



Commission for  
**Children & Young People**  
Queensland Government

# Queensland Commission for Children and Young People

# Annual Report 2000-2001



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# Organisational Profile

The 2000-2001 reporting period has been one of transition for the Queensland Commission for Children and Young People.

## Scope and Functions

In February 2001, the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000* was proclaimed significantly extending the agency's scope, functions and powers. Until that point, the organisation's services had been informed by the provisions of Part 2 of the *Children's Commissioner and Children's Services Appeals Tribunal Act 1996*. They included monitoring and reviewing entities engaged in the provision of children's services, collaborating with relevant government agencies, maintaining an Official Visitor Program and Children's Services Tribunal, conducting relevant research and advising the Minister.

Under the latter Act, the Commissioner reported to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care. Under the current Administrative Arrangements Order, the Commissioner for Children and Young People reports to the Premier.

## Our operational goals (July 2000 to February 2001)

- 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.

Revision of the organisation's Strategic Plan has recently occurred in line with the provisions of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000* proclaimed on 2 February 2001.

Key changes affected by proclamation of the new Act have included:

- transfer of the Children's Services Appeals Tribunal to the Department of Justice and Attorney General;
- expansion of the former Official Visitor program to a statewide Community Visitor program;
- introduction of an employment screening program for child related employment;
- expansion of the Complaints and Investigations program to include both an ombudsman and advocacy function; and,
- maintenance of Research, Communication and Policy programs.

## Provisions of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000*

Under the new Act, the Commission for Children and Young People is an independent statutory body attached to the Premier's portfolio.

In serving the needs of all Queenslanders under 18 years of age the Commission:

- **advocates** for the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people
- administers a **state-wide community visitor program** to provide advocacy and support services to children and young people in detention centres, authorised mental health services and out-of-home residential care facilities, including those for people with a disability
- receives, seeks to resolve and **investigates complaints** about the delivery of services provided to children subject to the orders or intervention of the Department of Families
- establishes youth and other expert **advisory committees** to advise the Commissioner about specific issues related to children and young people
- **monitors and reviews laws, policies and practices** relating to the delivery of services to children and young people or that otherwise affect them
- administers **employment screening** for child related employment,
- conducts and coordinates **research** into issues affecting children and young people.

Any child or young person or adult acting on their behalf can express a concern or grievance to the Commission, which may exercise its advocacy function. This function is complemented by provisions requiring the Commissioner to:

- consult with children and young people in a way that promotes their participation in decision-making by the Commissioner
- listen to, and seriously consider, the concerns, views and wishes of children and young people
- adopt work practices that ensure the Commission is accessible to children and young people, and,
- be sensitive to the ethnic or cultural identity and values of children and young people, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The Act requires the Commission to give priority to the needs and interests of children and young people: not able to protect their rights, interests or wellbeing; for whom there is no appropriate person to act on their behalf; who are disadvantaged by disability, geographic isolation, homelessness or poverty; who are in, or may enter, youth detention or out-of-home care including facilities for those with a disability.

As at the 30 June 2001, the Commission for Children and Young People employed 22.2 full-time equivalent positions:

Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Executive Director  
Director - Corporate and Strategic Planning  
Manager - Complaints and Investigations  
Complaints and Investigations Officer  
Manager - Employment Screening Services Unit  
Employment Screening Officer (three)  
Manager - Community Visitor Program  
Community Visitor  
Manager - Research  
Senior Research Officer  
Research Officer (two)  
Project Officer  
Principal Advisor - Policy  
Principal Advisor - Communication  
Web Development Officer (0.2)  
Executive Officer to the Commissioner  
Administration Officer  
Administration/Finance Officer  
Receptionist

The Commission workforce was comprised of 4 male staff members and 18 female employees.

# Commissioner's Report

Over the past 12 months, the Commission has continued to work with children, young people, their families and carers as well as other government and non-government service providers to achieve our commitment to promote and protect the rights, interests and wellbeing of Queensland's youngest citizens, now and in the future.

Our heightened capacity to respond to the needs of Queensland's children and young people has been facilitated by proclamation of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000 in February 2001 which re-established the former Children's Commission as the Commission for Children and Young People with expanded scope, functions and powers.

Under the new Act the Commission's overarching principles are:

- every child and young person is a valued member of society;
- in decisions involving a child or young person, their best interests are the paramount concern, and their views and wishes should be taken into account with regard to their age and maturity;
- every child and young person is entitled to:
  - have their dignity and privacy respected
  - be cared for in ways that protect them from harm and promote their wellbeing
  - express concerns and grievances and have them dealt with in a way that is fair, timely, and promotes their participation
  - receive information and help to exercise entitlements
  - access services necessary to meet their needs
- the family has primary responsibility for a child's upbringing and development, and should be supported in that role.

In carrying out its functions, however, the Commission is required by law to give priority to the needs and interests of children and young people:

- who are not able to protect their rights, interests or well being;
- for whom there is no appropriate person to act on their behalf;
- who are disadvantaged because of a disability, geographic isolation, homelessness or poverty; or
- who are in, or may enter, out-of-home care or detention.

## **Advocacy**

The Commission collaborated with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board (ATSIAB) in exploring the development of a culturally appropriate fathering program for Indigenous inmates at Rockhampton's Lotus Glen Correctional Centre. After the initial scoping carried out by the Research Unit in Brisbane and Cairns last year, a local reference group hosted by the Cairns and District ATSI Corporation for Elders (Gumba Gumba) has taken responsibility for furthering the project, supported by the Commission. This community capacity building approach ensures that the program will meet local needs, has the support of the local community and builds on the talents and strengths of Indigenous leaders in that community.

The issue of particular interest to the Commission is the impact which the incarceration of Indigenous men has on their children, the "hidden victims" of crime. To encourage recognition and discussion of this, the Commission and ATSIAB published a discussion paper with input from respected Indigenous researchers from the Gumurri Centre, Griffith University.

The Commission has also been advocating to the Department of Corrective Services for the introduction of baby supplies in visiting areas of correctional centres that can be accessed on an "as needs basis" during the time of the baby's visit.

This particular need was highlighted through meetings I held over the past year with various prisoner support and advocacy groups who sought to promote child friendly practices within this context.

The Commission gained a successful outcome on this issue with the Department instructing all general managers of correctional centres to ensure that baby provisions including bibs, disposable nappies and wipes are available for visitor's use.

A further outcome to emerge from consultation with prison advocacy groups and liaison with the Department of Corrective Services has been the ongoing provision of a toll free telephone service to prisons across the state. This service extends access to our Complaints and Investigations unit by prisoners who are parents.

Other advocacy activity undertaken by the Commission has included membership of the Policy Action Team to develop the *Putting Families First* policy and its whole-of-government reporting framework. The reporting framework for this strategy requires all government departments and agencies to report on their contribution to three outcomes areas:

- Giving children the best start
- Valuing and supporting the nurturing role of families
- Creating safe, supportive communities for families.

Many of the Commission's initiatives make a direct contribution to these outcome areas and have been highlighted for inclusion in the report. Particular note was made of such

initiatives as employment screening, complaint handling, the community visitor program, research into integrated service provision in the early years, national collaborative research activities focussed on the early years and the agency's fathering project. The final report is expected to be published next financial year.

My continued participation on the Child Protection Council, the Forde Monitoring Committee and the Crime Commission Management Committee as well as the contribution of the Executive Director to conceptualisation of the Child Protection Strategic Framework ensures that the voice of children and young people is being heard at the highest levels.

### ***Monitoring and reviewing***

As detailed in this year's Annual Report, establishment of the state-wide Community Visitor program - a key recommendation arising from the Forde Inquiry - greatly enhances our capacity to advance quality service to children and young people through regular and frequent interaction at the local level.

Consultation with Department of Families staff in relation to development of child protection monitoring strategies and configuration of data storage and reporting mechanisms progresses another significant Forde Inquiry recommendation and demonstrates our commitment to evidence based practice and continuous improvement.

