

System insights paper

JANUARY 2025

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SNAICC 2024 Family Matters report – key findings and recommendations for Queensland

CHILD SAFETY

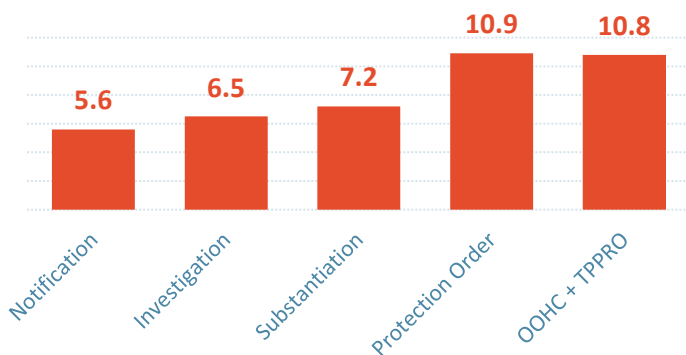
OVER-REPRESENTATION

The SNAICC 2024 Family Matters report analyses 2022-2023 data to report the progress made toward ensuring Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe, connected to their families, communities and culture.

Over-representation in child protection system

- In 2023, Queensland had the **second-lowest rate of over-representation** in OOHC at 9.5, compared to a national rate of 10.8.
- OOHC entries for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland in 2023 was higher than the rate of exits.
- Over-representation in Queensland has increased 13% over the past three years.
- Over-representation worsens as the level of child protection involvement increases.

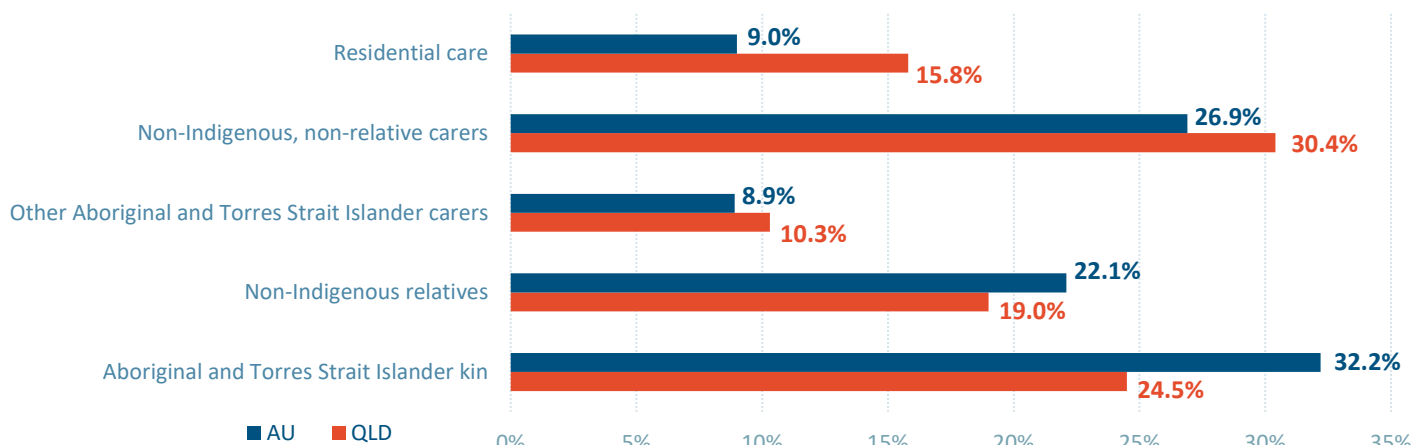
National over-representation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in child protection by stage of involvement



Government initiatives and community-led solutions

- The Queensland government invested **approximately \$775.22 million** over 11 years (2016-17 to 2026-27) to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection.
- The Queensland government **committed to appointing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner**.
- **"Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families"** aims to eliminate over-representation in the child protection system by 2037.
- The **"Breaking Cycles 2023–2025"** action plan, developed in partnership with QATSI CPP and the Queensland Family Matters Leadership Group, includes critical reforms such as expanding Delegated Authority and transitioning investment to the ATSI CO sector.
- A review of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child in residential care in Queensland led to **140 children exiting residential care**.

Proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC by placement type

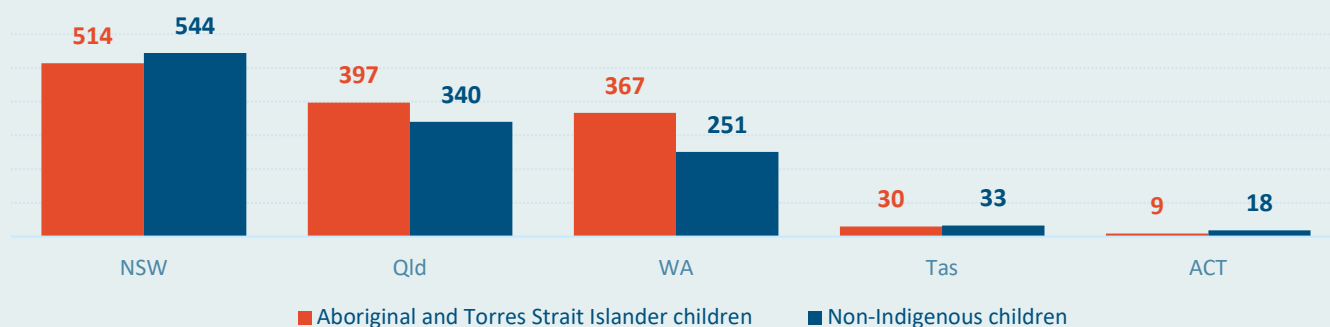


Continued — SNAICC 2024 Family Matters report – key findings and recommendations for Queensland

Unborn reports and notifications

- Queensland has the second highest number nationally of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to unborn reports.
- Apart from a minor increase in 2020, the number of unborn reports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland has remained relatively stable between 2018 and 2023.

Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children subject to unborn reports (2022-23)



Data limitations

- There is a lack of consistent, comprehensive data for unborn reports across the nation. This makes inter-jurisdictional comparisons problematic.
- Due to a lack of information on reunifications, there is little data on the long-term impacts and effectiveness of interventions related to unborn notifications.

Blue Card requirements for kinship carers

A 2023 QFCC review found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people faced barriers progressing through formal carer assessments in Queensland due to the Queensland Working with Children Check system.

The **Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024** removed the Blue Card requirement for kinship carers in Queensland.

Recommendations

- Ensure all families have access to quality, culturally safe services.
- Empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations in decision-making processes.
- Promoting responsive and culturally safe laws, policies and practices.
- Holding governments and services accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Recommendations for Queensland

- Increase resourcing to support reform implementations along the entire child protection continuum, particularly Family Wellbeing Services and Family Participation Programs.
- Sufficiently resource localised approaches defined by self-determination, accountability and collaboration.
- Establish a dedicated and independent Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland.

AIHW youth detention population in Australia 2024 report – summary

YOUTH JUSTICE

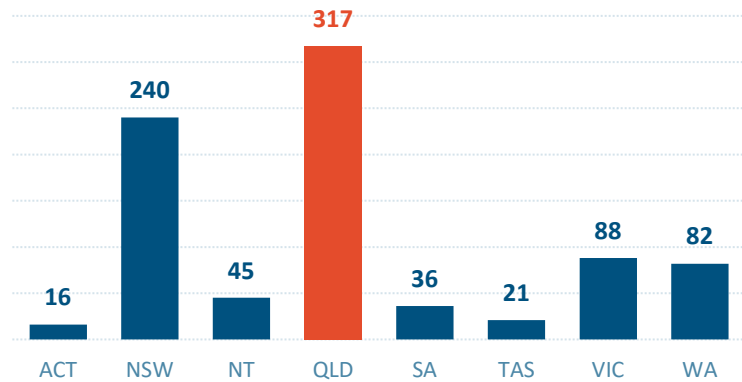
OVER-REPRESENTATION

The AIHW youth detention population in Australia 2024 report includes national data from the June quarter 2020 to the June quarter 2024. In the most recent quarter, 845 young people were in detention. This reflects an increase from June 2020 but is lower than pre-COVID levels. Nationally, 90% of young people in detention were male, 81% were aged 14-17, and 60% were First Nations young people.

