

2026

# Research Strategy

## Our research functions

The *Family and Child Commission Act 2014 (Qld)* (the Act), sets out the research functions of the Queensland Family and Child Commission. These functions help promote the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people and help support improvements to the child protection system. Under section 9 of the Act, the Commission must:

- inform and educate the community about research relevant to the child protection system;
- develop and coordinate a multidisciplinary research program to inform policies and practices, in consultation with stakeholders and relevant agencies.

Section 26 sets out the Principal Commissioner's functions to help reduce the likelihood of child deaths:

- to conduct research, alone or in cooperation with other entities;
- to identify areas for further research by the commission or other entities;
- to make recommendations, arising from keeping the child death register and conducting research under this section, about laws, policies, practices and services.

Genuine researchers, as defined in section 28 of the Act, may also access information from the child death register for research.

The Commission hosts the Child Death Review Board. Under Part 3 of the Act, the Board may:

- analyse data, and apply research, to identify patterns, trends and risk factors relevant to reviews
- carry out, or engage persons to carry out, research relevant to reviews.

## Our research continuum

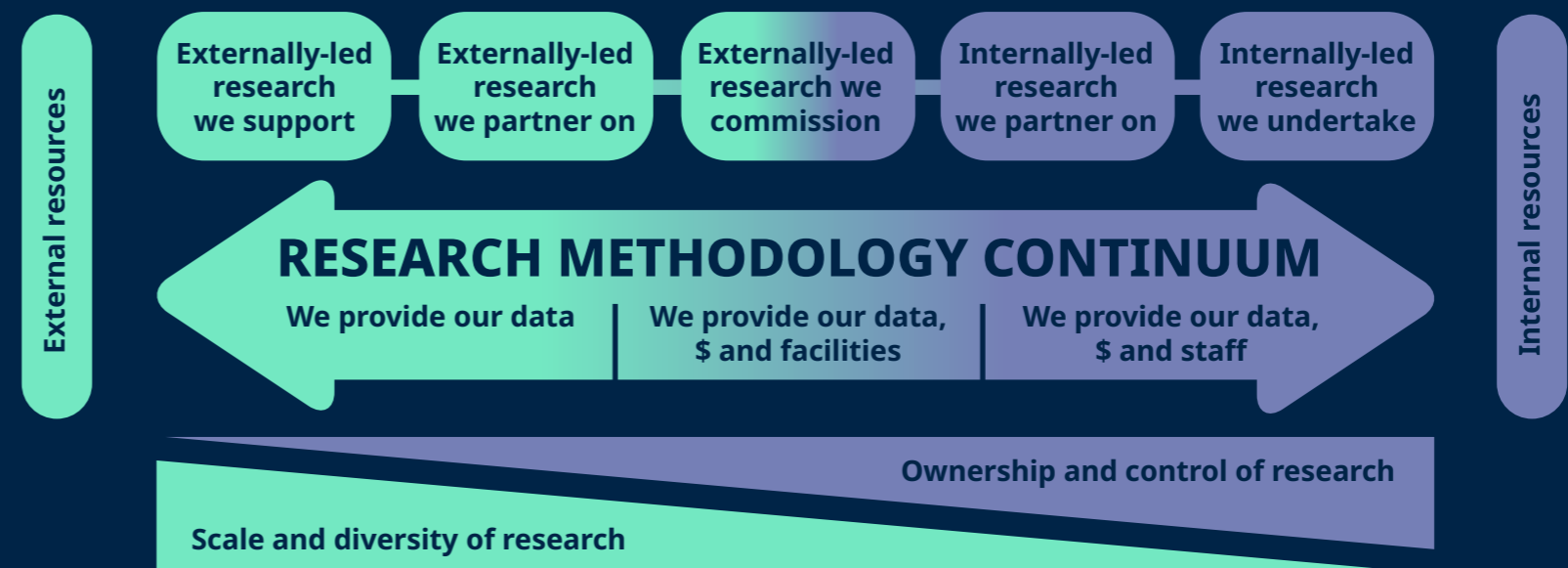
The Commission recognises the importance of high-quality research in shaping positive system outcomes for Queensland children and families. We pursue research across a continuum that empowers and enables research through collaboration with sector partners, researchers and agencies.

This Research Strategy clarifies how the Commission fulfils its statutory research functions, guides strategic investment and prioritisation, strengthens governance of structured research, and shapes engagement with external partners.

This strategy outlines how we support, coordinate and invest in research activities, as set out in the Act. Our research activities fall into 5 key areas:

1. externally led research we support
2. externally led research we partner on
3. externally led research we commission
4. internally led research we partner on
5. internally led research we undertake.

Figure 1: The continuum of possible elements and considerations of how the Commission can approach research.



# Research Strategy

The Commission will invest in research that informs policies and services for children, parents and families in Queensland. To maximise impact we take an empowering approach where we support and invest in external research to maximise our reach. When determining delivery we assess strategic alignment, impact, capability and governance to select the most effective approach. When a research need arises, we first consider existing evidence, expertise, partnerships and commissioning options to maximise value and avoid duplication.