Our membership of the Detention of Children in Watchhouses Liaison Committee also serves the best interests of children and young people. This committee is responsible for reviewing the operation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Queensland Police Service and Department of Families regarding the detention of children and young people in watchhouses. The monitoring of service delivery in this area has highlighted significant positive trends and initiatives. A significant decrease in watchhouse detention of 10.5% in 2000/2001 from the previous year is notable. A reduction in strip searching for children and young people being transported to watchhouses from detention is also to be commended.

Other achievements have included the development of a protocol between the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations to continue the effective and efficient complaint handling of the respective Commissions. The protocol provides clarification regarding jurisdiction in relation to complaints and issues affecting children and young people. The protocol also promotes regular communication between the respective Commissions to ensure no duplication or overlap of effort.

### ***Safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people***

Implementation of the range of recommendations arising from the Forde Inquiry and relating to our core functions has also been a key achievement for this reporting period, as detailed on page 22.

Our potential to safeguard the wellbeing of our youngest citizens was significantly enhanced with the introduction of employment screening for child related employment and the ongoing provision of a complaints and investigation service. As noted in this report, the volume of complaints processed by the latter unit has risen considerably in recent years - due largely I believe to a growing community intolerance of child abuse and neglect, a proactive commitment to child protection and an increasing awareness of the role and functions of the Commission for Children and Young People.

Development of a suite of indicators of children's wellbeing, currently being undertaken by the Commission's Research Unit, seeks to facilitate a mechanism for tracking and reporting on such developmental areas as health, educational attainment and social wellbeing in order to examine the efficacy or otherwise of policies and practices as they relate to the provision of children's services.

### ***Emerging issues***

Several issues have emerged during the reporting period that the Commission is seeking to address and monitor, including:

- fewer persons registering as foster parents;
- a lack of suitable residential facilities for young people;
- a lack of integrated data about child welfare.

It is my view that the Commission's Community Visitor program provides the agency with an opportunity to work with children and young people to develop recommendations for alternative and diverse models of youth housing and thus achieve positive outcomes for some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Since my appointment I have been advocating strongly for the integrated delivery of services to children and young people. At the statewide level the trial of a range of service 'hubs' by the Department of Families and the development of a policy by Education Queensland on the provision of childcare services on school sites are to be applauded. Community based initiatives which take an holistic approach to the delivery of services to children and young people are also increasing and the Commission for Children and Young People both supports and publicizes such initiatives. We are directly involved as a partner in the QUT Access project. However, a crucial element of integration remains elusive - the interconnectedness and sharing of critical client information.

I believe it is timely to accompany this development of a more integrated approach to the wellbeing of children and young people with serious consideration being given to allocating a unique identifier at birth to each of our young citizens. This consideration could include:

- endorsement of protocols for sharing of information across agencies in the interests of holistic response to client needs;
- development of procedures for securing client consent to sharing of information between service providers; and,
- establishment of safeguards to limit information sharing to relevant parties and maintain client confidentiality beyond the immediate support network.

The passage of our new legislation is strong evidence that Queenslanders are committed to promoting and supporting the best interests of children and young people. I look forward to working in partnership with government and non-government providers of services to children, families, carers and our children and young people to secure quality outcomes for the whole community.



**Robin Sullivan**  
**Commissioner for Children and Young People**

## Key Strategies and Outcomes

### *Official Visitor/Community Visitor program*

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.

Official Visitors spend considerable time building up supportive relationships with children and young people in residential facilities. During the course of a conversation on one visit the young people began to identify and discuss a number of issues of that they felt impacted on their quality of life at the residential. These issues included the perception that:

- they had little freedom or independence given evening curfews set by residential staff.
- they had few opportunities to participate in development of house rules;
- designated eating times were restrictive;
- there were limited activities available that they could access during the day;
- there was a lack of trust between the young people and the workers which made the residents feel as though they were 'paying for other people's behaviour'.
- there were differences between shelters with regards to rules - some actions are acceptable at one shelter and not another.

The young people did identify some positive aspects of living at the shelter, including week-end trips and access to transport.

Strategies to address these issues with staff were discussed with the young people. Ideally, the young people would have felt comfortable enough to raise these issues themselves or in the presence of the Official Visitor: however, this group did not feel comfortable enough to do this. They did participate by compiling a list of issues for consideration to be passed on to staff. The young people were active in ensuring that the issues were accurately reflected and were happy for the Visitor to advocate on their behalf.

The Co-ordinator acknowledged the concerns of the young people and appeared to be willing to discuss compromises on a number of issues. A house meeting was scheduled to create a safe space for the concerns to be resolved.

This situation demonstrates the ability of the visitor role to advocate for young people's needs and empower them to negotiate meaningful and positive outcomes.

Introduction of the provisions of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000* in February 2001 resulted in significant strengthening of our monitoring role through establishment of the Community Visitor program to replace the former Official Visitor program.

Conduct of a formal evaluation of the Official Visitor program by the Research Unit informed the scope and structure of the Community Visitor program, sustaining operational strengths and addressing perceived weaknesses in the former program to better meet clients' needs and aspirations. Publication and dissemination of the evaluation report occurred in September

2000 with an electronic copy of this document available on the Commission's website at [http://www.childcomm.qld.gov.au/publications/pdfs/off\\_vis\\_surveyresults.pdf](http://www.childcomm.qld.gov.au/publications/pdfs/off_vis_surveyresults.pdf) .

Prior to the transition to the Community Visitor program the agency's two (2) Official Visitors exceeded their anticipated performance targets by completing 165 individual visits to Alternative Care Intervention Service Program (ACISP) or Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) facilities during the reporting period. This workload represents a significant increase on achievements in recent years, when they completed 85 visits for 1998-1999 and 135 visits for the period 1999-2000, respectively.

The new Community Visitor program employs 23 suitably qualified part-time locally placed Community Visitors with the capacity to deliver state-wide, frequent and regular service to children and young people.

### ***Developmental directions***

- Development of operational protocols and manuals to support implementation of the Community Visitor program and consistency in the quality of service provision across the state.
- Development and timely implementation of a comprehensive induction and training program for Community Visitors.
- Establishment of a monthly visitation schedule for all Community Visitors and regions for existing visitable sites and in accordance with the provisions of the new Act.
- Enhancement of partnerships with Department of Families, Disability Services Queensland, Queensland Health, other government departments, non-government service providers and related stakeholders to support provision of quality service and positive outcomes for children and young people.

### ***Complaints and Investigations***

**A young person contacted the Complaints and Investigations Unit at the Commission for Children and Young People with serious concerns about the Department of Families intent to return them to their home environment. A close relative who had been caring for the young person also participated in the discussion.**

**The young person described a range of experiences that suggested that a placement at home might pose a risk to the young person's well being. Immediate action was taken by the Commission, through phone calls to the relevant Departmental Area Office and follow up correspondence which advocated for consideration of the young person's wishes and assurances that the well being of the child would be maintained.**

**The Commission received a response from the Department of Families indicating that a comprehensive assessment was undertaken and that at no time was the young person returned home. The current placement arrangements stand.**

The Complaints and Investigations Unit receives, seeks to resolve, monitors and investigates complaints in relation to the delivery of children's services. Two full time officers provided this service during 2000-2001.

As noted in the agency's profile, the scope of the Complaints and Investigations Unit changed with the introduction of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000* in February 2001.

The legislative framework now provides the Commission with both ombudsman and advocacy functions. Under the ombudsman function, Commission staff respond to complaints about service provision to children and young people by both government and non-government organisations in receipt of government funding. Advocacy, mediation, negotiation and liaison with relevant authorities and service providers often result in effective resolution of matters impacting on the rights, interests and well-being of children and young people in Queensland. While the Act also provides the Commission with a capacity to initiate formal investigations, this power has not been exercised to date.

During the reporting period the Complaints and Investigations Unit processed a total of 2375 expressions

of concern: a significant increase in case load since the 1999-2000 (548) and 1998-1999 (294) reporting period(s).

All expressions of concern received by the Commission during the period 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001 were processed within 28 days. Resolution of formal complaints was achieved in 90% of all cases, with confirmation of the result being forwarded to complainants characterising the agency's service provision.

61.5% of expressions of concern originated from outside the Brisbane metropolitan area.

