

Annual Report

2025–26



Queensland Sentencing
Advisory Council

Accessibility

The report provides detailed information about the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council's non-financial performance for 2025–26.

Open data

Information about consultancies, overseas travel and the Queensland Language Services Policy is available at the Queensland Government Open Data website (<https://data.qld.gov.au>).

Information about the Council's financial performance is available in the Department of Justice annual report 2025–26 at www.justice.qld.gov.au.

Public availability

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Online: ISSN 2208-5203

Feedback

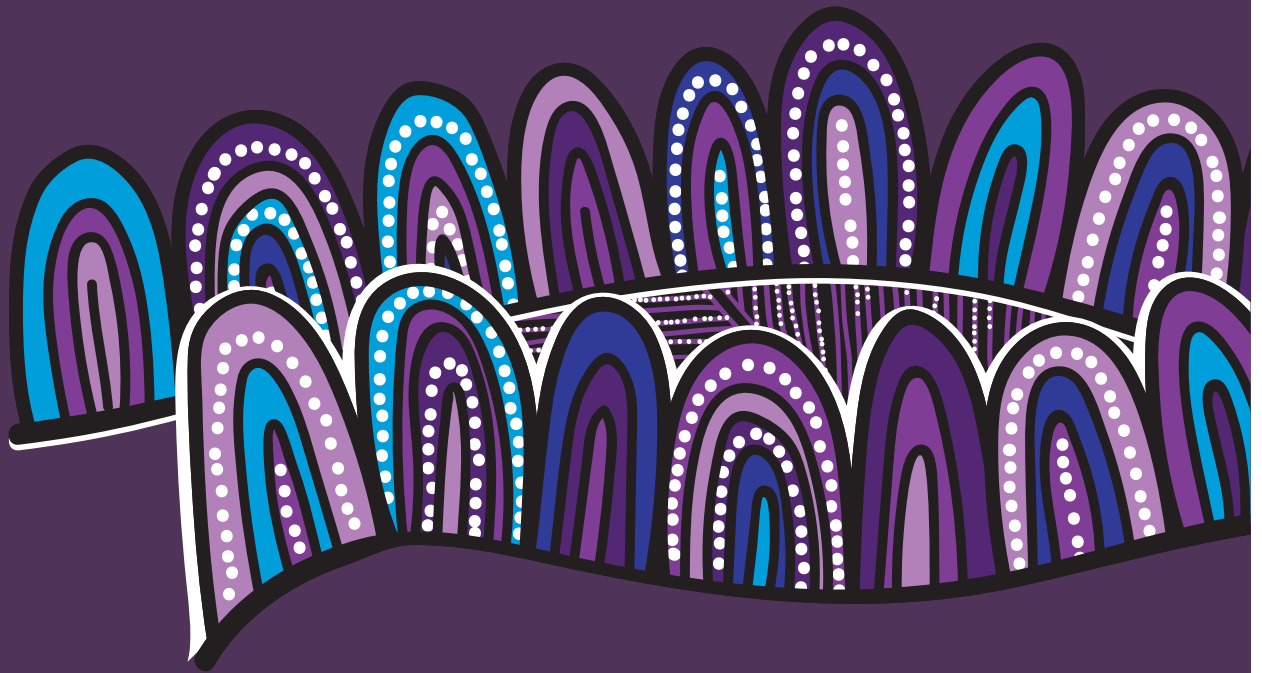
Feedback is important for improving the value of our future reports. We welcome comments, which can be made by contacting us at:

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Acknowledgement of country

We acknowledge and give our respects to the Traditional Owners and Caretakers of this land, where they have performed age-old ceremonies of storytelling, healing, music, dance and celebration. We would also like to acknowledge and give our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, traditions and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. The Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council recognises and prioritises the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to address their disproportionate representation in Queensland's criminal justice system. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporate artwork *Overcoming Obstacles* by Casey Coolwell was commissioned to embody our commitment to understanding the drivers of over-representation in the Queensland criminal system. To view the artwork please visit our [website](#).

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Statement of compliance

2 September 2026

The Honourable Deb Frecklington MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity
GPO Box 149
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Attorney-General,

I am pleased to deliver for presentation to Parliament the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council's 2025–26 Annual Report.

I certify that this annual report complied with the detailed requirements set out in the *Annual report requirements for Queensland Government agencies*.

A checklist outlining the annual reporting requirements is provided on page 27 of this annual report.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K O'Brien', with a large circular flourish at the start.

Kerry O'Brien AM
Chair
Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council

Chair's foreword



Kerry O'Brien AM
Chair
Queensland Sentencing
Advisory Council

I am delighted to present the 2025–26 Annual Report on behalf of the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council (the Council).

The past year has been one of significant change, with nine new members appointed to the Council after the terms of several former members concluded. I was honoured to be appointed as the new Chair following the conclusion of the Honourable Ann Lyons' tenure in August 2025.

The Council has focused on continuing to build its reputation as a respected authority on sentencing-related matters. This work included the completion of our response to a Terms of Reference on domestic and family violence sentencing reforms, promoting community understanding on sentencing through community engagement activities, holding sessions to educate the public about the sentencing process, and informing the community through our website and social media.

In February 2026, we delivered our report *The Tangled Web: Examining domestic and family violence sentencing reforms* to the Attorney-General. The report was a result of more than a year of research, data analysis, consultations, and reviews of case law surrounding two legislative reforms relating to domestic and family violence sentencing. We looked specifically at the increase in maximum penalties for contravening a domestic violence order and the introduction of domestic violence as an aggravating factor for the purpose of sentencing.

Our research found domestic and family violence is being treated more seriously by the courts when it comes to sentencing outcomes and practices. Our investigations led to the Council making two recommendations, 12 findings, and seven observations in *The Tangled Web*. These evidence-based recommendations and findings were informed by our months of consultation, research and investigations into the reforms.

We have also continued our commitment to educating the public on the sentencing process through our focus on engagement activities with community groups, education institutions and other stakeholders. We conducted free Judge for Yourself sessions, open to the public, at the Supreme Court Library Queensland and provided sessions to schools, universities, service providers and community groups. These sessions presented attendees with accessible information on the sentencing process.

In late 2025, we created a workshop designed to educate those working with people navigating the sentencing process as to the way in which the criminal justice system works. Since then, Foundations of Sentencing has been delivered to multiple organisations and service providers both online and in-person. These sessions give participants a foundational knowledge of sentencing, which may assist in their everyday work as they support those going through the process.

