



Queensland  
Family & Child  
Commission

2023–2024

# Highlights

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





The Queensland Family and Child Commission acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians across the lands, seas and skies on which we walk, live and work.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique peoples, with their own rich and distinct cultures, strengths and knowledge. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across Queensland and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

## Commissioners' introduction

This has been a significant and productive year for the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC). We have worked to influence change in the child and family wellbeing systems so that every Queensland child is loved, respected and has their rights upheld.

This year, we have made a concerted effort to achieve this by investing in our sector partnerships and enhancing our community engagement. We have travelled extensively throughout the year to gain a greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing children, families, communities, frontline workers and governments. This has ensured our advice remains contemporary and is based on evidence and the lived experiences of Queenslanders.

Throughout 2023–2024 our partnerships with government agencies, sector organisations and community stakeholders have continued to grow. They have been vital in driving positive change and ensuring that our initiatives have a lasting impact. We acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the employees of the QFCC and Youth Advocates. Their commitment to our vision has been instrumental in making this year a remarkably impactful one.

### The Queensland Government announced significant positive change influenced by work conducted by the QFCC, including:

- legislative reform focussed on the Blue Card Scheme (*Thematic Analysis of the Blue Card Scheme*)
- increased access to free kindy, particularly for families with vulnerabilities (*Life Trajectories Report*)
- improved reporting to oversight bodies on watch houses (*Examination of Extended Stay in Watch Houses Report*)
- focussed investment on First Nations housing (*Child Rights Report 2023* and *Youth Summit 2023 Report*)
- the establishment of a peak body for youth justice (*Child Rights Report 2023*)
- funding for 85 behaviour specialists in 299 primary schools (*Child Death Review Board Annual Report 2022–23*)
- \$65 million dedicated to providing more sustained health home visiting and antenatal support and \$11.09 million for essentials including access to the culturally responsive and evidence-based Pēpi-Pod® Program (*Child Death Review Board Annual Report 2022–23* and *Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) Research Report*)
- the review of the home education accreditation scheme (*Child Death Review Board Annual Report 2022–23*)
- dedicated funding to increase housing and support services for young mothers, babies and families (*Parenting as a Young Person report*)
- the introduction of the *Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024* (submission on the review of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*)
- a children's plan for Queensland with clear priorities and investment – delivered through Putting Queensland Kids First (*Child Rights Report 2023*)
- \$15 million for a dedicated partnership fund for non-government organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (*First Nations Children's Report 2023* and *Child Death Review Board Annual Report 2022–23 Recommendations 1 and 2*)



**Luke Twyford**  
Principal Commissioner

**Natalie Lewis**  
Commissioner

# A snapshot of 2023–2024



**32** formal submissions were made to state, federal and international reviews and inquiries.

The voices of over **4600** Queenslanders were collected through a range of engagement and advocacy activities.

**14** oversight reviews were completed and provided significant insight into statutory child protection systems and opportunities to influence systemic change.

The details of **422** child deaths were recorded in the Child Death Register.

The Child Death Review Board (the Board) reviewed **70** deaths of children known to the child protection system.

More than **150** professionals participated in the Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention conference we hosted.

Under section 35 of our legislation, we made **13** requests for information.

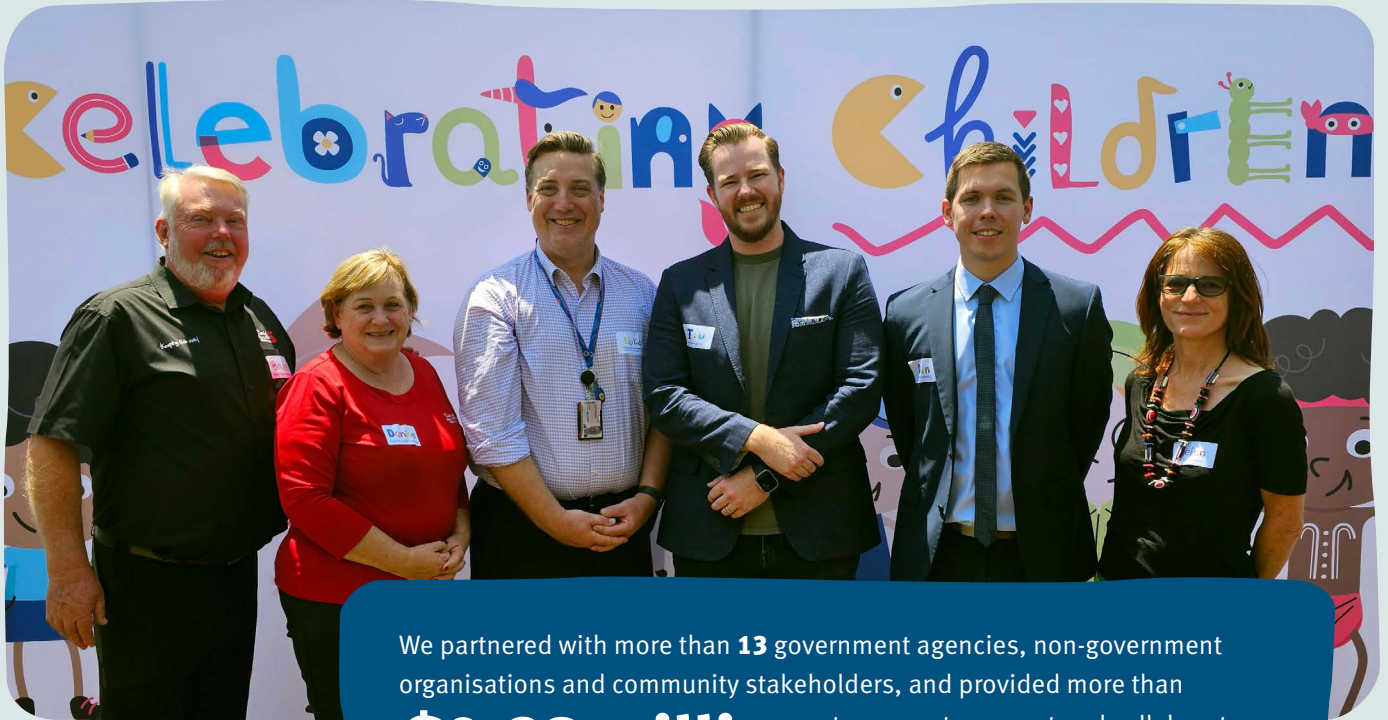
**2385**

**media report features**

a **293 per cent** increase from the previous year.

In 2023–2024, the QFCC has made a total of 20 recommendations for improvements to systems that impact the wellbeing of Queensland children, young people, and their families, and an additional 40 explicit expectations.





We partnered with more than **13** government agencies, non-government organisations and community stakeholders, and provided more than **\$0.98 million** to support, connect and collaborate with organisations to advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children. This represents 8% of our original 2023—2024 budget.



## Our why

We are a Commission focussed on Queensland's most precious resources – its children and families. Currently, there are more than 5.5 million people living in Queensland. There are 1.5 million families living in Queensland. Approximately 30 per cent of Queenslanders are under the age of 25, and eight per cent identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. In the past 12 months, the number of Queensland children and young people aged 0 to 24 years has increased two per cent to around 1.7 million, of which:

## Our people

Our workforce is comprised 65.68 full time equivalent staff with a total staff headcount of 80. QFCC employees come from a wide range of professional backgrounds – academia, law, media and communications, frontline youth justice, frontline child protection, clinical nursing, non-government organisations and advocacy.

As a micro-agency with less than 100 employees, the QFCC experiences the benefits and challenges of a small organisation. Our size and scale places pressure on many functions, staffed by one or two experts, whose broad responsibilities would be covered by hundreds of employees in a department. In addition, the nature of our review and evaluation requires significant agility and attention as we shift across the many portfolios that impact on the lives of children and families. We are also aware that our child death-related work has the potential to impact staff wellbeing.

To manage these complex workplace issues we seek partnerships, utilise short-term temporary positions, engage graduates and academic placements.

**1,200,000** have a grownup who listens to them and helps when they are upset

**229,300** have a disability

**150,000** access Medicare-funded psychological services

**15,000** start school with a developmental delay or vulnerability

**265,000** will attend school less than 90 per cent of the time

**43,000** are suspended or excluded from school

**42,000** live in public or social housing

**86,000** are subject to a report to the child safety system

**7000** are found to have been neglected, harmed or in need of protection

**13,000** are in state care

**3300** were convicted in a Queensland court.





## Our commitment to

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families

The QFCC recognises the rich and resilient culture, grounded in strong connection to community, family and Country, that continues to sustain and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. We are determined to see all children have access to family, community, and culture, with opportunities to develop a strong cultural identity.

In line with this commitment, Commissioner Lewis and the First Nations and Child Rights Advocacy (FNCRA) team led the following initiatives in 2023–2024:

### First Nations Queensland Consultative Body engagement and consultation project

The FNCRA team was commissioned by the Department of Education (DoE) to lead the First Nations Queensland Consultative Body engagement and consultation project. The purpose of the project was to inform the establishment of an independent, community-led and managed, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Education, Education and Training Consultative Body.

