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The Honourable P D Beattie MLA
Premier
Level 15
Executive Building
100 George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Premier,

It is with pleasure that I present to you the Annual Report for the Children's Commission of Queensland for the period 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000.

The report has been prepared in accordance with Section 81 of the Children's Commissioner and Children's Services Appeals Tribunal Act 1996 and Section 46J of the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1997.

Your sincerely,



ROBIN SULLIVAN
CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

The Children's Commission serves to protect and promote the well being of all children and young people in Queensland.

Functions and powers

The Commissioner's functions and powers are set out in Part 2 of *the Children's Commissioner and Children's Services Appeals Tribunal Act 1996*. They include, monitoring and reviewing entities engaged in the provision of children's services, collaborating with relevant government agencies, maintaining an Official Visitor Program, conducting relevant research and advising the Minister.

The agency was established as a statutory body on 23 March 2000. The Children's Commissioner reports to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care. In accordance with Administrative Arrangement Order (No.2) of 2000 gazetted on 4 August 2000, the Children's Commissioner now reports to the Premier.

The Children's Commission is a small agency comprised of 14 permanent full-time staff and one short term project officer.

Our operational goals

- To monitor and review, in collaboration with relevant entities, the provision of children and young people's services, to propose improvements and to provide an appeal mechanism for reviewable decisions.
- To foster a community culture that focuses on children and young people's interests, needs, rights and responsibilities.
- To enhance informed decision making through research into the evaluation of issues involving the well being of children and young people.
- To promote knowledge of and confidence in the Commission's role and functions.
- To develop and maintain a client focussed organisation with efficient and effective work practices and service delivery.

Our key programs

1. The Official Visitor program safeguards the welfare of children and young people living in state funded residential facilities by working with administrators to ensure the adequacy and appropriateness of services provided to residents.
2. The Review program receives expressions of concern relating to the delivery of children's services and liaises with relevant authorities to resolve matters impacting on the life experience of children, young people and families.
3. The Appeals program provides information about appeal rights and facilitates appeals to the Children's Services Appeals Tribunal in relation to reviewable decisions under the Child Protection Act 1999, the Adoption of Children Act 1964 and the Child Care Act 1991.
4. The Research program encompasses strategic research and development and facilitates greater appreciation of the life experiences of children and young people. The research agenda is enhanced through productive partnerships with a broad range of agencies.
5. The communication and policy programs play a key role in advancing public education about young people's interest, needs, rights and responsibilities and facilitates their voice at the highest levels.

Commissioner's Report

The 1999-2000 reporting period has been one of rapid change and transition for the Children's Commission.

Implementation of recommendations arising from the Forde *Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse in Queensland Institutions* and proclamation of the *Child Protection Act 1999* for example, have strengthened child protection measures in this state as well as enhanced the role of the Official Visitors and increased the number of complaints and appeals processed by the Children's Commission.

The Children's Commission has risen to the challenge of providing statewide access to quality service through a range of proactive strategies including:

- Provision of a toll-free telephone number for expression of complaints about children's services;
- An extensive schedule of regional visits by both the Children's Commissioner and the Official Visitors; and,
- Utilisation of communication technology to facilitate conduct of appeals involving regional complainants.

Issues emerging from analysis of Review Unit, Appeals and Official Visitor program performance data and consultation have included:

- a recognition that the provision of information about client rights by Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland (FYCCQ) personnel to clients has often been inconsistent;
- that there is a lack of out-of-home alternative care accommodation for children and young people at risk, particularly in regional areas.

Pleasingly, systemic refinement of FYCCQ case management practices is occurring, with the result that the number of appeals processed by the Children's Services Appeals Tribunal has risen significantly during the reporting period. An increasing number of these cases are being resolved through mediation processes rather than formal Tribunal hearings.

Other issues to emerge during the reporting period have been the growing

recognition of the importance of the early years and the need to develop and deliver holistic responses to children and young people's needs.

Research findings emerging from Canada, the United Kingdom and the Federal Attorney General's Department particularly, highlight the need for families, communities, governments and the corporate sector to work in partnership to ensure that all children have the best possible start in life.

The 1997 Rand Corporation review on the outcomes of early childhood intervention programs reported that integrated service delivery often led to:

- Gains in emotional or cognitive development for the child, typically in the short run, or improved parent-child relationships;
- Improvements in education processes and outcomes;
- Increased economic self-sufficiency, initially for the parent and later for the child, through greater labor force participation, higher income and lower welfare usage;
- Reduced levels of criminal activity; and,
- Improvements in health-related indicators, such as child abuse, maternal reproductive health, and maternal substance abuse.

It has been heartening to find that, through my interactions with children, young people, community representatives and service providers across the state, such a philosophy is informing a number of proactive initiatives including the establishment of Youth Councils by local governments, designation of schools and other locations as 'service hubs' for the local community and development and marketing of 'child friendly' environments by realty companies.

In recent months the Children's Commission has also developed strategic alliances with peak bodies in other states to secure Queensland's participation in the National Initiative for

the Early Years. It is intended that the Children's Commission will coordinate a research consortium in this state to facilitate inquiry into effective ways for supporting the first three years of life, including the conduct of a longitudinal study of Australian children to monitor the impact of social change and government policy on outcomes in a variety of domains such as health, education and well-being.

