

# 1 Introduction

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This report, the fifth in the Commission's *Snapshot* series, presents data gathered from many and varied sources to paint a composite (although incomplete) picture of Queensland children and young people with respect to their safety and wellbeing. In bringing these data together for consideration and discussion on an annual basis, the Commission aims for continuous improvement of data quality and utility through prompt and meaningful inclusion of new and relevant information and progressive closure of gaps in the data. The report also identifies significant initiatives designed to deal with issues highlighted in the data and affecting children and young people in Queensland.

Although *Snapshot 2007* draws on the most recently available information, not all information required for the report is updated annually by the data owners. Key examples are census statistics and survey data on health and child care. To ensure continuity of the report's "stand alone" capacity, information from previous *Snapshot* reports is repeated where updated data are not available.

New sources of information included in this *Snapshot* fill some of the gaps identified in previous *Snapshots* – with national data being used to fill some gaps where Queensland data are unavailable. The report is structured in chapters that focus on specific data categories, summarise the available data, and discuss relevant trends or issues evident in the data.

Chapter 2, "Key statistics", provides indicators of the health and wellbeing of children and young people in the form of tables on population and families; mortality; health; child abuse; child care and education; and crime, drug use and homelessness. It provides 10-year time series, giving the reader an indication of trends, and makes comparisons with Indigenous children and young people. The poor comparative health and wellbeing of Queensland Indigenous children and young people emerge very clearly from these data.

The tables in this chapter also include national data as a basis for comparison, whereas later chapters focus specifically on Queensland. The data in Chapter 2 will be updated in each subsequent *Snapshot*, and the gaps that exist in the current data are expected to be filled over time.

Chapter 3, "Vulnerable children", is a summary of statistics relating to children with identified risk factors, with the aim of heightening our focus on children whose needs should be given priority.

Chapter 4, "Population", uses information from Census 2001 and more recent estimates of resident populations to provide a demographic snapshot of children and young people in Queensland, covering various age 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.

Chapter 5, "Family", relies on data on births, household surveys and divorce released each year by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to examine the changing nature of family structures – including aspects such as fertility rates, the age at which parents have babies and the prevalence of single-parent or blended families.

Chapter 6, "Health", draws on data from several sources. The sections on health and reported disability rely on survey data which can only be updated periodically. Other sections look at long-term health conditions, oral health and hospitalisations. Information on the early years includes risk factors such as remote births, low birthweight and short gestation, and protective factors such as immunisation and breastfeeding. Other sections include information on youth issues such as sexual health and tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug use.

Chapter 7, "Deaths", 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 such as drowning and transport accidents.

Children and young people at risk of child abuse or neglect are of particular concern to the Commission. Chapter 8, "Child protection", looks in detail at the characteristics

of children and young people in the child protection system, rates of substantiated abuse and neglect, rates of re-substantiation, and the use of protective orders and out-of-home care. Information has been obtained from the Department of Child Safety and from national reports on child protection systems from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and the Productivity Commission. The Commission's *Child Guardian Report 2006* provides information on the outcomes for children and young people in the child safety and juvenile justice systems, while *Views of Children and Young People in Care – Queensland 2006* provides valuable insights into the children's perspectives of the child safety system.

The data in Chapter 9, "Early childhood education and care", are based primarily on the national Child Care Survey, and include the type of care provided, the hours spent in care and the need for additional care.

Data have been drawn from several sources for Chapter 10, "Education and employment", which includes statistics on participation and retention to Year 12, on academic achievement as measured by state-wide

testing in Years 3, 5 and 7, and on school suspensions and exclusions. Comparisons by sex, Indigenous status and language background have been presented where available. The chapter also includes information on employment rates of children and young people, and on their safety in the workplace.

Chapter 11 brings together police and justice statistics on victimisation and youth offending.

More general community indicators can be found in other reports such as the *Priorities in Progress* series (Queensland Treasury) and national series such as *Australia's Health* and *Australia's Welfare* (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) and *Australian Social Trends* (Australian Bureau of Statistics). The Department of Communities' *Partnerships Queensland: Baseline Report 2006* adds to these with information on the health and wellbeing of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The final chapter of this report looks at some of the initiatives and strategies designed to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people.