Other performance outcomes achieved during the reporting period included:

- ongoing development and refinement of the agency's complaints and investigation data base to support effective and efficient case management;
- continued consultation and collaboration with Corrective Services personnel to support access to Commission services by prisoners who are parents;
- delivery of workshops to Corrective Services personnel focusing on the scope and function of the Commission for Children and Young People and the impact of incarceration on children and young people;
- maintenance of regular communication and productive partnerships with foster carers; and,
- timely response to expressions of concern lodged by children and young people.

Staff participation in the delivery of training programs for Department of Families Family Service Officers has also contributed to the quality of service provision to children and young people and profiling of the agency across the sector.

### ***Developmental directions***

- Refine and operationalise a database which enhances the agency's capacity for effective and timely response to clients' expressions of concern and monitoring of service trends over time.
- Identify and recruit a pool of locum workers who can be deployed to relieve and augment existing Complaints and Investigations staff and functions at peak periods.
- Continue to provide opportunities for placement and development by students undertaking studies in social work and human services within the unit and at the agency.
- Continue to participate in various projects relating to the delivery of services to children and young people, including the provision of feedback to government and non-government service providers.
- Continue to sustain a schedule of regional visits by the Commissioner and other staff in the interests of promoting public awareness of the agency's scope and functions and ease of access to client services.
- Utilise a range of formal and informal communication mechanisms to encourage and support access to Commission services by children and young people.

### ***Children's Services Appeals Tribunal***

Prior to the transfer of the Children's Services Appeals Tribunal to the Department of Justice and Attorney General on 2 February 2001, the Commission for Children and Young People had processed a total of 31 appeals against administrative decisions.

### ***Developmental directions***

- Liaison between the Complaints and Investigation unit and Department of Justice and Attorney General to support integrated service as it relates to a client's right to appeal Department of Families decision making processes.

## Key strategies and outcomes

During the 2000-2001 reporting period Commission personnel undertook a range of activities designed to promote public discussion about and strategic response to issues impacting on children and young people.

### *Fathering initiative*

The role of fathers in promoting children's well-being is an issue that has been gaining greater attention recently. The well-being of children is a primary concern of the Commission, but the Commission is also concerned that policies and programs designed to enhance children's wellbeing are grounded in sound research and rational debate. The Commission's Research Unit conducted an analysis of research and writings on fathering issues which led to the drafting of a symposium of three papers presented by the Commissioner and Manager, Research at the 7th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference in Sydney in July 2000. Pursuant media interest contributed significantly to public awareness of the issues. The Commissioner was seen to provide a reasoned voice in the debate and was widely quoted in the media, for example in an article entitled "Father nature", in The Australian Magazine, 13 September 2000. There have also been national and international enquiries about the papers and relevant projects from a range of external groups and individuals interested in children's welfare.

Progress of this and other research activities have been facilitated by development and maintenance of productive partnerships with peak bodies such as:

- various fathering and men's support groups;
- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board;
- University of Queensland, Faculty of Education;
- Griffith University, School of Education, School of Nursing and Gumurri Centre;
- James Cook University;
- Queensland University of Technology, School of Public Health, Centre for Applied Studies in Early Childhood and Indigenous Studies Unit;
- Kids Helpline;
- the Abused Child Trust;
- Peakcare;
- Save the Children;
- A range of government departments.

Commission staff have also participated in forums in the interests of promoting child friendly principles and practices across a range of operational areas. These have included:

- Child Protection Council;
- Crime Commission Management Committee;
- Crime Prevention Strategy Coordination Committee;
- National Child Sexual Abuse Reform Committee;
- State Youth Advisory Council;
- Detention of Children in Watchhouses Liaison Committee;
- Child Protection Partners Forum;
- Abused Child Trust Research Committee;
- Creche and Kindergarten Association;
- Queensland School Curriculum Council Equity Advisory Committee;
- Indigenous Youth Arts Foundation;
- Peakcare's Early Intervention Network;
- Community Capacity Building Cluster Group;
- Crime Statistics Network;
- QUT Project ACCESS Partnership Committee;
- Alternative Care Research Reference Group;
- Child Protection Week Committee;
- Children's Week Committee.

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On 23 November 2000, the Commission hosted a hypothetical at Parliament House to commemorate the 10 year anniversary of Australia's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Eight prominent young people and adults formed a panel to debate and discuss the proposition that "*Children and young people have too many rights and not enough responsibilities*". The Commissioner for Children and Young People acted as the facilitator for the panel.

Panelists included:

- Ken Smith Director-General - Department of Families, Youth and Community Care
- Det.Supt. John Reilly Juvenile Aid Bureau, Queensland Police Service
- Ms Alanna Sherry UNICEF Australia
- Mr Lincoln Crowley Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service
- Ms Leticia Bouloukos Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland
- Ms Danika Hendy Student, Moreton Bay College
- Mr Akarapon Kongchanagul Student, Kooralbyn International School
- Ms Debra Jumpertz Youth Advocacy Centre

Browns Plains State High School Captains were the "UN Observers" and commentators, whilst lighting and sound support was provided by Kelvin Grove State High School students. Brisbane State High School provided entertainment.

Engagement of children and young people on the hypothetical panel provided them with the opportunity to research their basic human rights and voice their opinions around a range of children's rights issues. Key government bureaucrats and non-government service providers in the audience commented positively on the educative experience provided by the children and young people on the panel.

As one executive of a peak education body remarked:

*When the UN Convention was ratified 10 years ago, our organisation opposed it because we thought it abrogated the rights of parents...In light of what I've learnt today, I think we need to reassess our views about the Convention and children's rights in general...*

Further commentary was provided by a key bureaucrat in the environment portfolio:

*We need to engage young people more in the work of our department... I'm going to talk to the boss about it...*

## ***Developmental directions***

- Facilitate the authentic voice of children and young people by encouraging and supporting their participation as researchers as appropriate and opportune.
- Development of a program of events and exhibitions by and for children and young people for the Commonwealth People's Festival accompanying this year's Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Brisbane
- Facilitate the development of a blueprint for a Child-Friendly Commonwealth as a key output of the Commission's participation in the Commonwealth People's Festival.
- Continue to support development of child friendly policies and practice through provision of advice to government and non-government service providers.

## Key strategies and outcomes

The Commission has undertaken several activities during the reporting period with the intent of ensuring decision-makers are alert to issues impacting on children and young people and seek to accommodate these identified needs in their deliberations.

### *Research activity*

The Commission conducts, sponsors, supervises, coordinates and promotes research into issues impacting on children and young people. During the 2000-2001 reporting period, the Commission undertook the following major research activities:

- Contribution to projects such as the ongoing consultation with respect to Pre- Year 1 Options, the Draft *Child Care Industry Plan*, and the Draft *Putting Families First Policy* and reporting framework.
- Participation in collaborative research partnerships with tertiary institutions (QUT's ACCESS Project) and facilitation of cross-government input into proposed research.
- Progression of the Focus on Fathering project:
  - (a) In collaboration with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board (ATSIAB), a workshop in Cairns established a broadly-based local reference group to develop a fathering program for Indigenous prisoners at Lotus Glen;
  - (b) Analysis of 1400 entries in the Commission's 2000 Father's Day Competition will ascertain Queensland children's perceptions of their fathers/father figures; and,
  - (c) Analysis of a survey sampling some Queensland fathers' perceptions of fathering.
- Joint publication with ATSIAB of a discussion paper on "What is the impact on Indigenous children when their father is incarcerated?" launched in June 2001.
- Publication of the *Report of the Evaluation of the Official Visitor Program*, and of papers presented at Research Forums on Contemporary Children's Issues run by the Research Unit in Brisbane, Townsville and Rockhampton, in the *Queensland Journal of Educational Research* (Volume 16 Number 2 2000).
- Presentation of papers at a range of conferences including the International Forum for Child Welfare, the Australian Education Assembly, the British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Congress in York, United Kingdom, 7th Australian Institute for Family Studies Conference and Helping Families Change Conference.
- Nomination as Queensland contact for the National Longitudinal Survey of Australia's Children, responsible for providing advice/ feedback on draft proposals and consultation with other State agencies to identify Queensland priorities in data collection;
- Chairing the Evaluation Reference Group for the Yelangi pre school Project.

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- Participation in regular meetings to support the relevant work of other agencies such as the Abused Child Trust Research Committee and the Crime Statistics network.