The desire to respond strategically to children and young people's needs has also been addressed in development of the *Commission for Children and Young People Bill 2000*.

The proposed Bill seeks to strengthen the role of the Children's Commission by advancing its capacity to:

- Advocate for children and young people;
- Implement an expanded state-wide community visitor program;
- Receive, seek to resolve and investigate complaints about the delivery of services provided to children subject to orders or intervention of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care;
- Introduce and manage employment screening for child-related employment not regulated by existing legislation.
- Conduct and coordinate research into issues impacting on children and young people;
- Monitor and review laws, policies and practices relating to the delivery of children's services; and
- Establish advisory committees to advise the Commissioner about specific issues related to children and young people.

Integral to the agency's endeavours to promote the best interest of children and young people has - and will continue to be - our commitment to facilitating the 'authentic' voice of youth at the highest levels.

Examples of this philosophy in practice have included:

- Direct reporting of children and young

people's views in relation to Education Queensland's 2010 *The Next Decade* discussion paper;

- Participation in an on-line chat with young people from across the state which focussed on their interest, needs and aspirations; and,
- Support for a tertiary student on placement at the Children's Commission to deliver a presentation at a national conference addressing the importance of youth participation in decision making processes.

I commend the initiative of the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland in establishing a State Youth Advisory Council ensuring, as it will, the increased participation of young people in decision making processes. The Children's Commission has accepted the invitation to nominate a representative on this body.

As I noted in a recent address to the CREATE foundation Face to Face Conference, adoption of the principles of participation, collaboration, partnership and learning will prevent us - the chronologically challenged - from becoming entrenched in our own agendas and demand that consideration of children and young people's needs, views and aspirations becomes an integral part of the planning and delivery process. We have a long way to go.

I encourage all Queenslanders to work toward optimising outcomes for children and young people in the interest of improving our collective and long term community wellbeing.



ROBIN SULLIVAN
CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

GOAL

To monitor and review, in collaboration with relevant entities, the provision of children and young people's services, to propose improvements and to provide an appeal mechanism for reviewable decisions.

Key Strategies and Outcomes

Official Visitor program

Official Visitors safeguard the welfare of children and young people living in state funded residential facilities by working with administrators to ensure the adequacy and appropriateness of services provided to residents.

The agency's two (2) Official Visitors conducted 135 visits to Alternative Care Intervention Services Program (ACISP) or Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) facilities during the period 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000. (See Figure 1)

The number of visits to these facilities increased by 62% in comparison to the 1998-99 reporting period with most facilities hosting Official Visitors at least once during the past twelve months.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the Official Visitors' workload and movements across 11 of the state's 12 Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland (FYCCQ) regions for the reporting period.

Figure 1

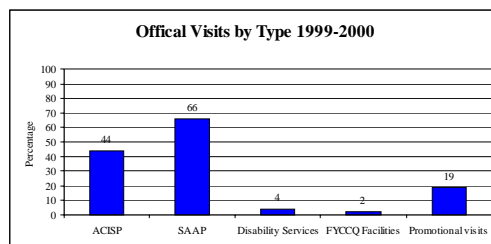
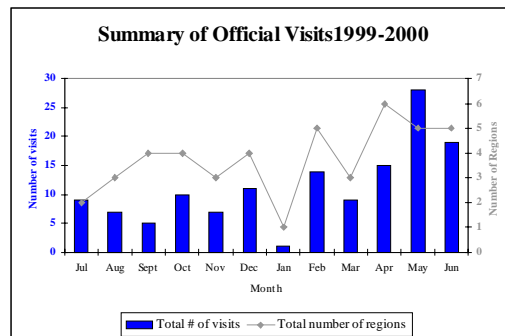


Figure 2



On sixty-five occasions issues about the standard of care or consistency of service provision were addressed. Concerns typically focused on:

- Safety and maintenance of the physical environment
- Lack of regular contact with FYCCQ staff
- The adequacy and effectiveness of FYCCQ case management including provision of information to clients about entitlements and services
- The implications of increasing client numbers
- Staff training opportunities
- Limited exit options and transitional support for young people in care.

A recurring issue has also been the lack of availability of alternative accommodation for children and young people at risk, particularly in regional and rural areas. The Children's Commission looks forward to working with relevant government agencies and non-government service providers to address this deficit in the interests of child protection and optimising long term outcomes for our youngest citizens.

Review of complaints

The Review program receives expressions of concern relating to the delivery of children's services and liaises with relevant authorities to resolve matters impacting on the life experience of children, young people and their families.

Refinement of the agency's complaints management system has resulted in automation of tracking and an improved capacity to report on outcomes achieved by this unit.