The training sessions are a part of our commitment to educate the public about the complex sentencing process and other sentencing matters. They are part of our strategy, including regular social media posts and newsletters, to inform the public about the latest changes to sentencing.

In early 2026, we embarked on a regional engagement tour to speak with various stakeholders about the Council's work and sentencing issues impacting their communities. We spoke to almost 60 key stakeholders spread across 10 different communities to gain their insights and perspectives on sentencing and discuss how our work can assist them. The conversations we had explored the nuances of each community from multiple different perspectives including legal stakeholders, community organisations, relevant service providers, and not-for-profit groups. Our discussions will help ensure our work continues to meet the needs of the community and our stakeholders.

Stakeholders showed great interest in participating in community consultation, providing their views and insights about their experiences with the sentencing process and criminal justice systems. They were appreciative of being able to provide their perspective as to what was working and what improvements could be made in the sentencing process. The consultations highlighted strong support for continued engagement from the Council, particularly in relation to improving public understanding of sentencing and informing policy

discussions with evidence-based data. Stakeholders also acknowledged the Council's online Sentencing DataHub were valuable to support evidence-based discussions and provide greater insight into regional and statewide sentencing trends.

The Council's reputation as the provider of Queensland specific sentencing statistics was enhanced through a series of updates to our Sentencing DataHub. In August 2025, we introduced an addition to the DataHub focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Custodial Sentences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples section of the Sentencing DataHub was launched to provide users with access to information on the drivers of custodial sentences for First Nations peoples and support evidence-based decision-making to develop effective early intervention programs.

In November 2025, we uploaded data for the 2024–25 financial year to ensure we continued to provide the public with the most up-to-date information possible. Our Sentencing DataHub enhancements continued in January 2026 with the addition of gender and other demographic detail to both the yearly trends and individual offence category sections of the website.

At the core of our work, we remain committed to engaging and informing the public about the sentencing process to help demystify the often-complex process.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Council members and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel for their support, advice, and expertise during this year of renewal and engagement.

I also thank all the Queenslanders who provided their insights and offered their unique perspectives in support of our work. It was a privilege to hear your thoughts, and I am grateful for the time and considered insight you have provided.

It has been an honour to serve as Chair during the past financial year, and I look forward to continuing the Council's work and building on its achievements in 2026–27.



Kerry O'Brien AM
Chair
Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council



Attorney-General and Minister for Justice the Hon. Deb Frecklington MP, Chair Kerry O'Brien AM, Council members and Secretariat Director April Chrzanowski at the June 2026 meeting.

Our organisation

About us

The Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council provides independent research and advice, seeks public views and promotes community understanding of sentencing matters. The Council, which was established in 2016, operates in accordance with part 12 of the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992*.

The Council consists of up to 14 members appointed by the Governor in Council following recommendation from the Attorney-General.

The Council:

- Informs the community about sentencing in Queensland through research and publications
- Engages with Queenslanders to gather their views on sentencing
- Advises the Attorney-General on matters relating to sentencing, if asked
- Publishes information to help enhance the general public's understanding of sentencing
- Provides the Court of Appeal written views about guideline judgements, if asked.

The Council also works closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel (the Advisory Panel), which provides independent advice and amplifies the voices of First Nations communities in sentencing reforms.

The Council is supported by a Secretariat of 11 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, employed by the Department of Justice. The Secretariat's expertise includes research, data analysis, media, community engagement, communications, legal policy, and administration.

Our commitment to First Nations peoples

The Advisory Panel, established in 2018, helps the Council address sentencing issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples and how those issues may contribute to the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the criminal justice system.

The Advisory Panel:

- Ensures the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are heard
- Provides insight into the impact of current sentencing practices on these communities
- Offers valuable recommendations to support reforms to improve outcomes for First Nations peoples.

The Advisory Panel is comprised of up to eight independent members – including experts, practitioners and advocates – and meets bi-monthly.

Vision and purpose



Vision

Just sentencing and community understanding.



Purpose

To inform, engage, and advise the community and government about sentencing in Queensland.

Our response to the Queensland Government's objectives for the community

The Council supports the Queensland Government's objectives by:

- Engaging with Queenslanders and promoting understanding of sentencing and its implications
- Providing insights through data-driven analysis to help inform sentencing reforms
- Educating the public by enhancing transparency and awareness of sentencing practices and process and legislative changes.

Our commitment to human rights

The Council aligns its strategies and activities with the *Human Rights Act 2019*, striving to ensure all actions respect, protect, and promote human rights. This commitment is reflected in every aspect of our work during 2025–26.

Our strategic objectives in 2025–26

This annual report highlights the Council's achievements under its 2025–26 Strategic Plan, structured around three core pillars: Advise, Engage, and Inform.

Advise



Engage



Inform



Advise

Provide evidence-based advice on sentencing

In 2025–26, the Council completed part two of our Terms of Reference from the former Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, issued in May 2023. In this part, we were asked to examine the impact of the increase to maximum penalties for the offence of contravention of a domestic violence order (CDVO), the introduction of domestic violence as an aggravating factor for sentencing and its impact on victim satisfaction. We were also asked to identify any trends or anomalies with sentencing of domestic and family violence (DFV) offences generally.

