

**Policy Environment Scan
April 2009**

Source	Topic	Content
Research Findings, Reports and Policy papers, etc		
<p>Families Australia http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au/publications/publications/churchillreport22march2009.pdf</p>	<p><i>An examination of multi-jurisdictional child protection systems in the UK, Ireland, Canada and the USA</i></p> <p>Babington, B., 22 March 2009</p>	<p>The author sought to gain a critical appreciation of the child protection systems in the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), the Republic of Ireland, Canada and the United States of America. The author visited these countries under the auspices of a Churchill Trust Fellowship in February and March 2009. During the visits, the author also sought to gain an appreciation of the UN system's global response on child protection and gain understandings relevant to Australia's developing national child protection system.</p> <p>The report contains ideas and recommendations for enhancing Australia's emerging national child protection system. The report recommendations include that the Australian Government should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain and strengthen its investment in prevention and early intervention approaches which deliver services to families • aim to increase investment in intensive support for vulnerable or 'at risk' families • ensure that the national framework clearly specifies the roles and responsibilities of each level of Government and of NGO players • establish a standing whole-of-Federal Government officials' working group on child protection and welfare • develop national reports from household or case-level data to better inform policy makers, practitioners and the public • convene an annual knowledge sharing and relationship building gathering of Government officials, NGO representatives and academics • urgently assess workforce development needs with a view to implementing a major package of practical improvements as soon as possible • in the context of the global financial crisis, all Australian Governments should be strongly encouraged by NGOs and child welfare advocates to: maintain a prevention and early intervention focus; continue funding for family support programs; and promote greater cross-sectoral collaboration amongst service providers and community awareness of child abuse and neglect, and • local Governments should also be requested to consider their role in this area.
<p>CREATE Foundation http://www.create.org.au/content/Reports/</p>	<p><i>2009 Create Foundation Inaugural National Youth Advisory Council Summit Report Sydney 15-17 February 2009</i></p>	<p>This report provides an overview of the Create Foundation Inaugural National Youth Advisory Council Summit. Key issues raised by delegates at the Summit include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of children and young people's appropriate participation in case planning - lack of support for transition from care - challenges faced in meeting the driving hours required to obtain a driver licence, as well as difficulty attaining adequate formal identification of 100 points and guardian permission, and - placement issues, including lack of options and appropriate carers.
<p>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10662</p>	<p><i>Homeless People in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report 2007-08, Queensland supplementary tables</i></p>	<p>The annual report provides an overview of assistance given to Queensland clients of agencies funded through Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP).</p> <p>Children and young people are counted in this report as either clients themselves, or as accompanying clients (i.e. parents or caregivers). Some of the key findings from 2007-08 pertaining to children and young people are outlined below.</p> <p>Children and young people as clients:</p>

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	April 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there were 800 children under 15 years of age who were SAAP clients, representing 3.7% of all clients • a further 3400 young people aged 15–19 years required SAAP assistance • 17.5% of under 15 year old clients and 24.1% of 15–19 year old clients had multiple periods of assistance <p><u>Accompanying children:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there were 13,200 children and young people aged 0–17 years accompanying clients using SAAP. This was a rate of 129 per 10,000 persons aged 0–17 years • the age breakdown was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5,900 children aged 0–4 - 3,800 children 5–9 year olds - 2,700 10–14 year olds, and - 800 15–17 year olds • 31.5% of accompanying children were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children • a greater number of client periods were for single mothers (6500), followed by couple families with children (2100) and single fathers (700)
<p>Australian Institute of Family Studies http://www.aifs.gov.au/nc/pubs/newsletters/nl2009/17_1/17_1.html</p>	<p><i>Looking after Children Data Outcomes Project</i></p> <p>2009</p>	<p>Commissioned by the Victorian Department of Human Services, the overarching purpose of the project was to explore the potential of using Assessment and Action Records as outcome assessment tools to produce better information and planning for children living in out-of-home care.</p> <p>As well as developing a database for analysis, the project produced a detailed picture of the developmental experiences of more than 600 children and young people in out-of-home care in Victoria. Trends in the data were consistent with other research findings. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • younger children are less likely to be teased or picked on than older children, and tend to do better in terms of risky behaviour, illnesses and accidents, and • children in residential care fare worse than children in home-based care across most health and well being dimensions. <p>The project concluded there is potential to use the Assessment and Action record data collected as a means of outcome monitoring and there were a number of lessons learned about how the reliability, consistency and validity of the data might be improved.</p>
<p>Australian Institute of Criminology http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/mr/03/</p>	<p><i>National Deaths In Custody Program 2007</i></p> <p>Curnow, J. and Larsen, J.J., May 2009</p>	<p>This report presents information on deaths in custody in Australian states and territories for the 2007 calendar year and provides comparisons by jurisdiction and Indigenous status. It also presents information on deaths in prison custody between 1980 and 2007 and deaths in police custody and custody-related operations between 1990 and 2007.</p> <p>Report findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been a significant decline in the total number of deaths in custody – declining from 105 in 1997 to 55 in 2006. • Deaths rose in 2007 to 74. Of these, 45 occurred in prison custody (the majority from natural causes) and 29 in police and police-custody related operations (which include pursuits and police shootings). • Since 2001, there has only been one death (in 2006) recorded in juvenile detention. • Most deaths resulting from police pursuits are of young males. Sixty-four percent have been of persons aged less than 25 years.