### ***Overview of the Early Years Project***

There is growing recognition of the significance of the early years of childhood which has been reflected by recent funding allocations by the Commonwealth and various State governments to specific projects such as the National Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children.

As a proactive strategy in this area, the Queensland government allocated funding of \$100,000 per annum for four years to the Commission for Children and Young People to carry out activities which will add to knowledge about the early years of childhood and inform relevant policy and practice.

The Commissioner is a foundation Director of the National Initiative for the Early Years (NIFTeY). This group meets regularly and is developing a National Agenda for the Early Years.

The Commission is also the Queensland contact for the Federal Government's National Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children.

The Commission invited representatives of relevant state departments to a workshop on 20 March 2001 to generate ideas and explore the possible scope of this Queensland Early Years Initiative. At the workshop, stakeholders agreed that an audit of information held by government and non-government agencies should be conducted at the outset of the project.

The Commission has appointed a Project Officer to:

- ☞ liaise with Government and non-government agencies to:
  - (a) identify existing sources of data relating to children in Queensland
  - (b) clarify the nature of the data and how they are collected
  - (c) negotiate and develop written protocols and procedures to facilitate the Commission's access to that data;
- ☞ establish systems and processes for the Commission to collect and collate data relating to children in Queensland from Government and non-government agencies;
- ☞ undertake the inaugural collection and collation of data relating to children in Queensland from Government and non-government agencies.

### ***Policy submissions***

The Commission monitors and reviews laws, policies and practices relating to the delivery of services to children or that otherwise impact on them and promotes laws, policies and practices that uphold their rights, interests and wellbeing.

During 2000-2001 the Commission also endeavoured to enhance decision-making processes through provision of submissions on key issues and in response to the following major legislative, policy and practice proposals and reviews:

- draft *Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Amendment Act 2000*;
- implementation of the *Multi-Cultural Affairs Queensland* policy;
- draft *Young Person's Housing Statement*;
- draft *Good Practice Guidelines for Working with Young People at Risk of Suicide or Non-Fatal Deliberate Self Harm who Present at Qld Health Facilities - A Resource for Developing District and Service Policy and Procedures*
- draft *Putting Families First Policy*;
- Second Report of the Deaths in Custody Monitoring Committee Unit;
- review of the *Corrective Services Act*;
- discussion Paper on Body Piercing and Tattooing;
- information paper on Inter-Country Adoptions;
- *Report of the Review of the Detention of Children in Watchhouses* and the accompanying draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care;

- *Discussion Paper on Taskforce on Women and the Criminal Code;*
- *Discussion Paper on Principles underlying the Youth Justice Program;*
- Position Paper on Female Genital Mutilation;
- *Strategic Directions in Child Protection Paper*
- draft *Child Protection Policy and Guidelines and Towards Healing Protocol and Procedures* for use in Edmund Rice Ministries;
- submission in response to key design features of the new Youth Detention Centre at Wacol and the rebuilding of the Cleveland Detention Centre;
- draft *Coroner's Bill 2000;*
- *Mental Health Bill 1999;* and
- *Child Care Act Amendment Bill 2000.*

80% of recommendations in major policy submissions to government about issues impacting on children and young people have been supported by government and/or implemented.

Positive outcomes have also been achieved through the adoption of a pro-active and cooperative approach when dealing with government service providers. To this end, the Commission has advocated for and achieved:

- access to, and the ability to provide early input into, Government Cabinet submissions relating to children and young people; and,
- representation on major non-government, whole-of-Government and agency specific committees dealing with children's issues including:
  - ☞ UNICEF National Taskforce on Child Rights;
  - ☞ Queensland Law Society - Children's Issues Committee;
  - ☞ Coordinated Effort Against Violence Against Women Project;
  - ☞ Organising Committee - Children's Program, CHOGM;
  - ☞ School Based Youth Health Nurse Program;
  - ☞ Alternative Education Working Party;
  - ☞ Project Axis Interdepartmental Working Party;
  - ☞ Needs of Women Offenders - Reference Group;
  - ☞ Pregnant and Parenting Young Women Working Group.

Other outcomes facilitated by Policy personnel have included:

- leadership and management of a Hypothetical at the Parliamentary Annexe to commemorate the 10 year anniversary of Australia's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and promote child rights across government and non-government sectors; and,
- coordination, in collaboration with key human service government and non-government agencies, of a comprehensive children's program to accompany the Commonwealth People's Festival at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in October 2001.

### ***Developmental directions***

- Utilise Government funding of \$100,000 per annum for four years to effectively contribute to research into the early years of childhood.
- Continue to coordinate and deliver a program of activities and displays for children and young people to accompany CHOGM 2001.
- Continue to offer policy advice to non-government service providers in relation to development of child friendly practices and policies and youth participation.

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

## Key strategies and outcomes

### *Communication and marketing activity*

The Commission's communications activities include: coordination of youth consultation and participation mechanisms, organisation of youth-focussed activities and forums; management of media coverage; and coordination of Commission publications and presentations.

The Commission also liaises and establishes partnerships with government and non-government agencies to collectively promote the rights, interests and well being of children.

During 2000-2001 the Commission:

- produced 55 conference papers for state, national and international forums focusing on a range of issues including:
  - ☞ Young people and decision-making: decoration or democracy?
  - ☞ Breaking the silence on child sexual abuse
  - ☞ Does TV breed bullies?
  - ☞ "It's not the same as when we were young": Visible differences - unrecognised effects
  - ☞ Volunteers strengthen the village that raises the child
- produced 51 publications of official comment, letters to the Editor and articles by the Commissioner in local, statewide and national Newspapers - with media coverage as follows - Radio 27%, Print 64% and Television 9%.
- launched the new Commission for Children and Young People website containing comprehensive information about the new role of the Commission under the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000*.
- successfully implemented Stage 1 of the Communications campaign including:
  - (a) Commission for Children and Young People Information Kit
  - (b) Employment Screening for Child Related Employment Information Kit
  - (c) a radio campaign: (3 weeks) - Brisbane 4 stations, 30 seconds - 180 spots and Regional 27 stations - 60 spots
  - (d) a newsprint campaign: (3 weeks) - *Courier Mail*, Saturday and *Sunday Mail*, regional dailies, regional non-dailies
  - (e) a transit campaign: bus and train panels and billboards in the metropolitan area
  - (f) publication of print brochures on the agency's website

Other strategies employed to promote knowledge and confidence in the role and functions of the Commission have included:

- distribution of 5000 information kits to peak bodies and relevant stakeholders detailing the agency's new scope and functions.

- publication and dissemination of the agency's quarterly newsletter *Kids' Issues*, including summary information about our performance achievements.
- provision of responses to 428 email inquiries to the agency's webmaster through the Commission's website.

Since the launch of the new Commission for Children and Young People website to coincide with proclamation of the Act, the site has hosted a total of 171 052 visitors, an average of 628 visits per day. Significantly, 24.12% of all visitors viewed information and about the Employment Screening program including application forms. It is anticipated that the number of hits and unique visitors to the site is likely to increase in line with expansion of the Employment Screening program to include self-employed persons and volunteers in October 2001 and February 2002, respectively.

### ***Developmental directions***

- Continued refinement of the Employment Screening program content on the agency's website to include application forms for all categories of employment screening together with comprehensive information relevant to each.
- Continue to develop the Commission website as a tool through which children and young people can provide input into Commission decision-making processes, express their views and access information about their rights and support services appropriate to their needs.
- Implement an evaluation of the Communication campaign including a market research household survey focusing on community awareness of the scope and function of the Commission.
- Engagement of a youth participation officer to conceptualise and coordinate a youth participation program.
- Encourage representation of positive images of children and young people's issues through sponsorship a media award for 'Best Coverage of Children's or Young People's Issues' .

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*

A key output for the last quarter of the period has been redevelopment of the agency's Strategic Plan in line with the provisions of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000*

During 2000-2001, the Commission's Code of Conduct was also reviewed in light of our new legislative mandate. The new Code of Conduct requires staff to carry out their duties in accordance with the Act's overarching principles. Similarly, the Commission's internal policies were reviewed to reflect its commitment to operate under a best practice ethical and corporate governance framework. The new Code of Conduct for Commission staff and various risk management policies relating to dealings with the media, confidentiality, security and use of official resources will serve to enhance the integrity and reputation of the Commission and service delivery to the children and young people of Queensland.