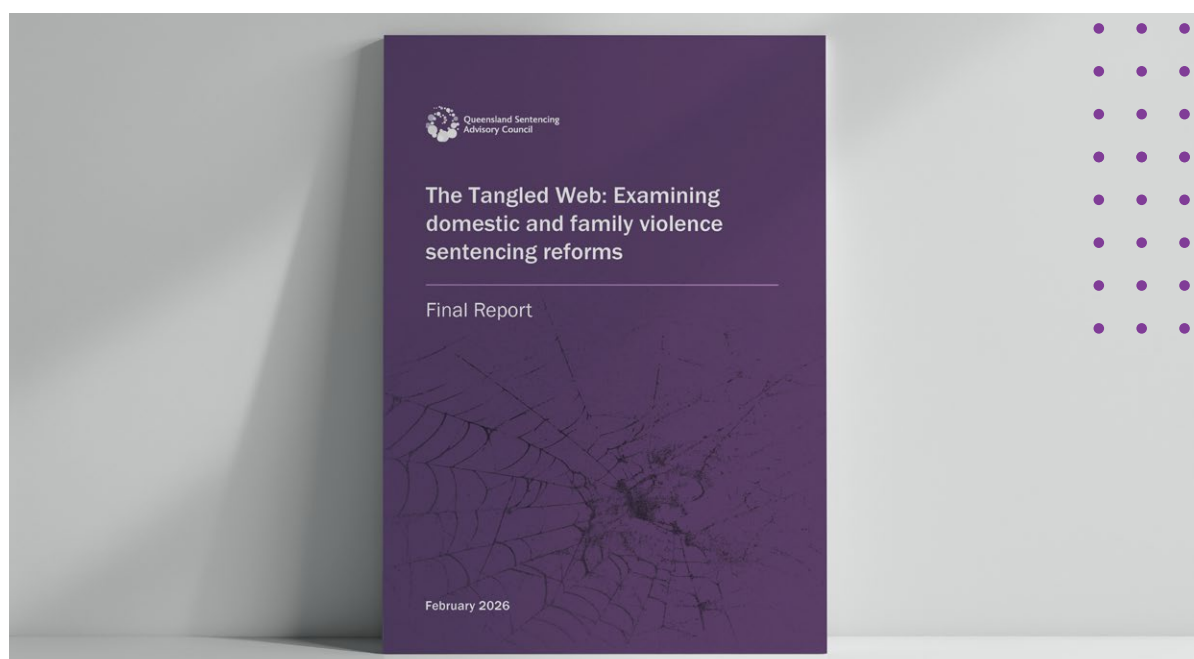
In response to this aspect of the Terms of Reference, the Council used a multi-method research design, combining administrative data analysis, case law reviews, stakeholder consultations and commissioned research. The Council conducted extensive consultation with victim-survivors and service providers. The Council extends its gratitude to those who contributed their time, expertise, and lived experience. In February 2026, we delivered our report to the Attorney-General: *The Tangled Web: Examining domestic and family violence sentencing reforms*.

The report found that overall, there was an increase in the seriousness of penalty outcomes for domestic violence offences and CDVO. However, as these reforms occurred during a period of significant system-wide change, we could not conclusively attribute these changes to the reforms alone.

Commissioned research into victim-survivor satisfaction also found that whilst there was limited awareness of the aggravating factor among victim-survivors, their satisfaction was enhanced by a range of other circumstances. This included:

- when there was recognition of violence and its harm
- the process was fair, treatment in the courtroom was respectful
- there was an opportunity to participate and proceedings are timely.

This research raised broader questions about how the effectiveness of sentencing reforms are



measured, and the importance of addressing systemic issues such as court delays, secondary victimisation, and the lack of culturally safe practices.

The Council's report ultimately made seven observations, 12 findings and two recommendations. These recommendations were focused on opportunities to strengthen the evidence base and support future monitoring and evaluation of sentencing reform:

- Pre-sentence custody not declared but taken into account should be routinely recorded to support monitoring and evaluation efforts (recommendation 1)
- Standardised linked data sets should be developed for the purpose of supporting research and evaluation (recommendation 2).

The Council also explained the outcomes of the report to stakeholders and community members during the Council's regional engagement tour between April and June. Many of these stakeholders had been consulted during the Council's development of the report.

The Council's work continued to influence sentencing reform during 2025–26 through the implementation of key recommendations from our *Sentencing of Sexual Assault and Rape: The Ripple Effect* (Final Report, December 2024). On 1 November 2025, the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992* (Qld) was amended to introduce:

- a new sentencing purpose requiring courts to recognise the harm caused by an offender to a victim
- new guidance restricting the use of good character evidence in sexual offences
- a new aggravating factor where the victim of sexual assault or rape is 16 or 17 years old and
- ensuring victims are not disadvantaged if victim impact statements are not provided.

Together, these reforms reinforce the seriousness of this conduct, enhance the recognition of victim harm in sentencing and reflect some of the Council's evidence-based recommendations aimed at ensuring sentencing outcomes for sexual assault and rape offences reflect community expectations. The Queensland Government also committed to conducting holistic reviews of the sentencing guidelines in section 9 of the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992* (Qld), and the victim impact statement regime as part of the next stage to address the Council's recommendations.

Throughout the year, the Council also met with key members of the judiciary and legal profession more broadly to discuss the findings from the Terms of Reference, and met with stakeholders to share information about updates to our Sentencing DataHub which included annual updates to trend information and the provision of additional demographic information relating to sentencing outcomes.

Members of the Council and Secretariat also continued to contribute to the legal and criminal justice system through:

- Presenting at the Applied Research in Crime and Justice Conference on community views on rape and sexual assault sentencing
- Presenting at the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology Conference on the nature of conduct charged and sentenced for CDVO
- Mentoring law students through work placements

- Participating in the Community Legal Centers Queensland annual conference.

The Council was not requested to provide advice to the Court of Appeal on guideline judgements during 2025–26.



Council members Nathan Crane and Chris Anderson, and Secretariat Director April Chrzanowski in Gympie



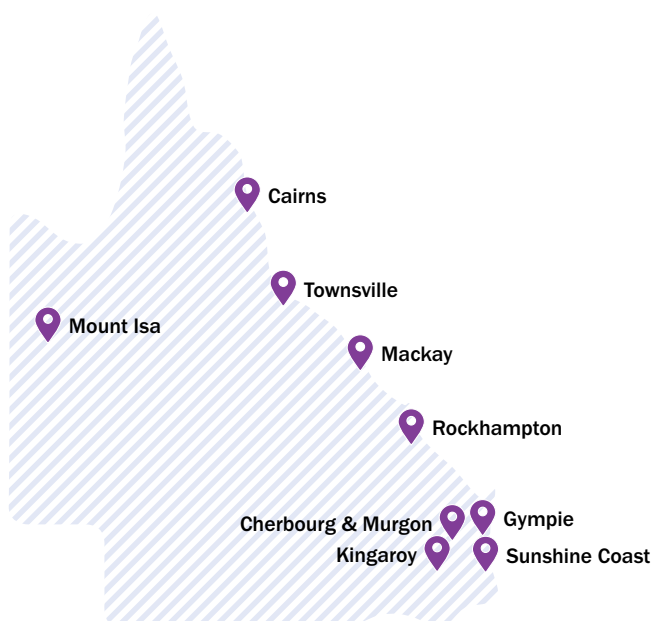
Council Member Chris Anderson, Secretariat Director April Chrzanowski, and students at Nambour State College.

