

# ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY - *Policy*



## KEY FUNCTIONS

Under the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000*, the Commission is responsible for monitoring and reviewing laws, policies and practices impacting on children and young people. The Policy Unit's work helps ensure these functions are met and promotes policies upholding children and young people's rights, interests and wellbeing and evidence-based practice.

The Policy Unit provides expert advice to the Commissioner and government on economic, social, legal, administrative and infrastructure issues relating to children and young people through:

- participating in government and non-government working parties, committees and taskforces
- submissions to Ministers, parliamentary committees, government departments and other agencies
- briefings on Cabinet Submissions that impact on children and young people
- monitoring and analysing policy trends and innovations in services to children and young people at local, state, national and international levels, and
- disseminating the Commission's policy position on children and young people's issues, in collaboration with the Communications Unit, to media and key stakeholders.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

### *Indigenous children*

The Policy Unit contributed significantly to the Commission's advocacy for Indigenous children in 2001–2002 by consulting with Indigenous children on Cape York to inform a submission to Justice Tony Fitzgerald's *Cape York Justice Study*. Children in the Cape were asked to identify issues impacting on their communities. Their solutions appeared in full in the Commission's submission to the Study, and were reflected in the Study's final recommendations.

The Policy Unit also advocated strongly for resources for children on Palm Island, and is on the Department of Housing's Community Renewal Program Steering Group to Develop a Coordinated Response to Children and Young People on Palm Island.

### *Satellite Broadcast – young people's consent to medical treatment*

In November 2001, the Commission's Principal Policy Advisor chaired an expert panel of lawyers, academics and youth advocates to discuss young people's consent to medical treatment. The event was hosted by Queensland Health and was broadcast to thousands of health workers at sites throughout Queensland.

### *Refugee children and young people*

The Policy Unit also played a significant role in advocating for the wellbeing of refugee children and young people

during the financial year. This included hosting a Forum for Refugee Children and Young People on 5 February 2002.

The forum's outcomes include:

- the Commission's membership on the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's whole-of-government Interdepartmental Committee on Multicultural Affairs to advocate for improved services to refugee children
- a commitment from the Minister for Education to review current guidelines for charging asylum seekers fees to attend government schools.

Policy staff also accompanied the Commissioner on a visit to Milpera and Greenslopes State Schools to gain insight into the education of refugee and migrant children. This knowledge has informed the Commissioner's input into the National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention.

In November 2001, the Policy Unit began work on a project on the incidence of volatile substance misuse by young people in Queensland.

## OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2001–2002, the Policy Unit co-ordinated 124 briefs and submissions, consisting of:

- 64 submissions to Ministers, government departments and agencies on laws, policies and practices impacting on children and young people (see graph over page)

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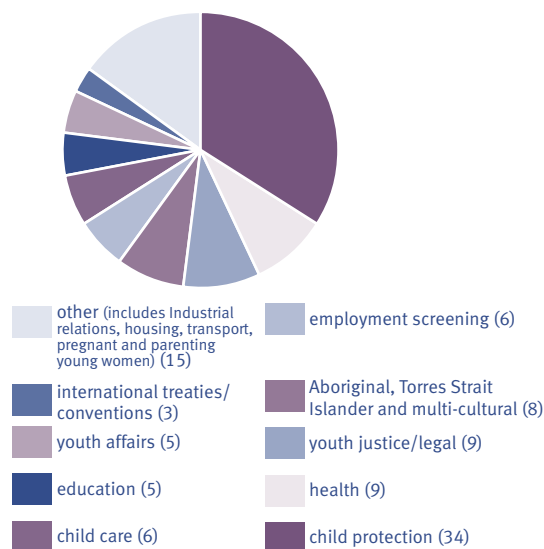
## COMMONWEALTH PEOPLE'S FESTIVAL – CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

In 2001-2002, the Commission coordinated the Children's Activity Program for CHOGM's Commonwealth People's Festival from 2-8 October 2001.

Its outcomes include:

- coordination of 23 government and non-government exhibitors
- a range of interactive face-to-face and electronic workshops, titled "Dare to Care" contributing to a Blueprint for a Child and Youth Friendly Commonwealth
- publication of the Blueprint for a Child and Youth Friendly Commonwealth featuring the views of children and young people about the arts, culture, education, employment and training, entertainment and recreation, environment, family, health, police and the law, safety, town planning and transport
- a video and CD Rom on participants' views
- distribution of thousands of copies of the Blueprint to CHOGM leaders, early childhood studies students and school students throughout Queensland
- a Ministerial Statement by the Premier in Parliament in February 2002 urging people to take time to consider the wishes of children expressed in the Blueprint.

Submissions made  
in 2001-2002



- 60 briefings for the Premier on the Commission's operations.

Major submissions made to Government during 2001-2002 included those on:

- Cape York Justice Study
- Juvenile Justice Amendment Bill 2001
- Child Care Amendment Bill 2001 and other child care policy proposals
- *Domestic Violence Amendment Act 2001*
- review of Education Queensland's Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy
- review of education curriculum, assessment and tertiary entrance requirements
- Queensland Health Strategic Policy for Children and Young People's Health
- School Transport Safety Committee Taskforce

- Queensland Crime Commission's Project Axis recommendations
- procedures for responding to standard of care issues and notifications of allegations of harm for children in out-of-home care, and
- Second Report of the Forde Implementation Monitoring Committee.

The Policy Unit promotes the protection and wellbeing of children through its public presence and advocacy work in policy forums. Last financial year, Policy Unit staff represented the Commission on over 30 government and non-government committees and working groups dealing with policy issues impacting on children and young people.

## OUTLOOK

In 2002-2003, the Policy Unit will develop a Working with Children Kit, and deliver statewide training to promote work practices to protect children from harm. It will include specific advice on:

- what constitutes child abuse and other inappropriate conduct
- selection processes for choosing suitable people to work with children
- pre-employment checks including criminal history and other background checks
- training, supervision and management of staff including volunteers
- appropriate ways to respond to, and the establishment of systems to deal

with allegations of abuse or other inappropriate conduct.

The kit is aimed at organisations involved in child-related employment and will complement the Commission's employment screening function. Its development will be informed by an advisory committee with representatives from government, the child protection sector and peak community organisations.

Other key policy projects proposed for 2002-2003 include:

- launching the Commission's Volatile Substance Misuse by Young People in Queensland Report
- trialling the Commission's community engagement strategy for dealing with volatile substance misuse by young people throughout the state
- amending the Commission for *Children and Young People Act 2000* to allow expansion of the Community Visitor program to foster carers with six or more children in care
- chairing the ISPCAN 2004 International Child Protection Conference Sub-committee on children's participation
- developing a booklet on child-friendly journalism.