

kids' issues

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Child Protection Week 2003

Child Protection Week saw the Commission involved in a range of activities throughout Queensland to draw attention to child protection issues.

As part of the Week, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Robin Sullivan was a guest of Douglas Shire, participating in activities in Mossman and Port Douglas.

The Commissioner also visited Cherbourg and Townsville, speaking at breakfasts, taking part in community consultations and conducting workshops.

Dr Sullivan said while Brisbane is the traditional centre of Child Protection Week events, she was pleased to see the level of interest in regional Queensland.

"I was very impressed by the coordinated approach taken by the regional centres I visited during the week," Dr Sullivan said.

The Commission was also represented at the Child Protection Week Award Ceremony and took part in a Child Protection Week family day at Broadbeach on the Gold Coast.



Community Visitor Dianne Polglasse helps out at the Child Protection Week family day at Kurrawa Park on the Gold Coast.

New advocacy training program to be launched

The Commission will launch a new advocacy training package later this year to improve advocacy for children and young people.

Announced by the Commission during Child Protection Week, the program will increase workers' understanding of how they can provide better support for, and advocate on behalf of, children and young people.

Principal Project Officer, Tania Hill, said the package is intended to help people recognise the different forms of advocacy and how to be a good advocate for children and young people.

"It's really important we respect children and young people's right to have a say in issues which affect them," Ms Hill said.

"To properly address issues of abuse and neglect, we need to open the lines of communication between adults and children."

The training package will include a reference manual containing information and contact details on organisations which advocate in a range of areas, including health, education, youth justice, employment and training and housing.

The trial program is expected to be delivered to teacher's aides, child care workers and staff from a variety of community organisations.

For further information about the advocacy project and training package, contact the Commission for Children and Young People on 3247 5525.

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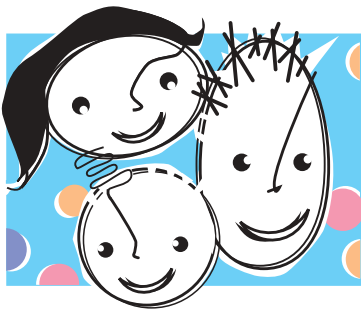
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Commission for
Children & Young People
Queensland Government



Commissioner's column

The Commission has a firm commitment to encouraging children and young people's participation in activities which affect them.

Our Act also demands that we listen to children and take their input seriously.

The Commission does this in many ways, such as including young people on selection panels and consulting them in a range of forums, including recently at the Ideas Festival held at Brisbane's Powerhouse.

In addition, we are committed to ensuring children and young people have input into policy and practices which directly affect their lives.

To this end, the Commission has recently sponsored two children and a carer from Queensland to attend the Ninth Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect being held in Sydney in November.

In addition, the Commission is supporting the participation of children and young people in ISPCAN's 15th International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect to be held in Brisbane next year.

We have done this through my role as the Chair of the Congress organising committee, and our Principal Communication Advisor's role as Co-Chair of the Youth Participation sub-committee.

I believe it's vital for practitioners from all backgrounds to hear children and young people's views on the best way to address abuse and neglect, and build stronger, more resilient communities.

We need to understand the choices today's young people face to ensure the services we provide meet their needs.

Robin Sullivan
Commissioner for Children and Young People

Blue cards for child carers

From 1 September, the Commission began screening of all child care workers following changes to the Child Care Act 2002.

Child care workers now need a blue card to work with children and young people. Those issued with a blue card have their criminal history, if any, checked, including charges as well as convictions.

Commissioner for Children and Young People, Robin Sullivan, said the screening was a big step forward.

"I believe this protects the safety and interests of children and will give parents added confidence in those who care for their children," she said.

The changes are expected to affect workers in more than 1500 child care services around the state. All child care workers are expected to undergo the Working with Children Check in the next six months.

Commission welcomes changes to child evidence

The Commission has welcomed new legislation which will improve the way children and young people giving evidence in court are treated.

Commissioner, Robin Sullivan, said the Evidence (Protection of Children) Amendment Bill 2003 will ensure the courts deal more sensitively with children.

"I applaud these amendments, as they should help minimise the stress on children and young people required to give evidence," the Commissioner said.

The new measures include:

- pre-recording evidence at a preliminary hearing
- mandatory use of CCTV or screens
- entitlement to a support person in court
- exclusion of all but certain people from court during a child's evidence about a sexual offence
- restrictions on calling a child as a witness at committal hearings
- restrictions on the type of questions if a child is a witness at a committal hearing.

The new provisions will also allow Police to share information with the Commission about any charges laid against a person currently holding a blue card.

