

Our ref: 2025-00555

**PUBLIC**

24 March 2026

Mr Paul Anastassiou KC  
Commissioner  
Commission of Inquiry into the Child Safety System

**Sent by email:** [secretariat@childsafetyinquiry.qld.gov.au](mailto:secretariat@childsafetyinquiry.qld.gov.au)

Dear Commissioner

Thank you for your letter of 13 February 2026.

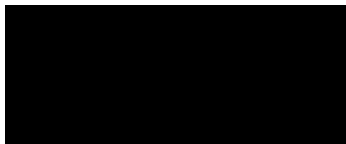
You have invited the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman (this Office) to make a submission to the Commission of Inquiry into the Child Safety System on any of its terms of reference.

To assist the Commission, I provide the attached submission which includes information about:

- the role of this Office in receiving and investigating complaints about Queensland public sector agencies, including about the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (Child Safety)
- Child Safety complaints received by this Office in 2023, 2024 and 2025
- two investigations by this Office into Child Safety's complaints management system
- a current investigation by this Office into matters related to child safety and agencies that interacted with two children with disability.

If you have any questions or require further information from this Office, please telephone me or Assistant Ombudsman Ms Barbara Petrie on (07) 3005 7040, or email to [investigations@ombudsman.qld.gov.au](mailto:investigations@ombudsman.qld.gov.au).

Yours faithfully



Anthony Reilly  
Queensland Ombudsman

**Att.**

## **Queensland Ombudsman submission to the Commission of Inquiry into the Child Safety System**

### **The role of the Ombudsman**

#### *Administrative improvement*

The Office of the Queensland Ombudsman is an independent statutory body established under the *Ombudsman Act 2001*.

We investigate complaints about the administrative actions and decisions of state government departments, local councils and public authorities. We can also investigate complaints about non-government entities that deliver services to the community on behalf of these agencies.

We investigate a range of issues from these complaints, including systemic issues. We aim to conduct our investigations efficiently and informally. The Ombudsman can also:

- investigate formally using coercive powers
- commence investigations of his own initiative.

The Ombudsman makes recommendations for improvement where it has been identified an agency has acted unreasonably or unjustly or made decisions that are unlawful or wrong.

The Ombudsman is accountable to Parliament.

We receive approximately 12,000 contacts a year. Of these, approximately 7,000 relate to agencies within our jurisdiction.

#### *Public interest disclosures*

We also receive and assess public interest disclosures under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010*.

We monitor how agencies meet their obligations under this Act by collecting data about public interest disclosures and monitoring trends. We provide regular training for agencies as well as provide standards for how agencies should deal with public interest disclosures.

#### *Inspector of Detention Services*

The Ombudsman has an additional role as the Inspector of Detention Services under the *Inspector of Detention Services Act 2022*.

The role of the Inspector is to review detention services, inspect places of detention and report on these activities. The Inspector can make recommendations to improve detention services and places of detention.

### **Complaints about Child Safety**

The Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (Child Safety) is an agency within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

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In the last few years, we received the following number of complaints about Child Safety:

- 334 in 2022-2023
- 312 in 2023-2024
- 439 in 2024-2025.

Common issues raised by complainants about Child Safety include:

- statutory intervention/decisions
- ongoing case management
- foster carer and kinship carer assessments and payments
- child placement decisions
- staff behaviour, communication or alleged misconduct.

The significant increase between 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 was driven by complaints about intervention and foster/kinship care.

Most Child Safety complaints are finalised by our Intake team. We decline to investigate most complaints made about Child Safety at the preliminary assessment stage because either:

- the complainant has not exhausted Child Safety's complaints management process; or
- the complainant has a right of review or appeal at a tribunal or court; this Office cannot review decisions made by a tribunal or court.

Of the complaints investigated, most are discontinued because Child Safety's actions or decisions are considered reasonable in the circumstances.

### **Investigation reports about Child Safety**

This Office has conducted 2 formal investigations into Child Safety's complaints management in recent years. Both investigations resulted in public reports published by former Ombudsman Mr Phil Clarke.

#### *2016 investigation*

This investigation examined Child Safety's complaints management and record-keeping. It identified that Child Safety had not been capturing all child safety complaints issues due to inadequate complaint recording processes. The investigation also identified opportunities for Child Safety to work with the Office of the Public Guardian to better manage issues identified by Community Visitors.

The Ombudsman made 5 recommendations in his report, published in 2016, which focused on the need for more accurate recording and management of child safety complaints. Child Safety accepted the recommendations and agreed to implement internal systems and strategies. A copy of the investigation report can be found here: [Management of Child Safety Complaints Report - Queensland Ombudsman](#)

#### *2020 investigation*

This investigation focused on Child Safety's complaints management system (CMS) and reviewed the work undertaken by Child Safety to implement recommendations from the 2016 report.

The investigation identified that although Child Safety had taken steps to improve its complaint-handling processes, there were still issues. Child Safety's complaint-handling was observed to be protracted, ineffective and resulting in poor outcomes for complainants. The Ombudsman made 9 recommendations for administrative improvement all of which were accepted by the Director-General. A copy of the investigation report, published in 2020, can be found here:

[Management of child safety complaints - second report - Queensland Ombudsman](#)

### **Current own-initiative investigation**

In 2023, the Ombudsman commenced an own-initiative investigation into matters related to Public Hearing 33 of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Public Hearing 33 examined the experience of Kaleb and Jonathon, two young men with disability, and their interactions with various government departments and agencies.

The Royal Commission found the State of Queensland through the departments and agencies that engaged with Kaleb, Jonathon and Paul Barrett, could and should have done more to prevent Kaleb and Jonathon from experiencing violence, abuse, neglect and the deprivation of their human rights, having regard to the particular departments' or agencies' powers and responsibilities.

This Office's investigation has focussed on the practices and procedures of the Department of Education, the Department of Housing and Public Works (Housing), Queensland Health and Child Safety. The investigation has considered whether the current practices and procedures of these agencies are sufficient to prevent the type of harm that Kaleb and Jonathon suffered.

In April 2025, the Ombudsman published the first report of the investigation – [Preventing harm to children with disability in Queensland - Report 1: Department of Education](#).

In July 2025, the Ombudsman decided to discontinue investigation into Child Safety's practices and procedures while the Commission of Inquiry is underway having regard to its broad terms of reference.

In November 2025, the Ombudsman published the second report of the investigation - [Preventing harm to children with disability in Queensland – Report 2: Department of Housing and Public Works](#).

The Ombudsman has significantly progressed investigation into Queensland Health and intends to publish a report in due course.