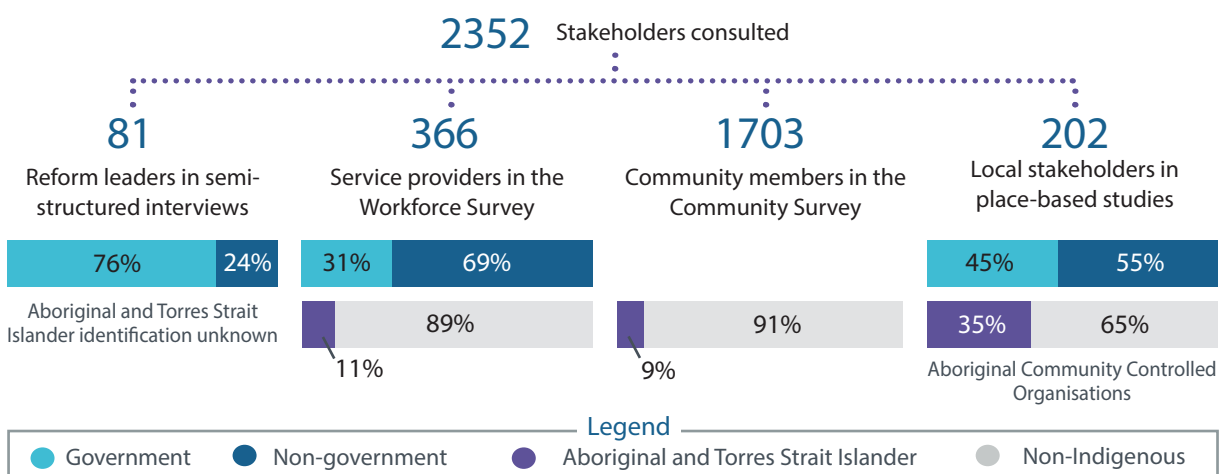


Note: It was too early to examine impact on children and families, but anecdotal evidence was raised in some methods. This is represented by dashed circles.



## Samples

We consulted with a variety of stakeholder groups for this evaluation. Conducting place-based studies and using online and telephone surveys meant we could hear from people across Queensland. The figure below describes the samples we used for the evaluation.



In addition to an overall evaluation report, we have written a series of Addenda Reports. These describe the results of each method we used in more detail. The following pages are summaries of each Addenda Report.



## Stakeholder interviews



### Purpose

We spoke with key stakeholders in the child protection reform program about:

- foundations for the success of the reform program
- design and implementation issues
- progress towards achieving outcomes.

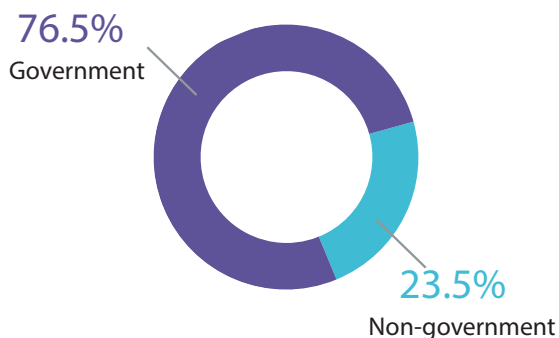


### Method and sample

We spoke with stakeholders between September 2017 and April 2018. We had 22 interview questions.

81

Stakeholders participated in an interview



- 12 Government agencies
- 10 Non-government organisations
- 3 Subject matter experts

13.6%

of the 22 organisations we spoke to represented the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



### Key findings

#### Foundations for success

- Stakeholders told us that the reform program foundations for success are largely in place. Where they said there were areas for improvement, these are generally being dealt with. Overall, the foundations appear to be on track to have a positive influence on reform progress.
- Stakeholders say:
  - we need better connections, information sharing and communication across the child protection and family support system.
  - the ability and availability of frontline workers is improving.
  - there is policy and legislation to support reform program implementation, but some say information about these changes could be shared better with frontline workers.

#### Design and implementation

- The reform program, and the broader child protection and family support system, has changed a lot since 2014.
- The reform program is generally being implemented as intended, in phases, and in a collaborative way. Some aspects, such as governance, have changed to fit the changing context.
- Progress has been slower in some areas than others. For example, some stakeholders say reform changes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families should be a higher priority. This view is balanced by stakeholders who think the work and time that has gone into designing and implementing an appropriate program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families is worth it.