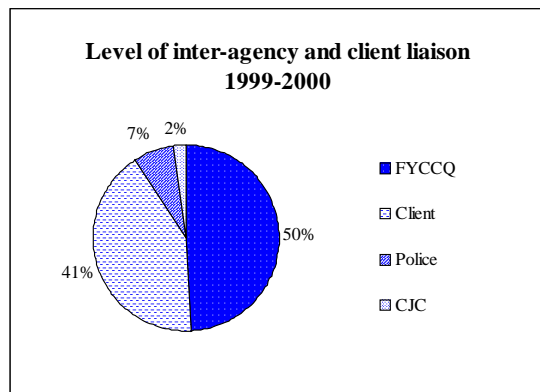
During the period 1 July 1999 – 30 June 2000, the Review Unit initiated response to 314 ongoing matters and 234 new expressions of concern. The number of new cases has declined since the conclusion of the Forde *Commission of Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions* when the Children's Commission was in receipt of a significant number of 'historical' complaints about service provision.

Typically, new cases involved:

- Placement and contact issues;
- Fulfilment of entitlements and the quality of service for children, young people, their parents and carers; and,
- Family Law issues.

Figure 3 demonstrates the scope of inter-agency liaison required to progress resolution of child protection matters processed by the Review Unit during the reporting period.

Figure 3



In addition, consultation and collaboration with Corrective Services personnel resulted in the development of operational protocols for provision of services to prisoners who are parents. A twelve-month trial of a statewide toll-free telephone complaint management service commenced in January 2000. At the conclusion of the reporting period, the Review Unit had processed a total of 101 expressions of concern.

Figure 4

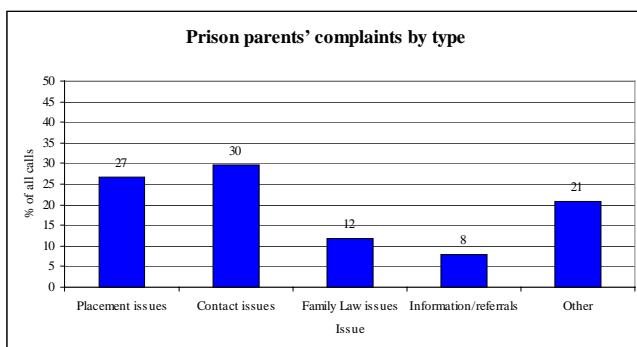


Figure 4 summarises the scope of issues raised by parents who are prisoners.

To date, provision of the toll-free service has resulted in conduct of two appeals by prisoners.

A formal evaluation of the trial program will be undertaken in January 2001.

Appeals against reviewable decisions

The Appeals program provides information about appeal rights and facilitates appeals to the Children's Services Appeals Tribunal in relation to reviewable decisions under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, the *Adoption of Children Act 1964*, and the *Child Care Act 1991*.

There are currently twenty Tribunal members. (See page 24) Members have been appointed to hold office until April 2001.

The appointment of four new Tribunal members ensures that the Children's Commission is well positioned to respond in a culturally appropriate way to the

significant over representation of indigenous children and young people in the child protection system.

During the 1999-2000 reporting period 33 appeals were lodged with the Children's Services Appeals tribunal, some 24 more cases than for the previous reporting period.

Appeals fell into three broad categories, including:

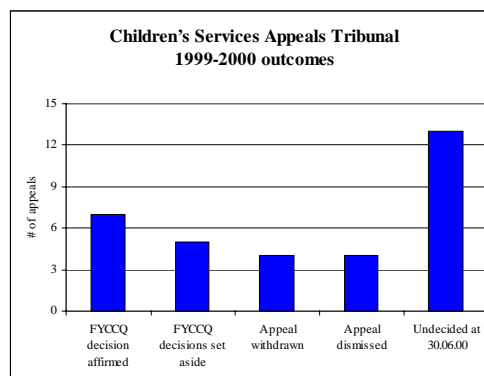
- Placement of children in care;
- Contact conditions; and,
- Certification of foster carers and service providers.

Appeals were lodged by a range of individuals including:

- Biological parent (18)
- Foster carers (11)
- Relative carer (4)
- Child (1 – joint application with parent)

Figure 5 summarises outcomes arising from conduct of appeals during the reporting period.

Figure 5



The average time between lodgement of an appeal and handing down of a Tribunal decision for the 1999-2000 was 13 weeks.

Pleasingly, a focus on mediation processes as a mechanism for resolving disputes has contributed to the withdrawal of 12% of all appeals during the reporting period.

Developmental directions

- ➔ Implementation of the statewide Community Visitor Program in line with provisions and anticipated proclamation of the *Commission for Children and Young People Bill 2000*.
- ➔ Development of protocols with the Department of Justice and Attorney General (JAG) to support efficient and timely liaison between the Children's Commission and the Children's Services Tribunal in line with anticipated transfer of that administrative body to JAG and anticipated proclamation of the *Children's Services Tribunal Bill 2000*.
- ➔ Continued refinement of data collection and tracking mechanisms to advance efficient and timely case management by Review Unit personnel as well as analysis of trends associated with child protection issues and other matters.
- ➔ In line with the provisions of the *proposed Children's Services Appeals Tribunal Bill 2000*, transfer of the Children's Services Appeals Tribunal to the Department of Justice and Attorney General will position the Children's Commissioner to represent and support children and young people as appellants. An ability to hear appeals against employment screening for child related employment will also fall under the jurisdiction of the Appeals Tribunal.
- ➔ In line with provision of the proposed *Commission for Children and Young People Bill 2000*, the Review function will be expanded to include the receipt of expressions of concern about services relating to children and young people subject to certain orders and intervention under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, the *Juvenile Justice Act 1992* and *Bail Orders Act 1989*.