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<p>National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children http://apo.org.au/node/14249</p>	<p><i>Time for action: The National Council's plan for Australia to reduce violence against women and their children, 2009-2021</i></p> <p>March 2009</p>	<p><i>Time for Action</i> (the Plan) states that no woman should be a victim of sexual assault or domestic and family violence, and that no woman should fear for her safety at home, at work or in her community. The safety of women and their children is the guiding principle for the Plan.</p> <p>The Plan emphasises there is no “one-size fits all” approach. It acknowledges, for example, that different responses are needed in rural, urban and remote areas, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, women with disabilities, same-sex couples, and immigrant and refugee families.</p> <p>It focuses on strategies and actions for prevention, early intervention, improved service delivery, and justice, identifying six fields for improvement, described as 'outcome areas'. They are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communities are safe and free from violence. 2. Relationships are respectful. 3. Services meet the needs of women and their children. 4. Responses are just. 5. Perpetrators stop their violence. 6. Systems work together effectively. <p>Queensland initiatives and laws are referenced.</p> <p>The six outcome areas are based on 25 strategies and 117 actions. The Council advocates for the immediate implementation of 20 actions, and the early implementation of another 21 in the period 2009-2012.</p>
<p>Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth http://www.aracy.org.au/index.cfm?pageName=protecting_children</p>	<p><i>Inverting the Pyramid: Enhancing Systems for Protecting Children</i></p> <p>Allen Consulting Group, 28 April 2009</p>	<p>This 294 page report describes the current service systems for protecting children across Australia in terms of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention and identifies the organisational strategies and processes that could lead to more effective approaches to prevent child abuse and neglect.</p> <p>The appendices of the report includes chapters on the service systems, costs and impacts in each state with Chapter 5 devoted to Queensland.</p> <p>The report focuses on describing how to move to a collaborative child protection system, which uses a public health model of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention to ultimately assist in reducing the prevalence of child abuse and neglect.</p> <p>The four key elements required to move the system to a more preventive focus are identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • articulation of a shared vision • building a supportive culture • integrated governance arrangements, and • legislative support. <p>The reports analyses the fundamental systems parts that support the status quo which can also be used to leverage change, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the norms underpinning the system • the resources that reflect the capacity of the system to perform its functions • the regulations that govern the system and • the power and decision-making that influence system functioning.

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<p>Dusseldorp Skills Forum http://www.dsf.org.au/resources/</p>	<p><i>How Young People are Faring: Key Indicators 1996 - 2006</i> and its companion <i>Keeping Up: Strengthening Transitions from Education into Work for Young Indigenous People</i> April 2009</p>	<p>The Report considers best practice examples from the UK, the USA and Australia (Victoria).</p> <p>These two reports are jointly published by Reconciliation Australia and the Dusseldorp Skills Forum. <i>How Young People are Faring</i> uses ABS Census data from 1996, 2001 and 2006 to examine and comment on changes in the education and labour force participation of Indigenous teenagers (15-19 year olds) youth (20-24 years olds) and 25-29 year olds.</p> <p>Findings for Indigenous teenagers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time engagement in education or employment increased over the decade to 2006 and particularly from 2001. Although the gap with non-indigenous teenagers has narrowed, closing it would take another 50 years at the present rate. • There has been an improvement in school participation but in the context of continuing low levels of literacy and numeracy and attendance. • Participation in full-time work was almost unchanged. <p><i>Keeping Up</i> draws on its companion paper and maps the patterns of what is happening now and how improvements can be made.</p>
<p>Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/download/30540_pp</p>	<p><i>Improving Housing Outcomes for Young People Leaving State Out of Home Care</i> Johnson, G., Natalier, K., Bailey, N., Kunnen, N., Liddiard, M., Mendes, P. and Hollows, A., April 2009</p>	<p>This paper forms part of broader research being conducted to listen to the views and experiences of care leavers with regard to housing. The paper states that the aim of this project is to inform policy and service practice to promote positive and sustainable housing outcomes for young people 'ageing out' of the state out-of-home care system.</p> <p>The key research question to this project is : Which support model(s) most effectively facilitate positive housing outcomes for young people leaving care? Four additional questions are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the housing experiences, needs and outcomes of care leavers? 2. Do they vary by the age people leave care and/or by biographical circumstances? 3. What current forms of housing assistance and transitional support are offered, and to what extent do stakeholders (care-leavers and service providers) assess such assistance and support as effective? 4. What information can be obtained from (1), (2) and (3) to provide knowledge about minimum standards, best practices, and effective housing outcomes? <p>This paper includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifying legislation, policies and programs relevant to the study - reviewing literature on the outcomes (housing and non-housing) associated with young people leaving state care and on the effectiveness of leaving care programs, and - outlining the methods to be used in the study. <p>Interviews will be undertaken in Western Australia and Victoria of people aged between 18 and 25 years who 'aged out' of care at 18 and those who left care before the age of 18. The paper states that the interviews will focus on the ways in which care leavers gain access to secure and affordable housing, and whether an improvement in housing outcomes enables improvements in wellbeing and other areas of care leavers' lives.</p> <p>It is anticipated a final report and research policy bulletin will be available in September 2009.</p>

