

The Queensland Parent Advisory Committee (QPAC) Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The purpose, of the Queensland Parent Advisory Committee (henceforth called 'the QPAC') is to provide parent leadership that creates and maintains:

- (a) a voice for parents as stakeholders in the child protection and family support systems; and
- (b) a platform for parents' participation in developing government policies and practices that impact on their lives so as to improve outcomes for children and families.

2. The QPAC will be effective from the 6th December 2019 and continue until its termination has been agreed between all parties.

3. The QPAC is made up of approximately 15 members:

- **Parents (TBC approx. 9-18)** - parents who wish to contribute to advancing Queensland's child protection and family support system reforms.
 - parents must form at least **50% of total membership**
 - parent-members will ideally have had child protection experience **within the last five (5) years**, however parents from all walks of life may be considered
 - a diversity of perspectives is important: the Committee's parent-membership will have **experienced different parts of the 'system'** - from 'early support', through the range of orders, and reunification.
 - parents are not all expected to be literate: a **diversity** of backgrounds, abilities, preferences, learning and communication styles are valued.
 - five (5) parent-members must reside outside of Southeast Queensland.
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation is a priority.
- **Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women** (henceforth called 'the Department') (**approx. 2-3**) - departmental officers with sufficient decision-making authority to be able to work with parents on identified issues.
- **Minister**
- **Shared Secretariat:**
 - Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women: Senior Advisor, Service Delivery and Practice or similar.
 - Family Inclusion Network (FIN): Coordinator or their nominee.

4. **Application to join:** Applications to join the QPAC must be received in writing. New members will be selected by the existing QPAC members based on the applicant's ability to commit to the QPAC's Terms of Reference, and ensuring the membership maintains the diversity required (as above) – particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership, geographic variation, and diversity of members' experiences.

5. **Period of Membership ('tenure')**: Parent members will be appointed for the term of two (2) years, with the ability to re-nominate at the end of one term. The maximum parent membership period on the Committee is five (5) years. Note the following principles:

Continuity: Continuity of membership is important due to the high level of trust required between members, and the need for the group to move beyond the 'forming' stage of group development, towards the 'performing' stage. To retain continuity, the re-nomination of at least two (2) members must be encouraged at the end of each two-year period.

Membership changes: Notwithstanding the above, additional and/or replacement members may be considered by members at any time. Members may also withdraw from the QPAC at any time, and similarly nominate to re-join the Committee at any time. All membership decisions are determined by the QPAC.

6. **Meeting Frequency**: QPAC meetings will be held 3-4 times per year, for at least four hours, at a suitable venue.

'Parent preparation' sessions will also be an expectation for parent members. These sessions will generally be held on the day preceding the QPAC meeting: the sessions will focus on group development, member skill development, and identifying **priorities** for influence.

7. **Attendance**: If a member is unable to attend more than two meetings in a row, the Shared-Secretariat will contact the member to assess if there are any additional supports needed for the member to participate or if the member is unable to fully commit to the QPAC at this time.
8. **Independent Chair**: The QPAC will be chaired by an independent person agreed by Parents, FIN, and the Department. The Chair will have the same tenure as other members (see Period of Membership - above)
9. **Shared-Secretariat Support**: The QPAC and Chair will be supported by a Co-Secretariat provided by FIN and the Department (see Roles and Responsibilities - below).
10. The **roles and responsibilities** of QPAC members are described below.

Role	Responsibilities
Independent Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate meetings & decision-making processes Act as spokesperson if required or delegate as they determine
Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend meetings at identified time periods