GOAL

To foster a community culture that focuses on children and young people's interests, needs, rights and responsibilities.

Key strategies and outcomes

Raising the voice of children and young people at the highest levels

During the 1999-2000 reporting period, the Children's Commissioner or her delegate represented the voice of children and young people on a range of consultative and decision making bodies including:

- The Crime Commission Management Committee;
- The Queensland Child Protection Council;
- The Forde Inquiry Implementation Committee;
- The Forde Inquiry Monitoring Committee;
- The Community Services Strategy Advisory Group;
- The Community Capacity Building working group;
- The interdepartmental committee on Child Statistics;
- The Queensland Law Society Children's Issues Committee; and,
- The Child Protection Week Committee.

In June 2000, the Children's Commissioner was invited to be a member of the UNICEF National Taskforce on Child Rights.

The Children's Commissioner has also facilitated direct liaison and consultation between young people and decision-makers. Conduct of a meeting between members of the Coolum State High School Seniors Forum and the Minister for Fair Trade and Minister for Women's Issues focused on the former's concerns about:

- young peoples' consumer rights;
- their potential for exploitation; and,
- a desire to develop a code of conduct to provide an ethical framework for retailers' provision of service to this demographic group.

Promoting state-wide access and participation

The interests of children and young people were also promoted through facilitation of their 'authentic' and direct voice in activities such as an on-line chat with the Children's Commissioner which attracted 74 participants from as far afield as Thursday Island, Roma, Maryborough, the Gold Coast and Brisbane.

Redevelopment of the Children's Commission website has also served to promote sharing of information about the agency's scope and function with the wider community through provision of information papers, newsletter content, research reports, speech materials and media releases.

Community partnerships

Development of productive partnerships with peak non-government and community groups has also served to promote the interests, needs, rights and responsibilities of children and young people.

Ongoing liaison with community groups in Coolangatta has resulted in the recognition of the local state school as the service hub to support ease of access and integrated service delivery.

Consultation and liaison with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board, local community groups and the Department of Corrective Services has resulted in community commitment to development of a fathering program for indigenous inmates at Lotus Glen prison in Cairns.

Conduct of research forums in Townsville and Rockhampton provided opportunities for key groups such as policy makers, academics, government and non-government service providers to join together in the interests of promoting strategic alliances and integrated service provision with the express purpose of optimising outcomes for children and young people. Materials arising from these forums has been published on the Children's Commission website in the interests of sharing of good practice and further refinement of strategic partnerships in the best interest of children and young people.

Developmental directions



In partnership with Central Queensland University, the Children's Commission will publish papers delivered at the agency's Brisbane, Townsville and Rockhampton Research Forums in the interests of:

- promoting understanding of issues impacting on the life experiences of children and young people;
- celebrating good practice; and,
- advancing strategic and integrated response to these circumstances.



The Children's Commission anticipates development of productive partnerships with peak Government, business and community groups in progressing its Child Friendly Communities initiative. Key components of this strategy for fostering a community culture that focuses on the interest, needs, rights and responsibilities of children and young people include:

- Accreditation of child friendly businesses;
- Accreditation of child friendly communities; and,
- Development of a set of indicators of children's well being.



The Children's Commission also anticipates coordinating Queensland's contribution to the National Initiative for the Early Years, focusing on promoting staged and strategic service provision to children and families in the interests of optimising early childhood development outcomes, community capacity building and long term social capital.



Development of a comprehensive communication strategy to support staged implementation of the proposed *Commission for Children and Young People Bill 2000* is expected to:

- raise the agency's profile;
- enhance public awareness of child protection issues; and,
- increase commitment to improving the quality of life for our youngest citizens and the community as a whole.

GOAL

To enhance informed decision making through research into and evaluation of issues involving the well being of children and young people.

Key strategies and outcomes

Promoting a community of interest – the Children’s Commission Research Forums

Conduct of two Research Forums – 100 participants in Townsville and approximately 150 in Rockhampton – focused on contemporary children’s issues and provided a forum for local decision makers and service providers to share good practice and establish strategic alliances. Themes addressed at the forums included:

- children and young people’s health and well-being;
- education;
- child protection;
- justice; and
- integrated service delivery models.

Participant feedback included:

- confirmation that the forum had promoted enhanced understanding of the complexity of children’s issues;
- strong support for the conduct of similar and periodic forums in the interests of sustaining productive partnerships and improving outcomes for children and young people; and,
- recognition of the Children’s Commission’s scope and function and its commitment to advancing the best interests of children and young people.

Management data emerging from the Children’s Commission website, which indicated that the report on the Brisbane Research Forum was one of the most frequently accessed web page for the 1999-2000 reporting period, also evidences interest in the Research Forums.

Evaluation of issues impacting on children and young people

The Children’s Commission made submissions on 26 legislative and policy proposals relating to the delivery of children’s services or issues that impact on children and young people including:

- Review of the *Juvenile Justice Act 1992*;
- Report of the Taskforce of Women and the Criminal Code;
- Information Paper on Inter-Country Adoptions; and,
- Report on the Review of the Detention of Children in Watchhouses.