## Progress towards outcomes

- Overall, stakeholders think progress is being made towards achieving the reform program outcomes.
- Stakeholders want us to stay on track and continue implementing the reform program and allow time for the outcomes to emerge.

'We really need to follow through with this.'

## System is efficient, effective, client-centred and focussed on prevention

Stakeholders think the system is client-centric, because:

- clients are playing a bigger role in decision making
- they have more representation and procedural fairness in court processes
- there are better service responses supported by strengths-based policies and practice.

'The really positive story is the Practice Framework. We are not doing things to families, we are working with families—helping them to identify their own strengths and challenges. We are having a much more honest conversation with families about what we need them to do.'

## Community confidence in the system

Community confidence in the child protection system is a continual work in progress. Sharing responsibility across government is important to increase and keep public confidence in the system. Confidence is influenced by how the service system responds to a crisis, and also by media coverage.

'There has been a lot of discussion about child safety in the media ... That public controversy undermines confidence in system. I think we are making improvements in the system which are steady and positive, but perceptions affect confidence.'

'Community confidence is dependent on action. If something is going wrong, the community expects us to respond ... It's about doing what you say you will do, it's about doing the right thing.'

## Timely access to high-quality services

Evidence suggests that access to quality support services has improved, although views on timeliness are mixed.

'I think that the families in our region now have a greater ability [to] access services in a timely way ... because there are services to access now.'

Stakeholders feel that a high-quality service is one with workers who have the skills and time to work with clients.

## Reduced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people remain over-represented in the child protection system. This is seen as an urgent priority.

'To actually address over-representation, it is about the child protection system, education, health, the judicial system ... and we're now asking whether the whole system is dealing with it with the same urgency.'

Several new initiatives are underway to address this issue, and hold promise for these families. However, most have not been running for enough time to know if they are effective.

'The Family Wellbeing Service is a powerful shift to the approach.'

There is more effort to work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, which is seen as a positive way to improve outcomes for families.



# Workforce survey



## Purpose

We surveyed frontline staff and service providers about the services they provide to children, young people and families and the impact of the child protection reforms.



## Method

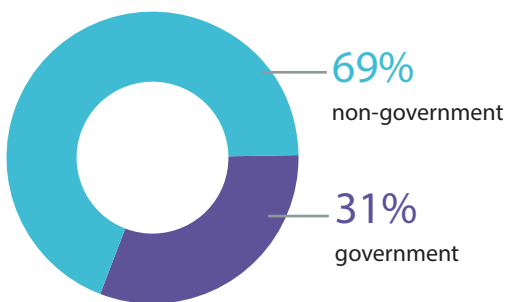
The survey was available online or in a hard copy. It was sent to organisations across Queensland that provide child protection and family support services.

The survey was open for 8 weeks between January and March 2018. We asked 27 questions with a mixture of rating-style and free text responses.



## Samples

**366** workers responded to the survey



**11%** identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



## Key findings

### Overall

**56%**

agreed the reforms have improved access to early intervention services

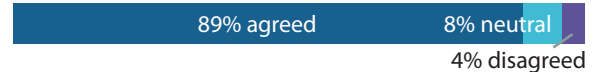
**37%**

agreed the reforms have improved families' ability to care for their children

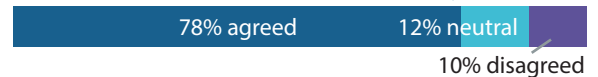
### Access to services

The workforce is positive about their service and the ability of children, young people and families to access them. They are less positive about whether children, young people and families know where to find information about what support is available.

The service we provide is fair/unbiased



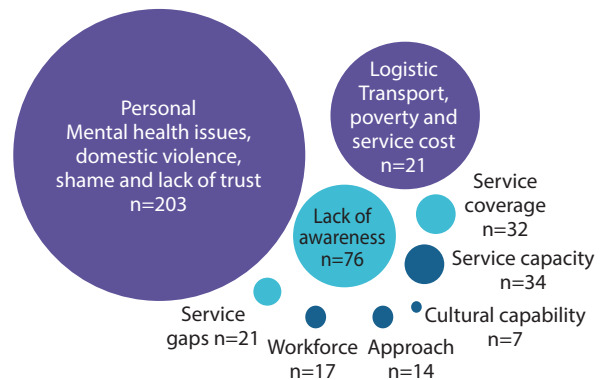
The service we provide is accessible and easy to use



Clients know where to find services and supports



The most common barriers to service access were personal and logistic. The diagram below shows how many people talked about each barrier.



