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1. Consultation Opportunities

1.1 Review of Queensland's current practical driving test, Department of Transport and Main Roads, released 13 July 2011.

Feedback is being sought on proposed reforms to Queensland's Q-SAFE practical driving test which will include, the development of a best practice practical driving assessment and a suitable 'cooling off' or waiting period following a failed driving test.

Submissions are due by **14 October 2011**.

<http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/consultqld/index.cfm?go=consultonline.viewIssue&activityID=391>

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2. Reports, Research Papers, Policy Initiatives etc

2.1 Child Protection

2.1.1 Making prevention work in human services for children and youth, Head, B. & Redmond, G. Australian Review of Public Affairs, 18 July 2011.

This paper examines current preventative measures in the human services area and how they can be improved.

The paper highlights that prevention programs have long been recognised as the best way to reduce social problems and have become central to the approaches policy makers take when addressing a range of issues. However, the design and implementation of prevention programs has tended to be 'top-down' with minimal consultation with targets groups, including children.

The paper argues that to obtain the full benefit of preventative measures, new approaches need to be developed to encourage debate as to the desirability of prevention, the aims of prevention and how we should go about prevention.

The authors suggest that a more inclusive approach to prevention measures could be helpful in reaching population groups that are characterised by social exclusion, disadvantage and social stigma.

http://www.australianreview.net/journal/v10/n1/head_redmond.pdf

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2.2 Law and Justice

2.2.1 2009 NSW Young people in custody health survey: Full report, Indig, D., Vecchiato, C., Haysom, L., Beilby, R., Carter, J., Champion, U., Gaskin, C., Heller, E., Kumar, S., Mamone, N., Muir, P., van den Dolder, P & Whitton, G. Justice Health and Juvenile Justice, June 2011.

This report presents the findings of the second Young People in Custody Health Survey (YPICHS), conducted in 2009, as a follow-up to the 2003 survey. The YPICHS included (i) a baseline survey comprising a health questionnaire, physical health and dental examinations, offending behaviour and psychological assessment, (ii) follow-up surveys at 3, 6, and 12-months, and (iii) data linkage over five years for key health and offending data collections.

Some of the YPICHS key findings on social determinants, mental health, and risk behaviours are:

Social determinants:

- 27% had experienced being in out-of-home care, with females and Aboriginal young people more likely to have a history of out-of-home care
- 45% of young people had a parent who had been in prison, and 10% had a parent currently in prison. Aboriginal young people were more likely to have a parent who had ever been incarcerated, and to have a parent currently in prison, and
- 27% reported having ever been bullied, while 52% reported bullying others.

Mental health:

- 87% had at least one psychological disorder, with 73% having two or more disorders. The most common disorders were conduct disorder (59%), substance abuse (49%), alcohol abuse (44%) and ADHD (30%)
- 60% had a history of child abuse or trauma with more young women reporting (81%) than young men (57%)
- Intellectual disability was common, with 20% of Aboriginal, and 7% of non-Aboriginal young people assessed as having an intellectual disability. Almost one-third (32%) scored in the borderline range for intellectual disability (Aboriginal 39% vs. 26% for non-Aboriginal young people), and
- 16% reported suicidal ideation, and 10% had attempted suicide, with young women more likely to have attempted suicide, engaged in self-harm, or ever been admitted to a psychiatric unit.

Risk behaviours

- 78% were “risky drinkers”; while 61% said their alcohol consumption had caused them problems in the last year (with school, friends, health, police, parents)
- 89% had tried illicit drugs (cannabis 87%, ecstasy 41%, and meth/amphetamines 29%), and
- 65% reported committing crime to obtain alcohol or drugs, and 20% were intoxicated (alcohol, drugs or both) at the time of their offence.

The survey highlights the social disadvantage, poorer physical and mental health, high prevalence of childhood maltreatment and risk behaviours amongst the participants, with Aboriginal young people in custody appearing to be at greater risk.

While custody is not the best place for young people, it can provide authorities with an opportunity to assess young people’s health needs, provide social and emotional support and improve the health status and life skills of this vulnerable and highly disadvantaged group.

http://www.justicehealth.nsw.gov.au/publications/YPICHS_full.pdf

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2.2.2 Queensland Law Reform Commission’s (QLRC) Report No. 68 ‘A Review of Jury Selection’, February 2011.

This report proposes changes to Queensland’s current jury eligibility and selection processes to ensure that the pool from which prospective jurors are drawn is representative of the community and is as large as possible.

In Queensland, to be eligible for jury selection a person must be on the electoral roll within the relevant court district and not be classed as ineligible under the *Jury Act 1995*. Currently, the jury service criminal history exclusion makes no distinction between adult and juvenile offenders and does not specifically refer to people who have served a sentence in a youth detention facility.

The QLRC has proposed a number of amendments to the *Jury Act 1995* including amending the criminal history exception so that a sentence of imprisonment will also include a sentence of detention under the *Youth Justice Act 1992*.

The effect of the QLRC’s proposals are that:

- persons ordered to serve more than 30 months in custody will continue to be permanently ineligible for jury service, and
- for persons not ordered to serve any period in custody, or a period of no more than 30 months (that is, for less serious offences) where the conviction has not been revived:
 - for a conviction recorded against a person who was dealt with as a child, or a conviction other than on indictment, the person will generally be eligible for jury service after expiry of a rehabilitation period of 5 years from the date the conviction is recorded, or
 - for a conviction of an adult on indictment, the person will generally be eligible for jury service after expiry of a rehabilitation period of 10 years from the date the conviction is recorded.