A total of 812 participants were engaged through these partnerships including children, parents, guardians, First Nations staff, Elders, and community members. Additionally, 136 children, 57 young people and 224 parents and guardians responded to the online survey, achieving a 98 per cent completion rate.

We heard that schooling is valued within all communities. We heard the importance of having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in schools, and that sport provides motivation for young people. We also heard about what is not currently working, including a lack of further education and employment opportunities in rural and remote areas, and a lack of trauma-informed practices used by teachers. Challenges regarding school attendance, teacher cultural competencies, support for English as a Second Language and bullying were also shared.

Throughout the consultation, First Nations children and young people expressed deep motivation to succeed in their education and asserted that a consultative body that centres and truly represents First Nations views and experiences was integral to achieving this. Once established, the consultative body will support shared decision-making between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and provide an opportunity for representation in local, regional, state and national forums. We know enabling self-determination, shared decision-making and active participation for First Nations people are needed if we are serious about Closing the Gap for First Nations peoples.



### A model for empowering truth-telling

Recognising the importance of empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to lead these conversations within community, we funded 19 organisations including First Nations Community Controlled organisations from around Queensland to host consultations, workshops and interviews within their communities. Information on the experiences and aspirations of First Nations students, and their expectations of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood, Education and Training Consultative Body, was reported back to the QFCC.

The organisations that participated had established and trusted relationships within their communities and were able to draw on these existing connections to consult in environments that were culturally safe and inclusive, and enabled community to participate in genuine truth-telling. This also provided an opportunity for organisations to showcase place-based initiatives that support First Nations students and how they function in a practical sense. Participating organisations advised that this process created a safer and more trusting environment which enabled them to collect rich data and provide positive experiences for participants.



## Thematic analysis of provisionally approved kinship carers who receive a subsequent Blue Card negative notice

This report examined issues relating to the impact of the Blue Card system on kinship carers that were consistently raised in engagements with these service providers and departmental officers. The report found that the Blue Card scheme’s focus on employment suitability, rather than suitability to care for kin, gave limited consideration to the child’s best interests. Instead, the scheme is continuing to perpetrate the displacement of children away from their kin, culture and Country.



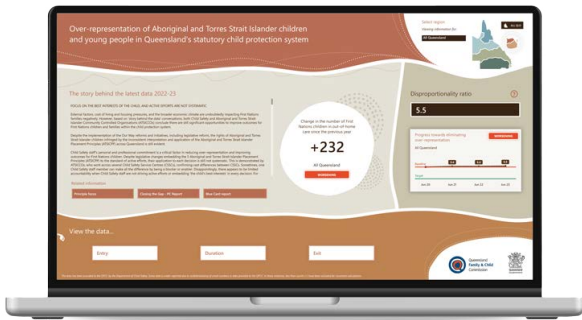
**We made two recommendations** to government calling for the removal of the requirement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers to hold a Blue Card while retaining the safeguard provided by the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services’ (the Department) existing assessment and approval process.



### Spotlight on impact

On 12 June 2024, the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024* was introduced to Parliament. The reforms, including the removal of Blue Card requirements for kinship carers, was noted in the Minister’s introductory speech as having ‘origins’ to the QFCC’s Blue Card report, and as being in response to QFCC’s recommendations dating back to 2017. The Bill directly responds to our report that detailed the limitations of the Blue Card scheme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families seeking to care for kin. Legislation is expected to pass in 2025.





## Principle Focus Dashboard

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to be removed from their parents and placed in out-of-home care (OOHC) at rates significantly greater than non-Indigenous children.

This year we publicly launched the Principle Focus dashboard monitoring over-representation statewide and regionally. Each region has a 'story behind the data' that identifies the key barriers to reducing over-representation, highlights promising practices, and gives localised context to the data.

The data will be updated quarterly, with support from the Department and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, and aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of over-representation, transparency and promote clear accountability regarding addressing this critical systemic issue.

The dashboard enables communities and partners to track progress towards eliminating over-representation and advocate for the continued implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP).

The findings and ongoing monitoring will assist in meeting the state's performance reporting obligations under Closing the Gap and the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*, but importantly provide clear advice to government as to what additional efforts and potential reforms are required to achieve the intended outcome of the *Our Way Strategy*. It also aligns with the Productivity Commission's recommendations in its review of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, specifically around strengthening accountability.

## First Nations Children's Report

In September 2023, the QFCC released its inaugural *First Nations Children's Report* which showcases the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, who are thriving despite the challenges of structural racism and the impacts of colonialism. The report demonstrates the strength and resilience of First Nations children, their families and communities, and shows the positive outcomes that are possible when their rights are upheld. The report is part of the QFCC's commitment to truth-telling, a fundamental component of the Queensland Government's *Path to Treaty Act 2023*, which acknowledges the adverse effects of colonisation on First Nations peoples.



## Hymba Yumba's Year 13 trial

The QFCC supported Hymba Yumba Independent School to implement the first year of its innovative Year 13 Program. The program supports students as they transition from school into their chosen education, training and employment pathways. The program is the first of its kind for First Nations students and their families in Queensland and could be the benchmark for future implementation across Queensland schools. The QFCC is supporting Hymba Yumba to evaluate the first year of the initiative and to use this data as the basis for additional funding from other sources.



## Our commitment to Advancing the rights of children

The QFCC is committed to leading a child rights agenda in Queensland and assisting others to integrate a child rights approach in everything they do. We strive to uphold the four core principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) through our work. In 2023–2024, we delivered the following work:

### Queensland Child Rights Report 2023

The QFCC's inaugural *Queensland Child Rights Report 2023* details how Queensland Government agencies are interpreting and implementing the UNCRC in policy, practice and legislation. It brings transparency and accountability to children's rights in Queensland and identifies opportunities for children and their rights to be centred in all decisions that impact their lives. The report holds significant value for children and young people who experience inequity, injustice and marginalisation.



The report analysed child rights issues relating to; the youth justice system; children's civil rights and freedoms; violence against children; the child protection system; disability, health and welfare; and, education and play.

It highlights Queensland's achievements in upholding children's rights, including enacting the *Queensland Human Rights Act 2019*, expressing a commitment to First Nations peoples through the *Path to Treaty Act 2023*, and action to address gender-based violence through the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce.

### Children's Week 2023

Children's Week is a national celebration of childhood and children's rights. It creates opportunities to advocate and build awareness of children's rights throughout Queensland and celebrates the talents and abilities of all children.

We fund Children's Rights Queensland (CRQ) to support and deliver on the Children's Week initiative. This includes educational campaigns and projects aimed at embedding a child rights agenda across grassroots organisations, families and frontline delivery services in Queensland. In 2023, the week was held between 21–29 October and celebrated UNCRC Article 31 – Children have the right to relax, play and take part in activities they enjoy.

This year, a children's rights song, "I am Me", was written and a video produced in partnership with Aunty Sharron Mirii Bell. As CRQ's Lead Ambassador, Commissioner Twyford presented awards to celebrate and honour the outstanding contributions, initiatives, and advocacy undertaken by young people and organisations.

### Child Rights Dialogues

To explore the value and practical application of the UNCRC across different contexts, we have hosted a series of Child Rights Dialogues. In August 2023 we hosted the second Dialogue focussed on the release of the *Queensland Child Rights Report 2023*. The event was well attended with participants hearing directly from child rights experts Professor John Tobin (University of Melbourne) and James McDougall (Australian Child Rights Taskforce), along with Commissioner Lewis and QFCC staff.



#### Spotlight on impact

As part of its spotlight on youth justice in Queensland, the QFCC's *Child Rights Report 2023* advocated for the establishment of a youth justice peak body to strengthen the sector's advocacy and representation.

In May 2024, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Child Protection Peak was appointed as the inaugural co-ordinator of the youth justice peak body. The ministerial statement directly referenced the QFCC's *Child Rights Report 2023*.



**The QFCC is a statutory body established by the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* to:**

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

**Our work is guided by our five strategic objectives:**

1. Ensuring systems are accountable for the impact they have on children and families
2. Raising awareness and advocating for children and their families
3. Empowering children, young people and their families to influence decisions that affect their lives
4. Supporting, connecting and collaborating with organisations that advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children
5. Building our capacity and culture to achieve our vision.

## 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. 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.

Under section 9 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, the QFCC has the functions to:

- provide oversight of the child protection system
- promote and advocate for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, particularly children in need of protection or in the youth justice system
- analyse and evaluate at a systemic level, policies and practices relevant to the child protection system and the performance of relevant agencies in delivering services.

### Oversight reviews

We scan and analyse what is known about an issue and the broader system policy, program, practice and reform environment. To achieve this we gather, review and analyse legislation, policies, procedures, practices, literature, quantitative data and interjurisdictional models to understand the operating environment (including improvements underway) and intended outcomes for children and families. Engaging with young people, responsible agencies, sectors and other stakeholders to enable us to identify the causes of the issue, the impact it is having on children and families and opportunities for improvement.

We advise agencies, sectors and stakeholders about issues scheduled for review and invite and facilitate contributions and insights. We publicly report on issues scheduled for a discovery review through our *Oversight Forward Workplan*. To communicate our findings to key stakeholders, we publish to a variety of channels and embed key messages and data into issue papers, reports, submissions, correspondence and social media content.

