

# Organisational capability - Research



research

## Key functions

The Research Unit analyses, coordinates, conducts and promotes research to inform decisions and improve the quality of services to children and young people in Queensland. The information obtained and relationships developed from these activities are used to further understanding of issues relating to children and young people in a variety of ways.

The Unit produces papers and reports on a wide range of topics and issues which relate to children and young people. These are shared with stakeholders with diverse interests. The Unit identifies trends in research, issues, and practices.

This enables it to provide the Commissioner and other government and non-government organisations and individuals with high quality information and advice.

The Research Unit:

- analyses reports, research and data to identify trends that 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
- seeks and reports the views of children and young people on a range of issues
- enables the Commission to:
  - provide high quality, current and well-informed debate or comment on issues relating to children and young people
  - disseminate information to influence theory, research, and the attitudes, policies and practices of government, service providers, academia and the general community
  - contribute to publications at local, state, national and international levels
  - provide advice to other government and non-government agencies on draft documents, policies or practices relating to children and young people.

## Highlights

In the 2002-03 financial year, the Research Unit initiated a number of key projects which included:

### **Generating Futures: Engagement, Participation and Young People Forum**

In February 2003, the Commission held the Generating Futures: Engagement, Participation and Young People Forum at the Ipswich Campus of the University of Queensland. This forum promoted the right of young people to participate actively in shaping the communities in which they live – the family, school, and the broader community – including influencing government processes.

### **Early Years Strategic Network**

In 2003 the Commission established the Early Years Strategic Network through its Early Years Project. The Network is designed to encourage collaboration and information sharing across government and non-government agencies which are involved in working with children from birth to eight years and their families.

The first meeting brought together over 80 senior people associated with early childhood policy development, research, child protection, family support, education, childcare, health and mental health. Representatives came from universities, professional groups, key government departments, non-government organisations, and peak bodies.

### **Early Years Advisory Group**

An Early Years Advisory Group was established following the first Early Years Strategic Network meeting. This group is the Commission's peak consultancy body for identifying and prioritising issues relating to the early years. It is made up of around 30 members, representing health, education, child protection, family support, child care, mental health, Indigenous issues, disability and linguistically and culturally diverse groups and children's rights advocates.

### **Input to the National Agenda for Early Childhood**

The Research Unit co-ordinated the Commission's submission to the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) on the development of the National Agenda for Early Childhood. Input from the Early Years Strategic Network was analysed and informed the Commission's submission and the Commissioner's input at the national roundtable discussion on the National Agenda for Early Childhood.





### Issues Paper series

In 2002-03, the Commission produced the second paper in its new Issues Paper series. Queensland researchers, Fagan and Najman based the paper, *The Gendered and Long-Term Relationship Between Family Practices and Children's Aggression and Delinquency*, on information from the Mater-University Study of Pregnancy (MUSP). It identifies family practices that increase children's aggression and delinquency and discusses the implications for prevention programs.

### Coordination of whole-of-government responses for the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children

The Research Unit co-ordinates the responses from all Queensland Government departments for the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children (LSAC). This survey, also called *Growing Up in Australia*, is a key research initiative designed to provide information about the influences on children's developmental pathways. This study will collect data from two different age cohorts of Australian children over eight years.

### Consultant on the evaluation of Future Families Program

A Research Officer has been appointed as consultant evaluator for the evaluation of Queensland Health's *Future Families Program*. The *Future Families Program* is a collaborative care initiative of the Child and Youth Mental Health Service of the Royal Children's Hospital and Health Service District. It is designed to help families with infants and young children who have complex needs in the Brisbane North and Pine Rivers districts. This Officer will provide advice on the design and conduct of the evaluation and hold focus groups with Queensland Health employees.

### Outcomes and achievements

In the 2002-03 financial year, the Unit's key outcomes included:

- 43 speeches/papers presented by the Commissioner, the Executive Director and other staff
- 116 internal papers providing advice and briefings on a range of topics for the Commissioner, Executive Director, and the Policy and Communications Units
- attendance at 88 meetings with agencies, groups and individuals in relation to issues associated with children and young people
- 16 responses to external requests from individuals for information
- seven responses to media queries
- four major submissions to other agencies
- membership of 14 interagency groups related to issues affecting children and young people

In April 2003 staff from the Research Unit attended the *Which Way You Mob!* Youth Policy Development Forum in Cairns to meet with and consult Indigenous young people on a range of issues. Contacts made during this visit will help the Commission access broader networks of Indigenous young people in the future to research their views on youth policy and other matters affecting them.

## Outlook

### Children and Young People in Queensland: a Snapshot 2003

The success of the Commission's first Snapshot report produced in 2002 has encouraged the Commission to work towards a 2003 Snapshot. The Snapshot provides a comprehensive view of children and young people in Queensland. The report is due for release towards the end of 2003. It will incorporate census and survey data as well as information from a range of government agencies providing services such as health, safety, education and housing to children and young people.

### A Focus on Fathering

The Research Unit is awaiting publication of its book on fathering by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). *A Focus on Fathering* is the culmination of a series of activities by the Research Unit over several years, designed to recognise and acknowledge the important role fathers play in their children's lives. Commission staff contributed three of the book's chapters and played a significant role in editing other chapters. The book will be launched around February 2004.

### Early years project

An Early Years Research Forum is expected to be held in early 2004 to address the issues and priorities identified by the Early Years Advisory Group and the Early Years Strategic Network. The Forum will further the Commission's capacity to provide expert advice and organisation in this area.

"The Research Unit co-ordinates the responses from all Queensland Government departments for the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children (LSAC)."

### VISE mentoring project

The Unit will coordinate an educational mentoring support project for young people in accommodation services, provided it can attract enough volunteers. The project is designed to allow young people to request, through their Community Visitor, educational support in any school subject area through a volunteer mentor.

The educational support is provided through the Volunteers for Isolated Students' Education (VISE) program. The unit hopes to expand the project following a pilot in early 2003-04.

### Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth

In 2003-04 the Commission for Children and Young People will be assisting the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) to host Queensland consultations during the development phase of the ARACY Research Agenda. The Alliance is a national initiative involving researchers, policy-makers and practitioners which promotes the development and application of evidence based knowledge through collaboration to enhance the wellbeing of children and young people.