## Research investment decision making framework

<b>Collaborative</b>	<p>Does the research opportunity promote collaboration with peaks, institutions, organisations or individuals of strategic importance (either in the research itself or the use of research outputs)?</p> <p>Does the research opportunity promote collaboration within the policy systems for children and young people?</p>
<b>Public Value</b>	<p>Does the research opportunity involve researchers (institutions or individuals) who are trusted to deliver value?</p> <p>Does the opportunity involve skill transfer or professional development for the Commission and/or other stakeholders?</p> <p>Does the opportunity offer the Commission an appropriate level of control over research outputs?</p>
<b>Child and Family Centric</b>	<p>Does the research topic concern or could positively impact the interests, rights, and/or wellbeing of children, parents and families?</p> <p>Has the research design been informed by the views of children, parents and families?</p>
<b>Values led</b>	<p>Does the research opportunity align to our objectives under the Commission Reframing the Relationship Plan, through investment in First Nations-led research and/or Indigenous data sovereignty?</p> <p>Does the opportunity involve investment in the Queensland economy?</p> <p>Does the research promote equity and diversity of perspectives?</p>
<b>Cultural Authority</b>	<p>Does research proposing to understand the needs of First Nations peoples have sufficient involvement in the design, procurement, coordination and conduct of the research?</p>

### OBJECTIVES



**Collaborative**

We invest in research that allows us to work collaboratively with other statutory agencies, peaks, institutions or individuals on key strategic issues.



**Public value**

We invest in research in a way that appropriately balances the investment of our resources with the likelihood of value creation.



**Child and family-centric**

We invest in research that influences change that improves the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families.



**Values-led**

We invest in research that reflects our enduring values: to support diversity and equity, self-determination for First Nations communities, and local research capacity.



**Cultural authority**

We invest in research that respects the cultural authority of First Nations peoples, supporting self-determination and community-led knowledge.

### RESOURCES (to invest)

**Levers**

- Our legislative powers under the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* (e.g., ability to request data).
- Funding that can be used for the purposes of fulfilling our functions.

**Assets**

- Internal research expertise and knowledge.
- Connections and networks with family and child system actors.
- Processes for engaging with children and families.
- Child death dataset and information.

**Awareness**

- Building stronger connections with university and other research institutions to collaborate.
- Increasing awareness of child death prevention data access and collaboration, within protocol and families.
- Child death dataset and information

## Defining research

For clarity in applying strategic decision making aligned with this strategy, the Commission considers the difference between strategic research projects (including projects identified on the Oversight Forward Work Plan) and the routine analytical and statutory insights functions that form core work within the Commission. This distinction provides clarity in streamlined reporting of projects and work, preventing additional governance over routine analytical tasks, and maintaining a central research register in a practical and purposeful approach.

**Strategic Research Projects** are structured, time-limited initiatives that aim to create new knowledge or test existing assumptions. These projects have a defined scope, methodology and set of deliverables. They may be commissioned, delivered through partnership or led internally. All strategic research projects sit within the central research governance and reporting framework and are undertaken in accordance with appropriate ethical standards, including consideration of participant wellbeing, cultural safety, privacy and the responsible use of data.

**Routine analysis and statutory insight** functions include ongoing analysis, case reviews, statutory reporting and work that uses existing datasets. These activities are essential to the Commission's role. While these activities do not constitute formal research projects, they are conducted in line with the Commission's ethical obligations, including appropriate data governance, confidentiality and respect for the rights and experiences of children, young people and families.

## Public reporting

A summary report will be published quarterly on the Commission's website to provide transparent updates on the progress of research initiatives. These reports will outline key activities undertaken during the reporting period, highlight emerging findings, and communicate the impact of ongoing research efforts. They will also identify new and emerging research opportunities, areas for collaboration, and priorities for future investigation. This approach supports accountability, promotes knowledge sharing, and ensures stakeholders remain informed about how research is contributing to improved outcomes for children, young people, and families.

# Research Strategy

## Methodology

The Commission's research methodology is diverse and context-sensitive, combining conventional academic practices with culturally grounded approaches to ensure ethical, meaningful and impactful research outcomes.

It is about selecting methods that best answer the research questions.

The Strategy commits to embedding culturally safe principles across all research, strengthening quality and supporting outcomes that respect and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

### Externally-led research we support

External researchers may seek access to the data we hold to support their own research activities.

Sharing our data with external researchers provides significant benefits for both the Commission and the broader research community. By enabling access, we invite independent analysis and interpretation through diverse perspectives, generating fresh insights and innovative approaches to complex challenges. This collaborative model can uncover new patterns, trends and potential solutions that may not be apparent through internal analysis alone.

Researchers from a range of disciplines can also pursue questions beyond the Commission's immediate focus, contributing to wider evidence development and broader societal impact.

#### Our approach

Proactively engage universities, research institutes, and other commissions and government departments to promote the availability of our child death data. Leverage the refresh of the *Safer Pathways through Childhood Framework 2022-27* to strengthen collaboration with external researchers and advance a shared research agenda.

