



# kids' issues

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## North Queensland Parliament Sitting

In September, the Commission took part in Queensland's first Parliamentary sitting in a regional centre.

From 2 – 5 September 2002, children and young people from schools throughout North Queensland witnessed this historic event at the Townsville Entertainment and Convention Centre.

The Commission hosted two activities during the sitting – community engagement activities over the three days, and a 'Students Speak Out' breakfast on 5 September.

Over the course of the sitting the Commission conducted a ballot to assess what issues are important to children and young people in North Queensland.

Over 2,000 votes were received from children and young people from Years 1 – 12.

In addition, the Commission's 'Students Speak Out' breakfast at the Great Barrier Institute of TAFE gave Parliamentarians the opportunity to speak directly with young people about their views.

100 students and around 40 Parliamentarians, including Speaker of the House, Ray Hollis and Premier, Peter Beattie, attended.

Townsville Grammar School and Pimlico State High School provided a string quartet and a woodwind ensemble.

Commissioner, Robin Sullivan commended the TAFE students on their professionalism in catering and serving at the breakfast.

"I was very pleased with the success of the event and received a lot of positive feedback," Dr Sullivan said.



## 2004 15th ISPCAN Congress promoted

The Commissioner, Robin Sullivan, travelled to Denver, Colorado in July to promote the 15th International Congress of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN).

Robin attended this year's conference to promote the 2004 conference to delegates.

The Commissioner said ISPCAN is the only multi-disciplinary organisation that brings together a cross-section of people who work for the prevention of child abuse, neglect and exploitation throughout the world.

"These Congresses allow child protection workers from across the globe to share research findings, discuss programs, support each other and seek ways to improve the lives of abused and neglected children," she said.

"This kind of networking is vital to ensure child protection issues are prioritised."

The 15th Congress of ISPCAN will be hosted by NAPCAN in Brisbane from 19 – 22 September 2004.

For more information, visit the official Congress website at [www.congress2004.com](http://www.congress2004.com)

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Commission for  
Children & Young People  
Queensland Government



## Commissioner's Report - Palm Island Community Renewal Project

Over the past four months, the Commission has been involved in consultation about a community and youth centre proposed for Palm Island.

In July, Principal Policy Advisor, Kathy Mandla, travelled to the island to ensure the views of children and young people are included in plans for the Palm Island Youth Centre.

The Commission is represented on the Palm Island Community Renewal Steering Committee, which oversees the funding and financial viability of the centre, and coordinates the input of all government agencies.

The consultation conducted by the Commission is designed to give children and young people input into the centre's concept, design and building.

Following Kathy's trip in July, Selina Roosmale-Cocq and Bianca Hill from the Commission attended the Bwcolgman "Speak Out" Youth Conference on 30 – 31 August as part of the community consultation process.

Selina and Bianca helped run workshops to identify the thoughts and ideas of children and young people.

Up to 60 children aged 12 and under took part in activities used to explore their views.

Monthly consultation with the Palm Island community is expected to continue for the rest of 2002.

This project aims to empower children and young people by inviting them to contribute to decisions which affect them.

### **Barry Salmon**

Acting Commissioner  
for Children and Young People



*Selina paints the face of one of the workshop participants*

## Executive Director visits NZ counterparts

In late June, the Commission's Executive Director travelled to New Zealand to attend the 'Advancing Children's Advocacy' training program hosted by New Zealand's Commission for Children.

Barry Salmon made the trip after the New Zealand Commissioner for Children offered to host one of our staff members following a visit from two of our New Zealand colleagues.

The program was developed by the New Zealand Commission for Children to assist community organisations in their advocacy work for children.

Barry said the two-day program focused on developing an understanding of children's rights and developing advocacy skills in the areas of care and protection, health, education and youth justice issues.

It also provided ideas to enable young people to participate in community and government practice and policy development.

"The training program was a fantastic idea, allowing people who work in the child protection industry to examine their work and compare their services with others in the industry," Barry said.

"The concept is something that can readily be translated into the Queensland context."

Barry intends to develop a similar training program through the Commission to support community organisations in regional Queensland.

## Kidspeak

### 2002 Leukaemia Charity Ambassador tells her story

I am ten years old and in August this year I was awarded the 2002 Leukaemia Charity Ambassador, which means Mum and I, with help from many friends, raised the most money for the Leukaemia Foundation.