Publication of the Commission's quarterly newsletter *Kids' Issues* has also supported public accountability and focus on client outcomes with the inclusion of performance data and commentary on contemporary children's issues.

### *A skilled and competent workforce*

Ongoing implementation of a program of staff supervision and professional development and training endeavours to sustain the currency of employee's skills and competencies to better meet client needs.

### *Developmental directions*

- Participation of all Commission staff in a program of cultural awareness training facilitated by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Development.
- Liason with the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Development to support recruitment of Indigenous personnel.
- As part of the implementation of the new *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000*, develop and adopt child-friendly work practices and policies which facilitate children and young people's access to the Commission and participation in the Commission's decision-making processes. The practices and policies will extend to children and young people who are clients of the Commission, children and young people who wish to consult, work, liaise with the Commission as well as children of Commission staff.
- Establish Youth Advisory Committees comprised of young people to advise the Commissioner about issues impacting on children and young people in Queensland and to provide input into the Commission's decision making processes.

- Continue the ongoing review of the Commission's internal policies over the next financial year to reflect the Commission's commitment to operate under a best practice ethical and corporate governance framework. The new Code of Conduct for Commission staff and various risk management policies relating to dealings with the media, confidentiality, security and use of official resources will serve to enhance the integrity and reputation of the Commission.

**In recognition of the International Year of the Volunteer, the Commissioner has endorsed *Kidzone*, a program which provides staff with the opportunity to work as volunteers to assist select non-profit community agencies who support children and young people.**

**One staff member, Selina Roosmale-Cocq, has successfully applied to volunteer with the Australian Red Cross, a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The Australian Red Cross operate the Playscheme Service in children's hospitals, which is where Selina will begin her voluntary placement in November.**

**Selina's preparation for this undertaking has been extensive. A comprehensive training program must be completed by all those wishing to volunteer their services to the Red Cross prior to commencement of those duties.**

**Selina reported that the training program was truly inspiring, drawing attention to the vast nature of the work undertaken by thousands of Red Cross and Red Crescent members around the world and the seven fundamental principles that inform their activity: humanity, neutrality, independence, impartiality, voluntary service, unity and universality.**

**Upon completion of her training Selina elected to participate in the Mater Children's Hospital Playscheme. Playscheme is a service centred around caring for children and their families within the Queensland Health Environment.**

**The aim of the play worker is to help bridge the gap between the home and hospital environment through play and thereby ease the patient's adjustment to a strange and sometimes frightening setting. The play worker's duties, responsibilities and skills include:**

- a) communication with children through play, taking into account social and cultural conditions;**
- b) provision of different play activities which are flexible and adaptable to the child's developmental needs;**
- c) Good verbal and written communication;**
- d) Team work; and,**
- e) A capacity for positive interaction with children, families and hospital staff.**

**Participating in this program will allow Selina to gain valuable insight into a children's health setting and how this impacts on the rights, interests and well-being of young people receiving treatment there. Issues such as participation, information sharing, communication and service provision can be explored within this biomedical setting.**

**Selina will be required to report back to the Commission about her experiences at the completion of her placement.**

# Employment screening for child related employment

## Key strategies and outcomes

On 1 May 2001, the Commission for Children and Young People commenced a major employment screening initiative for the protection of children and young people in Queensland, known as the 'working with children check'.

The 'working with children check' is a significant means of protecting and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people. By ensuring that people who have an unsuitable criminal history background are not employed to deliver services to children or are not accepted to provide volunteer services where children are involved, a safer and more supportive community will result. It is anticipated that the 'working with children check' will deter unsuitable people from applying for child-related employment.

Implementation of the employment screening provisions of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000* is planned to occur in three stages over twelve months. On 1 May 2001 employment screening commenced for new paid employees whose employment is regulated under the Act. In broad terms these categories include residential facilities, schools, churches, clubs and associations involving children, counselling and support services, and private teaching, coaching or tutoring.

Early in 2001, significant work was undertaken to:

- conceptualise and design the applications forms, suitability card and accompanying correspondence;
- develop guidelines for the assessment of applications that involve criminal history records;
- create a database to support secure storage and processing of applications;
- provide instructions for a regulation under the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000*; and,
- recruit Screening Officers and other staff to facilitate the efficient and effective operations of the Employment Screening Services Unit.

During the first two months of implementation, the Commission received 1060 applications. At the close of business on June 30 2001, a total of 420 suitability cards had been issued and the remaining applications were at various stages of the process.

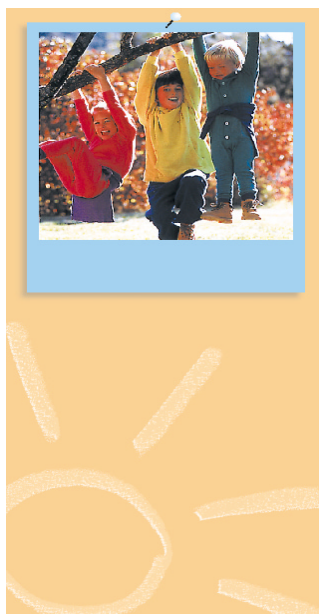
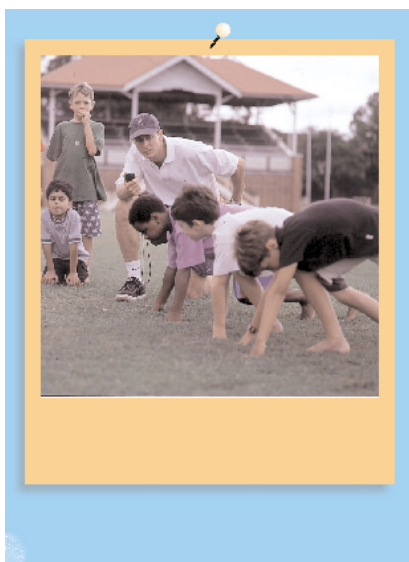
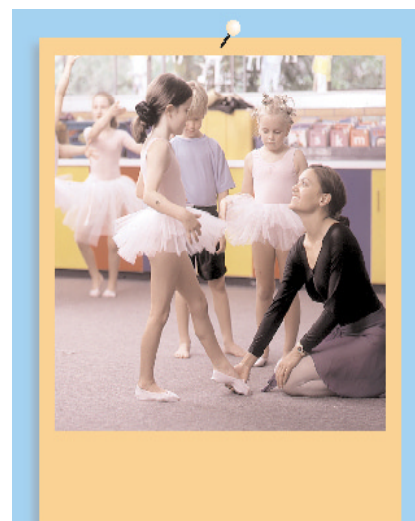
Positive feedback from the public contributed to a significant increase in the volume of inquiries processed by the Commission. During May and June 2001 Commission staff dealt with over 1200 telephone inquiries and mailed out approximately 8000 information kits to child-related employers.

Officers from the Employment Screening Services Unit attended conferences and meetings with key organisations and stakeholders, gave presentations and held workshops to discuss the impact of the employment screening legislation and their responsibilities under the Act.

In addition to promoting the 'working with children check' as an important child protection initiative, the Commission advocated that the check should be accompanied by safe work practices and policies established by all agencies involved in working with children and young people.

### ***Developmental directions***

- Implementation of the next stages of the 'working with children check' by screening of persons carrying on regulated businesses from 1 October 2001 and volunteers from 1 May 2002.
- Commission will continue to engage in ongoing consultation with sporting and other volunteer associations in preparation for the final stage of employment screening.
- Continued refinement of procedures and systems to advance efficient and timely processing of applications by Employment Screening personnel.



# Implementation of Forde Inquiry Recommendations

Nine recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions (Forde Inquiry) made specific reference to the Children's Commission which was re-established as the Commission for Children and Young People on 2 February 2001.

All these recommendations have been fully implemented through their incorporation in the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000* ("the Act").

