

ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY - *Research*



KEY FUNCTIONS

The Research Unit analyses, coordinates, conducts and promotes research to inform decision making and the quality of services to children and young people in Queensland. The Unit monitors research findings and emerging issues relating to children and young people through readings, literature reviews and networking.

Where possible, the Unit seeks the views of children and young people on issues and ensures these are reflected in Commission activities. The Unit's activities play a key role in promoting evidence-based practice and monitoring policies and practices impacting on children and young people.

The Research Unit:

- works collaboratively to develop effective, efficient and ethical research processes
- provides information about evidence-based work that supports the Commission's contribution to debate on issues relating to children and young people
- plays an essential role in enabling the Commission to:
 - present relevant material at state, national and international forums
 - contribute to publications at local, state, national and international levels
 - disseminate information to influence theory, research, and the attitudes, policies and practices

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- of government, service providers, academia and the general community
- analyses reports, research and data to identify trends which have the capacity to impact on the wellbeing of Queensland children and young people
 - initiates, identifies and/or promotes networks and alliances in research with academic, non-government and government partners.

HIGHLIGHTS

Children and Young People in Queensland: a Snapshot

In June 2002, the Commission published *Children and Young People in Queensland: a Snapshot*, which provides the state's first comprehensive snapshot of the wellbeing of children and young people in Queensland. The report examines current literature on indicators of wellbeing for children and young people and data from a range of government agencies providing services to children and young people such as health, safety, education and housing.

Focus on Fathering Project

The Commission's Focus on Fathering Project began in 2000. In 2001-2002 activities included:

- Research on the impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children whose fathers are incarcerated. In collaboration with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board, the Research Unit launched

a discussion paper in Cairns in July 2001. The Unit then worked with Indigenous elders in Cairns to draft a framework for fathering programs for these fathers.

- A fathering survey – the Unit identified a gap in the literature on the views of fathers on fathering and carried out a survey of a specific group of fathers to investigate fathering issues and fathers' relationships with their children. Of fathers attending men's support groups around Queensland, 105 participated. The data identified a number of barriers to 'good' fathering, including a lack of formal knowledge and education about fathering, inadequate experience and negative media images of men. These findings were presented at relevant conferences and forums.
- Fathers' Day competition – in September 2000, a Fathers' Day competition was held to get information from children from preschool to Year 12 on how they felt about their fathers. Entries were received from 1,499 children from over 100 schools across Queensland. The surveys were analysed in 2001-2002. Children identified the following as being the most important things about their fathers:
 - qualities that made fathers special eg. being caring and supportive (48%)
 - activities shared and time spent by fathers with their children (36%)
 - a father's love and affection (24%)
 - their work (24%).

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- Focus on Fathering Research Forum – jointly organised with the School of Applied Psychology, Griffith University Gold Coast. Held in February 2002, it brought together 170 researchers, policy-makers, practitioners and fathers interested in issues relating to children and young people. The forum provided an opportunity to share information about the latest research and projects, and enabled networking between people from different fields. It addressed:
 - what the research says about the importance of the father-child relationship
 - what research is currently being carried out in Queensland, and
 - what programs and support are available to men in their fathering roles.

Professor Clyde Hertzman videoconference and seminar

In November 2001, the Unit co-sponsored a visit by Canadian Professor, Clyde Hertzman, with QUT's School of Public Health. Professor Hertzman, an internationally recognised expert in the impact of early childhood development on population health, presented a seminar for senior government officers on key research on the early years. This was followed by a video-conference linking sites across Queensland and interstate to discuss the importance of the early years, and links between social and health issues and economics.

Let's Get Loud Project

In collaboration with Peakcare and the Queensland Youth Housing Coalition, the Research Unit began a project to examine how young people accessing out-of-home care feel about the accommodation and placement options available to them in Queensland. The Commission's Community Visitors assisted in collecting data for the project. The data will be analysed and a report prepared in the 2002–2003 financial year.

Evaluation of health services in youth detention centres

The Research Unit received funding from Queensland Health and the Department of Families in 2001–2002 to evaluate the new health services model being implemented in youth detention centres, following recommendations of the Forde Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions.

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The Research Unit's work contributes to the key outcome areas of the Strategic Plan, but predominantly to the Commission's key outcome area of promoting evidence-based practice. Specific achievements include:

- 35 speeches/papers presented by the Commissioner, the Executive Director and other staff at forums or conferences at state/national level
- 50 internal papers providing advice on a range of topics for the

Commissioner, Executive Director, and the Policy and Communications Units

- eight briefing papers for the Premier or Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- five submissions to external bodies and five submissions for research funding in collaboration with academics – three were successful
- 14 media releases or responses to media queries
- implementation of the Issues Papers series
- membership of 14 interagency groups on the wellbeing of those under 18
- mentoring a University of Queensland student from the School of Social Science
- the *Queensland Journal of Educational Research (Vol 16)* was dedicated to papers presented at a Commission research forum.

OUTLOOK

The Commission will launch the Research Unit's Issues Papers series in August with the first paper by Professor Hertzman: *An early child development strategy for Australia? Lessons from Canada*. The series will provide the Commission with the opportunity to inform policy and practice through research into child-related issues. The papers will be high quality, peer-reviewed research papers addressing critical issues facing children and young people in Queensland. They will also provide information which will assist those working in the sector.

The results of the Let's Get Loud collaborative consultation project and a report on the Focus on Fathering project will be released.

The Unit will monitor information provided by the Commission's Community Visitor program to inform evidence-based policy and practice.

Work will also continue on three joint research projects, including one promoting resiliency in primary school children, a joint QUT Access project with Professor Collette Tayler and others, and a joint QUT governance project with Dr Susan Danby and Dr Ann Farrell.

The Unit's evaluation of health services in Queensland's youth detention centres will continue, and the ongoing Early Years Project will increase knowledge about the early years of childhood and enhance relevant policy and practice.

