



Media Release

Commission's 150 new Community Visitors to visit children in foster care

3.09.04

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian will today launch its expanded Community Visitor program, formally welcoming 150 new Community Visitors to the program – up from 25 just five months ago.

Acting Commissioner, Barry Salmon, said today is timely to announce the commencement of the expanded program, as it's the first day of Child Protection Week.

"Over the coming weeks, our Community Visitors will start contacting and visiting 3,800 children in foster care in over 1,500 homes around the state," Mr Salmon said.

"For the first time, we will be able to ensure Queensland children in foster care receive the support and entitlements they have a right to," he said.

"Our Community Visitors have done a great job of visiting children and young people in residential facilities, respite care, detention facilities and mental health facilities, but this is the first time children in foster care will have independent advocates visiting them regularly.

The initiative stems from the recommendations of the CMC's Inquiry into the abuse of children in foster care, and was outlined in Peter Forster's Blueprint.

The Community Visitors have spent the past week undergoing training to prepare them for their new roles, including learning how to use an innovative new information management system designed specifically for them.

The new Community Visitor Information System - a prototype sponsored by Microsoft through the Australasian Technology Centre - has been tailored specifically for the program, to ensure information about vulnerable children is timely, accurate and secure.

Mr Salmon said the Commission would be well placed to respond faster to children's issues, and have greater capacity to share information with other key stakeholders, such as the Department of Child Safety and non-government service providers.

"It's important to recognise the hard work of the people from Microsoft, the application development team from Data^{#3} and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in getting the system up and running in a short time," he said.

"This technology places the Commission at the cutting edge of information management in the child protection system," he said.

Kevin Ackhurst, Director Public Sector, Microsoft Australia agreed, saying Microsoft shared the Commission's goal to develop a cutting edge system that would meet project goals within time and budget.

"Our partnership enables the delivery of a superior service to Queenslanders and demonstrates how public and private sector partnerships can be effective. We provided the additional skills and investment to achieve a quick and successful turn around," he said.

“Additionally, this standards-based technology has provided the Commission with the capability to deliver a prototype that can be quickly modified to evolve overtime to meet changing needs and processes.

John Grant, Chief Executive of Data#3 claimed that building the CVIS system has been one of the most exciting application projects undertaken by Data#3 in recent times.

“To build a prototype solution of this complexity within three months was a substantial challenge for the team,” he said.

“This was only made possible by leveraging cutting-edge Microsoft products that were glued together by the Data#3 team to meet the specific needs of the program.”

Consulting services and funding were provided by the Australasian Technology Centre, a joint \$9 million investment between Microsoft and the Queensland Government which provides public sector agencies and local Microsoft Partners with support for strategic cross-agency projects.

The Community Visitor Induction Training finishes today, with training on use of the new information system to continue over coming weeks.

For more information, contact:

Sam Keegan
Principal Communications Advisor
Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian
Ph: 0412 246 499

Simon Murphy
Howorth Communications – for Microsoft
02 8281 3826 or 0413 0777 46
simon@howorth.com.au

John Grant
Managing Director
Data#3 Ltd
Ph: 07 3371 8088