In addition, the Children’s Commission Research Unit coordinated a number of submissions relating to various issues and their likely impact on the quality of life for children and young people including:

- The Mental Health Bill 2000;
- The Community Services Strategy;
- Response to the *Principles Underlying the Youth Justice Program* discussion paper;
- Project Axis;
- The Youth Participation Charter;
- The Families, Youth and Community Care *Generate* website; and
- The Prostitution Law Reform proposals.

In recognition of debate around the importance of a father figure in the lives of children and young people, the Research Unit also progressed investigation of this issue through:

- Conduct of an environmental scan to identify the range of fathering programs and service providers in Queensland;
- Liaison with national and international researchers to ascertain methodological requirements for implementation of a fathering survey to scope community attitudes to fathering;
- Drafting of a paper analysing current research into - and images of - contemporary fathering; and,
- Strategic networking with community groups to advance timely and appropriate responses to expressed needs. (See description of Lotus Glen Fathering Program below).

The Research Unit also led the process of evaluating the efficacy of the existing Official Visitor program, using the findings to inform development of the state-wide Community Visitor program in line with the provisions of the *Commission for Children and Young People Bill 2000* and identified client needs. The report on this evaluative process will be published on the Children's Commission website later in the year with an abridged version also appearing in the Spring 2000 newsletter.

Strategic alliances and integrated service delivery

Commitment to collaborate in development of a fathering program for indigenous inmates at Lotus Glen prison arose from:

- Consultation with representatives from the Law and Justice Policy Branch, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development;
- Participation in the *Over-representation of Indigenous People in Custody* workshop by Children's Commission personnel; and,
- A desire to respond to inmates' and management's request to develop and implement such a program in the interests of improving parenting skills and long term outcomes for children and young people.

In contributing to this initiative, Children's Commission personnel coordinated a scoping meeting with around 37 separate organisations including:

- The Cairns Indigenous Men's Support group;
- Gumba Gumba Elders;
- Yarrabah Community Council;
- Injino Land Trust; and
- Yuddika children's organisation.

Development of strategic partnerships has also been an integral component of the evaluation of the Yelangi Pre-School Project. The Research Unit initiated interdepartmental discussions about this evaluation and helped scope the initial proposal.

Negotiations with Queensland University of Technology led to the placement of Dr Ann Farrell within the Research Unit for a month to workshadow the Commissioner and to complete a project identifying standards for child protection resources. This proved to be a valuable experience for both Dr Farrell and the Commission, strengthening the agency's standing in the tertiary sector and raising public awareness about the scope and function of the Children's Commission in this professional field.

Collaboration with academics at James Cook University and Queensland University of Technology has led to the involvement of the Commission in submissions









proposing research projects which will significantly add to knowledge of issues around the delivery of services to children and young people in Queensland.

Research Unit personnel also took a lead role in identifying the need for establishment of a crime statistics network focused on advancing the best interests of children and young people. In collaboration with officers from the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Courts, Department of Public Prosecutions and Protect All Children Today, the agency worked to drive improved systemic data collection, associated decision making processes and enhancement of the quality of services to children and young people.

Enhancing our research capabilities

The Children's Commission Research Unit undertook a number of internal procedures during the reporting period designed to enhance the agency's capacity to access and utilise information in a timely and strategic manner. Formal organisation of library resources, review of journal subscriptions and identification of potential partners such as the Planning and Information and Forecasting Unit served to ensure the currency of our familiarity with emerging trends and data related to children and young people's experience.

Developmental directions

-  Publication of the *Report of the Evaluation of the Official Visitor Program* is anticipated in late 2000. An abridged version of the full report will be included in the Spring 2000 newsletter, with the full report to appear on the Children's Commission website.
-  It is anticipated that the Lotus Glen fathering program for indigenous inmates will be developed and commence implementation by the beginning of 2001.
-  Conduct of the Fathering survey is scheduled to occur in late 2000, followed by collation and publication of a report in early 2001.
-  At the request of the Yelangi Evaluation Reference Group and with funding provided by Queensland Health and the Crime Prevention Unit, the Research Unit will complete the first stage of the Yelangi Project evaluation by mid 2001.
-  Development of a comprehensive database detailing contact information for international, national and local agencies such as UNICEF, the NSW Commission for Children and Young People, The Create Foundation, government departments and other non-government service providers to facilitate ease of access to advice about children's services.
-  The Child Labour Project designed to clarify the scope and complexity of the issue in partnership with Department of Education, Training and Industrial Relations continues.
-  A review of the Research Unit scope and purpose will be undertaken in line with anticipated provisions for expansion outlined in the *Commission for Children and Young People Bill 2000*.
-  Ongoing provision of opportunities for work placement by representatives from relevant tertiary institutions and faculties in the interests of promoting strategic alliances and supporting integrated service provision.

GOAL

To promote knowledge of and confidence in the role and functions of the Children's Commission.

Key strategies and outcomes

Communication and marketing

During the reporting period, the Children's Commission website hosted 16860 visitors with an average number of user sessions per day of 42.3. International visitors accounted for 35.6% of all users, with 44.6% originating from Australia and 19.8% of unknown origin. The average period of time that users were on the site was 8.3 minutes with some 22% of visitors having visited the site on several occasions.

