

Queensland Family and Child Commission

Strategic Plan

2022–2026



*Every
Queensland child
is loved, respected
and has their
rights upheld*



Queensland
Family & Child
Commission





The Queensland Family and Child Commission acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians across the lands, seas and skies where 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 Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the important role played by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and recognise their right to self-determination, and the need for community-led approaches to support healing and strengthen resilience.



About the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) and this document

The QFCC is a statutory body of the Queensland Government. Its purpose is to influence change that improves the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families. Under the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, the QFCC has been charged by government to review and improve the systems that protect and safeguard Queensland's children. The QFCC also hosts the Child Death Review Board which undertakes system reviews and makes recommendations for systemic improvement following the death of a child connected to the child protection system.



The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If you have difficulty understanding this report, you can contact Translating and Interpreting Service National on 13 14 50 to arrange for an interpreter to effectively explain it to you. Local call charges apply if calling within Australia; higher rates apply from mobile phones and payphones.

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Message from the Commissioners



We are pleased to present the Queensland Family and Child Commission Strategic Plan 2022–2026.

We are a commission that can make an immense impact on the lives of Queensland’s children and their families. We have been charged by government with significant responsibilities to review and improve the systems that protect our children and their families.

Our focus is on influencing system improvements. We do this by assessing performance, collaborating for impact, and amplifying the voices of Queensland’s children and their families. This strategic plan outlines how we will concentrate our efforts to ensure we deliver outcomes for Queensland. It is a plan that will unite our work, relationships and resources under a common vision, values and shared goals.

The success of this strategic plan will be in its implementation, including the way we engage with our partners across government, non-government and community sectors. Enhancing our performance and effectiveness requires us to set priorities and allocate our resources in a way that maximises our impact.

While the majority of children in Queensland are safe, happy and thriving within their families and communities, we know that this is not the experience of all young people. We have a particular responsibility to raise awareness and advocate for those children and young people who experience inequity, injustice and marginalisation. For this reason, we will target our efforts to redress inequity for children, young people and their families who are experiencing vulnerability.

We know that prevention and early intervention are the key ingredients for a system that improves life outcomes. We consequently consider the holistic wellbeing of families in our approach, and we pay particular attention to the gaps between statutory systems, and those created by a lack of access to coordinated universal and targeted supports.

The disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in our statutory systems and across multiple indicators of disadvantage is unacceptable. We are committed to making active efforts to redress the inequity experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families in Queensland. We believe that families are strengthened by inclusive, safe, and thriving communities where respect for culture and the rights of children is at the centre.

Our plan is deliberately ambitious. It is designed to stretch and strengthen our collective efforts to achieve outcomes that matter for children, young people, their families and Queensland. We have a large and important role, and this strategic plan will direct our efforts to ensure we make a difference.



Luke Twyford
Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child
Commission



Natalie Lewis
Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child
Commission

Introduction



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

The *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* states that our responsibilities are to:

1. promote the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people;
2. promote and advocate for the responsibility of families and communities to protect and care for children and young people; and
3. improve the child protection system.

Our role is to influence systemic change to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by driving accountability, raising awareness, amplifying voices and advocating for change.

The QFCC has a vision that **every Queensland child is loved, respected and has their rights upheld**. We believe that for Queensland to achieve this vision, we need a future where:

1. Queensland has a world-class system for protecting the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and their families
2. Queensland has an awareness of the issues experienced by children and their families and supports solutions to address them
3. Queensland acts on the views of children and their families
4. there is shared leadership for the rights, safety and wellbeing of children across Queensland
5. Queensland has an effective and respected family and child commission.

