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## New Commissioner

Queensland's new Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian started work on 17 January.

Elizabeth Fraser joins the Commission from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, where she was the Executive Director, Social Policy.

Ms Fraser said she was keen to get on with the job.

"2004 saw significant reforms to improve child safety which included significant expansion of the Commission's role," Ms Fraser said.

"In 2005, I look forward to ensuring the Commission fulfils its mandate and continues to contribute to Queensland being a better place for children and young people, particularly those most vulnerable."

With qualifications in social work and education, Ms Fraser has worked in public health and child welfare organisations in Canberra. Ms Fraser has led social policy and program development at federal and state levels and managed the corporate services of a number of large organisations.

In announcing Ms Fraser's appointment, the Premier paid tribute to the work of Barry Salmon, who acted as Commissioner in the second half of 2004. Mr Salmon remains at the Commission in the role of Acting Assistant Commissioner and Child Guardian.

## Changes to blue cards affect Qld volunteers

From 17 January 2005, Queensland volunteers who work with children and require a blue card face new laws.

Launching the new Act, Premier Peter Beattie said that volunteers working in the

categories of employment screened by the Commission now need a blue card regardless of how often they work with children.

"The government has tightened the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000* to better protect Queensland children and young people," Mr Beattie said.

"This means thousands of new blue cards will be issued this year to volunteers."

Commissioner for Children and Young People Elizabeth Fraser said other changes to the blue card mean new categories of employment and businesses will be screened.

"Religious representatives, child accommodation services including homestays, sport and active recreation, emergency services cadet programs and school crossing supervisors will all be affected by these new measures," she said.

The Commissioner can also access information from police investigations into allegations of serious child-related sexual offences, even if no charges were laid because the child was unwilling or unable to proceed.

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*Premier Peter Beattie and Commissioner Elizabeth Fraser announce changes to the blue card.*





## Commissioner's column



It is a pleasure to write my first column as the new Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. Having now been in the role for a few weeks, my first goal has been to clarify work priorities and

build productive relationships with my staff and key stakeholders.

A key priority for the Commission is effectively overseeing the implementation of the child safety reforms, particularly monitoring the impact for children and young people in care, and advocating improvements for individuals.

The changes to the blue card announced recently and the increased powers arising from the CMC inquiry into the abuse of children in foster care ensure the Commission has more teeth to better protect those most vulnerable.

I would like to highlight the importance for individuals and agencies to fully understand how changes to the blue card legislation may affect them.

Anyone seeking more information on the changes should contact the Commission on 3247 5145 or 1800 113 611 or visit our website at [www.bluecard.qld.gov.au](http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au).

Comprehensive fact sheets are also available by contacting the Commission or downloading them online.

I hope you enjoy the first CommIssues for 2005. I look forward to consolidating and building on the achievements of 2004 in the coming year.

Elizabeth Fraser  
**Commissioner for Children and Young People  
and Child Guardian**

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In addition, the Commissioner will be able to consider disciplinary information from the Queensland Nursing Council, Health Registration Practitioner Boards and the Departments of Child Safety and Communities.

In other changes:

- employers must have risk management strategies in place to ensure child-safe environments
- the Commissioner must suspend a blue card where charges have been laid for an excluding offence – a serious child-related sexual offence or child pornography offence
- the Commissioner must refuse a blue card to someone convicted of an excluding offence
- the Commissioner must notify employers that an employee's blue card eligibility is being reassessed if new information received is relevant to their work with children
- non-teaching staff employed in schools before 1 May 2001 will have to hold a blue card for the first time
- education providers can verify the identity of students who need a blue card to work in regulated child-related employment as part of their studies, and
- the Commission will notify the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board of the outcome of blue card applications of directors of governing bodies of non-state schools.

Anyone who wants more information on the changes should call the Commission on 3247 5145, toll free on 1800 113 611 or visit the website at [www.bluecard.qld.gov.au](http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au)

## Commission's reception moves to level 22 in T&G Building

The Commission has moved its front office to level 22 of the T&G Building.