Implementation of specific recommendations has included:

#### *Recommendation 25*

- Creation of the Commission for Children and Young People as an independent statutory authority attached to the portfolio of the Premier;

#### *Recommendation 26*

- Incorporation of an inspectorial function for community visitors of the Commission and other enhanced and new functions for the Commission generally;

#### *Recommendation 27*

- Establishment of a separate tribunal under the *Children Services Tribunal Act 2000*;

#### *Recommendation 28*

- Internal review of the Official Visitors program undertaken by the Commission during 2000, as well as by the Briton review of the former *Children's Commissioner and Children's Services Appeals Tribunals Act 1996* and in the course of developing the new Act. The initial training needs of Community Visitors will be met with a 2½ day program in early July 2001. Ongoing visits by the Manager to local work sites, video and tele-conference links, newsletters, and training updates are planned;

#### *Recommendation 29*

- Incorporation in the Act with the new community visitors to commence duties on 2 July 2001;

#### *Recommendation 30*

- Incorporation in the Act with 23 Community Visitors appointed under the new program and with monthly visits to sites and at the request of young people at the sites;

#### *Recommendations 31, 32 and 33*

- Incorporation in the Act; and,

#### *Recommendation 34*

- The Commission, in consultation with the Department of Families, is identifying the core data it requires to implement Recommendation 34, particularly in relation to the Child Protection Regulation. Such data collection will be a key component of database development currently being undertaken by the Department.

The Report on the Implementation of the Forde Inquiry Recommendations was presented to the Parliament in September 2001.

**STATEMENT OF FINICIAL PERFORMANCE**  
*for the financial year ended 30 June 2001*

	Notes	1 Apr to 30 Jun	
		2001 \$'000	2000 \$'000
<b>Revenues from ordinary activities</b>			
User charges	3	43	-
Grants and other contributions	4	2,510	454
Other	5	106	44
<b>Total revenues from ordinary activities</b>		<b>2,659</b>	<b>498</b>
<b>Expenses from ordinary activities</b>			
Employee expenses	6	1,320	332
Supplies and services	7	1,094	108
Depreciation and amortisation	8	65	16
Other	9	76	4
<b>Total expenses from ordinary activities</b>		<b>2,555</b>	<b>460</b>
<b>Net surplus</b>		<b>104</b>	<b>38</b>

*The above Statement of Financial Performance should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.*

# Financial Statement

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**  
*as at 30 June 2001*

	Notes	2001 \$'000	2000 \$'000
<b>Current assets</b>			
Cash assets	10	685	337
Receivables	11	44	5
Other	12	-	4
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>729</b>	<b>346</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>			
Property, plant and equipment	13	141	169
Intangibles	14	99	100
<b>Total non-current assets</b>		<b>240</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>969</b>	<b>615</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Payables	15	203	85
Provisions	16	148	116
Other	17	100	-
<b>Total current liabilities</b>		<b>451</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<b>451</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		<b>518</b>	<b>414</b>
<b>Equity</b>			
Contributed equity		376	376
Retained surplus	18	142	38
<b>Total Equity</b>		<b>518</b>	<b>414</b>

*The above Statement of Financial Position should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.*

**Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements  
for the financial year ended 30 June 2001**

		1 Apr to 30 Jun	
Notes	2001 \$'000	2000 \$'000	
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>			
<b>Inflows:</b>			
User charges	65	-	
Grants and other contributions	2,610	454	
Interest received	43	-	
GST refunded by ATO	71	-	
GST collected on income received	1	-	
<b>Outflows:</b>			
Employee costs	(1,289)	(328)	
Supplies and services	(1,031)	(42)	
GST paid on purchases	(90)	-	
GST remitted to ATO	(1)	-	
Other	(4)	-	
<b>Net cash provided by operating activities</b>			
19	375	84	
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>			
<b>Outflows:</b>			
Payments for property, plant and equipment	(27)	(8)	
<b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>	<b>(27)</b>	<b>(8)</b>	
<b>NET CASH BALANCES ASSUMED UNDER GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURE</b>			
	-	<b>261</b>	
<b>Net increase in cash held</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>337</b>	
<b>Cash at beginning of financial year</b>	<b>337</b>	-	
<b>Cash at end of financial year</b>	10 <b>685</b>	<b>337</b>	

*The above Statement of Cash Flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.*

## **Notes to and Forming Part of the Financial Statements for the financial year ended 30 June 2001**

### **1. Objectives of the Commission**

The Commission for Children and Young People is an independent statutory body with a strategic commitment to promote and protect the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people in Queensland. The Commission's key outcomes include:

- advocating for the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people;
- safeguarding children and young people from harm;
- monitoring laws, policies and practices that impact on children and young people; and
- promoting evidence based practice in relation to children and young people's issues.

### **2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies**

#### **(a) Basis of Accounting**

The financial statements are a general purpose financial report and have been prepared in accordance with the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977, the Financial Management Standard 1997, Australian Accounting Standards, Statements of Accounting Concepts, Urgent Issues Group Abstracts and other prescribed requirements.

The following new or revised Australian Accounting Standards became operative during the 2000-2001 year and have been adopted where relevant:

- AAS 1 *Statement of Financial Performance*;
- AAS 36 *Statement of Financial Position*; and
- AAS 37 *Financial Report Presentation and Disclosures*.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the historical cost convention and applicable accounting standards, except where required by the Treasurer's Policy "*Recording and Valuation of Non-Current Physical Assets in the Queensland Public Sector*." Further disclosure in this regard is provided in note 2(j). The accounting policies adopted are generally consistent with those of the previous year.

The financial statements have not been adjusted to take account of either changes in the general purchasing power of the dollar or changes in the prices of specific assets.

The accrual basis of accounting has been adopted.

#### **(b) The Reporting Entity**

The financial statements include all assets, liabilities, equities, revenues and expenses of the Commission. As a result of Administrative Arrangements Order (No.2) 2000, dated 3 August 2000, the responsibility for administering legislation under the *Children's Commissioner and Children's Services Appeals Tribunals Act 1996* was transferred from the Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services to the Premier and Minister for Trade, effective from 4 August 2000. Thus, the Commission for Children and Young People (formerly Children's Commission) is now administered by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

#### **(c) User Charges, Taxes, Fees and Fines**

User charges and fees controlled by the Commission are recognised as revenues. User charges and fees are controlled by the Commission where they can be deployed for the achievement of the Commission's objectives.

#### **(d) Grants and Other Contributions**

Grants, donations and gifts which are non-reciprocal in nature are recognised as revenue in the year in which the Commission obtains control over them.

Where grants are received that are reciprocal in nature, revenue is accrued over the term of the funding arrangements. The term '*reciprocal*' means that there is a contractual obligation for the grantee to comply with the terms of the grant or contribution and to return any unexpended funding in the event of the non-delivery or, of non-compliance with, the agreed grant or contribution conditions.

Contributions of assets are recognised at their fair value. Contributions of services are only recognised when a fair value can be reliably determined and the services would be purchased if not donated.

#### **(e) Cash**

For financial reporting purposes, cash includes all cash and cheques receipted but not banked as well as deposits at call with financial institutions. It also includes highly liquid investments with short periods to maturity which are convertible readily to cash on hand at the investor's option and which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

#### **(f) Receivables**

Receivables are recognised at the amount due at the time of sale or service delivery. The collectability of receivables is assessed periodically. Settlement on trade debtors is generally required within fourteen days.

#### **(g) Acquisitions of Assets**

Cost is used for the initial recording of all acquisitions of assets controlled by the Commission unless these have been received as a result of an administrative restructure. Assets acquired at no cost or for nominal considerations are recognised at their fair value at date of acquisition. Cost is determined as the value given as consideration plus costs incidental to the acquisition, including all other costs incurred in getting the assets ready for use, including architects' fees and engineering design fees.

#### **(h) Property, Plant and Equipment**

All items of property, plant and equipment with a cost, or other value, in excess of \$2,000 are capitalised in the year of acquisition, with the exception of personal computers which are capitalised regardless of value, and leasehold improvements with a cost or other value greater than \$5,000. Other items with a value less than \$2,000 are expensed.

Items or components that form an integral part of an asset are recognised as a single asset (functional asset). The capitalisation threshold is applied to the aggregate cost of each functional asset. All property, plant and equipment is measured at historical cost except where otherwise stated.