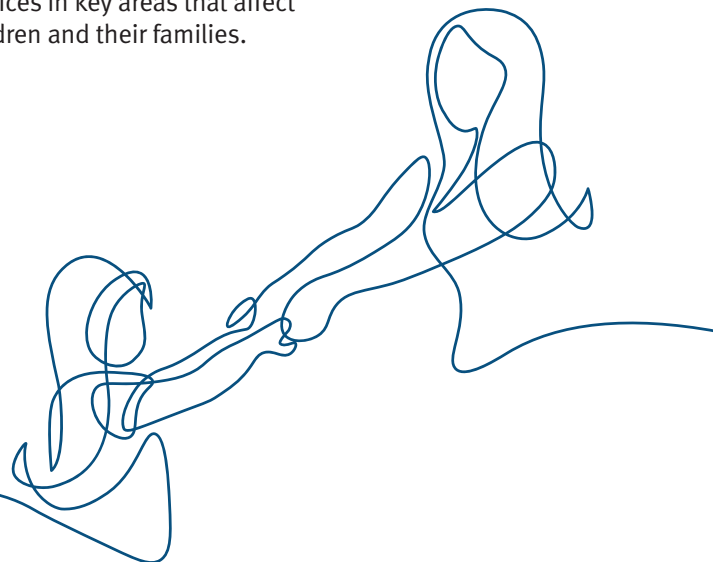
This strategic plan is built on 5 objectives that align with these aspirations. Each objective outlines strategic priorities that will enable our success. Our 5 objectives are to:

1. ensure systems are accountable for the impact they have on children and families
2. raise awareness and advocate for children and their families
3. empower children and their families to influence decisions that affect their lives
4. support, connect and collaborate with organisations that advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children
5. build our capacity, capability and culture to achieve our vision.

Across each of these 5 objectives, the QFCC has explicit commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families and advancing the rights of children. These 2 commitments are prominent in everything we do.

Alignment with government objectives

We have a track record of drawing attention to issues regarding child wellbeing; raising community awareness; and encouraging positive action by governments, service providers and others. Our strategies and activities support the government's 'Backing our frontline services' objective to deliver world-class services in key areas that affect children and their families.



Our context

There are **1.4 million** children and young people in Queensland.

Across any given 12 months in Queensland, approximately:

268,000

experience housing stress

.....

7,300

live in overcrowded housing

.....

35,000

live in public or social housing

.....

208,000

have a hospital admission

.....

25,000

access mental health services

80,000

are subject to a report to the child safety system

.....

10,000

live in the 'out-of-home care' system

.....

10,000

are named as a 'protected child' in a domestic violence order

.....

6,500

are found to have been neglected, harmed or in need of protection

.....

1,500

live in residential care



130,000

use the school transport assistance scheme

.....

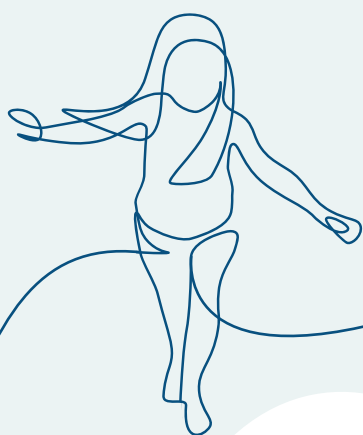
15,000

start school with an observable developmental delay or vulnerability

.....

4,000

appeared in court for a youth justice matter



64,000

babies
are born

400

children and young people die

This includes:

30 in fatal traffic crashes

10 in fatal drowning events

30 who take their own life

Vision

*Every Queensland child
is loved, respected
and has their rights upheld*

Objectives

1

Ensure systems are accountable for the impact they have on children and families

2

Raise awareness and advocate for children and their families

3

Empower children and their families to influence decisions that affect their lives

4

Support, connect and collaborate with organisations that advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children

5

Build our capacity, capability and culture to achieve our vision

Commitments

We are committed to
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
children and their families.



We are committed to
advancing the rights of children.



Purpose

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



Values

Be respectful and inclusive

- We value diversity, and respect each other and the public.
- We embed cultural safety in our workplace, decisions, interactions, and practices.
- We invest time to build respectful relationships.
- We uphold the dignity of the children and families our work relates to.

Be collaborative and engaged

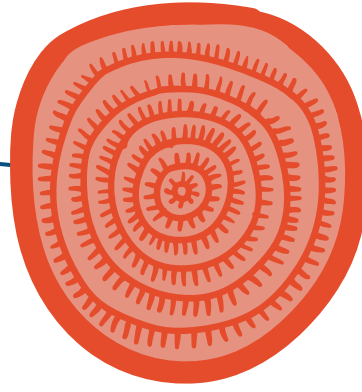
- We value the unique insights of children, young people, their families and their communities.
- We share expertise, knowledge and advice and build a common understanding.
- We work with others for holistic solutions.
- We recognise successful change will be achieved by others.

