



Media Release



New powers and Child Guardian role for Commission

16.06.04

The Commissioner for Children and Young People has welcomed the introduction of the *Child Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2004*, which paves the way for a new role of Child Guardian and greater powers to protect Queensland's children and young people.

Commissioner Robin Sullivan said the Bill provides the Commission with greater capacity to monitor the child protection system, and puts the best interests of the child first.

As well as creating the role of Child Guardian, the bill amends the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000* to establish a new Systemic Monitoring and Review Unit, expand the Community Visitor program to include all children in care and establish a new Child Death Case Review Committee.

Dr Sullivan said the legislation arises from the recommendations of the Crime and Misconduct Commission's foster care inquiry, and the Forster blueprint for reform of the child protection system in Queensland.

"The new role of Child Guardian will oversee services for children young people in care, and enable closer external scrutiny of the child protection system," she said.

"Importantly, for the first time, the Commission will have the right to talk to individual children about any problems they may have and the power to conduct systemic audits of the delivery of services to these children.

"In addition, I will chair a new Child Death Case Review Committee to independently oversee the Department of Child Safety's child death review processes to ensure decisions made were appropriate."

This Committee is expected to include workers from a range of specialist area such as paediatrics, child protection, mental health and forensic pathology.

Other changes include a specific child death research function in the Commission to identify risk factors associated with the deaths of all children and make recommendations to address these risk factors in an annual Child Death Report.

The Commissioner will also have the right to provide reports to the Premier on agencies which fail to comply with the Act, and request that they be tabled in Parliament.

In addition, the Commissioner will have the right to seek review of certain decisions of the Department of Child Safety through the Childrens Services Tribunal where the Commissioner believes decisions have not been made in the best interests of the child.

"This will provide greater transparency and accountability for the system.

"I have been very impressed by the bipartisan support both sides of the House have shown for this Bill," the Commissioner said.

For more information contact: Sam Keegan Ph: 3247 5346 or Mob: 0412 246 499