Engage

Gathering views on sentencing

During the 2025–26 financial year, the Council placed a considerable focus on strengthening relationships with stakeholders in the metropolitan and regional areas of Queensland. The Council's activities were undertaken with the aim of enhancing relationships, particularly in the regions. These activities included a regional tour meeting with key stakeholders, the development of the Foundations of Sentencing training, the roll-out of region specific sentencing information as part of the Custodial Sentences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples dashboard contained within the Sentencing DataHub and continued consultation with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel, our Legal Practitioner Consultative forum and our Research Consultative forum.

Between April and June 2026, Council representatives engaged with regional communities across the state to speak with community organisations, service providers, justice system stakeholders and victims of crime regarding the work of the Council and to gather their views on sentencing. These discussions provided helpful insight to the matters impacting sentencing in regional areas. These meetings also provided an opportunity to discuss how the Council's resources could help enhance the skills of service providers and help inform the work of legal stakeholders. The Council held 56 meetings with individuals and



organisations, and visited the Sunshine Coast, Gympie, Townsville, Mt Isa, Rockhampton, Cairns, Kingaroy, Cherbourg, Murgon and Mackay.

Early in the financial year, the Council developed the Foundations of Sentencing training program. This program is designed to improve knowledge about the sentencing process for people who provide services to those going through the sentencing process, either as complainant or defendant. We have provided this training session to 11 service providers throughout the state both online and in person. We held two Foundations of Sentencing session open the public—one in person at the Supreme Court Library of Queensland and one online—drawing about 50 attendees collectively. The session has been designed so participants can use the information and pass it on to those going through the sentencing process. To ensure service providers across the state have access to this training, we offer this training free of charge, both in-person and online, enhancing our connection with regional Queensland stakeholders. Survey responses from participants of the Foundations of Sentencing training show that 76% gave the session a five-star rating.

The Council continued to build on our strong relationship with legal practitioners and researchers, particularly through our Practitioner Consultative Forum and Research Consultative Forum. The Practitioner Consultative Forum was able to contribute to our investigations into domestic and family violence sentencing reforms, and were reflected in some of our findings and observation included in *The Tangled Web: Examining domestic violence and family violence sentencing reforms*. The Research Consultative Forum also met during the financial year to discuss preliminary data analysis and research findings for the Terms of Reference, as well as other research projects of the Council.

In August 2025, the Council released a major update to the Sentencing DataHub with the Custodial Sentences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples dashboard. The dashboard was designed in collaboration with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel to publish data which shows how different types of offences drive custodial sentences, and how these differ by age, gender, and location. This resource has been developed as a tool to assist communities to understand overrepresentation by location, and to enable communities to consider targeted, evidence-based programs to help reduce incarceration rates.

The Council continued to work closely and collaboratively with the Advisory Panel who were able to provide critical input during our regional engagement tour and ensuring culturally safe findings recommendations in *The Tangled Web: Examining domestic and family violence sentencing reforms*. The Advisory Panel met six times throughout the year and provided detailed advice to enhance the Council's work.

Survey responses from stakeholders who completed the annual reputational survey highlighted strong performance of the Council in relation to the objective to 'engage' (71% positive).



Secretariat staff Benjamin Mulcahy and April Chrzanowski, Council Member Nathan Crane, and Chair Kerry O'Brien AM with staff from The Neighbourhood Hub in Mackay.



Secretariat staff Benjamin Mulcahy and April Chrzanowski, Deputy Chair Kristy Bell, and Council Member Chris Anderson in Kingaroy.

Inform

Promoting community understanding of sentencing

The Council has continued its work to enhance community understanding of sentencing through multiple well-designed and innovative resources. Examples of these approaches include facilitating information sessions, engaging with community and the media, and supporting and publishing research papers. These resources have also supported the continued development of our role as a respected commentator in the sentencing space. This was demonstrated by the Council's research and information being cited in over 40 academic papers, research entries, and submissions in the 2025–26 financial year. This does not include media articles.

The Council's ongoing Judge for Yourself information sessions saw the Council providing participants with contextual information on the sentencing process and matters judicial officers need to consider when sentencing. This program is offered to a variety of students, community organisations, service providers, and the general public. Council representatives visited 28 schools, universities, community groups and not-for-profits to deliver these sessions in the past financial year. The Council also held six sessions at the Supreme Court Library which were open to members of the general public, attracting 152 registered attendees. These interactive sessions not only provided information but allowed attendees to ask questions regarding the sentencing process. Survey responses from participants of the Judge for Yourself sessions show that 90% gave the sessions a five-star rating.

The Council was invited to four community organisations, education facilities and service providers to provide information about the Council's work, including our latest research. Council representatives also used these opportunities to educate groups about the sentencing process and the latest developments.

In January 2026, the Council also released a Research Brief titled *Community views on the importance of sentencing purposes*. This research found that Queenslanders draw on a range of factors when thinking about the purposes of sentencing, and community members views shift depending on the type of offence, whether the person has offended before and how harmful the behaviour is perceived to be.

The Council continues efforts to enhance public understanding of sentencing included the distribution of the *Inform* e-newsletter and quarterly *Sentencing Round-up*. *Inform* provides subscribers with the latest updates on changes impacting sentencing, details on the Council's research, information on changes on interstate jurisdictions regarding sentencing and links to resources compiled by the Council. The *Inform* newsletter works hand-in-hand with the quarterly *Sentencing Round-up*. This publication, targeting legal professionals, provides summaries of appeal cases, relevant academic research, and articles which may impact sentencing.

The Council continued to engage with media on a regular basis, providing media releases on our latest movements, helping them access information in our Sentencing DataHub, and responding to any enquiries. Following the release of *The Tangled Web*, the Council engaged media and achieved multiple articles reporting on the Council's findings in different channels including print, online and radio. Social media has continued to be another way for the Council to inform the public about sentencing matters. The Council has continued to use our growing Facebook and LinkedIn followings to explain complex sentencing issues, provide access to resources, and enhance the work of the Council.

Survey responses from stakeholders who completed the annual reputational survey highlighted strong performance of the Council in relation to the objective to 'inform' (79% positive), and more than 85 per cent of survey respondents agreed that the Council's resources and publications are credible, and 75 per cent found them useful to stakeholders.



Council Deputy Chair Kristy Bell, Council Member Chris Anderson, secretariat staff, and members of the Barambah Local Justice Group in Cherbourg.

Plans and priorities for the next three years

In June 2026, Council members gathered to confirm the strategic priorities of the Council for the next three years, and revised the Strategic Plan for 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2029.