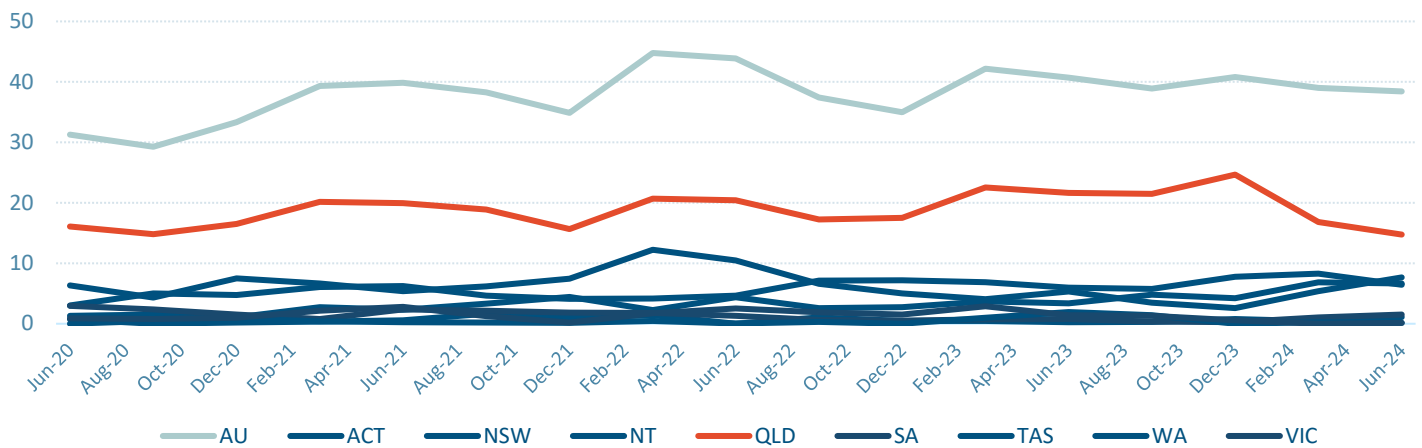
On an average night in the June 2024 quarter, Queensland had:

- The highest number of young people in detention.
- The greatest over-representation of First Nations young people in detention.
- The highest proportion of young people in detention who were unsentenced.
- The highest number of young people ages 10-13 in detention.

Number of young people in detention on an average night in the June 2024 quarter



Young people ages 10-13 in detention on an average night between June 2020 and June 2024



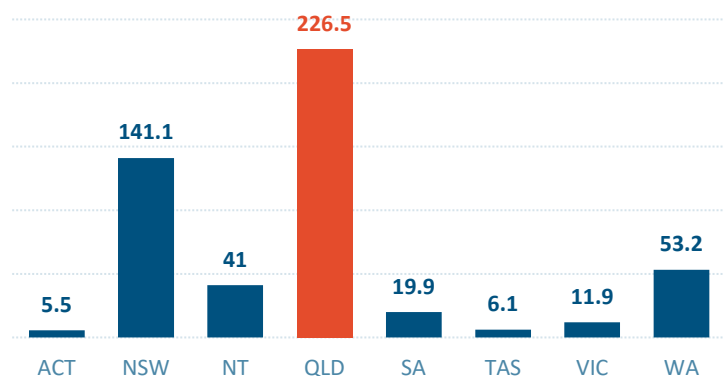
Young people ages 10-13

Approximately half of all young people aged 10-13 in detention between June 2020 and June 2024 were held in Queensland. There was a slight drop from 16.1 in June 2020 to 14.7 in June 2024. The highest average in Queensland was 21.6 in Dec 2023.

First Nations young people

Queensland held nearly twice as many First Nations young people in detention than any other jurisdiction in the June 2024 quarter.

First Nations young people in detention on an average night in the June 2024 quarter



Children’s Court of Queensland 2023-2024 annual report – summary

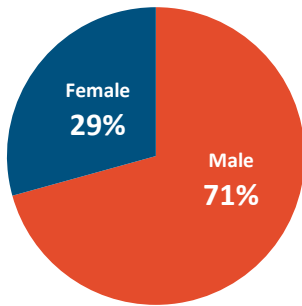
YOUTH JUSTICE

OVER-REPRESENTATION

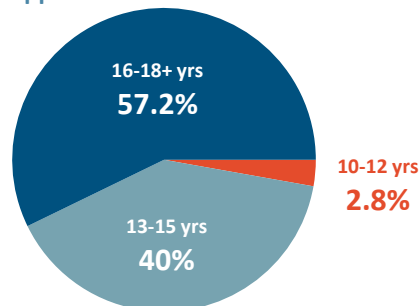
The Children’s Court of Queensland’s 2023-2024 annual report includes data pertaining to Magistrates Courts matters between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024 involving child defendants, as well as young people aged 18 years and over at time of finalisation due to the time it takes to have charges heard in court.