#### **(i) Amortisation and Depreciation of Non-Current Assets**

Depreciation on property, plant and equipment, is calculated on a straight-line basis so as to write off the values of each depreciable asset, less its estimated residual value, progressively over its estimated useful life. Work-in-Progress is not depreciated until it has reached service delivery capacity.

Any expenditure that increases the originally assessed capacity or service potential of an asset is capitalised and the new depreciable amount is depreciated over the remaining useful life of the asset.

The depreciable amount of improvements to or on a leasehold property is progressively allocated over the estimated useful lives of the improvements or the unexpired period of the lease, whichever is shorter.

For each class of depreciable asset the following depreciation rates are used:

	<b>Depreciation Rate</b>
<b>Class</b>	
Plant and equipment:	
Computers	33.3%
Office equipment	20%
Other equipment / furniture	10%
Leasehold improvements:	
Office fitout	10%

	<b>Amortisation Rate</b>
Intangibles:	
Internal use software	20%

### **(j) Revaluation of Non-current Physical Assets**

All non-current physical assets are valued on the deprival basis in accordance with the *Financial Management Standard* and Queensland Treasury's guidelines "*Recording and Valuation of Non-Current Physical Assets in the Queensland Public Sector*". Under this concept, assets are valued at an amount that represents the loss that might be expected to be incurred if the Commission was deprived of the future economic benefits of the assets at the reporting date.

An election has been made to continue to use deprival value as the basis of valuation until 30 June 2001. However, from 1 July 2001, some non-current physical assets will be revalued using fair value principles in accordance with AAS38 Revaluation of Non-Current Assets.

Since the Commission has no non-current physical assets having an estimated value greater than the revaluation threshold of \$1,000,000 and an estimated useful life of more than three years, no revaluations were performed.

### **(k) Leases**

A distinction is made between finance leases which effectively transfer from the lessor to the lessee substantially all the risks and benefits incidental to ownership, and operating leases under which the lessor effectively retains substantially all such risks and benefits.

Operating lease payments are representative of the pattern of benefits derived from the leased assets and accordingly are charges to the Statement of Financial Performance in the periods in which they are incurred.

### **(l) Intangibles**

Intangible assets are costs incurred by the Commission in developing software and systems. The costs are amortised over the expected useful life of the developed software.

All intangible assets with costs or other values greater than \$5,000 are recognised as assets. Items with a lesser value are recognised as expenses.

Software as developed by the Commission is valued at cost. Cost is determined as the initial purchase of software (where relevant) and subsequent costs incurred in developing the software for use within the Commission.

## **(m) Payables**

Creditors are recognised at the amount to be paid in the future for goods and services received, inclusive of GST.

## **(n) Employee Entitlements**

### *Wages and Salaries, Annual Leave and Sick Leave*

Liabilities for wages and salaries, and annual leave are recognised in the Statement of Financial Position, and are measured as the amount unpaid at the reporting date at current pay rates in respect of the employees' services up to that date and include related on-costs. As the pattern of sick leave taken is expected to be stable in the future and sick leave entitlements do not vest with employees, no provision has been made for sick leave entitlements.

### *Long Service Leave*

In 1999-2000, a new long service leave scheme became operative whereby a levy is made on the Commission to cover this expense. Amounts paid to employees for long service leave are claimed from the scheme as a reimbursement. Accordingly, a provision for long service leave is not recognised.

### *Superannuation*

Employer contributions for superannuation expense are determined by the State Actuary. No liability is recognised for superannuation benefits in the Statement of Financial Position, as the liability is held on a whole-of-Government basis and reported in the whole-of-Government financial statements prepared in terms of AAS31 "Financial Reporting by Governments".

## **(o) Taxation**

The Commission for Children and Young People is exempt from all forms of Commonwealth and State taxation except for Fringe Benefits Tax, Payroll tax and Goods and Services Tax (GST). As such, GST input tax credits receivable from and GST payable to/from the Australian Taxation Office are recognised and accrued. Further disclosure is provided in Note 11.

The amount of GST incurred on purchases that is not recoverable from ATO is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of an asset or as part of the expense item.

All fees relating to the Employment Screening service are GST-free in accordance with a Division 81 determination.

## **(p) Resources Received Free of Charge or For Nominal Value**

Resources received free of charge or for nominal value which can be reliably measured and which would have been acquired in the normal course of operations are recognised as a revenue and an expense.

## **(q) Insurance**

In accordance with Government policy until July 2001, assets have not been insured, and losses were expensed as they were incurred.

## (r) Rounding

Amounts included in the financial statements have been rounded to the nearest \$1,000 or where the amount is \$500 or less, to zero.

## (s) Comparative Figures

(i) On 23 March 2000, an amendment to the *Children's Commissioner and Children's Services Appeals Tribunal Act 1996* was made whereby the Commission became a statutory body under the *Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977*. As a result, for the first time, separate general purpose financial statements for the Commission were prepared for the period 1 April 2000 to 30 June 2000. Thus the financial results for this comparative period will be for three months, shown against the full financial year for 2000-2001.

(ii) Where necessary, comparative figures have been adjusted to conform with changes in presentation in the current year.

	Notes	2001 \$'000	1 Apr to 30 Jun 2000 \$'000
<b>3. User charges</b>			
Conference Registration and Fees		3	-
Employment Screening		40	-
		<b>43</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>4. Grants and Other Contributions</b>			
Grants from Queensland Government Departments		2,510	454
		<b>2,510</b>	<b>454</b>
<b>5. Other Revenue</b>			
Resources received below fair value		22	44
Interest Earned		43	-
Other		41	-
		<b>106</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>6. Employee Expenses</b>			
Salaries, wages and allowances		1,095	281
Salary related taxes		71	13
Employer superannuation contributions		128	35
Long service leave levy		17	3
Other		9	-
		<b>1,320</b>	<b>332</b>

Annual and sick leave expenses have been included in salaries, wages and allowances.

Notes	2001	1 Apr to 30 Jun 2000
	\$'000	\$'000
<b>7. Supplies and Services</b>		
Motor vehicle running costs	25	39
Building services	175	4
Telecommunications	40	22
Administration costs	91	11
Advertising and Promotions	500	-
Professional services	176	19
Travel	51	6
Other	36	7
	<b>1,094</b>	<b>108</b>

Contractors and consultants expenses are included in Professional services.

## 8. Depreciation and Amortisation

Depreciation and amortisation expenses for the financial year were charged in respect of:

Property, plant and equipment	49	16
Internal use software	16	-
	<b>65</b>	<b>16</b>

## 9. Other Expenses

Loss on disposal of non-current assets	12	-
Audit fees - QAO	4	4
Employee annual leave assumed	60	-
	<b>76</b>	<b>4</b>

## 10. Cash assets

Cash at bank	374	337
Deposits at call	311	-
	<b>685</b>	<b>337</b>

The above figures are reconciled to cash at the end of the year as shown in the Statement of Cash Flows.

## 11. Receivables

### *Current*

Trade debtors	11	5
Less: Provision for doubtful debts	-	-
GST input tax credits receivable	33	-
	<b>44</b>	<b>5</b>

## 12. Other Assets

### *Current*

Prepayments	-	4
	<b>-</b>	<b>4</b>

	Notes	2001 \$'000	1 Apr to 30 Jun 2000 \$'000
<b>13. Property, Plant and Equipment</b>			
<b>Plant and equipment</b>			
At Cost		239	249
Accumulated depreciation		143	139
		<b>96</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Leasehold improvements</b>			
At cost		118	118
Accumulated amortisation		73	59
		<b>45</b>	<b>59</b>
		<b>141</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>14. Intangibles</b>			
Internal use software:			
Work in progress		15	100
At cost		100	-
Accumulated amortisation		16	-
		<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>15. Payables</b>			
<i>Current</i>			
Long service leave levy payable		4	-
Trade creditors		149	85
Other creditors		50	-
		<b>203</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>16. Provisions</b>			
<i>Current</i>			
Employee Entitlements			
- Annual leave		148	116
		<b>148</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>17. Other Liabilities</b>			
<i>Current</i>			
Unearned revenue		100	-
		<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>18. Changes in Surplus</b>			
Opening balance		38	-
Net surplus		104	38
		<b>142</b>	<b>38</b>

