



## Media Release

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### Young people in detention have their say

Queensland's Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Elizabeth Fraser, today released the findings of the Commission's second Views of Young People in Detention Centres survey, which forms a key part of the Commission's commitment to hearing about the experiences of children and young people in state care.

The Commission highlighted that young people in youth detention centres are among the state's most vulnerable and socially disadvantaged.

"Studies have consistently shown that young people in detention are likely to have histories marked by multiple traumatic events, mental health problems, substance abuse, family dysfunction, school drop-out, and untreated health problems," Ms Fraser said.

"They are particularly vulnerable to falling through the cracks in our service delivery systems.

"Young people in detention provide a unique perspective on the health of our youth justice system that must be taken into account if we are serious about protecting their safety and their wellbeing."

Nearly 90% of young people in Queensland's two youth detention centres in Brisbane and Townsville participated in the Commission's survey.

Ms Fraser said the large number of young people who took part in the survey was "a fantastic result that reflects just how keen young people in detention are to have their voices heard".

"Pleasingly, nine out of 10 young people who took part in the survey reported feeling safe in detention and almost all reported participating in a range of activities, which over 90% reported as being helpful or very helpful to them," she said.

The survey also found that only half of young people in detention feel confident that they would be taken seriously if they raised concerns about their safety or wellbeing.

Ms Fraser said this lack of confidence may place young people at risk.

"Young people are unlikely to raise concerns about their safety if they do not feel confident that their concerns will be acted on", she said.

Ms Fraser indicated that the Commission would be looking for improvements in the next survey, which will be conducted in 2010.

In releasing the report, the Commission also took the opportunity to showcase the Youth Works art program, a collaboration between the Department of Communities and Education Queensland that aims to nurture young people's artistic talent.

According to Tracey Whitwell, Manager of Programs at Brisbane Youth Detention Centre, Youth Works is "one of a range of programs helping young people to develop job and life skills and divert them from the youth justice system".

Ms Fraser said "the Youth Works program is a wonderful example of how positive programs can help these young people develop their skills and create a better future for themselves".

She also said young people need opportunities to continue to develop their potential once they leave detention.

Artworks from the Youth Works program will be on display at the 2009 Youth Works Art Exhibition to be held in Townsville and Ipswich in late 2009.

**For more information, please call Chau Nguyen on 3211 6977 or 0412 246 499**