Child offender demographics

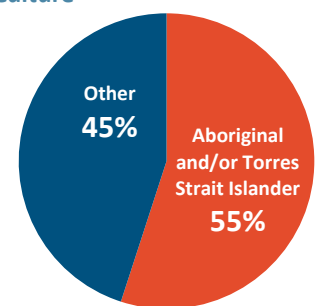
Sex



Age at final appearance



Culture



Worsening over-representation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children:

- 15 times more likely than other children to have a finalised charge (up from 13.9 times in 2022-2023).
- 24.4% more likely to commence a supervised youth justice order (up from 22.8% in 2022-2023).
- 29.1 times more likely than other children to have been held in detention (up from 27 times in 2022-2023).

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children accounted for:

- 55.4% of all convicted children.
- 82% of convicted children aged 10-11 years old.
- 71% of children in detention on an average day.
- Only 46% of restorative justice orders.

Unsentenced children in detention

On an average day, 86% of children in detention were unsentenced, reflecting a 2% decrease from last year. The average length of time a child spent in detention per unsentenced episode was 48 nights, which is three nights longer than last year. Following sentencing, 37.8% of children in detention were immediately released with no remaining time to serve.

Fast Track Sentencing pilot

The Fast Track Sentencing pilot continued operating in Cairns, Southport, Brisbane and Ipswich. There are early signs of success in improved clearance rates and reduced time before the court. Throughout the state, the average time taken to finalise proceedings decreased by 7 days from the previous year, to 85 days. The average time taken to resolve matters from the date of first mention in Children’s Court decreased by 12 days from the previous year, to 307.

Serious repeat offenders

Serious repeat offenders accounted for 19% of all children with finalised charges. This group was responsible for 51.6% of proven offences. Prosecutors made 51 applications to the court to have a child declared to be a serious violent offender.

Children held in watchhouses

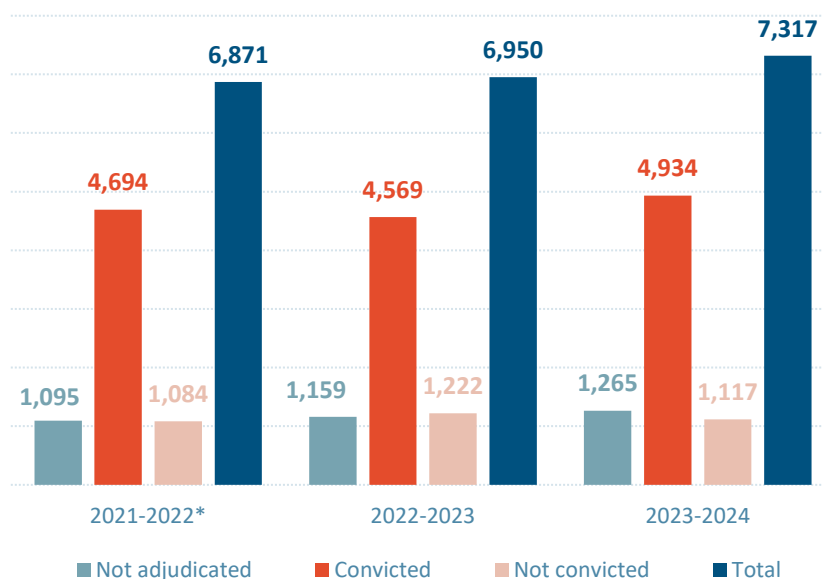
7,806	447	259	25	108	587
children held	held for more than a week	held for more than 2 weeks	10 year olds held	11 year olds held	highest number in a month (Dec)

Continued — Children’s Court of Queensland 2023-2024 annual report – summary

Previous year comparisons (all courts)

- ↑ **49,612** finalised charges
15.3% increase
- ↑ **7,317** finalised appearances
5.3% increase
- ↑ **6.8** average number of charges per finalised appearance
9.7% increase
- ↓ **3,281** children with a proven offence
0.6% decrease
- ↑ **6,626** child protection order applications
7.7% increase
- ↓ **398** domestic violence protection orders applications (child respondents)
7% decrease
- ↑ **1,610** offenders commencing youth justice orders
3% increase

Outcomes of finalised appearances



The increase in finalised charges is largely due to the introduction of breach of bail charges, legislated in March 2023.