### Examination reviews

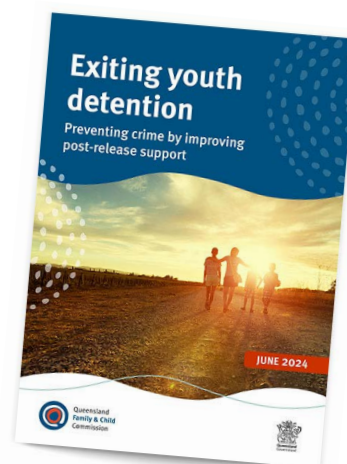
Examination reviews involve extensive research (over a three to 12-month period), including the analysis and synthesis of systemic issues to determine solutions-focused recommendations for change.

In 2023–2024 we released seven examination reviews.

### 1 Exiting youth detention: preventing crime by improving post-release support

Youth justice is an issue of strong community debate in Queensland, yet the voices of young people rarely feature in the conversation. Young people hold the truth about the circumstances that led them to offend and their views on what they need to effectively change their behaviour should be paramount in our consideration of youth justice policy.

To conduct this review, we spoke directly to 66 young people in or recently released from youth detention along with their families members, and those who work with them about what is needed for successful behaviour change. It found transition plans and rehabilitation programs are not as effective as they can be, and negative community views about young people are a disincentive for young people to change their behaviour.



### We made two recommendations

to government calling for a dedicated 12-month post-detention transition program that incorporates in-home family interventions and effective engagement in education, training and employment as part of a broader strategy to address risk factors and promotes protective factors associated with youth crime.

## 2 Who's responsible: Understanding why young people are being held longer in Queensland watch houses

In February 2023, the Office of the Public Guardian raised concerns with the QFCC regarding 13 young people who had been detained in a watch house for a period of 25 to 32 days. In response, the QFCC undertook a review of the issues contributing to extended stays in Queensland watch houses, with a specific focus on why it was occurring, and who was empowered to monitor and address the issue.

The review found that a separation of responsibilities across police, courts and youth justice means no one is directly responsible or accountable for how long a young person spends in a watch house.



### Spotlight on impact

The week following the release of the report, the Department of Youth Justice commenced providing the QFCC with daily reports on the number of young people in watch houses, and the number of days for the highest length of stay. The Queensland Police Commissioner outlined immediate plans for action in response to our recommendations including a review of engagement practices with oversight agencies. A review of the provision of data access was also undertaken to ensure agencies can effectively perform their regulatory roles.

**We made five recommendations to government calling for interdepartmental collaboration to monitor identified drivers of youth crime, formulate an action plan to reduce the length of time young people spend in watch houses, amend reporting to oversight bodies to increase transparency and establish a single point of accountability.**

## 3 Growing Up in Queensland report and dashboard

Our flagship report, Growing Up in Queensland launched in February 2024. This comprehensive resource describes the wellbeing of Queensland's 1.6 million children and young people, and their families. It uses data and case studies to present a holistic picture of their health, education, wealth, living situations, employment, culture, family circumstances, and more.

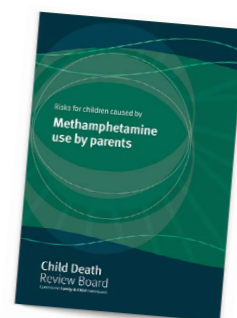
For the first time, the report was supplemented by an interactive data dashboard, Data Explorer, comprising of thousands of data points. This is the first time Queensland child, family and community wellbeing data has been presented in an interactive, multi-source platform and at regional and state levels.



## 4 Risks for children caused by methamphetamine use by parents

The Board published this paper after observing an increasing occurrence of parental methamphetamine use in child death cases it had reviewed. Of the 170 child death cases reviewed by the Board since its inception in 2020, methamphetamine use was present in almost 33 per cent of cases.

The research serves as a critical piece of awareness raising and will be shared with frontline workers to provide additional guidance on better responding to and supporting parents who use methamphetamine.



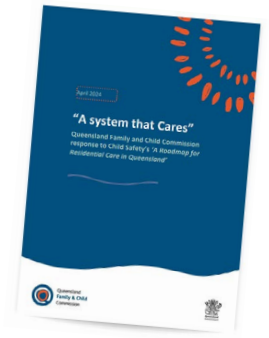
## 5 Queensland Paediatric Sepsis Mortality Study

Sepsis is a leading cause of death and disability for Queensland children, leading to more deaths in children than cancer. The QFCC was approached by Queensland Paediatric Sepsis Program (QPSP) who asked whether the QFCC could quantify and report on the number of child deaths from sepsis, using our child death data. The result was an Australian-first (and possibly world-first) population-based study to better understand the true incidence of childhood deaths from sepsis. Completed in partnership with QPSP we aimed to identify every sepsis-related child death in Queensland from 2004 to 2021.



## 6 Oversight of the Residential Care Review

Residential care is designed for teenagers whose needs mean they are unable to be in home-based care, including living with their relatives, kinship carers or foster carers. In July 2022, there were 490 children under 12 years living in residential care settings across Queensland, more than double that of 2019.



Commissioner Twyford was asked to provide independent oversight of the Department’s review of Queensland’s residential care system. We spoke with more than 200 workers, visited 16 residential care homes, and hosted workshops with young people who have experience living in residential care.

**We made five recommendations** to government calling for the improved documentation of causes of deaths, increased caregiver and community awareness of sepsis, improved recordkeeping processes and practice guidelines.

**We outlined 40 expectations** regarding the implementation of the government’s roadmap, including minimum standards to make residential care houses feel more like home, six-monthly (minimum) meetings between Minister for Child Safety and young people living in residential care and new complaints processes that empower young people living in residential care.

Our reflections on the government’s Residential Care Roadmap was called “A system that Cares” and was informed by Commission staff and 12 young people with experience living in residential care.



## 7 System review into the use of Permanent Care Orders for First Nations children

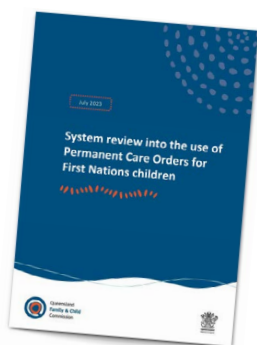
Permanent Care Orders (PCO) commenced in 2018, as part of a broader permanency framework to promote timely outcomes for children in care by providing relational, physical and legal stability and providing them a permanent home. The QFCC observed an increase in the use of PCOs during 2021–2022 and conducted a review in 2023 to examine how PCOs were being used for First Nations children to ensure orders were being granted to kin and/or First Nations kin in line with the permanency principles for First Nations children and ATSICPP.

The report found positive outcomes for First Nations children placed on PCOs, with 100 per cent made to kin in 2021–2022. Most children lived with their guardian for 2 years prior to the PCO being made, a quarter lived with their guardian for over five years, and almost 50 per cent were finalised within three months.

### Discovery reviews

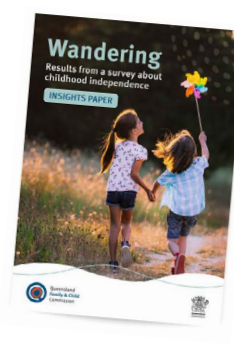
Discovery reviews are rapid in nature (a four to six week period) and consider multiple data sources as well as a mix of quantitative and qualitative data sources.

In 2023–2024 we completed five discovery reviews.



## 1 Wandering: Results from a survey about childhood independence

This one-off, online survey explored the perception that our parents and grandparents had more freedom to wander from their homes and explore their neighbourhoods without adult supervision. We learnt that children from previous generations have been allowed to wander both further and for longer periods, while differences were evident between children who lived in major cities versus those living rurally.



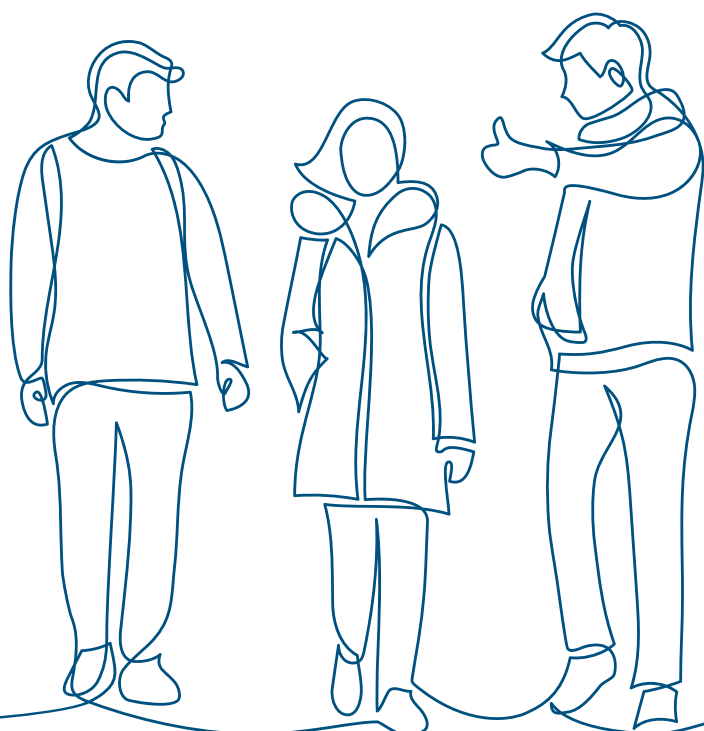
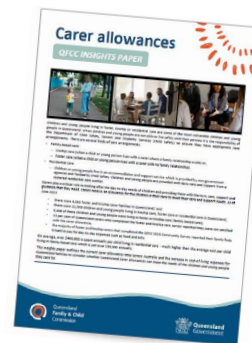
## 2 Absent from care

This paper explored the reasons why young people might leave their placement, the risks they face when absent from care, and what needs to change to ensure they are safe and supported. This paper was released alongside the *Safe and Sound in Queensland: Enhancing safety for young people who go missing from care toolkit*, funded by a partnership between Project Paradigm, PeakCare and the QFCC.



