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- officers of the Commission who designed the study, analysed the data and prepared the report.

June 2009

Dear Minister

I am pleased to present you with the Commission's report *Views of Young People in Detention Centres, Queensland, 2009*. This report details the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian's latest survey of the views and experiences of young people in youth detention.

This survey recognises that young people in youth detention have important views which are valid and can be used by decision-makers, practitioners and researchers to improve the interventions and support provided to young people in the youth justice system.

Yours sincerely

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

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to present the *Views of Young People in Detention Centres, Queensland, 2009*. This report details the findings of the Commission's second survey of young people in detention centres.

It is significant and timely that the release of this report coincides with the tenth anniversary of the 1999 Commission of Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions (i.e. the Forde Inquiry), a landmark public inquiry in Queensland that revealed the vulnerability of children and young people in residential facilities and youth detention centres to abuse and neglect. This inquiry was followed in 2003 by the Crime and Misconduct Commission's Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Foster Care, which exposed systemic abuse and neglect of children in foster care.

These inquiries have had a profound impact on Queensland's child protection and youth justice systems over the last decade and their influence continues to be felt today. Indeed, much of the impetus for the research presented in this report can be traced back to these inquiries. These inquiries made wide-ranging recommendations to improve independent systemic monitoring of the rights and wellbeing of children and young people in foster care, residential facilities and youth detention centres. They also identified the need for more effective mechanisms for children and young people in these systems to communicate their needs and experiences and to raise complaints about the services provided to them. In response to the findings and recommendations of these inquiries the Commission's monitoring functions in relation to the child protection and youth justice systems have been expanded and strengthened. An integral component of the Commission's systemic monitoring activities since 2006 has been the *Views of Children and Young People in Care* surveys, incorporating the *Views of Young People in Detention Centres* survey.

The *Views* surveys, as they have come to be known, explore the perceptions and experiences of children and young people in foster and kinship care, residential care and youth detention and monitor changes in these over time. Alongside other monitoring and performance data, the Commission believes that the views of children and young people as expressed through these surveys provide a critical perspective on the safety and effectiveness of Queensland's child protection, residential care and youth justice systems.

The survey findings presented in this report point to strengths of Queensland's youth detention centres and youth justice system and to areas where improvements can be made in the interests of providing a system that better promotes young people's interests, rights and wellbeing. For example, the survey reveals that the large majority of young people in detention centres feel safe, have someone to talk to about their worries, and have access to a range of programs important to their development and wellbeing. On the other hand, the survey reveals that around half of young people in detention centres lack confidence that they would be taken seriously if they reported concerns about their safety or wellbeing.

The Commission will continue to work closely with the Department of Communities and other government and non-government agencies responsible for administering youth detention centres and the youth justice system to improve their effectiveness and responsiveness to the needs of vulnerable young people.

I want to thank very much the young people who participated in the survey for their trust and courage in sharing with us their experiences and perceptions. I also appreciate the role that teaching and other staff in detention centres played in making the survey possible by organising and aiding in the administration of the survey.

I encourage you to read this report and be challenged by what young people have to tell us about their lives and their views about what we can do better.

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