There were 6,697 convictions for breach of bail in 2023-2024, and 938 breach of bail charges in 2022-2023.

Finalised charges by offence type in Magistrate Court

Offence type	2022-2023	2023-2024
Homicide and related offences	6	2
Acts intended to cause injury	2,044	2,221
Sexual assault	54	48
Robbery/extortion	250	626
Unlawful entry/break and enter	10,338	9,688
Theft	14,614	15,241
Fraud and related offences	1,035	670
Drug offences	1,777	1,681
Property damage	2,116	2,080
Traffic offences	2,155	1,969
Other offences	6,107	13,035
TOTAL	40,496	46,941

Most serious penalty per offence in Magistrate Court

Penalty type	2022-2023	2023-2024
Detention	352 (7.7%)	386 (7.8%)
Conditional release	279 (6.1%)	330 (6.7%)
Community service	417 (9.1%)	397 (8.0%)
Probation	1,449 (37.1%)	1,511 (30.6%)
Treatment orders	17 (0.4%)	20 (0.4%)
Fine	26 (0.6%)	27 (0.5%)
Compensation	11 (0.2%)	6 (0.1%)
Good behaviour	485 (8.5%)	496 (10%)
Driver’s licence disqualification	102 (2.2%)	90 (1.2%)
Reprimand	1,431 (31.3%)	1,672 (33.9%)
TOTAL	4,569	4,935

* 2021-2022 data obtained from: Queensland Parliament. (2023). *Children’s Court of Australia Annual Report 2022-2023*. Queensland Parliament. (2024). *Children’s Court of Queensland Annual Report 2023-24*, accessed 8 January 2025.

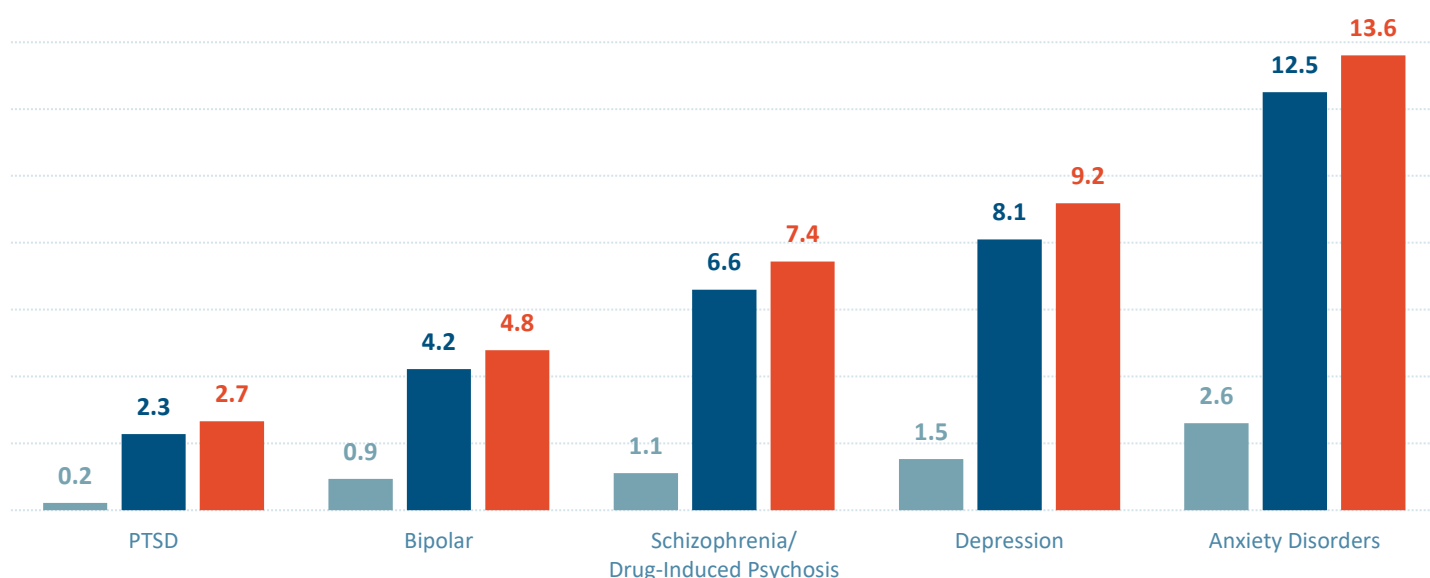
Adulthood mental health outcomes of Queensland adults who experienced childhood maltreatment

