



Our Department

Government objectives for the community

- **Give all our children a great start:** We contribute to the priorities to increase childhood immunisation rates, improve wellbeing prior to school and increase the number of babies born healthier.
- **Keep communities safe:** We support the priorities to reduce the rate of crime victimisation and reduce rates of youth reoffending.
- **Create jobs in a strong economy:** We support the priority to engage more young Queenslanders in education, training and work.
- **Keep Queenslanders healthy:** We support the priority to reduce suicides.
- **Be a responsive government:** We support the priority to make services easy to use.

Our strategic plan

Our Strategic Plan provides a strong vision and purpose, clear objectives and strategies and demonstrates how the department contributes to Advancing Queensland Priorities. The department's Strategic Plan can be found on our website at: <https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/about-us/our-publications/corporate-publications/strategic-plan>.

Vision, objectives and performance indicators

The department's vision is to see Queenslanders safe and thriving in families and communities. Objectives and performance indicators are outlined at the beginning of each service area chapter.

Priorities

Our priorities in 2018-19 included:

- progressing the *Our Way* strategy to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the Child Protection System by 2037
- implementing the first five years of *Supporting Families Changing Futures*
- continuing to engage communities and stakeholders in partnerships to continue the implementation of the *Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy*
- leading the *Queensland Youth Strategy* to ensure young people have a voice in developing government policies and services.

Strategic opportunities

- Build more culturally safe and capable practices.
- Strengthen our client focus and customer service.
- Partner, collaborate and co-design services and solutions with others, including place-based responses.
- Leverage local and global knowledge and stimulate innovation at all levels.
- Improve information systems and networks for more integrated service delivery.
- Investing early to prevent people from experiencing violence, abuse and neglect.

Strategic risks

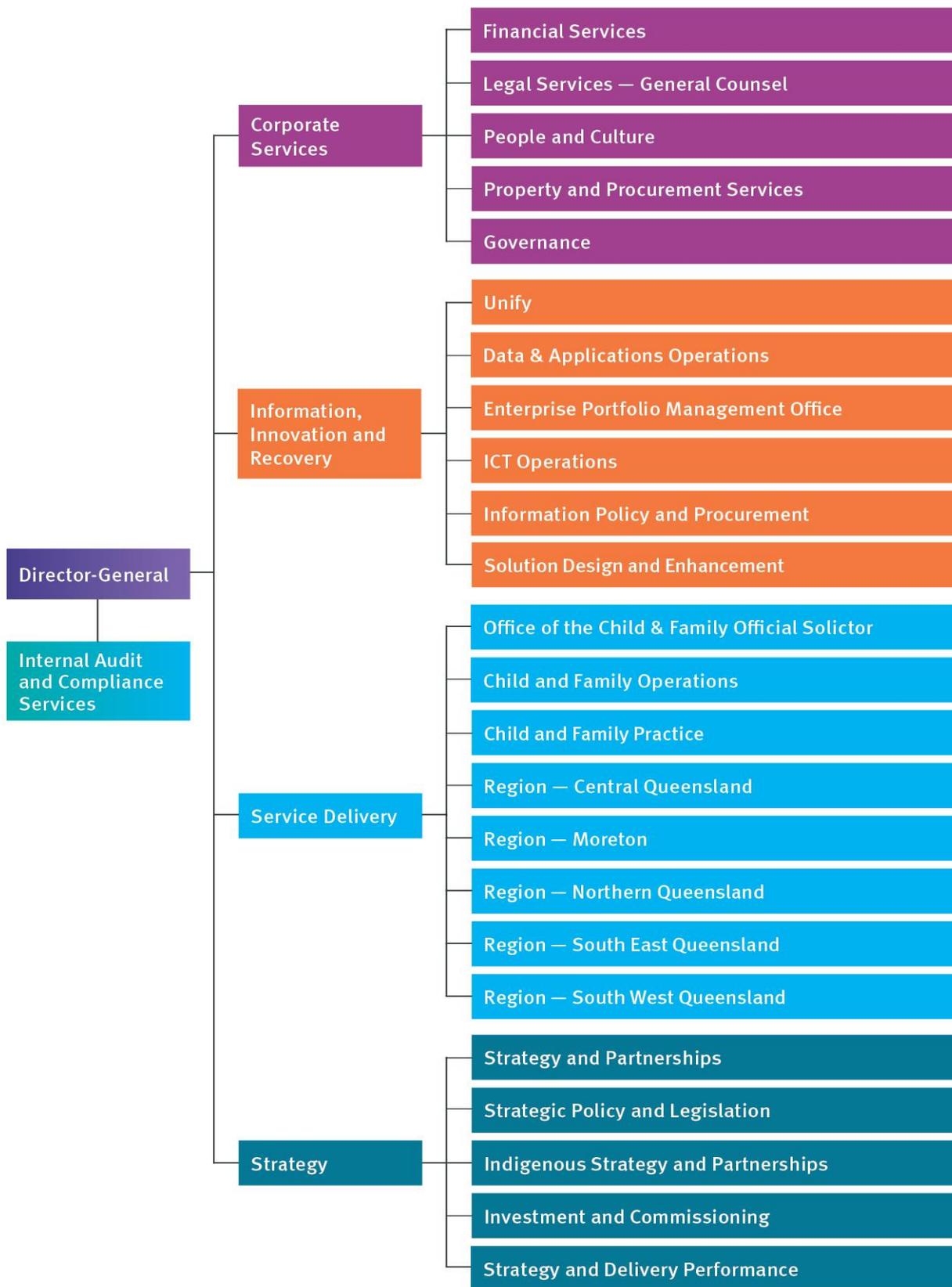
- Harm to children or young people in our care or custody.
- Harm to safety and wellbeing of staff, and challenges to workforce attraction and retention.
- Capability and capacity to respond to growing demand, increasing complexity of clients and communities, and to deliver multiple system and service delivery reforms.
- Breaches of information privacy and security, statutory rights and responsibilities.

