



# kids' issues

Edition 16 • 2004 •

## inside

Carol Smart seminar ..... 2

### Kidspeak

Porter at the National Youth Round Table..... 3

FPO poster series..... 3

ESS breaks records ..... 4

Performance stats..... 4

## Blueprint heralds new era for child protection

The blueprint for implementing the Crime and Misconduct Commission's recommendations from the Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Foster Care has been delivered.

Commissioner, Robin Sullivan, who sits on the Child Protection Implementation Committee, welcomed the Government's response to the blueprint.

It includes over \$8million additional funding for the Commission and an extra 71 staff over the next three years. This will include a new Monitoring and Implementation Unit, new Complaints and Investigations staff and more Community Visitors to visit children in foster care.

"The government's swift response to implementing the blueprint is a positive approach to erasing the demons of the past," Dr Sullivan said.

"By increasing the Commission's powers, the child protection system in Queensland will be more accountable.

"Queenslanders can be certain we will spare no effort to achieve this."

The blueprint's other changes include:

- 518 staff for the Department of Child Safety over the next three years
- 23 new or expanded Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies and a new Indigenous Support Branch in the Department of Child Safety
- increases in foster carers payments
- alternative care for young people not suited to conventional foster care
- more training, recruitment and retention strategies for frontline staff, and
- more therapeutic services such as counselling and disability support for children in care.

## Commission puts the Focus on Fathering

The Commission has launched a new book, *Focus on Fathering*.

The book was edited by the Commissioner and focuses on new ways to explore masculinity and re-think fatherhood.

"This book encourages fathers to examine their place in the family, contribute to the caring of children and household tasks and be more emotionally connected to their children," Commissioner, Robin Sullivan said.



Premier Peter Beattie launching *Focus on Fathering*

Launching the book, Premier Peter Beattie admitted that being a father is challenging.

"Many factors shape the way fathers behave, and it's sometimes hard to pin down a clear definition of a father's role," the Premier said.

The launch was hosted by the Playground and Recreation Association at Spring Hill, with Undurba State School students Brooke Hindmarsh and Matthew Leadbetter taking part by sharing quotes from children about their fathers.

The book is published by the Australian Council for Educational Research, and costs \$29.95. It can be ordered by phoning 1800 338 402.

## contact

Commission for Children and Young People  
Level 14  
T&G Building  
141 Queen Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000

PO Box 12671  
Brisbane George Street  
Qld 4003

### Office Hours:

9:00 am – 5:00 pm  
Monday to Friday

Phone: (07) 3247 5525

Freecall: 1800 688 275

Fax: (07) 3247 5507

### Website:

[www.childcomm.qld.gov.au](http://www.childcomm.qld.gov.au)

### Email:

[wmaster@childcomm.qld.gov.au](mailto:wmaster@childcomm.qld.gov.au)



Commission for  
Children & Young People  
Queensland Government



## Commissioner's column

Childhood nutrition is an issue I've been asked about more and more in recent times.

While under-nutrition remains a problem for some Australian children and young people – particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in rural communities – most children are at far greater risk of being overweight than underfed.

Childhood obesity dominates debate in health circles, and for good reason. Figures show that overweight and obesity affect about 23% of Australian children and adolescents, with 6% being obese. In addition, the prevalence of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents doubled over the period 1985–1997.

Monitoring children's diets and exercise habits is a challenge that parents can have difficulty managing. Communities must work together to develop solutions to problems associated with child nutrition and activity.

The Commission actively supports community initiatives, such as the Walk to School program devised by the Queensland University of Technology. I am also the patron of the Health Promoting Schools Association of Queensland, whose activities include education programs about nutrition and action to improve the nutritional value of foods available in tuckshops.

We also continue to promote ways in which the Queensland community can work together to improve children's nutritional health and wellbeing.

We continue to put the issue of child health and nutrition on the policy agenda through publications such as *A head start for Australia: An early years framework*, which we released jointly with our New South Wales counterparts.

It is important to remember that while adults must commit to finding solutions to childhood overweight and obesity, children themselves must be involved in understanding the problem and coming up with their own solutions.

Robin Sullivan

**Commissioner for Children and Young People**

## CCYP sponsors Smart seminar during Youth Week

To celebrate National Youth Week, the Commission sponsored a UK academic to present a seminar on how marital separation affects children.

Professor Carol Smart is the founding Director of the Centre for Research on Family, Kinship and Childhood at the University of Leeds, UK. Her main focus is issues of gender, intimacy and family life, childhood and socio-legal studies.

Commissioner, Robin Sullivan, said the seminar highlighted the importance of research on children's perceptions of their post-divorce childhoods.

"Professor Smart's study is one of the first to look at divorce from a child's perspective," Dr Sullivan said.

"The Commi share this information with others in child-related employment."

Those who attended the seminar were among the first in the world to hear the details of this research, as many of the findings presented are currently unpublished.



(l-r)  
Commissioner for Children and Young People, Robin Sullivan, Professor Carol Smart and the Commission's Research Manager, Sue Howard.

## Under 8s Week - 23-29 May

Time is running out to organise your event for Under Eights Week.

