

kids' issues

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New powers and Child Guardian role for Commission

The Commission has welcomed the introduction of the *Child Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2004*, which paves the way for a new role of Child Guardian and greater powers to protect Queensland's children and young people.

Acting Commissioner Barry Salmon said the Bill provides greater capacity to monitor the child protection system, and puts the best interests of the child first.

The Bill amends the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000* to establish new systemic monitoring and review functions, expand the Community Visitor program to include all children in care and establish a new Child Death Case Review Committee.

Mr Salmon said the legislation arises from the recommendations of the Crime and Misconduct Commission's foster care inquiry, and the Forster blueprint for reform of the child protection system in Queensland.

"The new role of Child Guardian will oversee the delivery of services for children and young people in care, and enable closer external scrutiny of the child protection system," he said.

"Importantly, for the first time, the Commission will have the right to talk to individual children in foster care about any issues they may have and the power to conduct systemic audits of the services to these children.

In addition, the Commissioner will chair a new Child Death Case Review Committee to independently oversee the Department of Child Safety's child death review processes to ensure the Department's involvement was appropriate.

The Committee is expected to include workers from a range of specialist areas such as paediatrics, child protection, mental health and forensic pathology.

Other changes include a specific child death research function in the Commission to identify risk factors associated with the deaths of all children and make recommendations to address these risk factors in an annual Child Death Report.

The Commissioner will also have the right to provide reports to the Premier on agencies which fail to comply with the Act, and request that they be tabled in Parliament.

In addition, the Commission will be able to seek review of certain decisions of the Department of Child Safety through the Children Services Tribunal where the Commissioner believes decisions have not been made in the best interests of the child.

Commission farewells Robin Sullivan

The Commission has said farewell to its leader of five years, Robin Sullivan, who has accepted the role of first Director-General of the Department of Child Safety.

In announcing Dr Sullivan's appointment, Premier Peter Beattie said the appointment was ideal.

"There is no better person than Robin Sullivan to steer the department with greatest responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable Queensland children," Mr Beattie said.

Dr Sullivan was appointed Children's Commissioner in April 1999 after a distinguished career in the Queensland Department of Education.

We wish the former Commissioner all the best in her new role.

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:

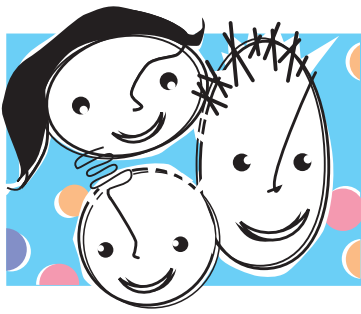
www.childcomm.qld.gov.au

Email:

wmaster@childcomm.qld.gov.au



Commission for
Children & Young People
Queensland Government



Commissioner's column

It's an exciting time for the Commission as we evolve and grow to support the changes occurring in the state's child protection system.

The recent appointment of the former Commissioner for Children and Young People, Robin Sullivan, as the first Director-General of the Department of Child Safety is a tribute to her profile as an advocate and administrator in the child protection sector.

While the Commission was sorry to lose her, we know her appointment will help bring about long overdue reforms in Queensland's child protection system.

The Commission looks forward to maintaining an effective professional relationship with Robin as we interact with the new Department, and wish her well in the new role.

From 1 August, we will introduce a name change to the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. The change reflects the additional Child Guardian responsibilities.

The Child Guardian's functions will commence from that date, including the systemic monitoring and audit functions. From September, our Community Visitors will also begin visits to children in foster care.

I am confident these enhancements will provide greater transparency and accountability for Queensland's child protection system.

With this goal in mind, we will continue to work with all levels of government and the community to promote and protect the rights of children and young people, particularly those most vulnerable.

BARRY SALMON
A/Commissioner for Children and Young People

Community Visitors prepare for September visits

The Commission's Community Visitor program has expanded significantly in recent months in preparation for visits to children in foster care, which begin in September.

Competition for the new positions has been strong, with more than 679 applications received for the positions advertised recently.

Manager of Community Visitors, Dennis Palmer said 27 Community Visitors had been appointed in the Brisbane area.

"We are currently interviewing all over the state for regionally placed Community Visitors as well," Dennis said.

All new Community Visitors will come together in Brisbane in late August to do training for their new roles.

Get involved in Child Protection Week 2004

From Sunday, 5 September, Child Protection Week will give the community the chance to take part in a range of activities.

As a member of the Child Protection Week Committee, Acting Commissioner Barry Salmon has urged groups to get involved in the week.

Each year, Queensland child protection workers are recognised for their work through the Child Protection Awards.

