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Abbreviations

ADD	attention-deficit disorder
ADHD	attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder
ASD	autism spectrum disorder
ATSI	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
CCYPCG	Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian
CMC	Crime and Misconduct Commission (Queensland)
CSO	Child Safety Officer
CV	Community Visitor
DChS	Department of Child Safety (Queensland) (renamed <i>Department of Communities (Child Safety)</i> in March 2009)
DETA	Department of Education, Training and the Arts (Queensland) (renamed <i>Department of Education and Training</i> in March 2009)
ESP	Education Support Plan
RACP	Royal Australasian College of Physicians
SD	standard deviation



June 2009

Dear Minister

I am pleased to present you with the Commission's report *Views of Young People in Residential Care, 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 residential care.

This survey recognises that young people 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 child protection and residential care systems.

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 Residential Care, Queensland, 2009*. This report details the findings of the Commission's second survey of young people in residential care.

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 (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 (CMC'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 were expanded and strengthened. An integral component of the Commission's systemic monitoring activities since 2006 has been the *Views of Children and Young People* surveys, incorporating the *Views of Young People in Residential Care* 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 effectiveness of Queensland's child protection, residential care and youth justice systems. The survey findings presented in this report point to aspects of the child protection and residential care systems that are working well and to areas where improvements could and should be made in the interests of providing alternative care systems that genuinely meet the needs of young people, promote their current and future wellbeing, and uphold their legislated rights. For example, young people in residential facilities overwhelmingly reported that they feel safe and well treated and are satisfied with the support and advocacy provided by their Community Visitors. This is heartening, particularly in view of the earlier findings of the Forde and CMC inquiries. On the other hand, the

survey reveals that a significant minority of young people in residential care experience considerable instability and insecurity in their care arrangements, have unmet health and education support needs, and do not feel involved in important decisions related to their lives in care. Encouragingly, the survey findings reveal that progress is being made in some areas. For instance, over the past year there has been an increase in the proportion of young people who feel that they have a say in what happens to them.

The Commission will continue to work closely with the Department of Communities and other government and non-government agencies responsible for administering the child protection and residential care systems so that all children and young people in these systems can enjoy the kinds of positive life circumstances envisaged a decade ago when the reform of these systems was set in train by the Forde Inquiry.

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 of life in residential care – for some, for a second time. I also appreciate the role that staff and carers in residential facilities played in making the survey possible by accommodating longer than usual visits and helping young people complete and return the questionnaires relating to the Community Visitors.

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

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