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Media Release

Second watchdog report looks at outcomes for kids in care

Better support from the Department of Child Safety is the issue identified most often by children in care in the *Child Guardian Report 2006*, tabled in Parliament today.

But the report, released by the Commissioner for Children and Young People in her role as Child Guardian, shows a substantial improvement in the level of support provided to children in care over the past year.

It looks at outcomes for children in the child protection and juvenile justice systems in 2006.

Importantly, in only 0.74% of visits made by Community Visitors to children in care said they felt unsafe, according to Commissioner Elizabeth Fraser.

In addition, they continue to say they want more contact with their families 12 months after this was identified as an issue in a landmark survey of children in care - *Views of Children and Young People in Care*.

Ms Fraser said children in care also want more say in decisions affecting them.

"I'm pleased these children are using our Community Visitors to help express their views to the Department of Child Safety," the Commissioner said.

Since the expansion of the program in 2005, the Government has invested substantially in the Community Visitor Program, helping children have their say and providing the Commissioner with information on their safety and wellbeing.

"This information is fed back into the child protection system to both individual and system-wide outcomes for children.

"In 2006 for example, 30% of serious issues raised by Community Visitors about Indigenous children related to those aged 0 – 4; in comparison, only 15% of serious issues raised about non-Indigenous children related to those aged 0 - 4," Ms Fraser said.

"While advocacy on these matters resulted in immediate responses improvements for individual children, it highlights the need for better reach of services to address this over-representation," she said.

The report also shows there have been positive changes in the child protection system since the first Child Guardian Report was released 12 months ago.

The Commissioner said the Department has decreased the number of outstanding Investigation and Assessments (IAs) across the state, and has also improved approval processes for foster and kinship carers (including requiring blue cards).

"I'd also like to commend the Government over the new 'Early Years Centres' and the Referral for Active Intervention service model introduced last year," Ms Fraser said.

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