CHILD SAFETY

A study published in *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences* identified that childhood maltreatment heightened the odds of mental health hospital admissions in a population-level sample of adults in Queensland. The population consisted of 83,050 individuals born in Queensland in 1983 and 1984. Data included child protection notification and psychiatric hospital records from birth to age 30.

Prevalence of psychiatric hospital admissions by age 30, by contact with Child Safety

Level of contact with Child Safety: ■ No exposure ■ Notification ■ Substantiation



Key findings

- **4,703** participants (**5.7%**) had a history of child protection notifications, most commonly for neglect.
- **3,510** (**4.2%**) of notifications were substantiated.
- A child protection notification history was associated with a **3–8 times greater** likelihood of a psychiatric hospital admission by age 30.
- Psychiatric hospital admissions were higher among women and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.
- Outcomes were similar for all types of maltreatment.
- Outcomes were similar for substantiated and unsubstantiated notifications.
- Outcomes were similar for single and multiple instances of notifications.
- Associations were strongest for PTSD and weakest for Bipolar Affective Disorder.

Limitations

Rates of historical child maltreatment notifications reported in this study are lower than more recent data. The chronological order between child maltreatment notifications and subsequent mental health diagnoses was not examined.

Kisely, S., Leske, S., Ogilvie, J., Thompson, C., Siskind, D., & Allard, T. (2024). *A longitudinal birth cohort study of child maltreatment and mental disorders using linked statewide child protection and administrative health data for 83,050 Queensland residents from 1983 to 2014*. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*, 33, e69. doi:10.1017/S204579602400074X

Socioeconomic and psychosocial outcomes of parents with children in out-of-home care – a scoping review

CHILD SAFETY

Research published in the *Children and Youth Services Review* has studied the outcomes of parents who have had a child removed from their care and placed in out-of-home care. The research consists of a scoping review of 15 quantitative studies across OECD countries.

Findings and implications

Most studies reviewed showed that overall, having a child placed in out-of-home care was associated with a deterioration of psychosocial and socioeconomic outcomes among parents.

Parents who have experienced the removal of a child may experience extreme distress, grief, guilt, shame, sadness and anger. This may also impact, or be impacted by, their socioeconomic conditions, such as poverty, unemployment and welfare dependency.

The review found limited evidence of positive outcomes, primarily related to parents with children with intellectual disabilities. Some of these parents reported good levels of post-placement adjustment and a decrease in feelings of guilt and loss over time. Placement of adult children with intellectual disabilities was associated with a decrease in caregiving burden.

The findings of the study highlight the need for tailored support and counselling for parents who have had a child removed from their care. The study's authors suggest policymakers and practitioners should consider the potential negative impacts of out-of-home care placements on parents and develop interventions to mitigate the impacts.

Straatmann, V. S., et al. (2024). *Socioeconomic and psychosocial outcomes of parents with children in out-of-home care: A scoping review*. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 164, 107854. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2024.107854>

Young people in out-of-home care who self-place – upcoming research from the University of Queensland

CHILD SAFETY

Researchers at the University of Queensland plan to conduct a study into the pathways and trajectories of self-placing young people to be completed in 2027. The intended design consists of 100 case studies of young people in out-of-home care who continue to be absent or have a history of being absent from their approved placement. Three study sites are planned for an urban, regional, and remote location in Queensland.

Self-placement does not have an international definition but is commonly defined as leaving a formal placement to stay in an unapproved location. The Queensland Department of Child Safety corporate datasets do not allow practitioners to select 'self-placing' or 'absent from placement', thus preventing any systematic oversight over this area.

Research aims

- Address the gap in knowledge about the experiences of young people who self-place.
- Enhance the safety and wellbeing of young people who self-place.
- Inform effective responses and systematic reform for child protection services.

The University of Queensland. (2024). *Enhancing outcomes for young people in out-of-home care who self-place Project (2024-2027)*.