Be objective and courageous

- We apply rigour and objectivity to our work.
- We use our position and our voice responsibly and in the best interests of children and families.
- We embrace change and new ideas and are agile in response to emerging issues.

Demonstrate a commitment to excellence

- We are driven by a determination to achieve meaningful and measurable outcomes.
- We take an evidence-based approach, grounded in best practice.
- We have a clear focus on what matters and how we create value.
- We invest in our workforce and encourage innovation.



Our explicit commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families



The QFCC 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 also recognise the significant disparities and challenges experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. First Nations children and young people continue to be disproportionately represented in statutory child protection and youth justice systems in Queensland and across Australia. The QFCC is committed to identifying and highlighting the dynamics and drivers of this over-representation, to helping others understand and address the causes and situational influences.

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.

Strategic priorities

- Conduct systemic reviews to increase our understanding of the dynamics and drivers of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in statutory systems and recommend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led solutions.
- Advocate to ensure the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are free of systemic racism.
- Promote the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and community-controlled organisations, and advocate for their full participation and control in decisions – to ensure the best interests of every child are met.
- Highlight the voices, experiences and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families as part of our business-as-usual approach.
- Consult with the appropriate cultural authority, at each stage of research, development and production, when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.
- Actively seek to increase our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce across all functional areas.
- Strengthen our organisational culture by embedding approaches that help staff partner with, and respond to the views and voices of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Our explicit commitment to advancing the rights of children



The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) charter recognises that children need special protection. The rights set out in the charter are the minimum entitlements and freedoms that should be respected by everyone. We will give practical effect to the UNCRC through raising awareness, undertaking targeted advocacy and promoting accountability for our shared obligation to uphold the rights of children and young people in Queensland.

The QFCC is committed to leading a child rights agenda in Queensland and assisting others to integrate a child rights approach into everything they do. A rights-based approach recognises that all rights are underpinned by the following 4 key principles:

1. devotion to the best interests of the child
2. the right to life, survival and development
3. respect for the views of the child
4. non-discrimination.

We will continue to keep children’s rights at the centre of our approach, and we will work with governments and the non-government sector to do the same. To achieve this, we will support the development of a comprehensive framework for Queensland legislation, policy and programs to promote and protect the rights of children and young people.

Strategic priorities

- Regularly monitor and report on children’s equitable enjoyment of their rights across Queensland.
- Increase the awareness of the rights of children, and the responsibility of everyone to promote and protect those rights.
- Highlight the voices, experiences and stories of children and families whose rights have been breached.
- Build a culture of everyday accountability for the rights of children and young people across government portfolios.
- Translate child rights principles into practice guidance for other organisations.
- Build expertise in child rights through our recruitment, orientation, development and training practices.
- Provide leadership in rights affirming practice and adherence to our obligations under the *Queensland Human Rights Act 2019*.

Objective

1

Ensure systems are accountable for the impact they have on children and families

Accountability is essential within any system that impacts on vulnerable populations. This is particularly true when decisions about the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families are made. Our work assures the community that government agencies fulfil their responsibilities.

The QFCC raises accountability by overseeing and publicly reporting on system performance. We do this in a variety of ways, including data collection and analysis and through our reviews and evaluations. Using our child death register we improve our own and others' understanding of risk factors and support the development of new policies and practices to reduce child deaths in Queensland. Similarly, the intent of our oversight function is to identify changes to laws, policies, programs and services that can improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. By bringing together evidence, the experiences of children and young people, and the insights of stakeholders, we produce high-impact analysis and evaluations of system performance.



Strategic priorities

- Identify and monitor emerging trends and issues through analysis, consultation, evaluation, audit and review.
- Publish an oversight forward work plan to ensure transparency around our work.
- Provide high-quality advice about improving the performance of the systems impacting children, young people and their families.
- Monitor the implementation of reforms, recommendations and government initiatives.