Family Inclusion Network

Valuing children
Partnering with families
Embracing diversity

Shared-Secretariat (FIN & Dept)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrange agenda• Record minutes and monitor actions• Monitor and communicate factors and risks that may influence the Committee• Write and receive correspondence
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contribute skills and knowledge from their lived experiences (focusing on system issues and improvements rather than on active case issues)• Provide in-person or written testimony that highlight the issues parents face• Potentially participate in additional opportunities (outside of scheduled QPAC meetings), such as meeting with Government, responding to government discussion papers and consultations, or speaking at professional forums.
Family Inclusion Network (FIN,SEQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FIN has a central role as an ally for parents:• Provide information in response to enquiries (from parents or other stakeholders), and administer membership EOIs• Facilitate parents' participation – incl child care, travel, accommodation (if necessary), etc• Develop and conduct 'Parent preparation' sessions (group development, member skill development, and identifying priorities for influence)
The Department (Child Safety)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide expertise developed from their professional experience• Seek formal feedback from the QPAC members. (Responses to open Government consultations should be scheduled for QPAC meeting-times wherever possible)• Contribute updates and facilitate actions from their area of work• Advocate for the inclusion of parent voices in the development of legislation, policy and practice
All Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work together as a team• Open, honest and respectful discussions• Respect all personal and confidential information shared in the group• Excuse themselves from participation in any matter in which there is a 'Conflict of Interest' (real or perceived)• Attend all scheduled meetings (face-to-face, telephone, or on-line)• Make timely decisions and responses to agreed priorities and actions• Maintain objectivity and focus on the Committee's purpose• Be a role model for the Committee's purpose, both within <i>and outside</i> meetings• Share communications and information across the membership• Monitor and communicate factors that may influence the Committee• Notify members of potential risks and issues which may impact the Committee• Participate in continual improvement reviews of the Committee's purpose, roles and responsibilities – to be held at least annually.

11. **Decision-making and Quorum:** While the QPAC does not have governance or statutory decision-making responsibilities, it will make decisions or recommendations in relation to its operations and/or its purpose.

All decisions will be voted on and, if not passed unanimously, will follow a **consensus decision-making process**¹² and finally, a decision will be made by majority

Quorum (the minimum number of members necessary to make decisions) requires the majority of parent members to be present. Specifically a majority is “half the parent membership, plus one” (for example, when 9 parents are appointed, half is 4.5, plus 1 is 5.5, so quorum is 6. If 8 parents are appointed, half is 4, plus 1 is a quorum of 5.)

Decisions that **are time-critical** will be made with the consensus of only those who attend the meeting (providing there is quorum).

Decisions that **do not have an urgent time-frame** may be recorded in the minutes as ‘draft’ so that Members not present at a meeting are able to have their say. Decisions become final if no further input is received ten (10) business days after the distribution of the minutes. If input is received within this timeframe, the decision is taken back to the next meeting.

12. Payment and/or Re-imbusement:

Parents will receive:

- Remuneration for participation at the QPAC meetings at an appropriate ‘industry standard’³.
- Reasonable travel costs to attend QPAC meetings

¹ A **conflict of interest** would usually mean that a member has breached their responsibility to promote the best interests of the Committee and its purpose. Examples may include - if a member has an interest in a competing organisation or in a contrary policy position, or a member has a personal relationship with a membership applicant, or accepts financial benefit relating to their membership or the knowledge gained through membership.

² **Consensus decision-making** is a democratic decision-making process that requires that group members engage in a dialogue and share information for the purpose of increasing others’ understanding of the issues and to provide a rationale for choosing a particular position. By including the whole of the group in the discussion and decision-making process, everyone becomes invested. If only some group members participate, it is more likely that only those who were the biggest advocates would continue to provide support for a decision. To reach a consensus, there has to be a context or environment created that is conducive to respectful dialogue and the healthy exchange of ideas. There should be a mutual respect, common vision, or shared principles between group members in order for the group to succeed in reaching a worthwhile consensus.

³ **Industry standard remuneration** is based on Health Consumers Queensland, Remuneration And Reimbursement of Consumers, Oct 2015.

- Training and support to develop necessary skills including speaking with intelligence over emotion, self-care in disclosure, how systems look and work, and understanding community.

The Independent Chair will be remunerated by negotiation at an appropriate ‘industry standard’. Reasonable travel costs will also be reimbursed.

Departmental/Government members will not be remunerated as these members are paid professionals with relevant knowledge of policy and practice, who commit their time as an ‘in kind’ contribution. The reimbursement of reasonable travel costs may be considered.

The **Shared-Secretariat will not** be remunerated when they hold paid roles in FIN, or the Department.

13. **Amendment**, modification or variation of these Terms of Reference may only occur in writing, in consultation and agreement with the QPAC members.

Related documents:

Minutes (template)	
Action Register	
Membership register	
Expression of Interest form	

Controlled Document: **Final**

Approved by QPAC Date: 26th of March 2020

Next Review Date: First review date, 30th of September 2020 – then annually.