National agreements

The department leads implementation and negotiations associated with the Intergovernmental Agreement on: the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse; Third Action Plan of the National Plan for Reducing Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022; National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020; National Partnership on the Women's Safety Package – Technology Trials and the Transition to Independent Living Allowance Project Agreement.

The department contributes to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap); National Partnership on: Pay Equity for the Social and Community Services Sector; National Disability Agreement; National Housing and Homelessness Agreement; National Affordable Housing Agreement; National Domestic Violence Order Scheme and the Bilateral Agreement between the Commonwealth Government and Queensland for the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Our organisational structure



Our regions

Our regions are the frontline of our service delivery. Our regional service delivery structure brings together all our service areas to enable the delivery of more holistic approaches to the complex and interrelated needs of our clients and communities.

We have five regions, led by Regional Executive Directors.





Regional highlights

Our regions enable families to safely care for their children and young people, and provide services to ensure the safety, belonging and well-being of children and young people not able to be cared for by their families. We investigate and assess reports about children and young people being significantly harmed or at risk of significant harm. We support parents and families to care for their children at home, and where this isn't possible, work out how to best meet their safety, belonging and wellbeing needs. We also ensure families can access help before issues escalate by funding services for parents and carers to build the skills and resilience they need for their children and families to thrive.

We prevent and respond to domestic and family violence and sexual assault, and enable young people experiencing vulnerability to address risk factors. We facilitate a range of programs and initiatives to develop the skills and capabilities of our young people, and women and girls across all cultures and backgrounds, preparing them for a prosperous future.

Northern Queensland Region

On 24 May 2019, the department and representatives from the education sector came together for the inaugural **Better Together for Brighter Futures Forum** with a focus on improving educational outcomes for children and young people in care, and developing practices and relationships that support the child's present and future. Cairns Catholic Education, Department of Education and the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women collaboratively presented the [#better](#) Together for Brighter Futures.