Conduct systemic reviews to increase our understanding of the dynamics and drivers of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in statutory systems and recommend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led solutions.



Regularly monitor and report on children's equitable enjoyment of their rights across Queensland.

Success indicators

We will know we have successfully achieved this objective when QFCC products create the impetus for change. We will know that we are on the right track when partners engage in the design and delivery of our review processes, and when we are invited to assist with the implementation of our system-focused recommendations.

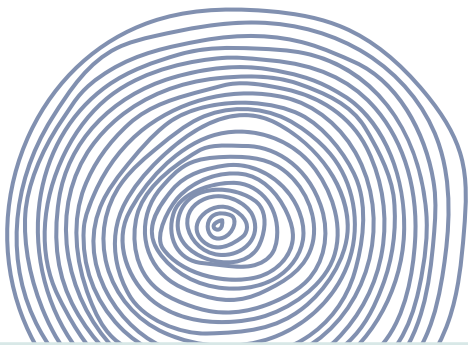
Objective

2

Raise awareness and advocate for children and their families

The QFCC provides leadership on matters that impact on the safety, rights and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families. We do this by raising awareness and advocating for them. We are in a unique position to do this, with a legislated mandate and a system-level perspective. We use this to deliver objective analysis and advice that supports government decision making and system improvement.

We use different forums and channels across the Queensland community to raise awareness and influence change. We contribute ideas and solutions in policy areas that contribute to child and family wellbeing. Our advice is used to influence legislation, policies and practices to improve outcomes for Queensland's children, young people and families.



Success indicators

We will know we have successfully achieved this objective when government seeks our advice, we are actively engaged in social policy design, and our advocacy leads to sustained improvements.

Strategic priorities

- Gather insights and use evidence to form proactive positions and engage in social policy discussions across government.
- Use diverse methods to effectively communicate the issues impacting on children to government, other agencies and the community.
- Provide independent, accurate and actionable intelligence to Queensland's parliament and government decision makers.
- Provide leadership, information and resources to guide and support organisations and the community.



Advocate to ensure the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are free of systemic racism.

Promote the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and community-controlled organisations and advocate for their full participation and control in decisions – to ensure the best interests of every child are met.



Increase the awareness of the rights of children, and the responsibility of everyone to protect those rights.

Objective

3

Empower children, young people and their families to influence decisions that affect their lives

Children and young people have a significant role to play in shaping future economic, social and cultural success across Queensland. We believe that all children and families have the right to participate in decision making on issues that affect them. We know that successful outcomes for children are more likely to be delivered when decisions about their lives involve them and the people significant to them (such as parents, siblings, carers, extended family and friends).

Empowering children and families to share their stories as part of our work is critical – both to ensure the accuracy and integrity of our work, and to indicate to others that they are not alone in their experiences. To deliver this, we seek to amplify the voices of Queensland children and their families through all our work.



Strategic priorities

- Amplify the perspectives and lived experience of Queensland children and their families, especially those experiencing inequity, vulnerability or marginalisation.
- Provide children and families with meaningful opportunities to influence systemic change and advocate for action.
- Assist others to build their capability to consult with, and act on the views and experiences of, children.
- Increase engagement by using the communication approaches children and their families prefer.
- Actively celebrate and promote the achievements and contributions of young Queenslanders and their families.



Highlight the voices, experiences and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families as part of our business-as-usual approach.



Highlight the voices, experiences and stories of children and families whose rights have been breached.

Success indicators

We will know we have successfully achieved this objective when the system actively engages with children and families as decision makers and considers their rights and interests in a systemic way, and when children and young people are given opportunities to influence key decision makers on the effectiveness of systems in protecting and promoting their rights, interests and needs.

Objective

4

Support, connect and collaborate with organisations that advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children

Improving child and family wellbeing throughout Queensland requires focus and effort that reaches across individual systems and portfolios.

All stakeholders must work collaboratively to ensure a comprehensive and coherent approach to legislation, policy, funding and service delivery that benefits Queensland's children and families.