Our Strategic Plan outlines key objectives to engage with the community and legal stakeholders, make meaningful contributions to increase awareness of the justice system, and guide evidence-based reform.

Strategic direction

The Council's strategic direction is shaped through:

- Aligning activities with justice priorities
- Engaging with the community to enhance public understanding of sentencing
- Developing research to support evidence-based advice
- Strategic implementation of resources towards the most impactful initiatives which align with our priorities and objectives
- Risk management to ensure effective mitigation strategies are in place.

Key priorities

Over the three years, the Council will focus on strengthening community understanding of sentencing and building confidence in the sentencing process. Central to this will be the delivery of accessible, evidence-based sentencing information and data products that help explain how sentencing decisions are made and the factors courts must consider. Through public education initiatives, research publications and engagement activities, the Council will continue to promote informed discussion about sentencing and contribute to a more informed public understanding of the justice system.

A key priority will be expanding and diversifying community engagement to ensure a broad range of perspectives are considered in discussions about sentencing reform. This includes consulting with communities across Queensland, engaging with people who have lived experience as victims of crime, and maintaining strong relationships with key stakeholders across the justice sector. The Council will also continue to work closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel to ensure First Nations perspectives and experiences are appropriately reflected in its work and advice.

The Council will further enhance its role as an independent and trusted source of sentencing research and advice. This will involve monitoring emerging and contentious sentencing issues, undertaking rigorous research, and strengthening the evidence base for sentencing reform. Through timely and professional responses to requests for advice from the Attorney-General, as well as providing advice to the Court of Appeal if requested, the Council will support decision-makers with objective, impartial and evidence-based insights.

Supporting evidence-based sentencing reform will remain a core focus. The Council will work to ensure proposed reforms are informed by robust research, community perspectives and practical experience across the justice system. Particular attention will be given to reforms that respond to the needs and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as those with a lived experience within the criminal justice system. Importantly, the Council will also focus on



Secretariat Director April Chrzanowski, Council Member Nathan Crane, Pioneer Murri Court Elder Veronica Ah-Wang, and Council Chair Kerry O'Brien AM.

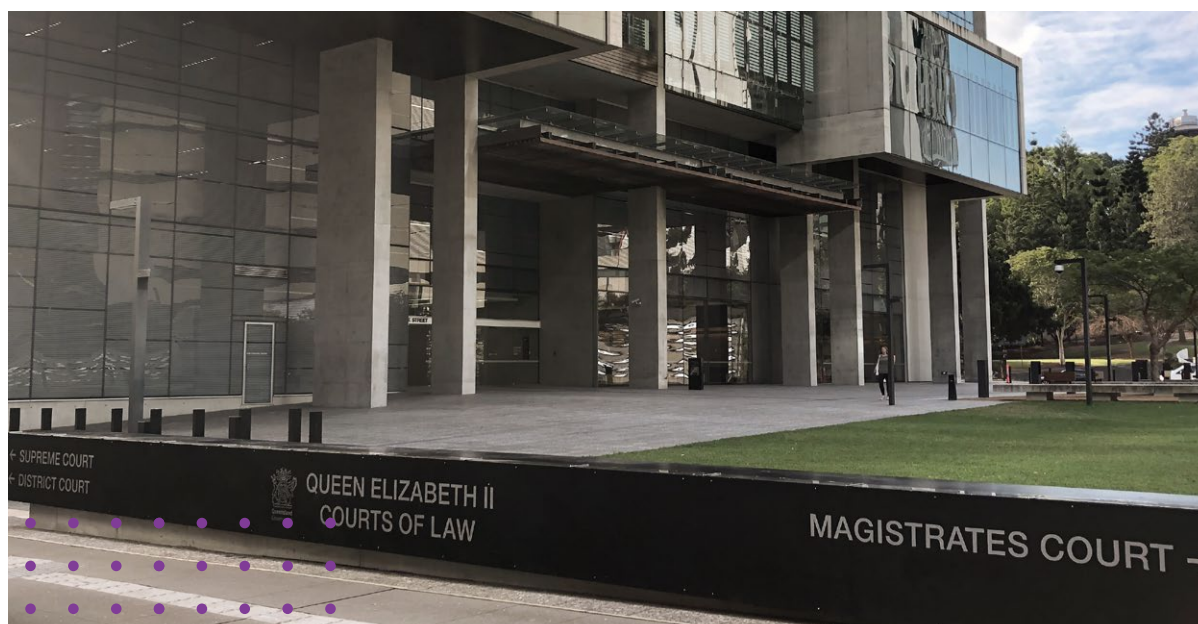
understanding contemporary community expectations and maintaining confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of Queensland's sentencing framework.

Collectively, these priorities will position the Council to deliver on its vision of sentencing that is fair, just and understood by the community. By informing public debate, engaging meaningfully with diverse communities, and providing high-quality advice to government and the courts, the Council will continue to play an important role in supporting a modern, transparent and evidence-based sentencing system in Queensland.

Opportunities and challenges

Over the next three years, the Council will operate in an environment of increasing community interest in crime, justice and sentencing. This presents a significant opportunity to strengthen public understanding of sentencing by providing accessible, evidence-based information and engaging directly with Queensland communities. There is also an opportunity to review, refresh and enhance the Council's existing suite of sentencing information products, educational materials and community resources. Refreshing and repurposing these assets, including sentencing data published on the Council's website, community guides and public education resources, will help ensure they remain relevant, accessible and responsive to community needs. The Council is well positioned to build on its reputation as an independent and trusted source of sentencing information, research and advice.

At the same time, the Council faces a range of challenges. Public discussion about sentencing is often influenced by highly publicised cases, misinformation and rapidly changing community expectations, making it increasingly important to communicate complex sentencing issues clearly and accurately. Ensuring that diverse community perspectives are heard and reflected in sentencing reform, particularly those of victims of crime and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, will require ongoing and meaningful engagement. The Council must also respond to emerging sentencing issues, evolving government priorities and increasing demands for timely, evidence-based advice while maintaining its commitment to transparency and rigorous research. Successfully navigating these opportunities and challenges will be critical to achieving the Council's vision of sentencing that is fair, just and understood by the community.



Our people

The Council is comprised of the Council, an Advisory Panel, and a Secretariat. Each group plays a distinct role in fulfilling the functions set out in the *Penalties and Sentencing Act 1992*.