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Media Releases/Speeches		
Premier and Minister for the Arts http://www.cabinet.qld.gov.au/MMS/StatementDisplaySingle.aspx?id=63645	Media Release - <i>Queensland signs up to Compact to guarantee youth employment</i> 30 April 2009	COAG agreed to immediately implement a new Youth Compact to increase participation of Queenslanders aged between 15-24 in education, training and jobs. COAG also approved the National Framework for Protecting Australian Children.
ABC Radio National – The Law Report (presented by Damien Carrick)	Queensland’s child protection system 14 April 2009	In this interview, Heather Stewart talks with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Queensland women about their experiences with the Department of Child Safety and how the legislation restricts them from having access to information regarding the department’s decision making. [The first woman interviewed had her son removed and placed in foster care a week after she was savagely raped and witness to a triple murder; while the second woman’s grandchild was placed in foster care and later died before the family could prove child safety’s decision was unsubstantiated.] • Terry O’Gorman, civil libertarian, who speaks about how the law prevents families from challenging these decisions, and suggests the lack of accountability leads to arrogance in decision making. • An unidentified source, possible from within the department of child safety, who reports on the increasing practice of parents being asked to sign voluntary care provisions because the department doesn’t have the evidence to get a court order.
ABC Radio National – The Law Report (presented by Damien Carrick) http://www.abc.net.au/rn/lawreport/stories/2009/2547132.htm	Restrictions on media coverage of child protection and family court matters 21 April 2009	This interview follows from the previous week’s which looked at two Queensland families who reported their children were wrongly taken by child safety. It explores the legislation restricting reporting on child safety and family law matters and the pros and cons of those statutory restrictions. The following are interviewed about their views: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alastair Nicholson, former Chief Justice of the Family Court; ○ Terry O’Gorman, president of the Australian Council for Civil Liberties; ○ Caroline Ovington, who covers NSW child safety stories for <i>The Australian</i>; ○ Chris Warren from the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance and ○ Hetty Johnston from Bravehearts. During the interview reference is made to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the National Day of Action organised by groups concerned with the way the Family Court operates and ○ the decision by the current Chief Justice of the Family Court, Diana Bryant, to make limited public comments about a specific case to maintain the public’s confidence in the courts.
QUT Faculty of Law – free public lecture series http://www.law.qut.edu.au/community/lectures/index.jsp	<i>Mental Health and Risk Assessment in the Family Law System</i> – The Honourable Chief Justice Diana Bryant, Chief	Justice Bryant uses the public debate surrounding a recently publicised of familicide to examine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the courts undertake risk assessment and whether such extreme behaviour can be predicted • the provisions in the Family Law Act which require family violence to be considered and taken into account by judges in deciding parenting cases and the processes used by in the Family Law Courts, particularly the Family Court of Australia, in the areas of family violence and support vulnerable clients; and

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	<p data-bbox="415 92 604 175">Justice of the Family Court of Australia</p> <p data-bbox="415 212 577 240">21 April 2009</p>	<ul data-bbox="680 92 1894 151" style="list-style-type: none"> • the haste with which blame was sheeted home to the Family Court, preventing any consideration of the role the community should play in assisting to prevent such tragedies. <p data-bbox="680 183 1915 332">Justice Bryant also discusses the controversy surrounding the shared parenting reforms, and the erosion of public confidence in courts especially when the public doesn't understand what the legislation actually requires judicial officers to do. For example, she cites section 117AB as a major impediment to raising violence in family law proceedings and as a consequence, has suggested to the Attorney-General that the Government give consideration to repealing it.</p>