The QFCC has a unique position that can bring together diverse voices to contribute to key issues that impact on the wellbeing of children and their families. We work with other statutory agencies, peak bodies and our counterparts in other jurisdictions to achieve common outcomes and collective benefits. By employing a collaborative approach, we can maximise our impact and assist others to achieve common goals.

Success indicators

We will know we have successfully achieved this objective when:

- agencies and entities with an interest in the safety and wellbeing of children work together to deliver improved outcomes
- relevant agencies proactively contribute to how our reviews are scoped and our recommendations are drafted
- community reference groups provide advice and local solutions to issues relating to child safety and wellbeing.

Strategic priorities

- Extend our visibility and influence to shape child-related laws, policies, programs and systems.
- Drive collaboration and coordination by bringing stakeholders together, and co-designing shared approaches.
- Engage with service providers and community groups to enhance our understanding, oversight and influence.
- Publish an advocacy agenda that engages partners in our work, in order to deliver shared goals.



Consult with the appropriate cultural authority, at each stage of research, development and production, when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.



Build a culture of everyday accountability for the rights of children and young people across government portfolios.

Translate child rights principles into practice guidance for other organisations.

Objective

5

Build our capacity, capability and culture to achieve our vision

To grow our influence we will maintain a culture of continuous improvement by making ongoing improvements to our performance, processes, governance and internal systems, with the aim of achieving operational excellence.

We understand the importance of having a diverse and inclusive workplace culture, and we also understand the need to foster excellence and expertise in our staff. With our internal and external stakeholders, we lead by example and operate in accordance with the standards we expect of others.



Success indicators

We will know we have successfully achieved this objective when we are an employer of choice with a healthy, engaged and empowered workforce that is skilled and accountable for the delivery of key functions and values the lived experience of individuals.

We will be informed by external reviews of our performance, and proactively contribute to the monitoring and oversight functions that apply to us.

Strategic priorities

- Invest in the development, wellbeing and capability of our staff.
- Continuously improve our organisational governance, systems, structures and processes.
- Implement a strategic workforce plan that enables us to attract, retain and develop a skilled, diverse and inclusive workforce that is reflective of the community we serve.
- Integrate our operations to improve efficiency and streamline practices.
- Enhance our internal and external communication to ensure we consistently and comprehensively share our achievements and demonstrate our value.



Actively seek to increase our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce across all functional areas.

Strengthen our organisational culture by embedding approaches that help staff partner with, and respond to the views and voices of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Build expertise in child rights through our recruitment, orientation, development and training practices.

Provide leadership in rights-affirming practice and adherence to our obligations under the *Queensland Human Rights Act 2019*.

Implementation and accountability



The QFCC has clear expectations of performance, accountability and being an evidence-based and learning organisation. However, measuring our impact is complex. The ultimate results of our projects and programs are often achieved over long periods of time. Given our role is collaborative, our success can be challenging to measure, as the outcomes of our work are often delivered by others.

When the strategic priorities and commitments within this plan are successfully delivered over the next 4 years, there will be a perceivable change in the systems that protect and uphold the safety, rights and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families.

To successfully deliver on this plan, we must:

- extend our capability and influence through greater co-design, partnership and collaboration
- expand our engagement with young Queenslanders and families, from all backgrounds and geographical locations to encourage their involvement in decisions affecting their lives
- demonstrate that the QFCC is an authoritative source of advice and expertise on issues impacting children and young people and their families
- engage with non-government service providers to enhance our oversight of the child and family support system
- overcome the strategic risks that may limit our ability to influence change, including:
 - the quality of our relationships and reputation
 - our ability to access quality data and evidence
 - our ability to engage with, and collect the views of, Queensland's children and their families.