## 3 Carer allowances

To enhance our understanding of the demand of, and forecast analysis for, the foster and residential care systems, and to inform our strategic advice on the Residential Care Roadmap, the QFCC published the Carer allowances insight paper. This paper outlines the current carer allowance rates across Australia and the increase in cost-of-living expenses for Queensland families to consider whether Queensland carer allowances can meet the needs of the children and young people they care for.





#### 4 Preserving a vital system: The future of foster care

This report was published in partnership with PeakCare and The Demographics Group and presents a demographic analysis of foster carers in Queensland.

The report suggests that the co-creation of a contemporary foster care system that involves collaboration between researchers, policymakers, peak bodies, agencies, intersecting systems, carers, children and young people, and their families is the best way forward. Further opportunities for improvement include foster care related leave for Queensland public sector employees, the professionalisation of home-based care, and targeted recruitment and engagement with First Nations communities.



#### 5 Parenting as a young person: Don't underestimate us

Many young parents experience social exclusion and isolation, which can hamper their ability to parent effectively. This report describes the context of young pregnancy and parenthood, and barriers to, and enablers of, help-seeking behaviours in young parents before and after childbirth. This paper is intended to add to the evidence available on young parenting in Queensland and proposes how the services and supports available to young parents and their children can be improved.



This paper resulted from an information sharing agreement with Queensland Health, Health and Wellbeing Queensland, the Brisbane Youth Service, Youth and Family Service, Integrated Family and Youth Service and Micah Projects.



#### Spotlight on impact

The Queensland Government announced dedicated funding to increase housing and support services for young mothers, babies and families, increase health home visiting visits, and extend and expand the infant safe sleep service.

#### The crossover cohort

The issue of 'the cross-over cohort' between the youth justice system and the child protection system has received attention during both the recent Review of Residential Care in Queensland and the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee process. As part of our legislative function, we sought to understand the current number and demographics of the young people involved in both systems and requested data held by the Department of Youth Justice under section 35 of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*.

The data collected as part of this study revealed that a significant proportion of young people living in Queensland youth detention centres are currently subject to a child protection order – as at 30 June 2023, 20.7 per cent of young people living in Queensland youth detention centres (51 out of 246) were subject to both a supervised youth justice order and a child protection order. In 2023, First Nations children were almost three times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be on both child protection and youth justice orders.

The Queensland Indigenous Legal Service quoted the publication at a Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee's public hearing regarding the *Queensland Community Safety Bill 2024*.

The QFCC will continue to investigate this crossover cohort to identify trends and opportunities for advocacy, awareness and amplification.



## Monitoring and reporting on child deaths

The QFCC is responsible for maintaining and reporting on the Queensland Child Death Register, which records the deaths of all children and young people in Queensland. We use this data to guide our child death prevention activities under our *Safer pathways through childhood framework*. In 2023–2024, we undertook projects to examine child mortality and promote preventative messages.

*The Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people, Queensland, 2022–23* was tabled on 14 March 2024. The report is intended to identify risk factors in deaths that are preventable so that action can be taken by relevant stakeholders. The deaths of 448 children (revised) were registered in Queensland from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, with natural causes accounting for 73 per cent of these deaths. Transport deaths was the leading cause of non-natural causes of death (28 deaths), closely followed by suicide (20 deaths).

Deaths of children and young people	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024 (preliminary as at June 2024) <sup>1</sup>
<b>Cause of death<sup>3</sup></b>			
Natural causes (e.g. disease)	271	335	311
Transport	33	28	20
Drowning	10	10	10
Other non-intentional injury	19	7	18
Suicide	20	20	19
Fatal assault and neglect	9	6	2
Unexplained cause (SIDS and Undetermined)	42	30	8
Cause pending autopsy or coronial	6	12	34
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>448<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>422</b>
<b>Of these deaths</b>			
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	71	94	90
Non-Indigenous	339	354	332
<b>Known to the child protection system</b>			
No involvement or ongoing intervention	26	35	22
Open intake event	1	5	2
Investigation and Assessment	25	16	22
Child Protection Order	12	9	4
Open Intervention with Parental Agreement	4	5	2
Support Service Case	1	1	1
Other child protection status	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>53</b>

<sup>1</sup> By 31 October each year, the Principal Commissioner must prepare and give to the Minister a report about information contained in the register and child death prevention activities. Data reported in this report may differ from data reported in the child death annual report where further information about the classification of death becomes available.

<sup>2</sup> Revised.

<sup>3</sup> Deaths by cause of death are subject to change as new information is received.



## 2

## Raise awareness and advocate for children and their families

The QFCC provides leadership on matters that impact the safety, rights and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families. We do this by using our unique position with a legislated mandate and a system-level perspective to deliver objective analysis and advice that supports government decision making and system improvement. We also raise awareness and advocate for the safety and wellbeing of children, young people, their families and the community.

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. In 2023–2024 we contributed evidence-based advice and solutions to government and other stakeholders on a broad range of policy and legislative issues impacting the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and families.

### Providing written submissions

We contributed 32 written submissions at state, Commonwealth and international governments, on the following matters:

- **Crime, law and youth justice**, including the Inquiry into Youth Justice Reform in Queensland, *Criminal Law (Coercive Control and Affirmative Consent) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023*, Criminal Justice Legislation (Sexual Violence and Other Matters) Amendment Bill 2024, Queensland Community Safety Bill 2024, Use of separation, force and restraints, and searches of children, and the provision of health services to children held in detention centres and the *Childrens Court Amendment Bill 2024*.
- **Child protection**, including Growing Child Safe Organisations in Queensland
- **Residential care**, including Queensland Residential Care System Review
- **Domestic and family violence**, including *Domestic and Family Violence Perpetrator Strategy*
- **Health and wellbeing (including mental health)**, including Inquiry into the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2023, *Queensland Trauma Strategy 2024*, *Queensland Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024* and the *Disability Services (Restrictive Practices) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024*
- **Housing and homelessness**, including *National Housing and Homelessness Plan*
- **Online safety**, including Statutory Review of the Online Safety Act 2021; and
- **Child and youth wellbeing and engagement**, including *Putting Queensland Kids First*, *Australia's Youth Engagement Strategy* and *Understanding Sexual Behaviours Displayed by Children and Young People: National Principles and Key Terminology*.

### Providing clear advice to policy makers

We contributed evidence-based advice and solutions to government and other stakeholders on a broad range of policy and legislative issues impacting the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and families.

In 2023–2024, we provided evidence at the following Queensland Parliamentary hearings:

- **Youth Justice Reform Committee – public hearing:** On 24 November 2023, Commissioner Twyford spoke of the theory of punishment, emphasising the need to focus on rehabilitation. Commissioner Lewis spoke to the importance of community in effective youth justice reform and undertook to provide further information regarding the youth program she worked on in the USA which is just one international example of alternatives to custody that are more effective in meeting the children and young people's needs and keeping community safe.
- **Inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime – private briefing:** On 4 March 2024, Commissioner Twyford appeared as a witness, and shared learnings from his oversight of the residential care review. This transcript has been made publicly available.
- **Inquiry into the Victims' Commissioner and Sexual Violence Review Board Bill 2024 – public hearing:** On 25 March 2024, Commissioner Twyford, Commissioner Lewis and Executive Director Anne Edwards presented at the public hearing about children as victims of crime in their own right. Recommendation two of the *Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee's* report directly referenced submissions made by the QFCC.

- **Oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission – public hearing:** On 29 April 2024, Commissioner Twyford and Commissioner Lewis appeared were asked about the Commission’s work, including the oversight of the residential care review, accessibility of data from other departments to undertake oversight work and the Commission’s Raising the age of criminal responsibility issues paper.
- **Community Safety Bill 2024 – public hearing:** On 24 May 2024, Commissioner Twyford and Commissioner Lewis appeared before the committee and spoke of the need to rethink the purpose of detention, the importance of connection to community and the need for transparent accountability.

“...commend the QFCC for its continuous and impressive volume of work in raising awareness, research and advocacy regarding matters concerning Queensland children, young people, and their families.”