However, Employment Screening has stayed on level 14, so those making blue card enquiries in person should still go to reception on that level.

## Child Death Case Review Committee members to meet

Members of the Child Death Case Review Committee will meet for the first time in February 2005.

Established as part of the government's response to the CMC Inquiry 'Protecting Children: An Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Foster Care', the multidisciplinary committee will be chaired by the Commissioner for Children and Young People, with the Assistant Commissioner a member as well.

Members include:

- Robert Atkinson (Commissioner of Police)
- Michael Barnes (State Coroner)
- Dr Colin Brennan (Psychiatrist)
- McRose Elu (Torres Strait Islander representative)
- Trudi Sebasio (Aboriginal representative)
- Jennifer Wiltshire (Social work consultant)
- Dr Neil Wigg (Paediatrician)

Commissioner Elizabeth Fraser said the CDCRC members were all professionals with expertise in child-related fields.

"The appointment of the CDCRC members is another step forward in enhancing accountability and enabling improvements in Queensland's child protection system," Ms Fraser said.

"The CDCRC is tasked with reviewing the Department of Child Safety's original reviews into child deaths."

The committee's recommendations will contribute to improvements to policies and practices in the child protection system.

Under the legislation, the CDCRC can ask the Director-General of Child Safety what steps have been taken to implement its recommendations within a reasonable time.

The CDCRC will provide a copy of its report to the Premier and the Minister for Child Safety.

The committee members have been appointed for three years.

## Special school recognised for artistic flair at Christmas

Cards sent out by the Commission last Christmas contained a unique touch.

Students of Darling Point Special School contributed designs for the cards. Pictures by James Hempenstall and Ngahina Tibble were chosen as the winning designs.

A/Commissioner Barry Salmon visited the school late last year to present James and Ngahina with certificates of recognition for their wonderful artwork.



*A/Commissioner Barry Salmon presents Ngahina Tibble with her certificate of appreciation in December 2004.*





## UK Professor visits Queensland

The Commission was recently visited by Professor Al Aynsley-Green, the UK National Clinical Director for Children in the Department of Health.

Professor Aynsley-Green, a paediatric endocrinologist, visited the Commission in December 2004 as part of his research into the status of children in Australia.

Professor Aynsley-Green's research examines the historical perspective on children, as well as current government policy in different countries.

He aims to make international comparisons between the UK and Australia, Sweden, Hungary, Canada the USA and Spain.



A/Commissioner Barry Salmon with Professor Aynsley-Green.

## Vision and Voice Conference

The Commission joined forces with the Queensland University of Technology late last year to host a conference showcasing participatory research with young people.

The aim of the Vision and Voice Conference was to provide a forum for young people taking part in research projects to share their findings and gain recognition for their work. It also provided an opportunity for youth workers, educators and other interested people to share their findings of working with young people as research.

The program also included a range of educational workshops about participatory research, a youth forum and a showcase of research projects.

The workshops covered a range of topics including social justice, confidence building and skills for working in groups.

The youth forum gave young people the opportunity to comment on how their involvement in research had affected them, while the showcase included case studies from all over Queensland.

Over 100 people attended the conference, including 36 young people.

## Working with Children Training – upcoming dates

The Commission's Working with Children training continues around the state. Upcoming training locations and dates are:

**Gladstone** - Tuesday, 22 February

**Brisbane** - Wednesday & Thursday, 2 & 3 March

**Mackay** - Tuesday, 15 March

**Townsville** - Wednesday, 16 March

**Cairns** - Thursday, 17 March

Anyone interested in training should contact the Commission on 3247 5518 to register.

## calendar of events

8 March – International Women's Day. Contact the Office for Women on 3224 4062 or visit [www.women.qld.gov.au](http://www.women.qld.gov.au)

9-17 March – National Youth Week. Contact organisers on 1300 555 954 or go to [www.generate.qld.gov.au](http://www.generate.qld.gov.au)

13-19 March - Foster Care Week. Visit the Department of Child Safety's website at [www.childsafety.qld.gov.au](http://www.childsafety.qld.gov.au)