#### Our current work

Eg. We receive an average of 20 research requests each year for child death data. The Commission has also previously hosted PhD candidates and research students, supporting them to undertake and complete their research.

### Externally-led research we partner on

Entering research partnerships where another organisation takes the lead offers significant advantages, while enabling the Commission to contribute to critical research.

Such arrangements allow us to leverage the expertise, resources and networks of the lead partner, enhancing the quality, reach and impact of the research. By aligning with established research leaders, the Commission can access new insights and innovative approaches without assuming full project management responsibility, freeing internal capacity to focus on other strategic priorities.

Participating as a non-lead partner also enables us to concentrate on clearly defined areas of contribution, such as data provision, subject matter expertise or analysis, while overall coordination and strategic oversight remain with the lead organisation. This creates a more efficient and effective division of labour.

#### Our approach

Proactively target established researchers and leading institutions to identify priority research topics where the Commission can add strategic value or targeted support. Align with and contribute to existing research initiatives to address gaps in our current evidence base and avoid duplication.

#### Our current work

Eg. Supporting the delivery of the research initiative 'Youth mental health: a framework for maltreatment healing' in partnership with PeakCare and Australian Catholic University. This collaboration will strengthen the evidence base on recovery pathways for young people who have experienced maltreatment and reinforces our commitment to trauma-informed, prevention-focused system reform particularly for children in out-of-home care.

### Externally-led research we commission

The Commission provides funding for selected research projects, which it oversees and manages through formal funding agreements.

By taking a proactive approach to research funding, the Commission can shape the focus and scope of studies to align with our strategic objectives, ensuring outcomes deliver actionable insights into the challenges we seek to address. Funding contracts enable us to set clear expectations, timeframes and deliverables, supporting efficient project management within defined parameters

This oversight ensures research remains aligned to our priorities and produces timely, relevant findings that maximise the impact of our investment. Ultimately, commissioning and managing research through contractual arrangements strengthens both the rigour and policy relevance of the work we support, generating meaningful insights that advance the Commission's mission.

#### Our approach

Establish and maintain a central register of current external research partnerships. Position the Research Coordinator as the single point of entry for new research proposals, ensuring consistent assessment, alignment with strategic priorities and coordinated engagement across the Commission.

#### Our current work

Eg. We are investing \$100,000 per annum over two years to partner with Australian Catholic University and Peakcare to examine the mental health impacts of out-of-home care, drawing on the Australian Child Maltreatment Study; \$40,000 to Queensland Health to extend our paediatric sepsis research; and \$50,000 to the Parenting Research Centre to identify best-practice family support models.

### Internally-led research we partner on

When the Commission leads a research partnership, we retain significant influence over the agenda and objectives. This allows us to shape the project in line with our strategic priorities and ensure outcomes deliver strong relevance and impact for stakeholders. Leading also enables us to allocate resources, set timelines and engage key stakeholders to meet organisational needs, while leveraging the expertise and capacity of external partners.

This model strengthens internal capability, as team members take on leadership roles in managing and coordinating the research effort. It also supports skill development and knowledge transfer, with clear expectations embedded in project scoping and agreements. This approach is most appropriate where research is strategically significant but unlikely to progress without our direct leadership and involvement.

#### Our approach

Scope and design a long-term research partnership model with academic institutions that maximises the production of high-value intelligence. This arrangement would formalise shared priorities, data access protocols and co-investment opportunities, ensuring sustained collaboration that strengthens the evidence base for child death prevention and broader system reform.

#### Our current work

Eg. We are investing \$40,000 and contributing resources and expertise to support Queensland Health to build on our paediatric sepsis research. This co-investment approach enables us to extend the impact of our existing evidence base, strengthen cross-agency collaboration and accelerate improvements in early identification and response to paediatric sepsis.

### Internally-led research we undertake

Conducting research in-house gives the Commission full control over scope, methodology and timelines, ensuring alignment with our strategic priorities and enabling agile responses to emerging issues. This autonomy supports timely, relevant and actionable outcomes.

However, it is the most resource-intensive model and should be used selectively, where the research is niche or tightly scoped and can be delivered without impacting core work, or where:

- the work involves sensitive or confidential information (e.g. child death or abuse case material)
- there is a clear gap in the existing evidence base that we are uniquely positioned to address
- outcomes are time-critical and require direct oversight to ensure prompt delivery.

#### Our approach

Adopt an 'internal as last' methodology, whereby external research partnerships, commissioned projects and sector collaborations are explored and prioritised before allocating internal resources. This approach ensures the evidence base expands efficiently and focuses our in-house capability on areas where the Commission holds unique authority, data or strategic advantage.

#### Our current work

Eg. The *Safer Pathways Through Childhood Action Plan* includes seven internally led research projects to strengthen the evidence base for child death prevention and drive system reform. We are reimagining delivery by exploring and implementing innovative, sustainable approaches, including strategic partnerships, co-design and alternative models. This shift will ensure the Plan remains ambitious, focused and achievable, while maximising impact.