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Child labour review report released

The Commission's Child Labour Review has been released, with the Government acting on the bulk of the Commission's findings.

As a result, the Government will introduce laws to protect children from workplace exploitation.

Changes will include the introduction of a minimum working age and bans on people under the age of 18 working in areas such as adult entertainment. There will also be limits on the hours children can work during school terms, so education does not take second place behind work.

Commissioner Elizabeth Fraser welcomed the reforms, saying they address the issues identified in the review and are consistent with feedback from key stakeholders and young people.

"I believe this response to the review will contribute to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and lead to stronger safeguards for children who work or volunteer, she said.

Child Guardian function is full speed ahead

The Commission's new Child Guardian function is on track to meet its goals.

The Child Guardian's primary role is oversee services to children known to the Department of Child Safety. It also advocates for individual children and young people in the child protection and juvenile justice system where necessary.

The teams which work to fulfill the Child Guardian function include Complaints, Community Visitors, Systemic Monitoring and Audit and Child Death Review.

Thanks largely to the expansion of the Community Visitor Program and the new Systemic Monitoring and Audit responsibility, the Commission's staff has expanded rapidly in the last six months.

This edition of CommIssues focuses on the Child Guardian function and its contribution to improving the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people.

So what does systemic monitoring mean?

The Commission uses its systemic monitoring tools to identify and assess the reforms to the child protection system recommended in the CMC's report into the abuse of children in foster care last January.

Through the monitoring, investigation, audit and child death review tools, the Commission is working to establish the information needed to tell us what services are being provided to children and young people and how. Examples include the quality of initial assessments, placement approvals and management of critical incidents.

This information is then reviewed and checked against Community Visitors' reports and issues arising in the Complaints area.

Investigating issues affecting young people

The Investigations team can investigate serious and/or systemic issues around services to children and young people.

These investigations are initiated by referrals from the Commission's Complaints Unit or Community Visitors, from other complaints bodies such as the Queensland Ombudsman or the Crime and Misconduct Commission, or by the Commissioner.

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Commissioner's column



This quarter, I have greatly appreciated meeting with many representatives from peak groups, including CREATE, PeakCare, Foster Care Queensland, YANQ and the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Forum.

We have agreed to meet regularly to exchange views on child safety issues and key priorities for the future – particularly for the next 12 months.

Three areas of critical importance are achieving:

- an effective child protection system
- safe service environments for young people
- well-targeted prevention and early intervention strategies to reduce the risk of children and young people entering the child protection and juvenile justice system.

The Commission is focussing its efforts on monitoring and driving reforms in these areas, particularly in terms of achieving improved outcomes for vulnerable children and young people over the next year.

We'll do this by looking at key performance information from agencies and assess where there have been improvements in the system, or where gaps exist. This will help us identify where we need to focus our advocacy efforts.

Details in the latest Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Report further emphasised the importance of expediting reforms to child protection – including strengthening the implementation of well-targeted early intervention and prevention strategies.

I'd also like to say a special thankyou to the representatives who sit on the new Community Visitor Advisory Committee, particularly the young people, CREATE and FCQ, who are helping shape an effective program with their input.

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

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Since coming on line in August last year, the team has started a number of investigations into child protection services provided to children and young people.

When investigating a case, the team carefully assesses the complaint, identifies any issues or allegations which need investigation, then gathers information on the case in question. This may include departmental files, records and interviews with officers and witnesses.

Once the information is analysed and a finding reached, the team prepares a detailed report which is provided to the relevant agency for comment and action, including any recommendations for improvements to services, policies or procedures.

All investigations finalised this financial year will be reported on in the Annual Report.

Team looks at services

The Monitoring team audits key compliance information on the implementation of the *Child Protection Act* and reviews the management of cases of children in the child safety system as well as the systems, policies and practices of agencies which provide services to them.

It also monitors the Department of Child Safety's (DChS) implementation of the Indigenous Child Placement Principle which requires the Department to try to place the child with a member of their family, their community or language group, another Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander compatible with the child's community or language group, or another Indigenous person.

The team is currently reviewing services provided by DChS in a number of cases involving children in foster care, and is looking into DChS' investigation and assessment practices in some cases.

The Monitoring team is also auditing DChS data to check what information is available about children in out-of-home care, including where they're located and the type of care they are in.

From 30 April, the team took on responsibility for monitoring the systems, policies and practices of nine more agencies, including Queensland Health, Department of Education and the Arts, Queensland Police Service, Department of Communities, Disability Services Queensland, DATSIP, Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Department of Corrective Services and Department of Housing.

Child Death Review team

The Commission's new Child Death Review team maintains a register of all child deaths in the state, and researches risk factors associated with child deaths. It also makes recommendations to prevent such deaths occurring, and will report annually on these child deaths.

The team is currently collating and analysing information on all child deaths since 1 August last year and is working with government agencies to identify programs, policies and procedures focused on preventing child deaths. Similar work is planned with the non-government sector in 2005/06.

