



Media Release

New Commission from today

1.08.04

The Commission for Children and Young People today becomes the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, with greater powers to protect Queenslanders under 18.

From today, new measures will be in place to provide checks and balances in the child safety system, which is experiencing an ever-increasing number of child abuse notifications around the state.

A new Systemic Monitoring and Audit Unit comes online within the Commission to oversee work in the child protection system.

In addition, there will be a new Child Death Case Review Committee which sits in the Commission, with the power to conduct external reviews of child deaths.

Acting Commissioner Barry Salmon said the changes mean the Commission now has more 'teeth' to monitor the child protection system, and puts the best interests of the child first.

"From today, the new role of Child Guardian within the Commission will oversee these functions, ensuring closer external scrutiny of the child protection system," Mr Salmon said. "For the first time, we'll be able to talk directly with individual children about any problems they may have.

"The Commission will also have the power to enter Department of Child Safety premises to perform its monitoring function.

"In addition, Expressions of Interest have been called for members of the new Child Death Case Review Committee, and the Commission hopes to attract interest from specialists in paediatrics, child protection, mental health and forensic pathology."

In other changes, the Commissioner will be able to provide reports to the Premier on agencies which fail to comply with child protection legislation, and request that he table them in Parliament. The Premier is obliged to do so.

The Commissioner will also have the right to ask the Children Services Tribunal to review certain decisions of the Department of Child Safety where it's believed they have not been made in the best interests of the child.

The new powers, outlined in the *Child Safety Legislation Amendment Act 2004*, arose from recommendations of the Crime and Misconduct Commission's Inquiry into the abuse of children in foster care, and the subsequent Forster blueprint for reform of the child protection system in Queensland.

"I expect these new powers to provide greater transparency and accountability of the system," Mr Salmon said.

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