The 130 participants comprised Senior Team Leaders, Senior Practitioners and other Senior Officers from the department, Guidance Officers and Senior Guidance Officers from the Department of Education and counsellors and student wellbeing team members from Cairns Catholic Education.

The Better Together for Brighter Futures Forum was born out of the recognition that whilst child safety and the education sectors work together, there were still issues identified regarding each organisation's understanding of how and what each service does, can do, and have done, in working towards the best interest of the child.

The main aim was to foster, develop and maintain more collaborative working relationships between staff from all agencies. It was a fantastic day with the three agencies developing action plans for their own catchment areas. The feedback from the group was inspiring and all attendees are committed to continuing this valuable work together.

The Mt Isa-Gulf Child Safety Service Centre has been working to start the **Mt Isa Community of Practice for domestic and family violence**. The aim being to use the David Mandell 'Safe and Together' model to focus and support a coordinated response, framework and language within agencies who work with families experiencing domestic and family violence in Mt Isa.



The Community of Practice is made up of 25 members from 16 government departments and non-government organisations agencies in Mt Isa. Each workshop includes a one hour link to the Safe and Together representative to work through a case from the lens of that theme.

Everyone was very excited and committed to be working and learning together across both the government and non-government sectors to create a change in how we work with families and each other to benefit our families.

The participants provided positive feedback after the two day training and the first workshops reporting that they can already see how they can make simple changes in interacting with families which will impact on outcomes. We are very excited to see how the Community of Practice will grow and develop over the next few months.

Central Queensland Region

The **Gungdoo (Child/ren) Dreaming Cultural Connections Program** is a 10 week program, developed in 2018-19, aimed at positively influencing the wellbeing of young people in care, with a focus on enhancing connection to culture, family, community and country. As 38 per cent of the children and young people in care in Bundaberg are Indigenous, it was identified there was a need for a program to keep these children and young people connected to their culture.

The program has a large range of activities for young people to participate in including, meeting with Elders, learning the local language and generic dance mimicking (kangaroo, emu and eagle) from a Traditional Owner, learning local cultural knowledge and Dreamtime stories regarding the coloured sands at Coonar. Elders also teach young people how to cook damper and find animal tracks in the bush and paint boomerangs.

The first program commenced in Bundaberg in July 2019 with 22 young people being invited to participate. The program has been well received with 15 to 16 young people consistently attending each week. Child Safety Officers from the Bundaberg Child Safety Service Centre are also regularly attending. An identified benefit from their participation has been a growth in their own cultural knowledge and capability enhancing their work with the children.

It is hoped a return to country trip for Bundjalung young people will be facilitated in the near future. The young people who attended enjoyed the program and received certificates of attendance at the conclusion of the 10 weeks.

As the program is new to Bundaberg, there is scope for further enhancement once the program establishes. The Bundaberg Child Safety Service Centre is also exploring ways to actively include foster carers as part of this program so they can also support the cultural needs of children and young people in their care.

South East Region

In August 2018, a Gold Coast Child Safety Service Centre in conjunction with the **Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Assessment and Service Connect (DVPC ASC)** became involved with a family after the mother experienced extreme domestic and family violence by her partner with her five year old son present. The partner misused alcohol and prescription drugs on a daily basis and had access to firearms and other weapons. The mother and son expressed extreme fear of the partner.

When the department became involved, the mother left the partner to relocate to a refuge. The partner was charged by the Queensland Police Service and received bail from the court. The department partnered with DVPC ASC given the risk indicators. DVPC ASC worked with the mother to find stable accommodation; enrol the child in prep with a scholarship; begin legal proceedings around family law and increase her safety through active safety planning on an individual and system level.

DVPC ASC assessed that many of the goals identified during the intervention period were met and that the support given by the Child Safety Service Centre had a positive impact on the family.

The mother also provided significant positive feedback. While DVPC ASC are aware that the former partner continues to hold significant risks to the mother and child, the mother continues to develop her safety plan using skills developed during the intervention period. She also continues to work with support services.