– Legal Affairs and Safety Committee

We also provided evidence and advice at the following inquests and hearings:

- **Inquiry into Australia’s Human Rights Framework – Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights:** On 15 August 2023, Commissioner Lewis gave evidence in support of a national Human Rights Act that fully incorporates the UNCRC, and advocated for strong protections for children and young people who do not experience the full enjoyment of their rights, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people in detention, children and young people with disabilities, and children and young people in OOHC care.
- **Inquiry into the ATSI CPP in South Australia:** On 12 October 2023, Commissioner Lewis gave evidence to the inquiry including sharing Queensland’s experience in implementing the ATSI CPP, the associated legislation and its translation into practice.
- **Coronial inquest into the deaths of Darcey-Helen Conley and Chloe-Ann Conley:** On 3 May 2024, Commissioner Twyford, in his capacity as chair of the Board, gave evidence at the inquest hearing which sought to determine the appropriateness of the response, the adequacy of the relevant policies and procedures prior to, and any action taken in response to, the deaths by Child Safety, Metro South Health and the Queensland Police Service.

## Media impact



Between May 2023 and April 2024, the QFCC featured in 2385 media reports, a 293 per cent increase from the previous year. Coverage over the period was overwhelmingly positive, with 93 per cent of all analysed mentions being positive or very positive, an increase from 89 per cent from the previous year.

## Watch house kids exposed to 'violent behaviour'

Stephanie Bennett

Queensland's overflowing youth detention centres, inefficient courts and a lack of bail options have been blamed for the staggering rise in the number of children being held in the state's watch houses.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission has conducted a months-long re-

view into the state's surging use of watch houses, with Commissioner Luke Twyford scolding a lack of oversight and accountability, saying kids in watch houses were being potentially exposed to violent and traumatic behaviour.

The review found there had already been more than 100 children held in watch houses for more than two weeks in the

second half of the year, with the number of children being held in for between five to seven days up by 78 per cent from 2019 and 2022.

Mr Twyford said while there was a "broad consensus" across the board that watch houses were not a safe place for children to be held, he was seeing "little improvement".

"Watch houses are not appropriate places to hold children, potentially exposing them to violent and anti-social adult behaviour, which is harmful, retraumatising and does not reduce the likelihood of reoffending."

"We also know that First Nations children are 21 times more likely to be held in youth detention in comparison with non-Indigenous children."

Commissioner saying more must be done to stem the scourge. Ambulances were also called more than 160 times for kids aged between just five and nine years who had self-harmed or attempted suicide in the

past financial year.

In 2022-23, 446 Queensland children aged up to 17 died – including 72 known to child safety – with suicide now the leading cause of death for children aged between 10 and 14 years for the first time.

## Kids are doing it tough

Outlook a 'worry' with children exposed to DV, bullying

Andreas Nicola

EXCLUSIVE

Only half of young Queenslanders are optimistic about their future, a third have been bullied and a shocking number have been exposed to domestic violence, a report reveals.

The Growing up in Queensland report compiled by the Queensland Family and Child Commission from a number of sources over several years details the experiences of young people across the state.

The report reveals 43.8 per cent of people aged 16-24 have been exposed to domestic and

family violence, while 11.7 per cent aged 15-19 are concerned about emotional abuse and 7.5 per cent have concerns about domestic and family violence.

It also shows the number of domestic and family violence applications lodged at the Magistrates Court where the victim was a juvenile was increasing.

QFCC chief executive Luke Twyford said the latest statistic about young Queenslanders was concerning.

"From my own personal perspective, only half of young people in Queensland are expressing optimism about their future. I think that's a worrying sign," he said.

"I want to see all Queens-

land children being loved, being safe and having a sense ... the future is bright. And so that stood out to me."

"And it aligns with some of the adolescent mental health statistics that are included later on in the report."

Mr Twyford said the fact children did not feel safe in their home was "incredibly worrying".

"We know we have high rates of domestic and family violence, but there's also external factors and a third of children saying they've experienced bullying," he said.

Mr Twyford said the report was meant to be a comprehensive resource for decision makers, researchers and gov-

ernment to decide where the money goes: "We need our community that is more acutely aware of domestic

and family violence and what we can do to prevent it. It is impacting our children. And it is an intergenerational issue."

There were also some positives from the report, with 93 per cent of four and five-year-olds enrolled in kindy, while more than 80 per cent of parents feel their neighbourhoods are good places to raise children and more than 75 per cent of students feel well supported by their teachers. "This report does say that Queensland is the positive place to grow up," Mr Twyford said.

# WORSE THAN CANCER

DATA REVEALS SUICIDE TOP KID CAUSE OF DEATH

Exclusive Stephanie Bennett

Suicide is now killing more young Queenslanders than cancer, harrowing new data has revealed, with Queensland's Family and Child

Commissioner saying more must be done to stem the scourge. Ambulances were also called more than 160 times for kids aged between just five and nine years who had self-harmed or attempted suicide in the

past financial year.

In 2022-23, 446 Queensland children aged up to 17 died – including 72 known to child safety – with suicide now the leading cause of death for children aged between 10 and 14 years for the first time.

Report P2



LUKE TWYFORD  
NEWS 10 QLD FAMILY & CHILD COMMISSION CEO



Systems not helping young people after leaving detention, new report finds

Dechlan Brennan - June 21, 2024



Long-term support system for juveniles  
BILL MCDONALD  
NEWS 10 BRISBANE  
MORNINGS 10:00 AM  
12:18



'No hope' for young crims  
LUKE TWYFORD  
NEWS 10 QLD FAMILY & CHILD COMMISSION



## Young, Black and Proud scholarships launch for 2024

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander young people can apply now for a Young, Black and Proud scholarship of up to \$5000 in the fields of arts, education and sport.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (ATSICHS) has called for young people from across Queensland to apply for the scholarship, with applications open until 16 August 2024.

Many past recipients have changed the direction of their lives with a Young, Black and Proud scholarship, providing help to pursue educational opportunities, take up a

new sport or follow their dream in the arts.

To be eligible to apply for the program, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people must be 25 years or younger, live in Queensland, be looking for support with school, university, arts or sporting dreams, and be passionate about their community.

Last year's winners included young Mabiung man Kane Munt and Kaziv Meta.

This year, \$1000, \$2000 and \$5000 scholarships were on offer.

More information on the Young, Black and Proud program is available on the QFCC website at <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/youth/young-black-proud>

## Advocates call for an end to children being kept in adult watch houses after latest shocking footage

Dechlan Brennan - July 10, 2024



## 'Ice' use high in deaths

Inquest told of shock stats

Patrick Billings

A third of child deaths reviewed by the Child Death Review Board involved the use of "ice", an inquest has heard. Board chairman Luke Twyford, who is also CEO of

the Queensland Family and Child Commission, said in the 110 cases reviewed since July 2020 methamphetamine use was prevalent or present in 33 per cent of cases. Mr Twyford was giving evidence on the final day of the inquest into the deaths of

Darcy-Helen, 2, and Chloe-Ann, 1, in a car where they had been left for hours by their drug-addicted mother Kerri-Ann Conley at Waterford West on November 23, 2019.

Mr Twyford said the board was seeing an increase in cases where ice use existed. "The extreme euphoria and the large crash cycle (of ice use) presents many different safety risks to children in the house," he said. "For infant children the highs and the lows can both contribute to parental neglect – that is children being left unsupervised, their immediate needs not being met."

"For toddlers and older children, more generally speaking, the heightened emotions and the prioritisation of drug-seeking behaviour over and above the prioritisation of parenting responsibility also has a significant safety impact on children."

Mr Twyford said the significance the drugs might play in a child's death were varied. "The cause of death might be associated but not correlated to the drug use," he said.

"So traffic accidents, drowning due to lack of supervision, certainly safe sleeping behaviours and some unexplained deaths in infancy would be part of that cohort."

"So the cause of death can occur in a variety of ways, but the drug use presents as a prioritisation of something other than the child's safety and something that detracts and reduces parental supervision."

The board conducts systemic reviews following the death of a child connected to the child protection system. The inquest has heard the Department of Child Safety received information about Conley's drug use numerous times, including that she had car accidents due to nodding while off on drugs. The response by the department to concerns raised about Conley is a key focus of the inquest, which heard evidence over five days in Brisbane this week.

It has now been adjourned to receive submissions from the parties with State Coroner Terry Ryan to deliver his findings at a later date.



NATALIE LEWIS  
QUEENSLAND FAMILY AND CHILD COMMISSION

Both QFCC Commissioners have been highly active and visible in their public appearances, attending conferences, delivering keynote speeches and using webinar presentations and social and media channels to raise community awareness of key policy, program and practice issues impacting Queensland children and families.

In addition to those already mentioned, in 2023–2024 we shared evidence and insights, and connected with stakeholders by speaking at, and participating in, conferences and panels, including:

- CREATE Foundation Conference
- Annual SNAICC Conference
- Children, Trauma and the Law Conference
- Education Roundtable
- The Association of Children’s Welfare Agencies Bi-annual International Child Protection Conference
- Free and Equal Human Rights Conference
- Q Shelter policy launch
- Children’s Health Queensland Youth Summit
- Adopt Change Thrive Conference
- Doing School Differently
- 2024 Childhood Summit
- Child Protection Practitioners Association practice paper panel session
- Safeguarding Gathering

### How to Help a Friend Pocket Guide

To support child sexual abuse prevention and education, we funded the distribution of the *Pocket Guide to Sexual Abuse: How to Help a Friend* to the value of \$20,280. Developed by Project Paradigm, the youth-friendly guide was designed to provide useful information to children aged 11 years and over.



