

Introduction

The first Snapshot report released in 2002 by the Commission, *Children and young people in Queensland: a snap shot 2002*, explored the concept of indicators of wellbeing and the literature around this. It provided statistics on a range of issues relating to children and young people, as well as highlighting the difficulties of measuring general health and wellbeing, particularly the limitations and the usefulness of available administrative data. This report does not revisit that analysis. Using the first report as a basis, the 2003 Snapshot focuses on presenting available data and updates and expands on the profile in the first report.

This report has a number of purposes. First, by bringing together existing data, it provides an overview of the wellbeing of Queensland's children and young people – a unique composite picture. Second, additional data allow for comparisons over time, national and Queensland comparisons and comparisons with Indigenous children and young people, our most vulnerable group. These holistic insights can provide a lens for decision-making. Third, by identifying gaps in data around significant issues, the report points the way for changes to occur in data collection. Finally, information on complementary resources is included for those interested in more general community indicators, and on recent significant initiatives designed to meet identified needs either in data collection or service delivery.

Readers will find some differences from the first publication. This report is structured differently, and provides more data than last year's report. For example, maps are included for the first time to give a clear picture of the distribution of children around the state, the distribution of Indigenous children and children in single parent families. In addition, there are four times as many figures and tables in this year's report as in last year's.

Some new areas covered in this report rely on information available only periodically, with the Census and survey data on health and child care being the key examples. Future releases from the Commission will update these areas only when new data become available. Some areas not covered in this report may be included in future Snapshots when suitable data are accessible – for example, the dental, sexual and mental health of children and young people.

The report has been structured into chapters which focus on particular categories considered 'indicators' of wellbeing. It summarises available data and provides some analysis of trends within those areas, keeping in mind that caution is needed when interpreting trends.

A new feature is the Key Statistics chapter, which provides a list of indicators of the wellbeing of children and young people in the form of one long table. It focuses on significant areas of concern across all aspects of wellbeing and allows for short and long term comparisons on these indicators, and comparisons with Indigenous children and young people. The plight of Queensland Indigenous children and young people emerges very clearly from this juxtaposition of data.

In this chapter, where available, data from ten years before and from one year before are included as a comparison, giving the reader some indication of trends. This also includes national data as a basis for comparison, whereas later chapters focus on Queensland. National data show Queensland data in a different light. For example, if we consider drowning deaths of children 0 to 4, the annual rate in Queensland has decreased over ten years from 10.2 per 100,000 to 6.1 per 100,000 in the three years 1999-2001. However, we see this in a different light when we compare it with the national rate of 2.9 per 100,000.

The data in this Key Statistics chapter will be updated in each subsequent report and it is anticipated that the gaps that exist in the current data will be filled over time.

The Population chapter uses information from Census 2001 to provide a demographic snapshot of children and young people in Queensland, covering age and sex profiles and cultural diversity.

Maps produced from regional Census data illustrate the distribution of particular focus groups – young children, Indigenous children, and children in single parent families. In addition, projections of population change over the next 50 years allow us to consider the impact of the ageing population. This chapter will not be included in later publications until new data are released from Census 2006.

The Family chapter relies predominantly on births and divorce data released annually by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to examine the changing nature of family structures – in fertility rates, the age at which parents have babies and the prevalence of single parent or blended families.

The Health chapter draws on data from several sources. The health and disability status sections rely on survey data which will only be updated periodically. Other sections look at injury-related hospitalisations, risk factors such as remote births, low birth weight and short gestation and protective factors such as immunisation and breastfeeding.

The Deaths chapter considers trends in mortality rates by age and Indigenous status, and the leading causes of death in children and young people, particularly from external causes.

Children and young people at risk of child abuse or neglect are of particular concern to the Commission, and the Child Protection chapter looks in detail at the characteristics of children and young people in the child protection system and the use of protection orders and out-of-home care.

The data in the Child Care chapter is based on the latest survey data, and includes the type of care provided, the ages of children in care, the hours spent in care, and the need for additional care. Government reports focusing on registered child care services will be used as data sources in future Snapshot reports.

Data have been drawn from several sources for the Education chapter, with statistics on participation and retention to Year 12, on academic achievement as measured by statewide testing in Years 3, 5 and 7, and on disciplinary absences. As well as comparisons by sex, Indigenous status and language background have also been presented where available.

The Social chapter brings together available statistics on youth employment, the use of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs, homelessness, the use of Kids Help Line, victimisation, and youth offending.

Many aspects of community wellbeing impact on the whole population, such as crime levels, access to services, feelings of safety, alcohol abuse, community cohesion/conflict, economic hardship and unemployment. These all contribute to the wellbeing and health of children and young people. However, only some of these are included in this report as the more general community indicators may be found other reports such as the *Priorities in Progress* series (Queensland Treasury), and national series such as *Australia's Health*, *Australia's Wellbeing* (both from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) and *Australian Social Trends* (ABS).

In the concluding chapter of this report, we look at some of the positive moves underway to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people, and at areas where there are information gaps which need to be addressed.