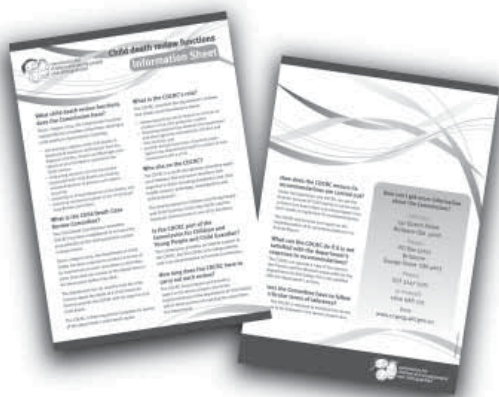
The Child Death Review team also provides secretariat support to the Child Death Case Review Committee (CDCRC).

This is a multidisciplinary committee chaired by the Commissioner with members including the Assistant Commissioner, the Commissioner of Police, the State Coroner, experts in paediatrics, child health, psychiatry and social work, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.

The committee is tasked with reviewing the cases of children known to DChS in the three years before their deaths.

Since 1 August 2004, the Department of Child Safety (DChS) has had six months to review its involvement in each case where a child dies.

The CDCRC then considers the department's review and can recommend improvements in policies which impact on services to children in the child safety system, improvements in relationships between the department and other agencies and whether disciplinary action should be taken in particular cases.



For more information on the Child Death Review team contact the Commission for a fact sheet.

CCYPCG improving services for our complainants

The Complaints team focuses on addressing complaints in relation to children in the jurisdiction of the Department of Child Safety (DChS).

The Unit has restructured its operations to meet an increasingly more challenging demand for services and to achieve faster, high quality outcomes for children and young people. The team has also engaged staff, is changing its work processes and updating its database.

The Unit is focused on working with DChS to reduce the response time to complaints raised by the Commission.

Community Visitors getting runs on the board

Community Visitors (CVs) regularly visit children and young people in alternative care and advocate where necessary for appropriate support for their needs.

The CV Program and Complaints team work closely together to promote the best possible protection, service and developmental outcomes for children and young people.

The team has grown from just 25 Community Visitors around the state last June to around 150 today.

The team is making a real contribution to improving services to children and young people in foster care.

For example, recently, a child with medical needs was facing delays in getting appropriate treatment, but received urgent medical attention following the Commission's advocacy. In another case, a CV identified four instances of abuse of children in care, and action was taken to remove the children from the risk of harm.

The Commission has established an CV Advisory Committee to provide advice and feedback on the program. It meets on a six-weekly basis and brings together the main agencies involved with and representing the children the Commission visits.

It includes DChS, Disability Services Queensland, Department of Communities, Queensland Health, Foster Care Queensland, PeakCare, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Forum, CREATE, and four young people.



Keeping children safe - how much do you know about the blue card?

Did you know that not everyone who works with children needs a blue card? Here's a quick quiz to test how much you know about who should have a blue card, and who shouldn't (answers opposite column)

Do I need a blue card? Please answer yes or no.

1. I coach a sporting team at my child's school on a voluntary basis.
2. I am studying a Bachelor of Teaching at university and have to complete a practicum teaching experience in a school as part of my study.
3. I am a tennis coach and run my own coaching business and provide private tennis coaching at a number of schools around Brisbane.
4. I am employed as a swimming instructor at a privately owned pool to run group swimming training for children under 18.

This is a free service sponsored by the Life Be In It Foundation which aims to encourage children to take part in sport and active recreation programs.

5. I am an electrician contracted by a high school boarding house to install a number of electrical points.
6. I am a parent volunteering to work at a stand at the fete at the school my child attends.
7. I am 19 years old and live at home. My mum operates a licensed child care service from home.

Visit to Youth Detention Centres

Commissioner Elizabeth Fraser recently visited Queensland's two youth detention centres and met with staff and young people.

Her visit to Townsville co-occurred with the opening of an exhibition of young people's artworks.

"I was very impressed with the quality of the work, and am keen to find a home for some of the pieces at the Commission," she said.

"It is great to see the way the art has helped some of the young Aboriginal and Islander people get in touch with their cultural identity and develop new skills."

Answers to blue card quiz

1. No. A volunteer parent at a school their child attends is exempt under the "schools other than teachers or parents" category of regulated employment in the Act.
2. Yes. A trainee student of an education provider who goes into a school to provide a service on a voluntary basis, falls in the "schools other than teachers and parents" category of regulated employment in the Act.
3. Yes. As you coach one or more children at the same time on a commercial basis, you fall in the "private teaching, coaching or tutoring" category of regulated business under the Act.
4. Yes. As you conduct an activity mainly involving children as part of sport or active recreation, you fall in the "sport or active recreation" category of regulated employment under the Act.
5. Yes. As you carrying out work inside a boarding facility at a school you fall in the "schools-boarding facilities" category of regulated employment in the Act.
6. No. As you have a child attending the school you are exempt under the "schools other than teachers and parents" category of regulated employment.
7. Yes. As an adult occupant of a home where child care is provided you fall in the "child care" category of regulated business under the Act.

calendar of events

May 1 - 31 Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month

May 9 - 15 National Families Week

May 15 - International Day of Families