My family and I live in Toowoomba, but when Mum was diagnosed with leukaemia our family lived at the E.S.A. village in Brisbane for one year.

We will be returning in October for a while so Mum can have a Bone Marrow Transplant. It is good to know that the foundation has the funds to give such support to patients and families like mine.

I thank the Leukaemia Foundation for giving me the opportunity to be in the Quest.

Fundraising can be hard work, but it is rewarding. I met lots of nice people and made heaps of new friends.

Mum and I had lots of fun organising fundraising events. Some things we did were a bowling day, bikini babe bike wash, disco, sports charity action and lots of head shaves and colours just to name a few.

I would recommend children of any age to join an event like the Leukaemia Quest. It's fun.

*Bianca Bauer*

### Expansion of Community Visitor powers coming

In July, the Premier announced a future expansion of the Commission's Community Visitor program to improve protection for children and young people in care.

The Community Visitors will be able to visit foster carers with six or more children in care.

Mr Beattie said the change would allow more

vulnerable children access to the support and advocacy services of Community Visitors.

The state's 23 community visitors make regular visits to children in residential facilities, youth detention centres, SAAP services and mental health facilities, and play a vital role in ensuring vulnerable children receive services appropriate to their needs.

The Commissioner intends to consult with the foster carer associations on the changes proposed to the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000*.

### Issues Papers launched

The Commission has launched a new series of Issues Papers, which are short, concise, relevant reviews on critical issues relating to children and young people in Queensland.

The launch, held in August at Brisbane's Customs House, was attended by around 30 key stakeholders in the child protection and child advocacy fields.

The first Issues Paper by Clyde Hertzman, Associate Director of the Centre for Health Services and Policy Research, discusses the role of early childhood development in determining later adult health, and the subsequent impact on the economic interests of government.

Manager of Research, Sue Howard, said the initiative aims to provide high quality, peer-reviewed research papers containing valuable information for both academics and those working directly with children and young people.

The first Issue Paper can be found at [www.childcomm.qld.gov.au](http://www.childcomm.qld.gov.au)



*Commissioner Robin Sullivan launches the Issues Paper series at Customs House*

## Commission congratulates Anthony on top Award



Anthony Benedetti, the Commission's Complaints and Investigations Unit Manager, has been awarded the 2002 Public Sector Award for Child Protection.

The award is well-deserved and highlights his commitment to his job.

## Performance

### Complaints and Investigations queries up

In the three months to September, the Complaints and Investigations Unit received 644 incoming telephone complaints or enquiries, a 67% increase on the previous quarter. Of these, 169 new cases were activated.

Unit Manager, Anthony Benedetti, said the figures show things are getting busier in the third quarter.

During the quarter, 99 case files were progressed, and 95% of existing complaints and investigations cases were closed.

The Unit had a 100% clear-up rate for assessments and follow-ups within 28 days of matters which arose during the quarter.

4 Of all formal written complaints lodged, 60% were from outside Brisbane.

### Community Visitor program still growing

The Community Visitor program now has 23 Community Visitors across the state visiting young people in out of home care. There are now 176 sites across the state to be visited each month.

A new Community Visitor has been appointed to Cairns with recruitment underway for Mount Isa and Brisbane.

The Community Visitors met for three days of training in July, which included awareness of cultural issues when working with young people from Indigenous or non English speaking backgrounds.

Manager of Community Visitors, Dennis Palmer, said useful discussions were held with officers from departments including the Department of Families, Housing and Queensland Health (Mental Health), and representatives from CREATE.

"The training allowed newly-appointed Community Visitors to learn more about their role from other more experienced Visitors," Dennis said.

In the September quarter, 377 visits were made, 322 of which were outside Brisbane.

### Demand for Employment Screening ongoing

Although demand for employment screening applications peaked last quarter, with over 48,000 applications received, demand was still strong in the September quarter, with 27,337 applications – 20,732 from volunteers.

In the three months, 22,384 blue cards were issued, reflecting the work of the additional temporary staff engaged to process applications.

No negative notices were issued in the quarter, but 68 people withdrew their applications, 21 as a result of being challenged.

An appeal against the Commission's decision to deny one applicant a blue card was upheld.

## calendar of events

5 December 2002 - International Volunteers' Day (United Nations) for more information call 02 9262 5111

9 December 2002 - International Children's Day of Broadcasting (encouraging media networks to involve children in broadcasting) for more information see [www.unicef.org.au](http://www.unicef.org.au)