The week aims to draw attention to issues affecting children in that age group through activities and celebrations held throughout Queensland.

For more information about the week contact Early Childhood Australia on 3891 6888, email [ecaqld@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:ecaqld@earlychildhood.org.au)

## Kidspeak



*Craig Porter, or Porter to those who know him, talks about his life on the streets and how he decided to do something to change his life and the lives of others.*

I first moved out of home when I was 15, back in Tasmania. Since then, I have lived on and off the streets for three years, sleeping in parks and wherever else I could. I have also battled with drug addictions, which I can honestly say I'm not proud of.

I remember the day my life changed for the better. My streetie mates and I were complaining how it sucked to live in a park, when I realised I had no right complaining if I wasn't prepared to change things for myself. It all starts with a change in your thinking.

Since that day, I have moved around a lot, trying to better the situation for all homeless youth. One day, I will end the problem forever. I tried doing this through a political party, which took me to America and brought some culture to my life. I have also 'harassed' politicians (Mayor of Launceston, Premier of Tasmania, Founder of the Greens Party etc) but they have not made a change. I have also given countless talks to schools and organisations, giving my perspective of life on the streets.

Currently, I am doing an apprenticeship as a baker and have also been accepted into the National Youth Round Table. I will be one of fifty to take my views to the federal cabinet, and also the Prime Minister, mainly regarding homeless youth.

I can't do these things alone, so if you have any ideas (all will be considered) on how the lives of youth can be better, please email me on [Funny\\_Man\\_Porter@yahoo.com](mailto:Funny_Man_Porter@yahoo.com).

Until the day we meet, respect yourself and each other.

*Craig Porter*

## New posters encourage children to talk with trusted adults

Commissioner for Children and Young People, Robin Sullivan, has launched a series of posters designed to encourage open communication between adults and young children about self protection, sexuality, feelings and warning signs.

*I Can – Promoting Self Protection Posters*, developed by Family Planning Queensland, is a series of six posters and a facilitator's guide for early childhood workers and educators to use with children aged two to five years.

Dr Sullivan welcomed the project, saying it was essential to open the lines of communication between parents or carers and children.

"This is an excellent resource, designed to teach adults that they can talk to children about sexuality and for children to learn that they can be heard," she said.

"The facilitator guide provides practical tips and strategies to get conversations started."

FPQ Chief Executive Officer Kelsey Powell said it is never too early to start teaching young children about sexuality.

"This area is often neglected in parenting programs or described as too controversial even though it's a healthy part of growing up," Ms Powell said.

The posters will be distributed free to childcare centres and services across Queensland in the coming months.



*(l-r) Caroline Fewster (Bond University), Robin Sullivan (Commissioner for Children and Young People), Shona Charters (FPQ) Holly Brennan (FPQ) and Cecelia Gore (FPQ).*



*Manager of Community Visitors, Dennis Palmer, has a close shave with Anthony Benedetti, Manager of Complaints and Investigations.*

## CCYP manager shaved for a cure!

Complaints and Investigations Manager Anthony Benedetti agreed to sacrifice his hair for the Leukaemia Foundation by participating in the Shave for a Cure fundraiser.

Anthony was skilfully cropped by Manager of Community Visitors, Dennis Palmer, much to the amusement of Commission staff. A charity auction was also held to raise funds, and over \$250 was donated to the Foundation as a result.

## Employment screening delivers 200,000th blue card

Employment Screening Services experienced a typically busy quarter, and also celebrated a number of milestones. After celebrating its third birthday, the Unit also celebrated the 200,000th blue card issued.

Michelle Miller, Manager Employment Screening, said issuing the 200,00th blue card was a significant achievement for the Commission.

"It indicates that Queensland is taking child protection very seriously, and most of the community is being very diligent in applying for the Working with Children Check before they begin working with children," Ms Miller said.

The Unit continues to surpass previous records, with 15,327 blue cards issued in March – 3,708 more blue cards than the number issued in February.

## Performance stats

### 1 January – 31 March 2004

The Complaints and Investigations Unit started the year with 816 enquiries during the first quarter. Of these, 84 per cent were received from outside Brisbane. The Unit progressed 125 cases during the quarter and closed nine per cent of cases.

As already mentioned, Employment Screening Services experienced a very demanding quarter, with 29,989 applications for blue cards received and a record 34,875 suitability notices issued, up more than 8,000 from the previous quarter. During the quarter, 133 people withdrew their application for a blue card after being challenged by the Commission.

Community Visitors are experiencing a particularly busy time, as the program prepares to extend visits to include all alternative care sites.

Nine new Brisbane CVs have been appointed in preparation for the increased number of visits.

From January to March, 332 visits were conducted throughout Queensland, with 253 of those visits taking place out of Brisbane.

Community Visitor training took place in Brisbane during February.

## calendar of events

1-31 May – Domestic Violence Prevention month. For more information, visit the Department of Communities website at [www.communities.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention/events](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention/events)

23-29 May – Under Eights Week. For more information, contact the State Planning Committee on 3891 6888 or email [ecaql@earlychildhood.com.au](mailto:ecaql@earlychildhood.com.au)