The Council

Members are appointed by Governor in Council on recommendation by the Attorney-General, and are appointed in their private capacity, based on their professional expertise in areas like criminal justice, legal reform, and victim advocacy. Members may also contribute to Project Boards, which guide the governance for major projects.

Council membership

As at 30 June 2025, the Council had 13 members, including a Chair and Deputy Chair. One member also temporarily stood aside during their appointment as an Acting Judge and will return to the Council when the appointment concludes.

Chair: Kerry O'Brien AM, appointment commenced October 2025.

Deputy Chair: Kristy Bell, appointed as Deputy Chair August 2025.

Membership changes in 2025–26

Significant changes to the Council's membership occurred during the financial year, reflecting both departures and new appointments.

- Departures:
 - Jo Bryant (August 2025)
 - Debbie Kilroy OAM (August 2025)
 - Dan Rogers (August 2025)
 - Professor Elena Marchetti (August 2025)
 - Beck O'Connor (September 2025)
 - The Honourable Ann Lyons AM (September 2025)
 - Sherrie Meyer (November 2025)
 - Matt Jackson (January 2026)
 - Julie Dick SC (January 2026)
 - Brett Schafferius (March 2026)

The Council would like to acknowledge the contribution of the members who concluded their terms in the past financial year, some who had been with the Council since its reformation in 2016. The work of those Council members helped form the early work towards *The Tangled Web: Examining domestic and family violence sentencing reform*. The Council thanks those members for their considered advice and contributions.

- Appointments:
 - Scott Lynch (August 2025)
 - Danielle Carroll (August 2025)
 - Natalie Merlehan (August 2025)

- Kerry O'Brien AM (October 2025)
- Victoria Trafford-Walker (February 2026)
- Christopher Anderson (February 2026)
- Dr David Bartlett (February 2026)
- Phillip Rennick (February 2026)
- Kelli Lemass (February 2026)

Council biographies (members as at 30 June 2026)

Kerry O'Brien AM, Chair

Kerry O'Brien AM was Queensland's longest-serving Judge of the District Court, with more than 30 years on the bench. Mr O'Brien was sworn in as a Judge in Townsville in October 1989. Prior to his judicial career, he built an illustrious legal career as a barrister, Crown Prosecutor and Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions. During his time on the bench, Mr O'Brien held additional responsibilities, including presiding over the Health Practitioners Tribunal and serving as chair of the courts' Criminal Law Committee and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee. He also served as President of the Childrens Court of Queensland. In 2014, he was appointed Chief Judge of the District Court, a role he held until his retirement in 2020. In recognition of his significant contribution to the law and judiciary in Queensland, he was named a Member of the Order of Australia in 2021. Following his retirement from judicial duties, Mr O'Brien continued to serve the community as chair of the Queensland Racing Appeals Panel.

Kristy Bell, Deputy chair

Kristy is a Queensland Accredited Criminal Law Specialist and is consistently recognised as one of the state's leading criminal defence lawyers by the Doyle's Guide. Kristy has worked on a variety of criminal and quasi criminal matters throughout her legal career, including investigative hearings, commissions, coronial inquests, and criminal confiscations matters.

Kristy has also conducted prosecutions on behalf of the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Kristy adopts a thoughtful and empathetic approach to her clients, ensuring that discretion is paramount in handling all matters, regardless of her clients' profiles.

Other council members:

- **Christopher Anderson:** Gympie-based solicitor with extensive experience in criminal law, traffic law, and domestic violence matters.
- **Dr David Bartlett:** Consultant criminologist with more than two decades experience in crime research and statistics.
- **Danielle Carroll:** A leading advocate for secondary victims of domestic and family violence and founder of the Kelly Wilkinson Foundation.
- **Nathan Crane:** A Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions with leadership in high-profile criminal cases.
- **Kelli Lemass:** Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) member and former senior criminal prosecutor with expertise in sentencing practice, statutory interpretation and evidence-based legal analysis.

- **Scott Lynch:** Criminal defence barrister who has appeared in courts across the state.
- **Natalie Merlehan:** Prominent victims' rights advocate and Director of the Voice for Victims Foundation.
- **Phil Rennick:** Townsville-based solicitor with extensive experience in criminal and family law.
- **Thelma Schwartz:** Executive Director Legal of Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisation.
- **Victoria Trafford-Walker:** Deputy Public Defender with Legal Aid Queensland who also has more than 10 years' experience working the prosecution.
- **Douglas Wilson:** Accomplished barrister, specialising in criminal law and focusing on trial and appellant work (Stood aside in 2026 to perform duties as Acting Judge).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel

The Advisory Panel plays a critical role in providing insights and advice to the Council on addressing the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland's criminal justice system.

The Advisory Panel meets bimonthly and was established in November 2018. The Advisory Panel became permanent in 2022–23.

Advisory Panel membership

As at 30 June 2025, the Panel had eight members, including a Chair.

Panel Chair: Thelma Schwartz (since May 2024)

Membership changes in 2025–26

There were two departures and two additions to the Advisory Panel in 2025–26.

- Departures:
 - Laurence Bateman (August 2025)
 - Helen Akee (February 2026)
- Appointments:
 - Rhea Bedi Waia (May 2026)
 - Dr Yolonda Adams (May 2026)

Advisory Panel biographies (members as at 30 June 2026)

Thelma Schwartz, Panel Chair

Thelma is the Executive Director Legal of Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisation providing legal and non-legal support services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and survivors of family violence and sexual assault. She was previously a member of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. Thelma has worked extensively with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, providing legal services and legal representation as a criminal defence solicitor with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service for over nine years. Thelma identifies as of Torres Strait Islander heritage alongside her German/Samoan and Papua New Guinean heritage.

Other panel members:

- **Dr Yolonda Adams:** Registered psychologist and Queensland Corrective Services Acting Assistant Commissioner for First Nations and Cultural Capability.
- **Rhea Bedi Waia:** Grassroots social worker, human rights practitioner, and policy and research advocate committed to advancing the rights, well-being, and self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- **John Cattnach:** Senior lawyer specialising in child protection and legal access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- **Christopher Emzin:** Academic and former Inspector with Queensland Police Service (QPS), specialising in Indigenous practices in justice.
- **Stephen Tillett:** Head of the First Nations Justice Office within the Department of Justice.
- **Graham White:** Director of Sector Engagement and Communications at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service.
- **Professor Kevin Williams:** Adjunct Professor at the University of the Sunshine Coast's School of Law and Society, with academic, legal, and human rights expertise.