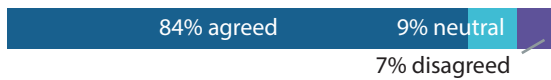
## Meeting clients' needs

The workforce is positive about the ability of their service to meet the needs of children, young people and families. They are less positive about whether the services they refer families to are capable of delivering services to them.

My organisation makes decisions that prioritise the needs of clients



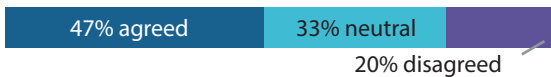
The services my organisation provides are tailored to meet the needs of clients



In my organisation clients have the opportunity to have a say in decisions affecting their lives



I am confident that support services I refer to are capable of delivering services to families



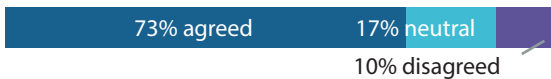
## Engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients

The workforce is positive about the ability of their service to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

I feel competent to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients



The service we provide is culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



When asked if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients face barriers accessing their service, one third agreed, but close to half disagreed.

There are barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients accessing my organisation's services



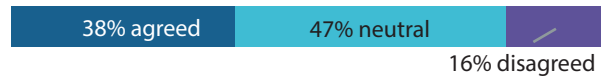
## Impact of legislative changes

Less than half of respondents agreed that legislative changes have had a positive impact.

Changes to the child protection legislation have had a positive effect on service delivery



Changes to the child protection legislation are keeping children and young people safer and better protected



## Information sharing and governance

Views about information sharing are mixed. Close to two thirds say information sharing happens regularly, but close to half say the lack of information sharing limits their ability to support clients.

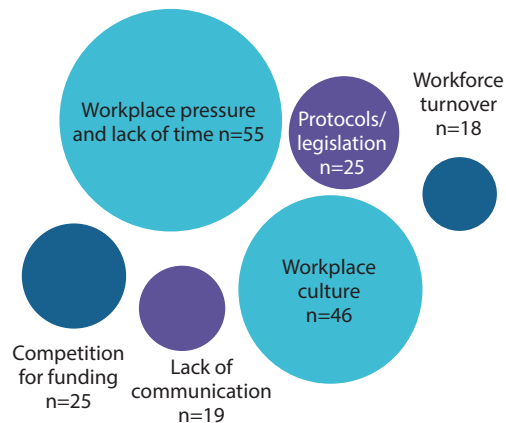
Information sharing occurs regularly between my organisation and other organisations



Information sharing restrictions limit my organisation's ability to support clients



The most common barriers to information sharing are workload/lack of time and workplace culture. The diagram below shows how many people talked about each barrier.



We asked four questions about reform governance groups like Local Level Alliances and the Regional Child and Family Committees. More than 30% answer 'don't know' in each question, suggesting awareness of the reform governance structure could be improved.



# Survey of community members



## Purpose

We surveyed community members to see how much trust and confidence they have in the Queensland child protection and family support system.



## Method

We surveyed 1703 people between 28 July and 4 September 2017. Our survey was available online or it could be completed over the phone. We asked 16 questions with a mixture of fixed-choice and free text responses.



89.5%  
online



10.5%  
by phone



## Sample

We aimed to get a representative sample of Queensland adults to complete our survey.

