

# Organisational capability - Policy



policy

## Key functions

Under the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000* the Commission monitors and reviews laws, policies and practices that affect the delivery of services to children and young people, or otherwise impact on children and young people. The Policy Unit helps ensure these functions are met and assists with the promotion of laws, policies and practices that uphold the principles underlying this Act. To achieve this, the Policy Unit monitors a broad range of areas – including health, housing, child protection, education, youth justice and training, transport and employment.

### The Policy Unit:

- provides submissions on legislative or policy reforms to Ministers, parliamentary committees, government departments and agencies and negotiates improved outcomes for children and young people
- provides briefings on issues that impact on children and young people
- sits on government and non-government working parties, committees and taskforces and advocacy committees
- identifies emerging issues concerning children and young people and advocates for appropriate responses from the government and the community
- monitors and analyses policy trends and innovations in relation to services and programs for children and young people both in Queensland and in other jurisdictions
- disseminates the Commission's position on issues affecting children and young people in collaboration with the Research and Communications Units, to media and key stakeholders

The Policy Unit provides advice on laws, policies and practices that impact on children and young people on the basis of what is in the best interest of the child or young person.

The Policy Unit is also responsible for administering Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation and privacy matters, and managing the Commission's legislation, cabinet matters and parliamentary briefs.

## Highlights

### Volatile Substance Misuse in Queensland

In 2002-03, the Policy Unit played a critical role in raising the profile of volatile substance misuse ('chroming') as an issue for Queensland's children and young people. The Unit developed a report: *Volatile Substance Misuse in Queensland* in September 2002. It outlines a community engagement strategy for dealing with this issue at the local level, which has been well received by both government and communities.

Following the release of the report, a working group was formed to develop a whole-of-government response to the issue of volatile substance misuse. The Policy Unit is represented on the working group, and the Commission's community engagement strategy is expected to inform the response.

The Commission has also presented papers on the strategy at several key conferences including the Youth Justice Conference and the State Youth Affairs Conference. In addition, the Policy Unit organised a retailers' forum in January 2003 to encourage retailers to adopt responsible retail practices for the sale of solvents. As a result, peak retail associations agreed to work with the Commission, the Queensland Government and the Brisbane City Council to develop a resource to help retailers address volatile substance misuse in their communities.

### Working with Children Kit

The Commission developed the *Working with Children Kit* and training program in 2002-03 to help organisations and community groups provide safe and friendly environments for children and young people. The kit complements the Commission's Working with Children Check.

An Advisory Committee established to provide guidance on the development of the kit and training included representatives from government, the child protection sector, peak community organisations that work with children, churches, and sport and recreation groups.

The kit covers topics such as organisational policies and procedures, codes of conduct, recruitment, training, supervision and management of staff and volunteers, and appropriate ways to respond to disclosures of abuse and other inappropriate conduct.

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## Outcomes and achievements

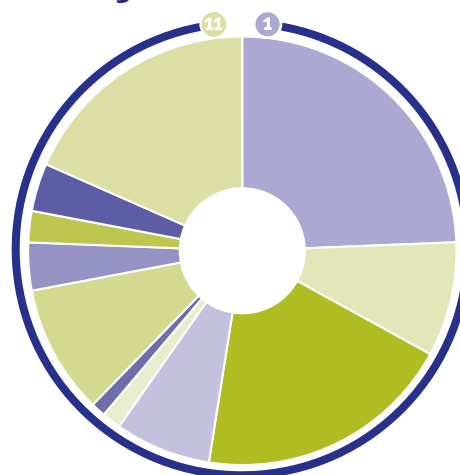
In 2002-03, the Policy Unit coordinated 154 briefs and submissions, including:

- 82 submissions and briefings to the Premier, Ministers, government departments and agencies on laws, policies and practices impacting on children and young people – a 31 per cent increase on the 64 submissions made last financial year
- 72 briefings for the Premier and Parliament on the Commission's operations – a 20 per cent increase on the 60 written last financial year

Major submissions to government departments in 2002-03 including those on:

- Final Report of the Forde Implementation Monitoring Committee
- Education and Training Reforms for the Future
- Department of Industrial Relations' Review of Work and Family
- Review of adoption legislation
- Review of the law of negligence and civil liability
- Review of section 63 of the *Health Services Act 1991*
- Education Queensland's review of home schooling
- Amendments to the *Juvenile Justice Regulation 1993*
- *Evidence (Protection of Children) Bill 2003*
- Senate Inquiry into Institutional Care
- Disability Services Queensland Carer Recognition Policy
- Education Queensland's Student Protection Inter-agency Working Party Report
- Ministerial Inquiry into Sexual Abuse in Schools
- Education Queensland's Safety in Schools Reforms
- Child Protection Strategic Framework
- Child Protection – International Measures
- Freedom of Information Review
- Sport Drug Testing

## Number of submissions made in 2002-2003



### Submissions, 2002-03

- 1 Child protection (20)
- 2 Employment screening (7)
- 3 Health (16)
- 4 Education (6)
- 5 Child care (1)
- 6 Indigenous/multi-cultural (1)
- 7 Youth justice/legal (8)
- 8 Employment (3)
- 9 Youth affairs (2)
- 10 National welfare, child protection issues (3)
- 11 Other eg sport, housing, young carers (15)

In addition, the Policy Unit advocated for children and young people by participating in 18 governmental and non-governmental committees during the 2002-03 financial year.

Throughout 2002-03 the Unit coordinated the following groups:

- Working with Children Kit Advisory Group
- Children of Prisoners Advocacy Group

## Outlook

The Policy Unit's activities are likely to increase in the 2003-04 financial year as the profile of the Commission and awareness of the Commission's activities and functions continues to grow. From next financial year, it is expected to be a requirement for agencies to consult with the Commission in the developmental stages of any policy or legislation impacting on children or young people.

The Unit will continue to work with local authorities and community groups, retailers and youth advocacy groups to support the establishment of local initiatives to address volatile substance misuse.

Training to support the Working with Children Kit will continue to be delivered by the Commission across Queensland in 2003-04.

The Unit will also coordinate and support the implementation of recommendations from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet review of Part 6 of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000* relating to employment screening.

In addition, it will play a key role in any Commission involvement in the CMC Inquiry into the Queensland child protection system and its subsequent outcomes.