The Secretariat

The Secretariat supports the Council to inform, engage, and advise Queenslanders on sentencing matters.

Leadership

April Chrzanowski: Appointed as Director in January 2023, April brings an expertise in law, criminology, and mathematics, with practical experience in criminal justice policy, evaluation, research, and teaching.

Key functions

Administration: Ensures efficient office management, compliance with departmental requirements, and provides Council member and staff support.

Media and engagement: Develops and delivers communication strategies and direct engagement activities to connect with the community, legal professionals and justice system stakeholders. Builds and maintains strong stakeholder relationships, educates the public, and raises awareness of sentencing matters through both communication channels and proactive engagement.

Policy: Provides legal expertise and advice on sentencing reforms and legislative matters, including analysis of emerging issues, stakeholder feedback, and the review of court decisions and sentencing outcomes.

Research and statistics: Undertakes evidence-based research and quantitative analysis to inform policy and community engagement and provides accurate sentencing data to support transparency and public understanding.

Corporate governance

Meetings and remuneration

Meetings

Council meetings

The Council met 11 times between July 2026 and June 2026.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel meetings

The Advisory Panel met six times during the same period.

Remuneration

Council and Advisory Panel members are remunerated following the Queensland Government's Remuneration procedures for part-time chairs and members of government bodies policy.

- Total remuneration for Council members (2025–26), including out-of-pocket expenses: \$44,892.31¹
- Total remuneration for Advisory Panel members (2025–26): \$2,550.00²

Management and information systems

Our risk management

The Council manages risks using a comprehensive risk register, covering both strategic and operational risks.

- Risks are reviewed monthly and aligned with the Department of Justice's risk management framework
- The Council Chair and Secretariat Director oversee risk management and mitigation strategies
- Using a modified PRINCE2 methodology, the Council identifies and mitigates risks early in project planning, with lessons learned documented during the closure phase.

Internal audit and external scrutiny

The Council complies with the internal audit policy and external scrutiny processes of the Department of Justice.

In 2025–26, the Council was not subject to any major internal audits, reviews or external review requests.

Information systems

The Council uses the Department of Justice's eDOCS system for secure electronic record management. This system adheres to regulations including:

1 See appendix 1.

2 See appendix 2.

- *Public Records Act 2022*
- Information Standard (Recordkeeping), and
- Information Standard (Retention and Disposal of Public Records).

Staff receive regular training on information and cyber security to protect data and maintain confidentiality.

Recordkeeping

The Council is committed to maintaining accurate records:

- Departmental recordkeeping policies aligns with the *Public Records Act 2022*
- Operating Guidelines, updated in July 2025, govern staff responsibility in managing records.

Code of Conduct and Public Service Values

Code of conduct

Council compliance

The Council adheres to its Code of Conduct, updated July 2025, compliant with the *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*.

The Code applies to all official duties, including participating in conferences, training events, or work-related social gatherings.

A copy of the Code of Conduct is available on the Council's website.

Advisory Panel compliance

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel also adheres to the Council's Code of Conduct, which governs their official duties.

Secretariat compliance

As Department of Justice staff, Secretariat members comply with the whole-of-government Code of Conduct, promoting ethical behaviour and accountability.

The Secretariat adheres to the four core principles of ethics, which guide their conduct:

- Integrity and impartiality
- Promoting the public good
- Commitment to the system of government, and
- Accountability and transparency.

New members participate in induction training to understand these responsibilities, reinforced by mandatory annual online refresher courses.

Queensland public service values

Secretariat members are also guided by the Queensland Government's public service values:

- Customers first - We make decisions with empathy
- Ideas into action - We encourage and embrace new ideas and work across boundaries

- Unleash potential - We lead and set clear expectations and seek, provide and act on feedback
- Be courageous - We act with transparency
- Empower people - We play to everyone's strengths and develop ourselves and those around us.

Operating guidelines

The Council follows a governance framework outlined in its Operating Guidelines, which address:

- Roles and relationships
- Meeting protocols and financial management
- Confidentiality, declaration of interests, and conflict resolution.

Advisory Panel compliance

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel follows a similar governance framework to ensure consistent operational standards.

Right to information

The Council did not receive any Right to Information (RTI) requests during 2025–26.

Strategic workforce planning and performance

In 2025–26, the Council continued operating within the Secretariats Support branch as a part of the Justice Policy and Reform division.

Health and wellbeing

As Department of Justice employees, Secretariat staff benefit from:

- Flexible work arrangements, promoting work-life balance
- Mandatory ergonomics training to support physical health
- Access to the TELUS Health Employee Assistance Program
- Vicarious trauma training to support mental health and resilience.

Professional development

Secretariat staff:

- Maintain performance development for regular feedback and growth
- Participate in relevant events such as internal training, external professional development courses, cultural capability training, and conferences.

Diversity and inclusion

The Council and Secretariat remain dedicated to building a workforce that reflects the community, promoting an inclusive culture that values the diverse skills and insights of people across genders, ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, and abilities.

Early retirement, redundancy, and retrenchment

The Council did not offer any redundancy, early retirement, or retrenchment packages in 2025–26.

Budget

Allocated budget (2025–26): \$1,855,000.00

Actual expenditure: \$2,052,038.95

The deficit primarily resulted from expenses related to responding to the Terms of Reference, including significant regional consultation, which were pre-approved to be covered by the Department of Justice (DoJ), to enable the Council to ensure high-quality outputs.

Summary of financial performance

The Council is not a statutory body under the *Statutory Bodies Act 1982* or the *Financial Accountability Act 2009* (FA Act). Funding for the Secretariat is allocated through the Department of Justice, with the Director-General serving as the accountable officer under the FA Act.

- Comprehensive financial details can be found in the DoJ's annual report: justice.qld.gov.au.
- The Council is committed to releasing as much public service data as possible through the Queensland Government's Open Data initiative at: data.qld.gov.au.

Consultancies and overseas travel

The Council did not expend any funds on consultancy services during 2025–26.

The Council did not incur any expenses for overseas travel during 2025–26.