DVPC and ASC are co-located with the Child Safety Service Centre and this has positively increased collaboration by the department and these services to get better outcomes for children.

South West Region

A **backyard family meeting** proved a great success when child safety came into contact with an Aboriginal family who were caring for five children. This family had been involved with child safety for several generations.

The parents were unable to care for the children due to escalating domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse and mental health challenges. Over a period of time all the children were removed and placed into a kinship placement with their grandmother. The parents had very negative interactions with the grandmother and the contact with their children became less and less. The grandmother had significant hesitations towards working with child safety.

The Convenor, who was an Aboriginal woman, decided that holding a family meeting would allow the family to work together to identify strategies and make decisions about their children and family. They worked closely with the Cultural Practice Advisor from the service centre to explore approaches to engage the family.

Initially the Convenor met with the grandmother on several occasions, drinking many cups of tea in the backyard and discussing plans for how the family could have safe connection and how the children's voices could be heard.

The Convenor and Cultural Practice Advisor also identified all the practical needs of the children by talking with them. This was significant in building trust with the grandmother and agreeing to a family meeting. Over this time the parents were also wanting to start conversations with the children.

The first meeting was held in the grandmother's home where the parents and the extended family attended including: brothers; sisters; aunts; and uncles. It was established that the family would prefer that child safety attend but make no comments or talk about the past as the children were on a Long-Term Guardianship Order. The roles of the Cultural Practice Advisor, Senior Team Leader and Child Safety Officer in the meeting were to allow space for the family to connect.

A Yarning Mat was placed in the back yard under a tree. Acknowledgements and introductions were made followed by the Convenor talking about self-determination and how each young person's needs can be met, and how child safety can support the whole family. Both parents contributed at the meeting.

After the meeting was finished the father, on his own initiative, started cooking the sausages that the Convenor had purchased. One of the children made a comment this was the first time dad had cooked for the family in a long time and it made her feel really happy.

The Convenor organised a painting to be done with all of the family's handprints as well as staff, including comments from the young people. This was a form of an agreement that had occurred at the meeting.

The grandmother was happy that the five core elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle were used throughout the day, because it reverted back to the importance of country and connection to culture. She also expressed how encouraging it was to connect with an Aboriginal

women from child safety throughout the process, which made her feel safe and empowered. She commented on how this process could really change outcomes for the department.

Every day, our staff and partners support thousands of Queenslanders experiencing vulnerability or who are at risk. Some of our dedicated Child Safety Officers from South West Region talk about their inspirational clients.

“As a teenager this young person really struggled with her identity as she had not known her mother or father since birth. Even though she was with amazing carers she was missing the biological connection. I did some research and made contact with her mother and over a few months the young person and her mum began to exchange letters and photos, slowly this connection progressed to a couple of phone calls. The trauma-based behaviours this young person had been showing decreased and she started to be more positive about her future.”

“In the last 12 months one young lady has worked incredibly hard with the endless support of her carers, child safety and the support agency. She graduated high school last year whilst also completing a course in beauty, working two part-time jobs and pursuing her passions of modelling and cheerleading. This young lady was able to get her license and buy her first car! The service centre is so proud of her achievements. She is very hard working and driven young women, and is so excited for this new chapter of adulthood and where life will take her”.

“Due to a very strong supportive family network, mother and baby were able to remain together and child safety were able to step back and support the family in ensuring the baby was safe and mum received the right support – no orders were needed.”

“This year we have had a young man, who has resided in 24 hour youth work care for the last five years, move into Semi-Independent Living Support (SILS) and start a Traineeship in Hospitality. This young person struggled with his education after year 7, so this is a wonderful achievement and he should be very proud of himself. He is growing into a responsible young person....we are so proud of him”.

“A young aboriginal teenager chose her own placement, maintained connection to her sport and represented Queensland during 2018-19”.

“A young teenage girl made a regional AFL Team earlier in the year, excelling in a sport that has been dominated by males – she is a great role model for other young girls.”