Visitor entry points were distributed across three key areas of the website, namely:

- About the Children's Commission (accessed by 50.8% of visitors);
- Children's Corner (accessed by 28.2% of visitors); and,
- Parent Talk (access by 21% of visitors).

The top ten requested pages were:

1	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	1078 visitors
2	About the Commission	878 visitors
3	Commission publications	865 visitors
4	Children's statistics	823 visitors
5	Commissioner's media releases	739 visitors
6	Research forums	692 visitors
7	Commissioner's speeches	497 visitors
8	Parent help	473 visitors
9	Children's safety issues	468 visitors
10	Kid's calendar including 'Chill Out' programs	448 visitors

A comprehensive review of the procedural framework underpinning management of the Children's Commission website was conducted as a result of inappropriate material being linked to the agency's site and a directive for such action to occur being received from the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care.

Subsequent redevelopment and relaunch of the Children's Commission website has been informed by recommendations arising from the review of the agency's web management procedures and in accordance with government guidelines. A summary of these measures was included in a report to the Minister that was subsequently tabled in parliament.

A major initiative of the past twelve months has been production and distribution of *Kids' Issues*, a quarterly newsletter addressing a range of topics and detailing performance outcomes achieved by the agency's core program areas.

Public accountability and marketing were also progressed by publication of information about the agency in external publications such as the White Balloon Day program, the Peakcare newsletter, Children's Week literature, and the Generate website.

Public speaking

During the period 1 July 1999 and 30 June 2000, the Children's Commissioner and other officers delivered in excess of 40 keynote presentations.

TABLE 1: Public speaking engagements – a sample

<i>Audience</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Zonta Club of Queensland	Suffer the Children – the Children's Commission post the Forde Inquiry
Research Forums <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Townsville • Rockhampton 	Contemporary children's issues
Australian College of Education	Strategies in protecting children from harm
Australian Early Childhood Association	Who's responsible for children and their families?
Crèche and Kindergarten Association	Building the village that raises the child
Middle Schooling Conference	Focusing on adolescents
Alcohol and Drug Foundation	Young people and substance abuse
7 th Australasian Conference of Child Abuse and Neglect	Focus on fathering
Inter-country Adoption Retreat	Role of the Queensland Children's Commissioner
Queensland Association of State School Principals	Childhood in crisis

Information and professional development seminars detailing the scope and functions of the Children's Commission and contemporary children's issues were also delivered by the Commissioner or her nominee to a range of audiences including:

- Government medical officers and Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) medical officers
- Juvenile Justice Bureau regional managers (Queensland Police);
- Newly appointed Family Services Officers (FYCCQ);
- Regional office personnel (FYCCQ);
- Trainee Corrective Services officers;
- Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Association (state and regional branches);
- Foster carer networks; and,
- Social work and education students at Queensland University of Technology, University of Queensland and University of Southern Queensland, respectively.

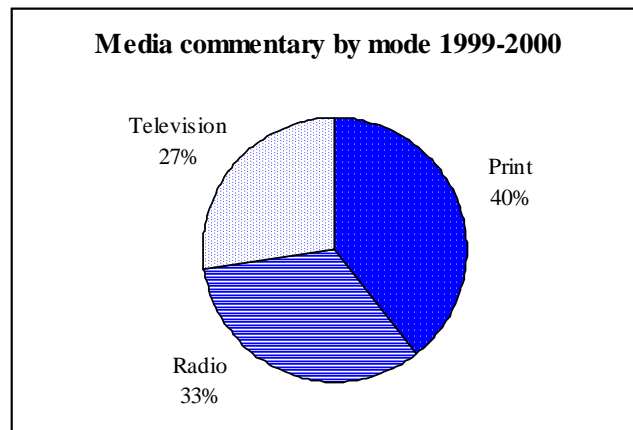
Media commentary

The Children's Commissioner delivered 66 media comments during the reporting period. Figure 6 highlights the mediums through which these comments were relayed to the public.

Media comment during the reporting period addressed a range of issues including:

- Provision of evidence by child witnesses
- Children in watchhouses
- Diversionary programs for young offenders
- The early years of schooling
- Child protection measures
- Employment screening for child related employment
- The effect of domestic and family violence on children and young people.

Figure 6



Developmental directions



The Children's Commission will develop and manage a comprehensive and staged communication strategy to support implementation of provisions embedded in the *Commission for Children and Young People Bill 2000*, to commence upon proclamation of the Act. Key components of this strategy will include:

- Rebadging of the agency as the Commission for Children and Young People;
- An information campaign to alert employers, prospective employees and the general public to the scope and requirements of the criminal history checking process for child related employment;
- Dissemination of information about the expanded and state-wide community visitor program to relevant Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland, Disability Services Queensland and Queensland Health employees as well as government funded out-of-home residential care providers and young people in care including those in Youth Detention Centres or undergoing treatment at mental health facilities;
- Dissemination of information about the agency's expanded research function to relevant stakeholders and potential partners;
- Dissemination of information about the Commission for Children and Young People's enhanced advocacy role to the general public;
- Relaunching of the Children's Commission website to reflect the expanded functions and powers of the Commission for Children and Young People.