QFCC’s funding enabled the Project Paradigm team to distribute 60,000 pocket guides to key organisations and institutions across the state, including Headspace, yourtown, Act for Kids, Life Without Barriers and Brisbane Youth Service. Distribution was far and wide, including to remote areas of Mornington Island, Palm Island, Cooktown, Aurukun, Mt Isa and Charlesville.

“ We are still getting requests coming through from a variety of agencies requesting copies, so we are currently working out how we can fulfil the ongoing need (we’ve clearly struck a chord!). Thanks so much for your support in the distribution of these guides, the feedback from frontline workers has been very, very positive indeed. ”

– Project Paradigm staff member



### Missing from Care Toolkit

In May 2024, *Safe and Sound in Queensland: Enhancing safety for children who go missing from care* was launched. The QFCC partnered with Project Paradigm and PeakCare to create a toolkit for professionals and frontline workers supporting children in OOHc who go missing. We contributed \$10,000 towards its development. The guide for professionals provides suggested actions to take when young people in OOHc go missing, including immediate steps to take, checklists, a risk assessment and safety planning. The toolkit includes a simple guide for young people with information on how to stay safe, where to get help, useful contacts, and facts about alcohol, drugs and sexual health.



3

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

The QFCC believes that all children, parents and caregivers have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. We deliver on our legislative functions by enabling and empowering children and families to tell their stories and raise their ideas and solutions.

### Youth Summit 2024

The inaugural QFCC Youth Summit was held in Brisbane on 10 and 11 April, 2024, as our way of honouring Queensland Youth Week. The summit amplified the experiences of young people aged under 25 years from across Queensland, providing a platform to voice ideas for positive change.



Thirty-eight young Queenslanders delivered compelling speeches on topics that are important to them to more than 200 attendees, including Queensland Ministers and community leaders. Charis Mullen MP opened the event, with heartfelt and considered reflection speeches delivered by Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath MP, Leeanne Enoch MP, Queensland Mental Health Commissioner Ivan Frkovic, Commissioner Twyford, Commissioner Lewis, Deputy Director-General Phillip Brooks, Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP) Convenor Michael Hogan, and Q Shelter Capacity Lead and Board member Murray Benton.

Speaker sessions centred around wellbeing themes, with some of the speeches focussed on:

- Empowering child safety through cultural transformation: a personal journey
- From classroom to community: my journey in cultivating cultural leadership
- A gateway to a better nation: challenges in regional Australia
- How spending time with your family can reduce youth crime and create safer communities
- Fairness isn't giving everyone the same, it's giving people what they need.

Speakers travelled from as far as Longreach, Rockhampton, Cairns, St George, Horn Island, Umagico and Bamaga.

“ Out of all the engagement events I have attended in my career I found this summit to be exceptional. It was a great experience and next year I am going to ensure that programs managers of my organisation attend. ”

– Sector professional

**234** total attendees



**56%** Professional / Sector

### Speaker demographics



Youngest speaker aged **11**

**44%** aged 25 and under

**10%** Identify as gender diverse



**25%** Identify as First Nations

**30%** of speakers under 18

More than **50%** from outside Greater Brisbane

## “I was raised by a checklist”

As part of our role in overseeing the Queensland Review of Residential Care, the QFCC

sponsored a forum to hear from young people with lived experience of residential care. The forum provided a space for young people to share their ideas about the improvements needed for the residential care system and to engage in solutions-mapping discussions.

The insights gained from this forum were presented in the “*I was raised by a checklist*” report, which captured young people’s views and experiences of the residential care system in Queensland. They spoke of the positives including activities, life skills training, some connection to culture and keeping safe at times. Additionally, participants mentioned that residential care was “better than being homeless” and that “having food” was another positive. We heard that:

- engagement by youth workers can make or break the experience in residential care
- policies and procedures often restrict young people from living a ‘normal’ life
- placement matching between young people and workers, as well as coresidents, would improve experiences in residential care
- children and young people need a home, not just a house
- cultural connection and expression should be encouraged and championed by residential care services.



“ There’s the same signs on the walls, the same Kmart furniture and décor - it’s familiar to you, but it’s familiar as a resi, not as a home. ”

– Young person

## Grape

In May 2023, we provided evidence to the Health and Environment Committee’s Vaping – An inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland, drawing on the views and experiences of young people we spoke with. In our submission, we advised Parliament that solutions for reducing e-cigarette used by young people would be more successful if youth-designed and youth-led.

Thereafter, the QFCC sponsored 13-year-old Queensland, Aurora, to produce Grape, a youth-led film focussed on the negative impacts of vaping. The film explores e-cigarette use among young people, aiming to dispel the myth that vaping is harmless and highlight the implications of vaping addiction. It premiered in July 2023 and a private screening held in Brisbane with key stakeholders.

The DoE has now adopted the film as part of their curriculum.





## Parent Voice

In this nation leading work, the QFCC set out to better understand how the *Charter of Rights for Parents* involved with the child protection system is being upheld for Queensland parents and carers who have interacted with the Queensland child protection system. We undertook a first of its kind survey which asked parents and carers to provide their perspectives on system performance against the Charter of Rights.

The joint project, undertaken with Micah Projects' Family Inclusion Network Southeast Queensland, received 324 responses from parents and carers, and provided new and important insights to help us understand the effectiveness of the system and will provide a baseline for future improvements.

This survey was also an opportunity to raise awareness of the *Charter of Rights for Parents* among parents and families, and better understand their rights, including their right to be treated fairly, with respect and without discrimination, and to have their culture respected and understood.

Of those surveyed, 65 per cent indicated that they felt information and decisions were explained to them in a language they understood.

## Young Leaders Summit Cairns

In April, Commissioner Twyford and staff travelled to Cairns to host a Young Leaders Summit, a partnered initiative of the QFCC and the Australian School of Entrepreneurship. Over 300 young people participated in the event which focussed on leadership.



Commissioner Twyford joined the Leaders' Panel to share stories of how to dream big, maintain determination and strive toward attaining fulfilling employment that also helps people and builds the capacity of the community. Young attendees pitched their ideas for resolving issues surrounding the safety and wellbeing of young Queensland people.

## Youth Advocates

The QFCC Youth Advocates are young people casually employed to share their views and experiences to shape the work of the QFCC and stakeholders. Youth Advocates amplify the lived experiences, diversity, challenges and proposed solutions of young people. Their involvement in influencing government policies and initiatives ensures relevance, effectiveness and sustainability for all young people.



During the past year, the Youth Advocates were empowered and supported to participate in many opportunities to impact policies, projects and initiatives that directly impact their lives, their families and communities. In 2023–2024 we funded over 500 hours of youth participation across many programs of work including:

- informing several QFCC submissions to government, including the Putting Queensland First Kids submission
- sharing views as part several consultations, including the Digital Inclusion Roundtable Consultation, Child Safe Standards Consultation, the Queensland Mental Health’s Trauma Strategy and Respectful Relationship Consultation
- collaborating with other young people as part of the Australian Child and Youth Wellbeing Atlas Youth Advisory Committee
- writing QFCC Amplify Blogs
- participating in QFCC all-staff workshops
- speaking at events and conferences, including the 14th Annual Child Protection Liaison Officer and Child Protection Advisor Workshop
- contributing their perspectives to the *Queensland Child Rights Report 2023*
- participating in the Children’s Health Week Youth Summit.

### **Statutory systems workforce survey 2023**

Since 2018 the QFCC has surveyed the broader Queensland community, as well as the child protection, youth justice and family support workforces to understand how the system is being delivered and received, and to inform our system reviews, strategic policy, advocacy and system monitoring and performance reporting. In 2023, 575 respondents were surveyed including 292 from government agencies (51%) and 283 from non-government organisations (49%).

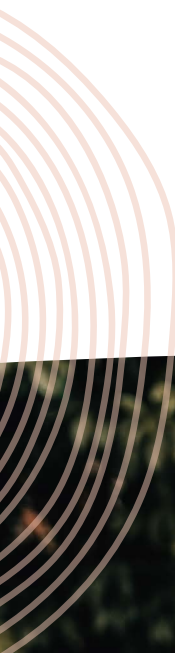
We had an overwhelming response regarding learning and development priorities for the child protection, family support and youth justice sectors, including a call for additional specialist training, additional skills and practices, and tools for engaging clients.

Respondents told us about positive things happening in the sector, including an overwhelming majority of their organisations (76%) partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to support the delivery of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, their families and communities.

### **Community perceptions survey 2023**

More than 3100 Queensland adults responded to this survey, providing their perspectives on the systems that support children and young people and how that system upholds their rights. The survey results highlighted a decrease in the community’s confidence in the child protection system and raised concerns about access to mental health services.

Respondents shared concerns about how the cost of living was having a negative impact on children, young people and families. Frontline child protection and family support workers called for greater workforce support (35%) while frontline youth justice staff advocated for an expansion of early intervention services (20%), followed closely by additional funding and resources.



