




Speech By
Jason Hunt

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2022

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr HUNT** (Caloundra—ALP) (3.33 pm): I rise to speak to report No. 31 as it relates to the Queensland Child Commission and its oversight by the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee. The committee held a public hearing with Principal Commissioner of the QFCC, Luke Twyford, and QFCC Commissioner Natalie Lewis on 28 March 2022, and also reviewed the QFCC's annual report 2020-2021 which was tabled on 30 September 2021. The QFCC annual report advises on the QFCC's performance in relation to its priorities which are identified as awareness, advocacy and accountability.

In 2020-21, the QFCC undertook some significant work and reports in the following areas: *Changing the sentence: overseeing Queensland's youth justice reforms* was an oversight project to examine options for further youth justice systems and processes to ensure investment decisions are implemented to support the best outcome for children, young people and the community.

Seeing they are safe: responsiveness to 5 day and 10 day notifications of child harm in Queensland was a review which examined the differing context in which the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs delivers its investigation and assessment function and the complexities and challenges facing its frontline workforce. The report found some improvements in response times and innovation in investigation and assessment approaches, but also that there is a delay between when an investigation and assessment process is commenced and the child safety officer sighting the child. The Rights, Voices, Stories project focused on the experiences and perspectives of children and young people who rely on the child protection system to stay safe and well, as well as identifying their views on outcomes that they believe should be measured.

The act requires the QFCC to report on the performance of Queensland's child protection system in achieving state and national goals; Queensland's child protection system performance over time in comparison to other jurisdictions; and Queensland's progress in reducing the number of, and improving the outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system. To this end, the QFCC conducts annual data collection activities, including surveys of the community and frontline child protection and family support sector workforce, and designing and conducting system-level evaluations.

One of the critical areas on which the QFCC records data is in relation to child deaths, and the news in this area is mixed. While infant mortality rates continue to decline, as have unexplained infant deaths, youth suicide has increased and our First Nations people continue to be over-represented in mortality statistics. That said, the QFCC is developing a child death prevention strategy which focuses on using the research and analysis of Queensland's child death data to influence child death prevention practices and policy changes.

As part of its responsibility to engage with and take account of the views of children, young people and their families, and uphold the rights of children to participate in decision-making that affects their lives, the QFCC promotes and raises awareness of their rights in a number of ways. In 2020-21, they

sought participation from children and young people through three key engagement mechanisms: the Growing Up in Queensland project, the Families are First project, and the QFCC Youth Advisory Council. I single out for special mention the Growing Up in Queensland 2020 project to provide opportunities to share their views and to discuss issues that matter to children the most, and the online safety initiative, Out of the Dark, to prevent, recognise and respond to online child sexual exploitation. As the parent of a 10-year-old boy, I do admit to having one or two anxious moments when he is online, and I have contemplated tossing his iPad out of the window on more than a few occasions, so I am highly appreciative of the QFCC's work in this space.

In closing, I would very sincerely like to commend Mr Luke Twyford and Ms Natalie Lewis for both the breadth and the very high quality of their report to the committee. On that basis, I commend the report to the House.