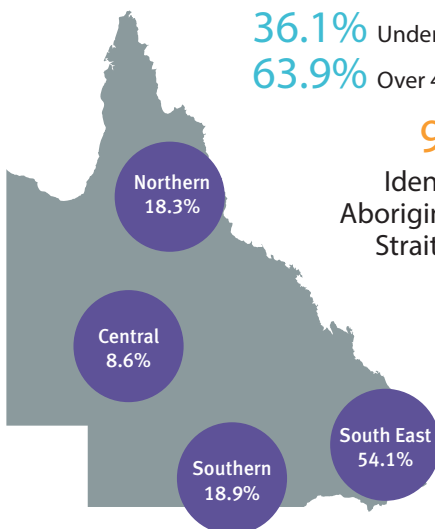
1703

People completed the survey

36.1% Under 40 years of age  
63.9% Over 40 years of age

9.0%

Identified as  
Aboriginal or Torres  
Strait Islander



52.7%  
Female



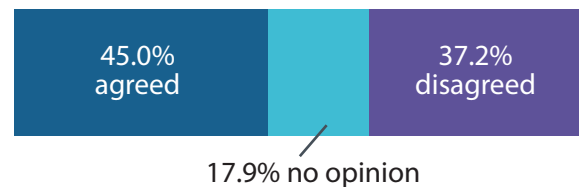
47.0%  
Male



## Key findings

Community members were asked about their overall confidence in the system. While less than half of the respondents agreed they had confidence and trust in the Queensland child protection system, more respondents agreed than disagreed.

Overall, I have confidence and trust in the Queensland Child protection system

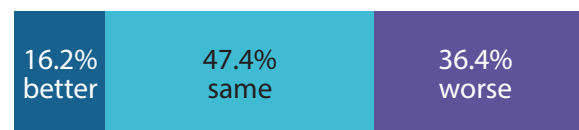


Factors with the strongest relationships with overall confidence in the child protection system were:

- Having confidence in the way reports of child abuse or neglect are managed
- Agreeing that children removed from their families are safe and well cared for
- Agreeing that services and support are available for those who need them
- Agreeing that decisions are made in the best interest of the child
- Agreeing that government monitors and reviews child protection decisions.

When community members were asked whether the child protection system had changed over the last five years, the most common response was that the system has stayed the same.

Has the child protection system got better, worse or the stayed the same over the last five years?



# Analysis of agency data and documents



## Purpose

We used existing data and documents (produced by other government and non-government agencies) to look at how reform program initiatives have been implemented and how the broader child protection and family support system is operating.



## Method

12

Activity-level evaluation reports and

2

implementation reviews were made available.

We also looked at data and reports about relevant services and reform initiatives.

## Limitations

- There were limited data and documents about the first three years of the reform program available.
- The data and documents focussed on implementation of the reform program and did not collect information about outcomes or impacts of the reform program.



## Key findings

### Reform implementation

- Progress has been made to the extent expected within the first three years of the reform program.
- Agencies are implementing a range of new initiatives designed to support families earlier and keep them out of the tertiary child protection system, or to improve processes and support for families who need tertiary intervention.
- Agencies are monitoring and reporting on the challenges and strengths experienced while implementing new services and initiatives. Their evaluations identify opportunities for improvements.

### System changes

- Data shows some early changes to secondary and tertiary system processes, such as the uptake of Family and Child Connect and Intensive Family Support services, and early changes to reporting child safety concerns. However, it is still too early to consider the long-term impacts of these changes.
- Other reform initiatives intended to improve the efficiency of the system are still embedding. Stakeholders are optimistic about the potential for these to improve the child protection and family support system and the experiences of children, young people and families.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation

- Agencies consider the cultural appropriateness of their services when evaluating their effectiveness.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are increasingly over-represented at various stages of the child protection system.



## Place-based studies



### Purpose

- We wanted to look at how the reforms are operating at the 'front end' of the system. To do this, we undertook 5 place-based studies across Queensland (see map below).
- We were interested in how the reform program is operating at the local level. We used realist evaluation to look at the extent to which prevention and early intervention supports for children, young people and families are preventing families from entering the tertiary child protection system.
- The central question of the place-based studies was:

What works, for whom, in what circumstances, and why?