New South Wales system review into out-of-home care – summary

A system review into out-of-home care in New South Wales released in October examined outcomes for children and young people, carer recruitment and support, value for money, and hybrid service delivery.

Key challenges

- Lack of **accountability** and **oversight**
- **Crisis-driven** investment
- Need for **legal framework reforms**
- **Inefficient** stewardship
- **Fragmented data** management
- **Lack of clarity** in regulatory roles
- Overly **complex, unsuitable** models of care
- **Little consultation** with children, young people, families, and carers
- **Weak governance**, fiscal management, and program oversight
- **Compliance driven** case management leads to service **delivery delays**
- Inconsistent **cross-agency collaboration**
- High workforce **turnover**

Recommendation 1

Establish an agreement between statutory departments to drive comprehensive reforms.

- Develop appropriate oversights to enhance transparency and responsibility.
- Review current governance arrangements to streamline decision-making, collaboration and coordination.

Recommendation 2

Investment in out-of-home care, early intervention and family preservation.

- Redirect resources from crisis response and out-of-home care towards early intervention and intensive family supports.
- Employ a public health approach to ensure families can access information and supports as early as possible.
- Increase non-statutory models due to fear of child removal among Aboriginal families.

Recommendation 3

Independent review of legislation to ensure it is contemporary, culturally sensitive and appropriate to need.

- Legislate a 'duty to act' on statutory agencies to safeguard and deliver timely services with legal ramifications for non-compliance.
- Delegate responsibilities to deliver early intervention services and reinforce mandates that removals can only occur when preventive supports have failed.

Recommendation 4

Strengthen accountability and value for money through evaluating the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of services.

- Establish performance outcomes, cost-benefit analysis and outcomes-based evaluations.
- Ensure competitive value through comparative analysis of service providers.

Recommendation 5

Ensure an accurate, reliable, timely and meaningful data strategy.

- Facilitate data capture, information access, performance and accountability to enhance data security and ensure stakeholders have timely access to information.
- Review information sharing protocols, practices, and legislation to enable coordinated service delivery.

Recommendation 6

Clarify the roles and responsibilities of regulators regarding decision-making and principles for information sharing.

- Ensure improved timeliness of investigations, procedural fairness, and evaluate the unintended consequences that can cause further trauma.
- Review the community visitor scheme to ensure the safety of children and young people and quality of service.

Recommendation 7

Streamline models of care to deliver a coordinated, evidence-informed continuum of care.

- Models should be clearly defined, evidence-informed and culturally appropriate.
- Ensure all children receive relationship-centred practice in homelike settings where they feel safe and supported.
- Seek to understand the needs of children, young people, carers and families.

Recommendation 8

Empower and elevate the voice of children, young people, carers and families to improve services and outcomes.

- Children should have more opportunities to actively participate in court processes, plan for their future, and influence decisions about their daily lives.
- Families need better access to advice, advocacy, support and communication.
- Carer knowledge should be valued and their feedback embedded into service delivery.

Recommendation 9

Enforce performance metrics and fiscal transparency to ensure government funds benefit children and young people in care.

- Maintain a system-wide financial policy for care allowance, expenses and additional supports.
- Provide carers with a list of services children are entitled to receive and be transparent about funding.

Recommendation 10

Increase efficiency in case management policies and practices to reduce delays and service delivery gaps.

- Implement a more holistic approach to planning, involving and key people with regular reviews for quality assurance.
- Cultural support plans should be viewed as dynamic documents that foster meaningful connections to culture, community, and Country.

Recommendation 11

Prioritise timely and integrated health care and mental health care for children and young people.

- Establish integrated health care coordination teams to ensure prioritised access to physical, social, and health services.
- Enhance coordination of health plans for children and young people.

Recommendation 12

Enhance education planning and practices to promote learning outcomes for children and young people in care.

- Ensure suspension plans for children excluded from school include reintegration strategies that support academic, wellbeing and behavioural needs.
- Mandate training for educators on trauma-informed practice.
- Publicly report on education outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care.

Recommendation 13

Implement a sector-wide workplace strategy to recruit, retain and recognise the value of the workforce.

- Increase role clarity, reduce administrative burden, and expand relational practice.
- Reward and recognise staff and enable career progression.
- Recruit more Aboriginal staff and create culturally safe, strengths-based workplaces.
- Promote pro-active, supportive and inspirational leadership.