## 4

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

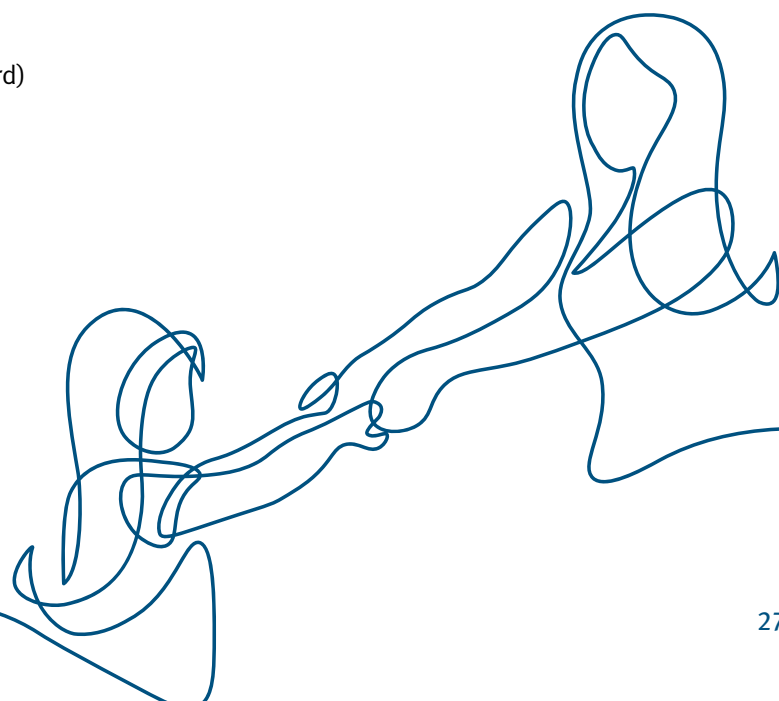
We have a unique position that can bring together diverse voices to contribute to key issues that impact on the wellbeing of children and their families. We work with other statutory agencies, peak bodies, non-government organisations and our counterparts in other jurisdictions to achieve common outcomes and collective benefits.

We strive to bring together agencies and entities with an interest in the safety and wellbeing of children to work together to deliver improved outcomes. This is why in 2023–2024, we invested \$982,000 to support the work of our key partners, including:

- **\$150,000** to deliver the Young, Black & Proud Scholarships in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (ATSICHS) to support and celebrate the talents and strengths of young First Nations people who exhibit outstanding promise but may lack the support and resources to reach their full potential
- **\$166,000** to Children’s Rights Queensland to deliver a public campaign promoting children’s rights, including Children’s Week, designed to celebrate the rights of Queensland children and celebrate their talents, skills and abilities
- **\$121,000** to the Daniel Morcombe Foundation for the e-kidna Group to develop and promote advocacy and community education regarding prevention of and recovery from child sexual abuse
- **\$96,000** to Deadly Inspiring Youth Doing Good for the Growing Our Way initiative
- **\$62,000** for two Young Achiever Awards (First Nations Youth Advocacy Award and Contribution to Community or Family Safety Award) and one Community Achievement Award
- **\$60,000** to support Play Matters Australia to deliver the Messy Play Matters initiative
- **\$54,335** to sponsor art competitions for children in OOHC.

In 2023–2024, the QFCC invested in the following organisations and initiatives:

- ATSICHS
- Children’s Rights Queensland
- Daniel Morcombe Foundation
- Deadly Inspiring Youth Doing Good
- Awards Australia
- Play Matters’ Messy Play
- CREATE Foundation
- Integrated Family and Youth Services
- Children’s Health Queensland
- Parenting and Family Research Alliance
- Australian Institute of Play
- Queensland Foster and Kinship Care
- ACT for Kids
- PCYC Cairns
- Queensland Child Protection Week
- Mount Isa NAIDOC Ball 2024
- NAIDOC Week activities (various)



## Young, Black and Proud Scholarships

The Young, Black & Proud Scholarships were launched by ATSICHS Brisbane to support and celebrate the talents and strengths of young First Nations people who exhibit outstanding promise but may lack the support and resources to reach their full potential.

Since their inception in 2018, we have sponsored the scholarships which are designed to support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to pursue their artistic, sporting and academic potential. For the first time, participants in the extended catchment areas of South East Queensland and the Torres Strait could apply for a scholarship worth \$1000 or \$2000.

To be eligible, applicants must be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, 25 years or younger, live in Queensland and require support to pursue their school, university, arts or sporting goals.

In 2023–2024, we invested \$150,000 in this sponsorship, enabling us to; strengthen and support young people’s development and skills; contribute to the development and career paths for young people; and capture and share young people’s success stories. Recipients used their scholarships for a range of purposes including travelling to sporting competitions, paying for classes and school fees, and purchasing art supplies, textbooks and uniforms. A group scholarship was awarded to Torres Strait Kaziw Meta Dance Team to fund their cultural trip to Hobart.

We will continue to sponsor the Young, Black & Proud Scholarships in 2024–2025. As part of the government’s 2024–2025 Budget announcement, an additional \$200,000 has been committed to expand this important scholarship program.

### Three of the 2023–2024 Young, Black and Proud Scholarship winners were Kane, Taylor-Lee and Torres Strait Kaziw Meta:



#### Kane, 2023 Young, Black and Proud Scholarship winner

A young Mabuiag man from the Torres Strait Islands who has used the scholarship funding to learn canoeing and is now competing in a world sprint competition.



#### Taylor-Lee, 2023 Young, Black and Proud Scholarship winner

A young Kundadidji artist who feels connected to her culture when at the ocean with friends, and winning the scholarship has helped her art journey.



#### Torres Strait Kaziw Meta, 2023 Young, Black and Proud Scholarship winner

A boarding house on Thursday Island. The children and young people of Kaziw Meta were able to travel from Thursday Island throughout Australia to showcase this longstanding and rich culture through dance and song.

“ By aligning with us, QFCC and ATSICHS has not just funded a dance team but invested in the empowerment, cultural preservation, and future of Torres Strait Islander youth. We couldn’t be more grateful. ”

– Torres Strait Kaziw Meta





## Queensland Community Achievement Awards

The Queensland Community Achievement Awards, facilitated by Awards Australia, is a statewide awards program aimed at encouraging, acknowledging and rewarding the valuable contributions that individuals, communities and businesses are making throughout Queensland.

This year, the QFCC's Dedicated to Supporting Young Queenslanders Award was presented to Care Kits for Kids who have distributed over 7100 care kits filled with essentials to young people aged 0–17 years. The team's unwavering mission is to ensure every Queensland child in need receives a care kit, creating a lasting positive impact and sense of community support.

## Young Achiever Awards

Our sponsorship of the Young Achiever Awards is an opportunity to support young people's advocacy agendas and leadership journeys. We sponsored two awards to the value of \$24,690 in the following categories:

**Contribution to Community or Family Safety Award** – This award was presented to young filmmaker, Aurora Iller, who directed, produced and starred in the short film, *Grape*, aimed to discourage teens from vaping. Her work has been embraced by Queensland schools and has received global acclaim.

**First Nations Youth Advocacy Award** – This award was presented to Daniel Rosendale, the co-founder of Deadly Inspiring Youth Doing Good. Daniel brings leadership, education, and health initiatives to young Indigenous people.



## Children's Week Awards

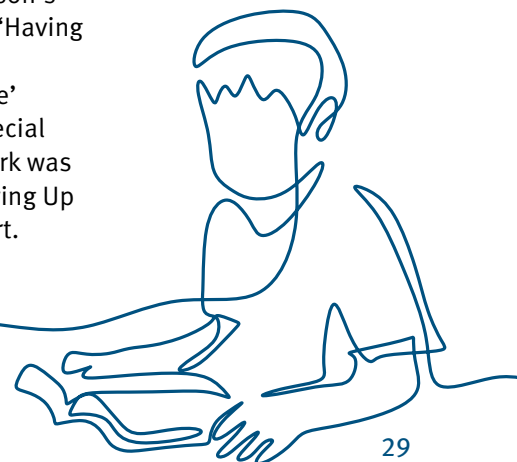
The Children's Week Awards program aims to celebrate and honour the outstanding contributions, initiatives, and advocacy undertaken by young people and organisations. The awards program aims to recognise and champion people who are making significant contributions to promoting the rights of children. The QFCC Commissioners' Award for Community Engagement was awarded to Hyanho Moser, CEO of the Australian Institute of Play and Logan advocate for children's right to play.



## CREATE Foundation Art Awards

CREATE Foundation provides art showcases for children in OOHC. These events aim to engage with young people that are cared for outside of the families they were born into. Supporting young people to be creative and inspire personal expression supports the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. This initiative aims to encourage children and young people in OOHC to participate in group activities and to be celebrated for their achievements.

On 19 January, Commissioner Twyford presented awards at the QFCC-sponsored CREATE Foundation Art Awards, which showcased the talented works of Queensland children living in OOHC. The competition categories were 'Reflections of a child or young person's experience in care', 'Having a voice', 'Hopes and dreams for the future' and 'First Nation special category'. The artwork was featured in the Growing Up in Queensland report.



### On the road (and in the air!)

The Commissioners travelled extensively throughout the year to gain a greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing children, families, communities, frontline workers and governments. This has ensured our advice remains contemporary and is based on evidence and the lived experiences of Queenslanders.