Notes	1 Apr to 30 Jun	
	2001 \$'000	2000 \$'000
<b>19. Reconciliation of Net Surplus/Deficit to Net Cash provided by (used in) Operating Activities</b>		
<b>Net surplus</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Non-cash items</b>		
Depreciation/Amortisation expenses	65	16
Net assets assumed / liabilities relinquished	(41)	(44)
Net liabilities assumed / assets relinquished	59	-
Loss on sale of property, plant and equipment	12	-
Net assets write on / adjustments	(5)	-
<b>Changes in assets and liabilities</b>		
Increase in GST input tax credits receivable	(35)	-
Increase in net receivables	(6)	(5)
Decrease in prepayments	4	-
Increase in unearned revenue	100	-
Increase in employee provisions	13	54
Increase in creditors	99	25
Increase in GST payable	2	-
Increase in long service leave levy payable	4	-
<b>Net Cash used in operating activities</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>84</b>

## 20. Commitments for Expenditure

### (a) *Non-cancellable operating lease commitments*

Commitments under operating leases at reporting date are inclusive of GST and are payable as follows:

Not later than one year	109	138
Later than one year and not later than five years	-	219

Total operating lease commitments	<b>109</b>	<b>357</b>
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Input tax credits anticipated	10	32
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### (b) *Expenditure Commitments*

Material expenditure commitments inclusive of GST contracted for but not recognised are payable as follows:

Not later than one year	148	-
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Total expenditure commitments	<b>148</b>	<b>-</b>
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Input tax credits anticipated	13	-
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### (c) *Capital Expenditure Commitments*

Material capital expenditure commitments inclusive of GST contracted for but not recognised are payable as follows:

Not later than one year	43	-
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Total expenditure commitments	<b>43</b>	<b>-</b>
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Input tax credits anticipated	4	-
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## 21. Financial Instruments

### (a) Terms, Conditions and Accounting Policies

Financial Instrument and Principal	Related Financial Statement Note	Accounting Policies	Terms and Conditions
<b>Financial Assets</b> Cash assets	10	Cash includes cash on hand, imprest account totals and 24 hour call deposits and similar investments that are readily convertible to cash.	Cash deposited with the Commonwealth Trading Bank earns interest at 4% calculated on daily balances and 24 hour call investments earn 4.35%.
Receivables - Trade and other Debtors	11	Receivables are measured at their nominal value less any provision for doubtful debts.	Receivables are on 14-day terms.
<b>Financial Liabilities</b> Payables	15	Creditors are recognised upon receipt of goods or services irrespective of whether an invoice has been received.	The amounts are unsecured and are settled in accordance with terms agreed with suppliers.

### (b) Interest Rate Risk Exposure

The Commission is exposed to interest rate risk through financial assets and liabilities. The following table summarises interest rate risk for the Commission, together with effective interest rates as at balance date. All other assets and liabilities have no interest rate risk exposure.

	Floating Rate \$'000	1 year or less \$'000	1 to 5 years \$'000	Greater than 5 years \$'000	Non Interest Bearing \$'000	Total	Weighted Average Rate
<b>Financial Assets</b>							
Cash	374	-	-	-	-	374	4%
Deposits at call	311	-	-	-	-	311	4.35%
Receivables	-	-	-	-	44	44	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>729</b>	
<b>Financial Liabilities</b>							
Creditors	-	-	-	-	203	203	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>203</b>	

### (c) Credit Risk Exposures

Credit risk exposure represents the extent of credit related losses that the Commission may be subject to on amounts to be exchanged under loans and accounts receivable from financial assets. The maximum exposure to credit risk at balance date in relation to each class of recognised financial assets is the carrying amount of those assets net of any provisions for doubtful debts as indicated in the Statement of Financial Position.

### (d) Net Fair Value

The net fair value of all monetary financial assets and financial liabilities approximate their carrying value.

## Certificate of the Commission for Children and Young People

The foregoing financial statements have been prepared pursuant to the provisions of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000, the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977 and other prescribed requirements.

We certify that:

- (a) the foregoing financial statements and notes to and forming part thereof are in agreement with the accounts and records of the commission for Children and Young People; and
- (b) in our opinion:
  - (i) the prescribed requirements in respect of the establishment and keeping of accounts have been complied with in all material respects; and
  - (ii) the foregoing financial statements have been drawn up so as to present a true and fair view in accordance with prescribed accounting standards of the transactions of the Commission for Children and Young People for the financial year 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001, and of the financial position as at the end of that year.

Signed: Robin Sullivan

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Robin Sullivan  
Commissioner for Children and  
Young People

Signed: Margaret Scott

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Margaret Scott  
Director Corporate and  
Strategic Planning

Date: 25 September 2001

Date: 25 September 2001

**INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT  
TO THE  
COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**Scope**

I have audited the general purpose financial statements of the Commission for Children and Young People prepared by the statutory body for the period 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001 in terms of section 46F of the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977. The financial statements comprise the Statement of Financial Performance, Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Cash Flows, Notes to and forming part of the financial statements and certificates given by the Commissioner and Director, Corporate and Strategic Planning.

The Commission for Children and Young People is responsible for the preparation and the form of presentation of the financial statements and the information they contain. I have audited the financial statements in order to express an opinion on them.

The audit has been conducted in accordance with QAO Auditing Standards, which incorporate the Australian Auditing Standards, to provide reasonable assurance as to whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. Audit procedures included the examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial statements and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion as to whether in all material respects, the financial statements are presented fairly in accordance with prescribed requirements which include Australian Accounting Standards so as to present a view which is consistent with my understanding of the entity's financial position and the results of its operations and its cash flows.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

**Audit Opinion**

In accordance with section 46G of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, I certify that I have received all the information and explanations I have required and, in my opinion -

- \* the prescribed requirements in respect of the establishment and keeping of accounts have been complied with in all material respects; and
- \* the statements have been drawn up so as to present a true and fair view in accordance with prescribed accounting standards and other prescribed requirements of the transactions of the Commission for Children and Young People for the period 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001 and of the financial position as at the end of that year.

Signed: M R Hyman  
.....  
M R Hyman  
Director of Audit  
(Delegate of the Auditor-General)

Queensland Audit Office  
Brisbane

Date: 27 September 2001

## Public Sector Ethics Act

The Commission for Children and Young People has continued to refine and implement a *Code of Conduct* to inform the professional behaviour of all 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* has been facilitated by training and education.

## Freedom of Information

The Commission for Children and Young People did not receive any applications for access to documents under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* during the period 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2001.

## Overseas Travel

The Commissioner for Children and Young People undertook two overseas trips during the reporting period.

The Commissioner was invited to address the Community Care Live conference in London on 23rd and 24th May 2001 as well as representatives from several organisations, including:

- Children and Young People's Unit, Department of Education
- Children's Rights Commissioners from London, Wales, Belgium and Tasmania
- Children's Rights Alliance; and,
- the National Children's Bureau.

Total expenditure for the Commissioner's participation in these activities was A\$1447.81.

The inaugural meeting of the Asian Pacific Commissioners for Children and Young People in Wellington New Zealand also required the

Commissioner undertake travel to that location in June 2001.

Presentation of a paper at the Fourth Child and Family Policy conference was also a feature of the Commissioner's visit to New Zealand.

Total expenditure for the Commissioner's participation in these activities was A\$1303.50.

## Multicultural activities

The Commission for Children and Young People hosted the work placement of a trainee of non-English speaking background during the reporting period. The agency also hosted practicum placement of two students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent for periods of up to six months during the period 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001.

The Commission for Children and Young People 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

From 1 July 2000 to 1 February 2001 when responsibility for the Children's Services Tribunal was transferred to the Department of Justice and Attorney General in accordance with the provisions of the *Children's Services Tribunal Act 2000*, 21 individuals were registered for selection as 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.

## 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 Kaliminios	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
Dr 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

The inclusion of several members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent ensured that Tribunal deliberations were culturally appropriate and accommodated the best interests of Indigenous children and young people.

Total remuneration paid to Tribunal chairs and members for the year ending 30 June 2001 was \$107,389.