Kidspeak



Chris Bell is a student at Smithfield State High School in north Queensland. He is the recipient of an Education Queensland Building Youth Technology Excellence (BYTE) Award.

My ICT teacher gave my class an assignment to create a five page website on ourselves. I enjoyed making it so much that I decided to include a favourite subject of mine – astronomy. When I finished, I found that I had made a website of 214 pages!

It took about eight weeks to complete and that was going to the computer room every morning, morning tea and lunchtime at school and some of it at home to get it finished in time for assessment.

I heard of a competition called the Digital Expo and decided to enter it. I did not even expect to get into the finals, but I did, and I ended up winning it. When I heard about the BYTE awards I wasn't going to enter it but my teacher thought that I should and I'm very glad I did because I ended up being one of ten winners in the state for my category which was Junior Website.

The award itself is excellent and I am very happy to have it. The prize is an Apple I-POD worth \$525 and it has a storage capacity of ten gigabytes and stores up to 2500 songs. The I-POD is very small and can fit into your top pocket.

Before I took an interest in IT my two interests were Astronomy and Geology. I would like to have a career incorporating both of these subjects but now I would like to fit IT somewhere in there as well.

I am already designing a new bigger and better website on Astronomy, a four minute Flash movie and a game using Visual Basic programming. Now my main hobby is IT.

Chris Bell

(Chris is pictured receiving his award from Dr Lesley Clark MP. Smithfield also had two other winners in the BYTE awards, Chris Diehm and Kwanta Fuangsila, making it the only school in Queensland to have three winners.)



The Commission's display at this year's Ekka

Commission on Show at the Show!

If you visited the Ekka you may have noticed a new addition to the Government pavilion - this year the Commission had a display in the popular Frank Nicklin pavilion for the first time.

The Commission's display was popular with show-goers, particularly children and young people visiting with school groups and relatives. Activities at the display included a games arcade, a 'shooting stars' challenge and photographs with our mural for those successful in shooting their star through the hoop.

Principal Communications Advisor Sam Keegan said the event was an excellent opportunity for the Commission to link with the community, particularly children and young people.

"We put a lot of work into making the display both fun and educational for children and young people, and most importantly, more than 5000 people left the Ekka with a greater awareness of the Commission's role," Ms Keegan said.

Annual Report available online

The Commission's Annual Report for 2002-2003 will be available on the web from early November.

You can find it at
www.childcomm.qld.gov.au

NAIDOC 2003

This year, for the first time, the Commission took part in NAIDOC Week celebrations by participating in the Musgrave Park Family Fun Day.

The Commission held a display, which attracted many visitors, with children enjoying the talents of a free face painter engaged for the day.

Parents and relatives were also interested to know more about the Commission's work and took advantage of the free information available at the stand.

NAIDOC – the National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee – celebrates and promotes a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture.



Nicole, Jacinta and Dennis enjoyed having their faces painted at CCYP's stand at the NAIDOC Family Fun Day in Musgrave Park

Performance stats

1 July – 30 September 2003

Employment Screening Services received 21,523 applications for blue cards and issued 22,224 cards during the quarter. There were 1,171 applications withdrawn, including eight as the result of a challenge by the Commission. Three people were issued with a negative notice during the quarter.

Complaints and Investigations had a slightly quieter quarter, receiving 681 enquiries. Around 51 per cent of enquiries came from Brisbane, with the remainder coming from regional areas. Eighty cases were progressed during the quarter.

Community Visitors continued their work across the state, making 469 visits during the quarter, with 209 visits taking place outside Brisbane. A total of 183 sites were visited during the quarter.

Commission stands up to sexualisation of children in media

Recent media pictures of young girls made up to look like adults caused a community outcry, and prompted the Commissioner for Children and Young People to speak out on the issue.

Robin Sullivan said the recent depiction of an 8-year-old girl photographed looking glamorous, and being described as a 'knockout', was an example of the growing sexualisation of children in the media

"These kinds of images raise a number of concerns," Dr Sullivan said.

"There's the effect on the child involved, the impact on other young girls who aspire to achieve the same look and the gradual erosion of restraints against children being seen as sexual objects.

"Sexualisation of young girls through images like this only weakens the fight against child sexual abuse."

The Commissioner said media organisations needed to develop more responsible policies.

She also urged the community to act when confronted with pictures in the media which inappropriately commodify or sexualise childhood.

"If you see an inappropriate image of a child in the media, make a complaint," she said.

calendar of events

November 24-27 – Australasian conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in Sydney. For further information go to www.community.nsw.gov.au/acan

December 3 – International Day of People with a Disability. For further information go to www.nican.com.au