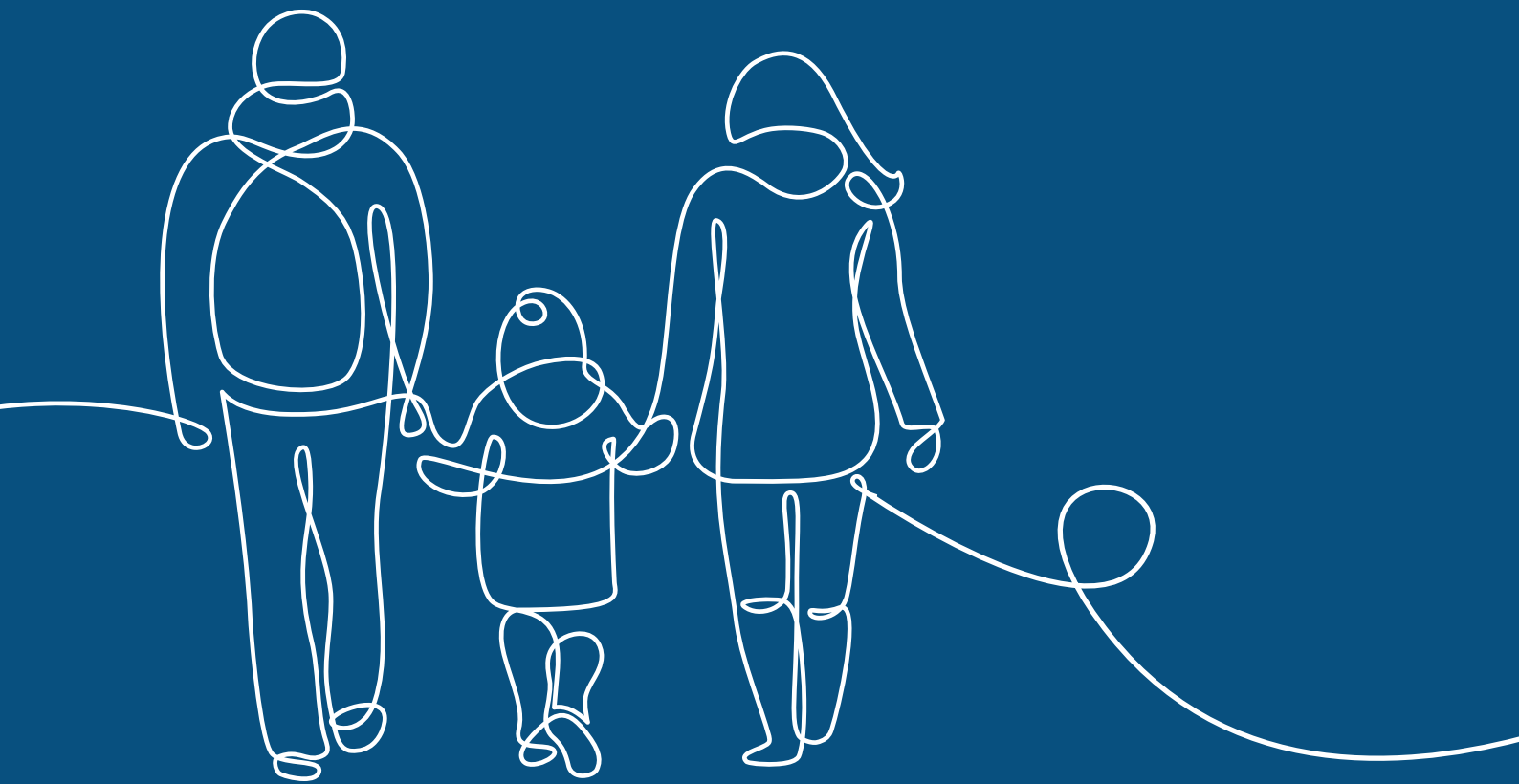
This strategic plan is deliberately ambitious in capturing the unique role and functions of the QFCC. To continuously improve our performance and ensure accountability, we will:

- develop annual work plans that prioritise and detail the specific projects that will achieve our strategic objectives
- publicly report against this strategic plan within our annual report and throughout the year
- focus on continuous improvement, including by engaging clients, staff and stakeholders in feedback
- oversee and manage our strategic direction through our Executive Leadership Board
- hold ourselves accountable for the performance of our deliverables
- use clear reporting as a mechanism for stakeholders to learn about and contribute to our improvement efforts.

To find out more

Visit www.qfcc.qld.gov.au





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