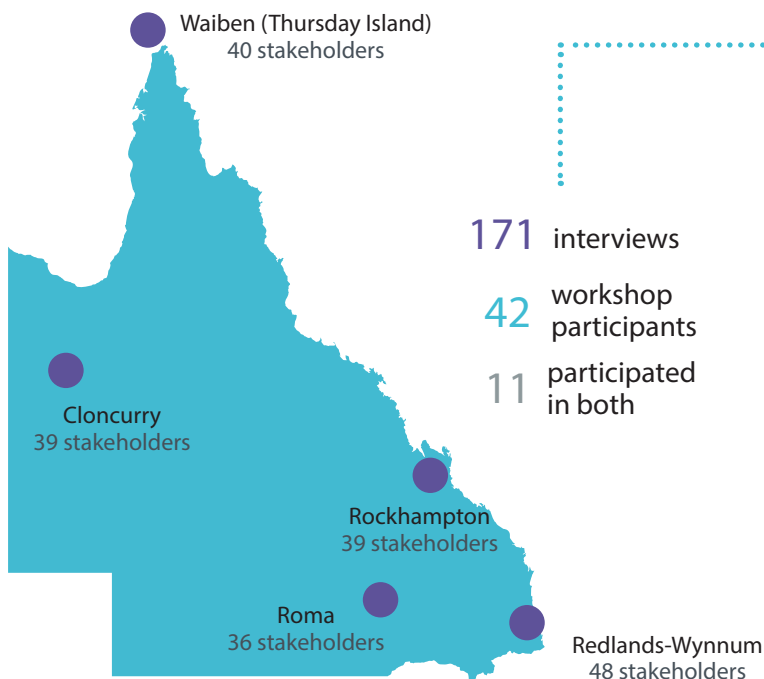


### Method

- We travelled to each location for one week.
- Key stakeholders helped us to identify and contact the target population.
- We ran interviews and workshops with local stakeholders from:
  - local governance groups
  - government agencies
  - non-government organisations
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations.
- Some stakeholders participated in both an interview and a workshop.

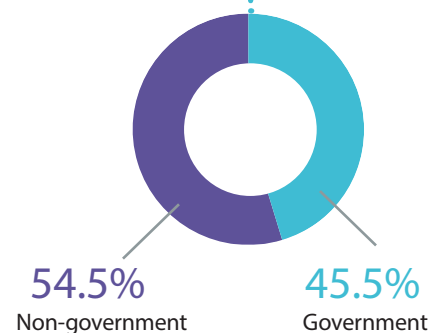


### Sample



171 interviews  
42 workshop participants  
11 participated in both

202 stakeholders participated in the place-based studies



34.5% Organisations were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled

# Cloncurry

## Context: Facilitators

- Existing local community networks assist with service coordination and information sharing.
- Local and regional service providers generally have collaborative relationships.
- Awareness and knowledge of relevant policies and legislation facilitate appropriate reports to Child Safety Services and referrals to secondary services.

### Improve access to family support services

- Service coverage is limited in Cloncurry, and is supported by outreach services from Mount Isa.
- Relationships and trust underpin service accessibility and client engagement.
- Services delivered in non-stigmatising environments are more appealing to families.

### Establish robust service networks

- Place-based governance structures are seen to be more useful, relevant and locally-focussed than regional governance groups.
- Positive information-sharing and collaborative cultures produce stronger relationships and client-centred practice.
- Feedback on referrals is valued and encourages subsequent referrals.

### Ensure high quality of services

- Service quality is grounded in trust of a service and its frontline workers.
- Local workers' knowledge and cultural understanding is equally as valued as their skills and experience.
- Continuity of workers is seen to be critical for sustained client engagement.

## Context: Barriers

- Shame, stigma, mistrust and lack of confidence and interest deter some people from seeking help.
- Distance to support services and limited transportation options impact service accessibility.
- High workforce turnover and employment of non-local people influence perceptions of service quality.
- A lack of service coordination and limited awareness of service coverage/availability influence referrals, which affects clients' access to services.



# Redlands-Wynnum

## Context: Facilitators

- Strong relationships between services facilitate access, service networks and service quality.
- Recent investment has resulted in an increased number of services available for children and families, despite historic underfunding of the local area.
- Practice is increasingly client-centred and strengths-based.

### Improve access to family support services

- The service footprint has expanded in recent years, which is partly due to reform investment.
- Outreach models (e.g. Intensive Family Support) have helped reach vulnerable families.
- Warm referrals for clients are enabled by strong relationships.

### Establish robust service networks

- Strong networks and relationships pre-date the reform program.
- Information sharing is variable, but stakeholders are committed to it.
- The Local Level Alliance functions effectively and is seen as valuable.

### Ensure high quality of services

- Staff are generally well-qualified.
- The Strengthening Families Protection Children Framework for Practice is highly regarded for being client-centred.
- Cross-agency positions have facilitated collaboration.

