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## Media Release

### Commission reports on 509 Qld child deaths in 2006-07

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian has released its Annual Report on the Deaths of Children and Young People in Queensland, detailing the causes of death of the 509 children under 17 who died in 2006-07.

Of these, 382 children died of diseases and morbid conditions and 104 children died of external causes such as transport accidents, drowning, fire and suicide. These external causes can be reduced by effective prevention and intervention efforts.

Transport accidents were the leading cause of death for the second year running for those aged 10 to 14 (12 deaths) and 15 to 17 year (25 deaths).

Suicide was the second highest cause of death for these age groups, with 8 deaths of 10 to 14-year-olds and 11 deaths of 15 to 17-year-olds.

Commissioner, Elizabeth Fraser said she was deeply concerned to see that Indigenous children and young people suicided at seven times the rate of the general population (22.2 per 100,000 compared with 3.0 per 100,000).

"The loss of any young life through suicide is tragic and an increase of four deaths on last year's figures is very worrying," Ms Fraser said.

Of the 19 suicides in 2006-07, six children were identified as Aboriginal and five of these were aged 10 to 14.

"These findings highlight the importance of taking threats of suicide seriously, even in primary school aged children, and seeking help and support as soon as possible," Ms Fraser said.

The report also highlights drowning as an area of concern. Of the 18 children who drowned in 2006-07, 13 were aged between one and four.

The Commissioner welcomed yesterday's release of the National Drowning Report 2007 by the Royal Life Saving Society Australia, saying it will help focus people's attention on the need to 'keep watch' - always supervise in and around the water.

"This age group is particularly vulnerable to drowning," the Commissioner said.

"We have lost 230 children aged between one and four to drowning since 1991 - I think everyone would agree this figure is far too high.

"Because young children are curious about water, they are particularly vulnerable to drowning as they experience increased mobility and a desire to explore their environment."

The Commission's report recognised the impact of mandatory pool fencing laws on drowning in pools, with the Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit estimating pool fencing has saved the lives of at least seven children a year.

The Commission is responsible for keeping a register of all child deaths in the state.

It reports annually on child death trends and makes recommendations around areas of policy or practice which need to be focused on to reduce or prevent future child deaths.

Help and support for children and young people is available from Lifeline on 131 114 or Kids Help Line on 1800 55 1800.

**For more information contact Lisa Connors on 3033 0220.**