Review and reformation of the Commission for Children and Young People Advisory Council to provide the Children's Commissioner with expert advice about issues affecting the well-being of Queensland's youngest citizens.



Identification and support of children and young people to participate on advisory groups and consultation processes will ensure the relevancy of the agency's operational practices and the continued facilitation of the 'authentic' voice of young people at the highest levels.

GOAL

To develop and maintain a client focused organisation with efficient and effective work practices and service delivery.

Key strategies and outcomes

Strategic planning and public accountability processes

During the reporting period the Children's Commission continued to utilise the *Interim Strategic Plan 1999* to inform its operations. With the approval of the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care review of this document will occur upon proclamation of the *Commission for Children and Young People Bill 2000* and in line with the provisions of that legislative framework.

Development of a suite of policy documents including a revised and comprehensive Code of Conduct as well as publishing, internet usage and e-mail communication guidelines has commenced with implementation expected to occur in line with proclamation of the *Commission for Children and Young People Bill 2000*.

Publication of the inaugural quarterly newsletter - *Kids' Issues* - in March 2000 reflects the agency's commitment to share information about issues affecting children and young people and provide data about a range of operational outputs achieved by the Children's Commission in the interest of public accountability.

Internal monitoring and review

Major Activity Profiles (MAPs) have been adopted as a planning, monitoring and accountability mechanism and align organisational activity with the performance goals articulated in the *Interim Strategic Plan 1999*.

Trailing of a formal staff development and supervision model has been undertaken by Research Unit personnel with a view to refinement of this process and utilisation of the strategy to promote personal and organisational growth as well as individual and shared accountability.

Refinement of the Commission's data management processes, as they relate to case management by the Review Unit, has been progressed to enhance:

- Easy identification and reporting of trends and patterns in the data;
- Informed decision making; and,
- Public accountability.

Research Unit personnel have also undertaken a lead role in the development of a centralised data collection process for tracking child complainants through the criminal justice system, in collaboration with officers from:





- Queensland Police Service
- Queensland Courts
- Director of Public Prosecutions
- Protect All Children Today

A skilled workforce

Children's Commission personnel have undertaken a range of professional development activities relevant to their operational responsibilities to sustain the currency of their knowledge and competencies.

In the interests of ensuring an informed, inclusive and skilled workforce, during the course of the reporting period the Children's Commission hosted several tertiary student placements as well as a three month part-time voluntary appointment through Multicultural Affairs Queensland which resulted in the subsequent appointment of the officer as a trainee.

Developmental directions

-  Development and publication of the *Strategic Plan 2000* to accommodate the provisions of the *Commission for Children and Young People Bill 2000* and related expansion of the agency's scope and functions.
-  Development and implementation of an agency wide performance planning and review process and professional development and training program to promote a skilled workforce and achievement of organisational goals.
-  Ongoing provision of opportunities for work placement by students from relevant tertiary institutions and faculties and those from non-English speaking backgrounds and Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the interests of promoting:
 - supporting inclusive and integrated service provision; and,
 - promoting strategic alliances.
-  Ongoing commitment to encouraging the permanent appointment of employees of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent or from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Appendices

- **Appendix A – Financial Statements**
- **Appendix B – Other Statutory reporting Requirements**
- **Appendix C – Interim Advisory Council**
- **Appendix D – Children’s Services Appeals Tribunal**

Appendix A – Financial Statements

Prior to its recognition as a statutory body on 23 March 2000 the agency's financial management and reporting processes – including audit and approval procedures – were overseen by the Families, Youth and Community Care.

The Auditor-General has notified the Children's Commissioner that the Commission's Financial Statements as a statutory body for the period to 30 June 2000 have been audited and approved.

OPERATING STATEMENT for the period 1 April 2000 to 30 June 2000

	2000 \$'000
Operating Revenue	
Grants and Other Contributions	498
Total Operating Revenue	<u>489</u>
Operating Expenses	
Employee Expenses	332
Supplies and Services	69
Depreciation and Amortisation	16
Other Expenses	43
Total Operating Expenses	<u>460</u>
Increase in net assets	38
AMOUNTS TRANSFERRED TO ACCUMULATED FUNDS	<u>38</u>
ACCUMULATED FUNDS AS AT 1 APRIL 2000	-
ACCUMULATED FUNDS AS AT 30 JUNE 2000	<u><u>38</u></u>

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
as at 30 June 2000

	2000 \$'000
CURRENT ASSETS	
Cash	337
Receivables	5
Other	4
Total Current Assets	346
NON-CURRENT ASSETS	
Property, plant and equipment	169
Intangibles	100
Total Non-Current Assets	269
Total Assets	615
CURRENT LIABILITIES	
Creditors	85
Provisions	116
Total Current Liabilities	201
Total Liabilities	201
Net Assets	414
EQUITY	
Accumulated surplus/(deficit)	38
General equity	376
Total Equity	414

Appendix B – Other Statutory Reporting Requirements

Public Sector Ethics Act

The Children's Commission has developed a *Code of Conduct* in consultation with staff. It is based on the five principles set out in the *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*, namely:

- Respect for the law and system of government
- Respect for persons
- Integrity
- Diligence
- Economy and efficiency.