The awards provide an opportunity to showcase the work being carried out by many Queenslanders who contribute to making a safe environment for children.

The Awards will be presented on 5 September, and nominations close Monday 26 July.

For more information about the week and eligibility for the awards, contact Gwenda Zappala on (ph) 3395 3778 or email zappalag@bigpond.com, or go to the Queensland Child Protection Week website at www.families.qld.gov.au/childprotection/events/cpweek.

Kidspeak



Pallavi Kumar is 16 years old and lives in Cairns where she is a year 12 student at St. Monica's College. Pallavi writes about her community work.

I started doing community work halfway through grade

ten. I am not sure what exactly motivated me to start getting involved, but I felt that I needed to do something different other than just going to school and coming back home every week day – life during the week was getting a bit monotonous. I thought it would be difficult for me to get involved, but it really wasn't.

Mum and I rang up all the volunteer organisations in Cairns, and due to my age, the only one I could join was the Australian Red Cross, as a member of the Far North Queensland youth group.

I take part in community work through school, but my main focus for the last few years has been the youth group. I have been a member for a total of three years, two of which I have been the president of the group. We are a group of high school students who aim to give something back to our community.

Getting involved in volunteer work is both rewarding and satisfying. I am also studying hard as my goal is to study medicine next year at the University of Queensland after a biomedical science degree. There are many places this degree may take me, but I would love to travel overseas to practice medicine.

Pallavi Kumar

Commission forges new partnerships with Queensland school nurses

The Commission joined forces recently with Queensland Health's Public Health Unit Network to take part in their school-based youth health nurse Symposium on 24-25 June.

The Symposium was held to give 53 nurses from Charleville to the Gold Coast the opportunity to join together to discuss the challenges they face working on campus.

Zonal Coordinator Sally Russell-Hall said the Commission's involvement was important as child protection and the Working with Children Check had been identified by school-based youth health nurses as important issues in their field.

"The aim of the session was to further inform participants about the blue card, and to offer an opportunity for their questions to be answered," Sally said.

"The responses they received ensured all participants received clear and precise information, and they also received resources to take back to the young people in their school communities.

"We were delighted to have the opportunity to work together with the Commission for Children and Young People in providing much needed information for this workforce," she said.



School-based youth health nurses at Queensland Health, Scientific Services, Coopers Plains.

Brisbane to host International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect in September

Up to 1,000 child protection professionals and volunteers from around the world will converge on Brisbane from 19-22 September for the 15th International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect.

Conducted every two years by the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN), the theme of the Congress is "Working Together for a Child-Safe World".

The Conference will bring leading experts from around the world together to look at ways to prevent child abuse, neglect and exploitation on a global scale.

Keynote speakers will include Professor Fiona Stanley, AC, 2003 Australian of the Year and founding CEO of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, Dr Astrid Heppenstall Heger from the University of Southern California and Professor Geraldine Macdonald from the University of Bristol.

The conference will also include a youth participation program, in which children and young people from Australia and overseas will join other delegates to discuss their ideas for preventing child abuse and neglect and building stronger, more resilient communities.

For more information about the conference, visit www.congress2004.com.

Performance stats

1 April – 30 June 2004

Employment Screening Services have experienced another busy quarter, receiving 32,192 applications for blue cards, and issuing 37,390.

Between April and June 1,476 applications were withdrawn, 72 of which were withdrawn after a challenge from the Commission.

Despite being busy recruiting new Community Visitors and preparing for visits to children in foster care, the Community Visitor program has been busy visiting existing sites.

During the quarter, 391 visits were carried out across 206 sites. Of these visits, 280 occurred outside the Brisbane area.

The Complaints and Investigations Unit took 650 enquiries during the quarter, with 75 per cent of those enquiries originating outside Brisbane. Around 18 per cent of cases were formally progressed from April to June.

Visit CCYP at the Ekka

The RNA will be on again from 5-14 August, and the Commission will again host a display in the Frank Nicklin pavilion.

If you're planning a visit to the Show, make sure you pay us a visit to try your luck at the shooting stars challenge, have your photo taken as part of a mural, and check out the games arcade.



calendar of events

5-14 Aug – RNA Show. See CCYP's stand at the Frank Nicklin Pavilion. For more information, visit www.ekka.com

5-11 Sept – Child Protection Week. For more information contact Gwenda Zappala on 3395 3778, email zappalag@bigpond.com, or go to www.families.qld.gov.au/childprotection/events/cpweek

19-22 Sept – ISPCAN 15th International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect. For more information go to www.congress2004.com