Compliance checklist

Summary of requirement		Basis for requirement	Annual report reference
Letter of compliance	A letter of compliance from the accountable officer or statutory body to the relevant Minister/s	ARRs – section 7	6
Accessibility	Table of contents	ARRs – section 9.1	5
	Glossary		34
	Public availability	ARRs – section 9.2	2
	Interpreter service statement	Queensland Government Language Services Policy	2
		ARRs – section 9.3	
	Copyright notice	Copyright Act 1968	3
		ARRs – section 9.4	
	Information Licensing	QGEA – Information Licensing	3
		ARRs – section 9.5	
General information	Introductory Information	ARRs – section 10	7–8
Non-financial performance	Government's objectives for the community and whole-of-government plans/specific initiatives	ARRs – section 11.1	10
	Agency objectives and performance indicators	ARRs – section 11.2	10–18
	Agency service areas and service standards	ARRs – section 11.3	10–18
Financial performance	Summary of financial performance	ARRs – section 12.1	23, 26, 29–30
Governance – management and structure	Organisational structure	ARRs – section 13.1	19–22
	Executive management	ARRs – section 13.2	19–22
	Government bodies (statutory bodies and other entities)	ARRs – section 13.3	N/A
	Public Sector Ethics	<i>Public Sector Ethics Act 1994</i>	24
		ARRs – section 13.4	
	Human Rights	Human Rights Act 2019	10
		ARRs – section 13.5	
Governance – risk management and accountability	Queensland public service values	ARRs – section 13.6	24
	Risk management	ARRs – section 14.1	23
	Audit committee	ARRs – section 14.2	23
	Internal audit	ARRs – section 14.3	23
	External scrutiny	ARRs – section 14.4	23
	Information systems and recordkeeping	ARRs – section 14.5	23–24
	Information Security attestation	ARRs – section 14.6	23–24

Summary of requirement		Basis for requirement	Annual report reference
Governance – human resources	Strategic workforce planning and performance	ARRs – section 15.1	25
	Early retirement, redundancy and retrenchment	Directive No.04/18 Early Retirement, Redundancy and Retrenchment ARRs – section 15.2	26
Open Data	Statement advising publication of information	ARRs – section 16	2
	Consultancies	ARRs – section 31.1	26
	Overseas travel	ARRs – section 31.2	26
	Queensland Language Services Policy	ARRs – section 31.3	N/A
Financial statements	Certification of financial statements	FAA – section 62	N/A
		FPMS – sections 38, 39 and 46	
		ARRs – section 17.1	
	Independent Auditor's Report	FAA – section 62 FPMS – section 46 ARRs – section 17.2	N/A

Appendix 1: Council members, meetings, and remuneration

Name	Position	Meeting attendance	Approved annual fee	Actual fees received ^a	Out of pocket expenses
Kerry O'Brien AM	Chair (from October 2025)	7	\$6,240	\$4,128.00	\$204.10
Ann Lyons AM	Chair (until end August 2025)	2	\$6,240	\$1,296.00	
Kristy Bell	Deputy chair (since August 2025, and member prior)	11	\$4,800	\$4,800.00	\$1,017.70
Professor Elena Marchetti	Deputy chair (Until August 2025)	1	\$4,800	\$369.24	
Chris Anderson	Member (from March 2026)	4	\$4,800	\$1,569.00	\$1,393.12
Dr David Bartlett	Member (from March 2026)	4	\$4,800	\$1,569.00	
Jo Bryant	Member (until August 2025)	1	\$4,800	\$553.86	
Danielle Carroll	Member (from August 2025)	7	\$4,800	\$4,320.00	
Nathan Crane	Member	8	*		
Julie Dick SC	Member (until January 2026)	6	\$4,800	\$2,769.30	
Matt Jackson	Member (until January 2026)	3	\$4,800	\$2,769.30	
Debbie Kilroy OAM	Member (until August 2025)	1	\$4,800	\$553.86	
Kelli Lemass	Member (from March 2026)	2	*		
Scott Lynch	Member (from August 2025)	6	\$4,800	\$4,320.00	
Natalie Merlehan	Member (from August 2025)	10	\$4,800	\$4,320.00	
Sherrie Meyer	Member (until November 2025)	3	\$4,800	\$1,716.97	
Beck O'Connor	Member (until September 2025)	1	*		
Phillip Rennick	Member (from March 2026)	4	\$4,800	\$1,582.00	
Dan Rogers	Member (until August 2025)	1	\$4,800	\$553.86	
Brett Schafferius	Member (until March 2026)	4	*		
Thelma Schwartz	Member	7	\$4,800	\$4,800.00	
Victoria Trafford-Walker	Member (from March 2026)	3	*		
Douglas Wilson	Member (paused from March 2026)	3	\$4,800	\$4,415.00	
TOTAL				\$42,277.39	\$2,614.92

^a Actual fees received are as received during the current financial year, though may relate to payments due for work completed in the previous financial year.

* Public sector employees are not paid fees unless approved by the government.

Appendix 2: Advisory Panel members, meetings, and remuneration

Name	Meeting attendance	Approved fee per meeting	Actual fees received ^a	Out of pocket expenses
Thelma Schwartz - Panel Chair ^{b,c}	6	\$150	\$900.00	
Dr Yolonda Adams (from May 2026)	0	*		
John Cattanach	3	\$150	\$450.00	
Christopher Emzin ^{b,c}	4	\$150	\$600.00	
Stephen Tillett	4	*		
Rhea Bedi Waia (from May 2026) ^c	2	\$150	\$150.00	
Graham White ^{b,c}	5	\$150	\$750.00	
Kevin Williams ^{b,c}	3	\$150	\$450.00	
Helen Akee (until December 2025)	1	\$150	\$150.00	
Laurence Bateman (until August 2025)	0	*		
TOTAL			\$2,550.00	\$0

* Public sector employees are not paid fees unless approved by the Queensland Government.

^a Actual fees received are as received during the current financial year, though may relate to payments due for work completed in the previous financial year.

^b Meeting fee for June 2025 meeting was paid after close of financial year 2024–25, so appears in this financial year.

^c Meeting fee for June 2026 meeting was paid after close of financial year 2025–26, so will appear in next financial years report.

Appendix 3: Citations

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Appendix 4: Glossary

Term	Meaning
Advisory Panel	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel
ARRs	Annual report requirements for Queensland Government agencies
DoJ	Department of Justice
eDOCS	Electronic document and record management system
FAA	Financial Accountability Act 2009
FPMS	Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019
FTE	Full-time equivalent
PRINCE2	Projects In Controlled Environments
PSA	<i>Penalties and Sentences Act 1992</i> (Qld)
QPS	Queensland Police Service
The Council	Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council
ToR	Terms of Reference





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Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council