Commissioners and staff travelled **thousands of kilometres** to present at conferences, appear at hearings and inquiries, meet with stakeholders and ensure the voices of children, young people and families across the whole of Queensland were heard.



## Thriving Kids Strategic Framing Initiative

A partnership between the QFCC and TQKP, the Thriving Kids Strategic Framing Initiative aims to catalyse systems to change the odds for Queensland children and young people and enable them to thrive by shifting mindsets, understandings and capabilities about child and adolescent health and wellbeing.

The initiative intends to build on the TQKP Core Story which aims to build connections, capabilities and capacities to embed the use of science and evidence-based framing of messages and communications as common practice. Evidence suggests that this could make a significant difference in how people think about, support and enact policies, programs and practices that support children to thrive.

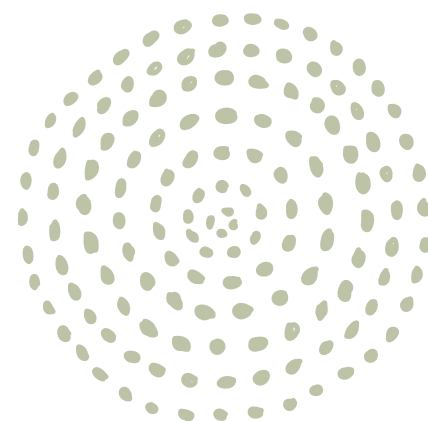
## Seeking and sharing insights on child deaths

As custodian of the Child Death Register, we share our data and expertise to learn from children's deaths and improve the safety and wellbeing of all Queensland children. Using data and insights from our register, we work with stakeholders and advisory groups to improve reporting systems and advocate for child death prevention activities. In 2023–2024, we worked with:

- Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group
- Australian National Child Death Data Collection Working Group
- Consumer Product Injury Research Advisory Group
- Queensland Government Births and Deaths Working Group
- Queensland Suicide Prevention Network
- Queensland Paediatric Quality Council Steering Committee
- Queensland Paediatric Quality Council Infant Mortality Sub-committee
- Road Safety Research Network
- Genetic Testing in SUDI SUDC Working Group
- Queensland Trauma Strategy Expert Advisory Committee
- Shifting Minds Strategic Leadership Group

We used data from the register to inform the development and strengthening of Australian product standards and regulations, including:

- potential hazards in the design, use and inappropriate use of cots, portacots and other infant sleep devices – for consideration of a review of the Australian cot and portacot standard
- clothing-related hazards for infants and young children including concerns regarding swaddle suits
- caustic ingestion fatalities from household cleaning products.



# 5

## Build our capacity, capability and culture to achieve our vision

To grow our influence we 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 stakeholders, we lead by example and operate in accordance with the standards we expect of others.

### Supporting the Child Death Review Board

Since July 2020, the QFCC has hosted the Board, which undertakes a system review following the death of a child that has spent time in the child protection system within the five years prior to their passing. The Board works to keep systems accountable by making recommendations to government and non-government agencies about legislative, policy and practice improvements.

In 2023–2024, the Board met six times to discuss child death reviews and invited researchers and experts to share contemporary advice and best practice on issues affecting Queensland children and families. Commissioner Twyford chairs the Board and QFCC staff fulfill the role of Secretariat. This past year the Board commenced using a collective review approach for its review work, in which cases that demonstrate a particular system issue/s are considered together. This approach gives added weight to demonstrating the existence and impact of a system issue, as well as allowing for more cases to be considered within one collective review.



### Building cultural capability

The QFCC's *Reframing the Relationship Plan 2024–2027* was developed to support the QFCC in its commitment to implement components of the Reframing the Relationship Plan requirements under s19-23 of the *Public Sector Act 2022*. The plan supports the QFCC to enhance and continue to build cultural capability to enable provision of advice to the government and deliver impactful services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

### Innovating our data presentations with digital dashboards

We leveraged the capabilities of PowerBI to communicate data findings for two distinct projects in 2023–2024. These dashboards will enable access to timely data, stronger collaboration, transparency and decision-making across the systems we collectively engage with, to support children, young people and their families.

### Professional development and training

We invested over \$108,000 in the development and upskilling of our staff, including the delivery of:

- Vicarious Trauma Training
- Mental Health First Aid
- First Nations First Approach
- Common Approach
- Recruitment and selection training
- Power BI Training
- Adaptive Leadership Masterclass (Children, Youth and Families)
- Unconscious bias training
- Youth Advocate Advocacy Development Days





## Our organisational governance

### QFCC Advisory Council

Members meet quarterly to connect and collaborate on opportunities to advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and families. These meetings bring together individual members and representatives from the following agencies:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service
- Australian Catholic University
- Bravehearts
- Brisbane Youth Service
- Children's Rights Queensland
- Daniel Morcombe Foundation
- Kummara
- Micah Projects
- Michael Hogan Consulting
- National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
- PeakCare Queensland Inc.
- Q Shelter
- Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak
- Australian Federal Police - ACCCSE
- Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
- Health and Wellbeing Queensland
- Office of the Public Guardian
- Queensland Human Rights Commission
- Queensland Mental Health Commission
- Queensland Police Service
- Queensland Council of Social Service
- Queensland Foster and Kinship Care
- Queensland University of Technology
- Yourtown

### QFCC Youth Advisory Council

The QFCC Youth Advisory Council amplifies and elevates the voices of children and young people in Queensland and provides advice and recommendations to the Commissioners. It is a collective of young people, supported by the QFCC, brought together to:

- provide advice to the Commissioners on important issues impacting young people in Queensland
- provide ideas and strategies to support youth participation in decisions that impact young people
- provide advice to the broader QFCC and external stakeholders to elevate and amplify the voices of children and young people.

All Youth Advocates are invited to participate in these meetings. The Council met quarterly, providing advice to QFCC staff and our Commissioners on the significant topics for children and young people in Queensland. The Council's terms of reference and discussion items were co-designed with the Council members.

In 2023–2024, Youth Advocates attended, contributed to, and chaired four hybrid Youth Advisory Council

meetings, including a regional meeting in Rockhampton where Commissioner Twyford and members of the QFCC Youth Participation team were joined by more than 20 young people. They discussed the lack of safe spaces, lack of reliable public transport, lack of employment pathways and job opportunities and insufficient activities for young people to participate in.

Topics discussed at other meetings included racism including the sharing of harms and scope that racism has in Queensland, such as within society, in the media and in schooling, prior to a discussion about solution-focused ways of managing and reducing this issue.

### Lived experience expert panel

To assist with the residential care review, Commissioner Twyford established a lived experience expert panel. This panel included 12 young Queenslanders from across the state who had spent time in Queensland residential care homes. This group met five times, including an all-day workshop in Brisbane and four online meetings to review the government's residential care roadmap. Life Without Barriers and CREATE Foundation supported this group's membership.

# Looking ahead

## 2024–2025 marks an exciting time in the history of the QFCC.

On 12 June 2024, a Bill was introduced in Parliament that when passed, will see the QFCC become legally responsible for the establishment and administration of a Child Safe Organisation System in Queensland.

The Child Safe Organisation System will consist of the mandatory implementation of Child Safe Standards and the establishment of a nationally consistent RCS for Queensland. The development of the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* (National Principles) is a key national reform in response to these recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission).

We have been working closely with DCSSDS and DJAG on this Bill and the government has confirmed a significant funding boost for us to operate as the oversight body for Queensland's Child Safe Organisations system, with the funding to be released upon passage of legislation in Parliament. This is an exciting development, demonstrating the faith that the government has in our specialist abilities and reinforces that we are a trusted statutory body.

The focus for the 2024–2025 year will be the establishment of the Commission as the oversight body as well as sector and industry education and capacity build activities.

We will continue to deliver on explicit commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families through the continuation and expansion of the Young, Black & Proud Scholarships, quarterly monitoring of Principle Focus data, and promotion of the strengths and achievements of First Nations children, young people and their families.

We will continue to advance the rights of children through the development and publication of the *2024 Queensland Child Rights Report*, which will include the voices, stories and experiences of Queensland children and young people.

## In the year ahead, we will:

- work to embed changes across the structure of the QFCC in readiness for our expanded range of functions that may come into effect with the passing of the *Child Safe Organisations Bill*
- implement our *Reframing the Relationship Plan*
- utilise digital dashboards to increase the reach and accessibility of our data
- work with other agencies, peak bodies and our counterparts in other jurisdictions to achieve common outcomes and collective benefits
- bring together diverse voices to contribute to key issues that impact on the wellbeing of children and their families
- focus our oversight work on the delivery of critical system reviews outlined in the *Oversight Framework 2023–2027* and implement our *Safer pathways through childhood 2024–2025 action plan*
- issue our biennial review of the status of government recommendations and implement a new framework to support the monitoring of recommendations to government
- publish the inaugural *QFCC Workforce and Community Trend Report*
- advocate for Queensland children, young people and their families through our written submissions, providing evidence at hearings and inquiries and through our media and digital channels
- empower children, young people and their families, including our Youth Advocates, by including their lived experiences and perspectives in our advocacy and oversight work, and by supporting them to have their voices raised in public forums, including in Parliament, at conferences, through social and media channels and as part of panels.







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