

MEDIA RELEASE

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A COMMISSION FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN QUEENSLAND

The Queensland Parliament today passed new laws which represent an historic day for Queensland children and young people under 18. The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000 re-establishes the Children's Commission as a powerful advocate for children and young people.

The Queensland Children's Commissioner, Robin Sullivan, said "the new laws will ensure that the Commission has the functions and powers to provide a 'one stop shop' to protect and promote the rights, interests and well being of our youngest citizens."

The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000 implements the recommendations of the Forde Inquiry and an independent review of the Commission's legislation. The new functions of the Commission include:

- An express advocacy function;
- The ability to monitor and review laws, policies and practices impacting on children;
- A Statewide community visitor program which will provide advocacy and support services to children, including children with disabilities, in out of home residential facilities, juvenile detention centres and authorised mental health services;
- a formal complaints mechanism for children who are clients of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care in respect of services provided to them by government and government-funded community organisations;
- employment screening for people seeking to work in child related employment or carry on a child related business; and
- a requirement for the Commission to work with service providers to enhance children and young people's participation in decision-making which affects them;
- an educative role in ensuring children and young people are aware of support and advocacy services.

The Act requires the Commission to adopt child friendly work practices and give priority to the needs and interests of children and young people who are particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged.

Most of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000* will commence this year, however, provisions dealing with employment screening for child related employment will commence in 2001. The new screening laws will require paid employees, volunteers and self employed persons seeking to work in child related employment to undergo a criminal history check to determine their suitability to work with children. Ms Sullivan said "the new laws will enhance child safe work practices."

Ms Sullivan said that she "hopes to advocate for the needs of children and young people across all aspects of community life. In this regard, one of my immediate priorities under the new legislation will be to advocate for more child friendly communities in Queensland. I consider that a core function of my role under the new legislation will be to promote a community culture which focuses on children and young people and their valuable contributions to society."

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