Staff familiarity with the scope of the *Code of Conduct* been facilitated by training and education and the framework applies to all staff.

Freedom of Information

The Children's Commission received two applications for access to documents under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* during the period 1 July 1999 and 30 June 2000.

Overseas Travel

At the request of the Premier and in response to an invitation by the Shanghai Women's Federation, the Beijing Women's Federation and the Provincial Women's Federation (Xian) the Children's Commissioner undertook a visit to China from 30 October 1999 to 10 November 1999.

A report on outcomes arising from this activity was subsequently developed and forwarded to the Premier through the Minister, Families, Youth and Community Care.

Whistleblower's Legislation

There were no reports provided to the Children's Commissioner by Commission staff under section 30(2) of the *Whistleblower's Protection Act* during the reporting period.

Multicultural activities

The Children's Commission hosted the work placement of an officer of non-English speaking background for the period 17 April to 26 May 2000 as part of the Multicultural Affairs Queensland Pilot Program for Migrants. The Children's Commission is committed to the principles of culturally appropriate service provision and an ethnically diverse workforce that addresses Queensland's demographic profile.

Membership of the Children's Services Appeals Tribunal

As at 30 June 1999, there were 19 individuals were registered for selection as a Tribunal members under Section 38 of the *Children's Commissioner and Children's Services Appeals Tribunal Act 1996*.

Members were paid fees according to the terms and conditions of the *Remuneration Arrangements for Part-time Chairs and Members of Government Boards, Committees and Statutory Authorities* at the AA1 level depending on the duration of meetings and special assignments.

Appendix C – Interim Advisory Council

Interim Advisory Council Members

Ms Kelly Trewin	Create Foundation
Dr Richard Roylance	Protect All Children Today
Ms Jane Anderson	Abused Child Trust Inc.
Mr Raymond James*	Save the Children Fund
Mr Andrew Pollard	Child Adolescent and Family Welfare Association of Queensland
Ms Rose Elu	Dept. of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development
Supt. John Reilly	Queensland Police Service
Ms Elizabeth Anderson*	Foster Parents Association of Queensland
Mr Trevor Carlyon	Kids Helpline
Mr Paul Testro*	Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland
Dr Neil Wigg	Royal Children's Hospital and District Health Service
Ms Janet Wright*	Youth Advocacy Centre
Prof. Patricia Noller	The Family Centre, University of Queensland

*During the course of the 1999-2000 reporting period and as a result of personnel changes in several organisations, there were four resignations from, and subsequent appointments to, the Interim Advisory Council, namely:

- Mr Raymond James who was succeeded by Mrs Lyn Thompson as the Executive Director of the Save the Children's Fund;
- Ms Elizabeth Anderson who was replaced by the incoming President of the Foster Parents Association of Queensland, Mr Frank Young;
- Ms Cathy Taylor who was appointed Director, Office of Child Care, Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland, replacing Mr Paul Testro; and,
- The Youth Advocacy Centre nominated Mr Paul Spooner to replace Ms Janet Wright.

Membership and participation on the Interim Advisory Council was undertaken on a voluntary basis.

The Interim Advisory Council met on five occasions during the reporting period.

Appendix D – Children’s Services Appeals Tribunal

Children’s Services Appeals Tribunal Members

Ms Joan Beddoe	Special Education Teacher
Dr Colin Brennan	Psychiatrist
Ms Suzanne Brooks	Barrister – Children’s Court
Ms Judith Burdon	Coordinator – Centrecare Children’s Program
Professor John Dewar	Director – Family Law Research Unit – Griffith University
Mr Bruce Doyle	Family Law
Mr John Hutton	Solicitor and Barrister
Ms Adrienne Irvine	Social Worker
Mr Cedric Johnson	Former Ombudsman
Mr George Kalimnios	Solicitor
Mr Frank Lippett	Barrister-at-Law
Mr Dugald MacMillan	Retired Police Inspector
Mr Peter McDermott	Senior Lecturer – UQ Faculty of Law
Mr Glen Munt	Social Worker
Ms Margaret Rebgetz	Clinical Psychologist/Primary Teacher/SCAN
Mr Graham Rhead	Barrister-at-Law
Dr Richard Roylance	Consultant Paediatrician

Professor John Dewar’s decision not to seek reappointment as a Tribunal member and the death of Mr Cedric Johnson reduced the number of potential Tribunal applicants.

The addition of several new members has maintained the size of the potential membership pool and ensured that it is well positioned to ensure deliberations undertaken by this administrative body are culturally appropriate and accommodate the best interests of Indigenous children and young. The appointment of the following Tribunal members became effective in April 2000:

Mr Robert Anderson	Elder, Chair - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board
Ms Ruth Ross	Community Education Counsellor
Mr Allan Sambono	Community Conference Convenor, Youth and Family Services
Ms Penelope Tripcony	Chair, Indigenous Education Consultative Body

Total remuneration paid to Tribunal chairs and members
for the year ending 30 June 2000

\$66151.00

This expenditure represents a significant increase in relation to the previous reporting period and is commensurate with the administrative requirements for progressing an increase of 300% in the number of appeals processed by this agency during the reporting period.