

6 The year ahead

Key messages

- To date, the child death review process has been viewed as an operational and strategic tool in the reform of the child protection system, a role in which it has helped to enhance accountability and driven important areas of change.
- The current child protection environment is characterised by a need for clear pathways to continuous improvement.
- The CDCRC can assist by focusing its strategic direction at a broader, system-wide level that builds on gains made to date and draws discrete service delivery issues into a coordinated system-level approach.
- Child death reviews need to strike a critical balance between the individual circumstances and events relating to the child and the application of these individual cases to their context within the broader system.
- The industry expertise of the CDCRC and the planned redefinition of its review criteria will help to facilitate this dual focus.

59

This chapter outlines some of the priorities of the CDCRC in 2008–09.

Sharpening the focus of CDCRC recommendations

There is a need for the CDCRC to clearly and consistently communicate with the department and its partner agencies about the role and outcomes of the CDCRC process. This has prompted the CDCRC to consider ways in which it can more openly share its findings and recommendations, while maintaining diligence in its requirement for confidentiality.

Therefore the CDCRC will ensure that its ongoing focus on evidence-based outcomes, achieved through transparent and accountable practice, is communicated to its stakeholders. In 2008–09, the CDCRC will frame its recommendations according to the following discrete themes:

- identified systemic issues in current policies and procedures of the department and/or its child protection partners
- scope for enhanced, coordinated service delivery
- significant issues of staff conduct and/or professional practice, and
- opportunities for innovation across the child protection sector which are in the best interests of children.

These themes, which have been developed based on their potential for holistic and systemic improvement across the sector, will guide the CDCRC's analysis and will form a benchmark against which the CDCRC will consider all child death reviews.



Review criteria

The existing review criteria used by the CDCRC in undertaking its child death reviews have been a strong foundation for the operation of the CDCRC to date and have provided a logical and structured avenue through which the CDCRC has contributed to strengthening the department's capacity to undertake child death reviews. The CDCRC will reconsider the adequacy of its existing review criteria, partly in view of the department's consistent quality of reviews and also as a means of providing a broader systemic focus for future reviews.

Qualitative data reporting

The CDCRC acknowledges the wealth of information, gathered through child death reviews, that accumulates to paint a vivid contextual profile of children within the child protection system. This information includes:

- information about the child's family composition and circumstances
- details of the child's physical, psychological and emotional history and development
- type, extent and duration of the child protection history of the child and his/her sibling(s), and
- interrelationships of key risk and protective factors.

In many cases, the descriptive and contextual information contained in child death reviews is potentially of broad value for understanding the child's individual pathway to contact with the statutory child protection system and for assessing the complex risk factors, vulnerabilities and socio-demographic profile of the child protection cohort. This in turn may facilitate more meaningful recommendations for programs and systems of prevention, early intervention and service to children, which aligns with the broad contribution the CDCRC makes to improving the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Queensland.

In 2008–09, the CDCRC will further develop its data capture systems and structures to record key qualitative variables for each child death review which it considers. Increased linkages with other work units within the Commission, facilitated through the implementation of an integrated case management system, will also allow this qualitative data to enhance and support data gathered across other aspects of the child protection sector and contribute further to better outcomes for children.