Moreton Region

The Early Indigenous Response Collective (EIRC) is a local initiative established across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in the child protection sector, in partnership with Maroochydore Child Safety Service Centre in achieving greater outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families entering the tertiary child protection system.

The Maroochydore EIRC was established in April 2017, with the explicit aim of reducing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering care.

Since the group's commencement two years ago, there has been a 73 per cent reduction in the need for in-home interventions being opened in the tertiary system with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

The group celebrated being awarded for 'Innovation within the sector' in achieving best outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people at the inaugural Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Community Controlled Child Protection Awards in September 2018.

The **HALT** model was set up in the Brisbane District Regional Intake Service in November 2018 to stop and safely divert Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from the child protection system. As at 30 June 2019, the model has successfully diverted 101 individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from our local Child Protection system, while actively linking these children and families with the necessary supports available through our funded services.

An intervention program developed by the department, **Walking with Dads** is applying a domestic violence-informed lens to support fathers to take parental responsibility and be accountable for the harm their behaviours cause in families.

The Walking with Dads program works directly with both parents and is delivering positive and safer outcomes for children. The program also builds the capability of all child safety staff to be domestic violence informed in their assessment, collaboration and intervention casework.

An evaluation of the Walking with Dads initiative is in the process of being finalised by Dr Silke Meyer from the Domestic and Family Violence Centre at the Central Queensland University. An initial early stage evaluation report confirms the benefits and positive outcomes associated with the program. The final report will include the view of professionals, stakeholders and a small sample of parents.

One of our dedicated Mt Gravatt Child Safety Officer speaks about her role.

"I guess an area that really caught my interest was engaging with families who've had their children removed from them. At times, you know, things go wrong in people's lives and people make the wrong choices, but I think we're there to help them and support them and get them back on their feet so that they can have that ongoing contact with their children.

There's definitely a lot of challenges in our role, but you do see families get back on their feet and you do see children go home to their families and you do see change. It does fire you up, it really gives you hope as well. I do feel like I am making a difference."

Our future priorities

After our first full financial year of operation and the creation of the new Department of Youth Justice it was timely to develop a new *Strategic Plan 2019-2023*. The plan has a clear focus on listening to our clients and it provides a strong vision and purpose, clear objectives and strategies and demonstrates how we contribute to the Government's objectives for the community, *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities*.

Our key objectives and strategies will drive this work to:

- enable the safety and wellbeing of children and young people experiencing vulnerability, especially those in or leaving care
- end domestic, family and sexual violence and abuse
- enable young people to have their voice heard and provide opportunities to lead and contribute
- promote gender equality and provide opportunities to lead and contribute
- value and support our staff.

Our key priorities for 2019-20

Through the *Supporting Families Changing Futures 2019-23* strategy, we will continue to invest in frontline services and create stronger networks of services and partnerships to support families experiencing vulnerability to help keep their children safe and well, and to improve wellbeing for children in care.

New and enhanced initiatives under *Our Way*, a generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system by 2037, will also be progressed. The second *Changing Tracks Action Plan 2020-2022* will be developed to deliver culturally responsive child, youth, family support, domestic violence and care services.

The department will continue to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Queensland Family and Child Commission.

We are working to deliver quality services through a capable and motivated workforce including an additional 116 new frontline staff over the next three years.

The department is leading and facilitating efforts to prevent and respond to domestic and family violence, including engagement with community and corporate stakeholders. We will continue to contribute to the implementation of the *Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy*.

New and expanded services will be rolled out to prevent and respond to youth sexual violence including community education activities and place-based trials to respond to young people who have experienced sexual violence or are engaging in early sexual offending behaviour.

The department will continue to lead the *Queensland Women's Strategy* to encourage government, the private sector and the wider community to take significant action to achieve gender equality in Queensland.

We will also continue leading the *Queensland Youth Strategy* to create opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making that will affect their lives now and in the future.