## Context: Barriers

- Client needs are increasingly complex and multi-faceted.
- There are varying remoteness classifications within the area, and poor public transport connectivity.
- High workloads and turnover constrain networking and can limit time with clients.
- Key services (e.g. Intensive Family Support and Family Wellbeing) are operating with long waitlists, constraining families' access to support.

# Rockhampton

## Context: Facilitators

- There are a large number of services and multiple providers of some types of services.
- Strong relationships between service providers enable families to move across services.
- Frontline workers use non-stigmatising and individualised approaches for working with clients.
- Some local stakeholders are increasingly focused on building collaborative relationships.

### Improve access to family support services

- The number of services available offers families a range of supports and choice in providers.
- It is difficult for families and service providers to navigate the large and changing service system.
- Relationships and trust between service providers and families are critical.

### Establish robust service networks

- Strong information sharing enables multiple services to co-develop responses for families.
- Multiple networks and meetings create stakeholder fatigue.
- A better understanding of the intent and a focus on driving outcomes would encourage agencies to participate in networks.

### Ensure high quality of services

- Frontline staff use tools and approaches which are strengths-based and tailored to the client.
- Workers have less time with clients if they provide support to neighbouring communities or carry high caseloads.
- It is difficult to attract and retain a regional workforce.

## Context: Barriers

- Local stakeholders have limited awareness of available services or their capacity to take on new families.
- There is poor public transport to connect families in surrounding communities to the services in Rockhampton.
- Services are filling up with low-risk cases, limiting the support available for high-risk families.
- There are pockets of strained relationships between services which restrict referral pathways.
- There are limited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific services in Rockhampton.



# Roma

## Context: Facilitators

- Strong relationships between services facilitate access, service networks and service quality.
- There is a trusted and established secondary support system in Roma.
- Strengths-based practice, holistic support and family-led decision making is occurring.
- Informal supports, churches and connections to culture and community exist.

### Improve access to family support services

- Service coverage has expanded in recent years, which is partly due to reform investment.
- Outreach models have helped reach vulnerable families.
- Service reputation and trust are critical to the referral system and client engagement.

### Establish robust service networks

- The strong existing networks and governance are place-based and driven by key individuals.
- A better understanding of strategic intent would facilitate buy-in from local stakeholders.
- Communication flow between the different levels of governance needs to be improved.

### Ensure high quality of services

- A local workforce familiar with the culture and context is ideal.
- Practice is more strengths-based and culturally safe.
- Difficulty with recruitment and retention limits service capacity and capability and creates instability for families.

## Context: Barriers

- Service capacity is strained by providing outreach services to surrounding towns.
- There are varying degrees of remoteness and poor public transport connectivity.
- High workloads and turnover constrain networking and can limit time with clients.
- Key services (e.g. Intensive Family Support and Family Wellbeing) are operating with long waitlists, constraining vulnerable families' access to support.



# Waiben (Thursday Island)

## Context: Facilitators

- Strengths include connections to culture, family, friends, community and country.
- There is a trusted and established secondary support system.
- Strengths-based practice, holistic support and family-led decision making are viewed favourably.
- Informal support networks and religious beliefs play an important role in keeping children safe and families supported.

### Improve access to family support services

- Service capacity is limited, and impacted by the provision of outreach to outer islands.
- Service reputation and trust in services are critical to the referral system and client service engagement.
- Informal or cultural supports are often preferred over formal, funded supports.

### Establish robust service networks

- There are strong existing networks and governance, but coordination and awareness of service capacity are limited.
- There are mixed views on information sharing and collaborative practice across the sector.
- There is some siloing and duplication of responses for children and families.

### Ensure high quality of services

- Practice is increasingly strengths-based and culturally safe.
- Workforce turnover affects client experience and can leave gaps in services.
- Local workers are seen to be more knowledgeable of culture and context.
- Relationships and reputation are key factors influencing perceptions of service quality.

## Context: Barriers

- Shame, stigma, mistrust/lack of confidence in services, and language barriers can limit service engagement.
- There is intergenerational trauma and, for some, a fear of asking for help.
- Distance, limited transport options and poor communication structures (i.e. telecommunications) all have an impact on service accessibility.
- There are concerns about the capacity of the service system, workforce turnover, process delays and poor service coordination.



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