The QLRC has suggested that this shorter period of exclusion for young offenders is appropriate in order to focus on their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/TabledPapers/2011/5311T4761.pdf>

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2.2.3 Office of the Children’s Commissioner: Response to the UK Family Justice Review Interim Report, UK Children’s Commissioner, July 2011.

This submission from the UK’s Office of the Children’s Commissioner (OCC) responds to elements in the Family Justice Review’s Interim Report concerning children’s voice. The Family Justice Review is exploring ways to improve the family justice system in the United Kingdom. Its Interim Report was released in March 2011 for public consultation.

One of the Review’s aims is to give children a greater opportunity to have their voices heard in decisions made in public law (child protection) and private law (family law) proceedings. On behalf of the Family Justice Council, the OCC consulted with 35 children and young people (aged three to 17) who had experience of either public law or private law.

The recommendations made in the OCC’s response to the Interim Report draws upon the consultation’s findings which are detailed in its consultation report: *Do more than listen – Act*. The OCC’s response should be read alongside its consultation report.

Key messages from the OCC response and consultation with young people include:

- children want adults to listen, understand and act so that they feel supported and are able to have a say in decisions

- explanations for children and young people about court processes, alternative resolution processes and the roles of those involved need to be given in a timely and appropriate manner
- in order for children to know that their voice has been heard, a written record should be made of how their views have been considered which could be combined with a record of the decisions made by the court
- each child and young person needs their own participation plan which includes how they would like to be supported, who can best support them and how they would like to have their voice heard, and
- adults need to understand the pressures that children face – from what is happening in their family and from the court process.

The Family Justice Review's final report will be published later this year.

http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/press_release/content_435

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2.2.4 Views of adolescents in separated families: A study of adolescents' experiences after the 2006 reforms to the family law system, Lodge, L. & Alexander, M. Australian Institute of Family Studies, AIFS, December 2010.

This study presents adolescents' experiences of parental separation after the 2006 changes to the Family Law Act 1975 which were intended to focus on co-operative parenting, and bring the views of children into sharper focus. The sample consisted of 623 adolescents aged 12-18 years at the time of the survey. Adolescents were in three care-time arrangements, (i) living mostly/only with mother (63%), (ii) living mostly/only with father (20%), and (iii) living equally with both parents (equal care time) (17%).

Selected key findings:

Care-time arrangements:

- Most adolescents were happy with the decision about where they would live after parental separation, and with the amount of time they spent with both parents. Most remained involved with their other non-resident parent.
- Some adolescents wished to be included in decisions about themselves (e.g. who they would live with), while others (more than one in three), did not wish to be involved in resolving parenting arrangements.

Parental violence and conflict:

- Almost one in four parents had experienced being physically hurt by their partner before separation. In many cases, children had witnessed some of the violence or abuse.
- Although parents reported trying to shield their adolescents from any ongoing conflict after separation, many adolescents were aware of these problems. These adolescents had a better understanding of why their parents could not live together, expressed the greatest relief over their parents' separation, and the least desire for parental reunification.

Adjusting to life after parental separation

- Younger adolescents (aged 12-14 years) expressed more unease over their parent's separation, and were more likely to maintain a desire for their parents to reunite.
- Boys were most troubled by parental separation.
- In relation to adjustment, boys with equal time care arrangements were more likely to report social adjustment concerns, while girls living mostly/only with their fathers tended to report lower levels of self-confidence.
- Multiple changes in care-time arrangements in a relatively short period appeared to affect adolescents' capacity to cope after parental separation.
- Adolescent adjustment is likely to be facilitated by economic stability after separation. Those living mostly/only with their mother had a higher risk of financial hardship due to diminished economic circumstances.
- Promoting a warm, secure and trusting relationship with at least one parent facilitates adolescent adjustment. Having a secure relationship with at least one parent was associated with adolescents' greater self-rated school achievement, self-confidence and general happiness. Adolescents with less secure relationships with both parents reported poorer academic and psychological wellbeing.

[http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/rwpattach.nsf/VAP/\(4CA02151F94FFB778ADAEC2E6EA8653D\)~Views+of+Adolescents+in+separated+families++AIFS+report+-+final+edited+version+June+2011.pdf/\\$file/Views+of+Adolescents+in+separated+families++AIFS+report+-+final+edited+version+June+2011.pdf](http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/rwpattach.nsf/VAP/(4CA02151F94FFB778ADAEC2E6EA8653D)~Views+of+Adolescents+in+separated+families++AIFS+report+-+final+edited+version+June+2011.pdf/$file/Views+of+Adolescents+in+separated+families++AIFS+report+-+final+edited+version+June+2011.pdf)

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2.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

2.3.1 Evaluation of the child health check initiative and the expanding health service delivery initiative, Department of Health and Ageing, March 2011.

This report presents the findings and recommendations of an evaluation conducted during 2009/2010 by Allen and Clarke Regulatory Services on behalf of the federal government of two Northern Territory Indigenous health programs, the Child Health Check Initiative (CHCI) and the Expanding Health Services Delivery Initiative (EHSDI).

The evaluation found that:

- there is a lack of adequate policy processes in the CHCI which meant that the child health checks did not follow international best practice for screening programs
- the Northern Territory health system does not have the capacity, processes, infrastructure or resources to cope with existing numbers of referrals, let alone meet additional demands arising from the Indigenous health programs resulting in a bottleneck in referrals
- there had been a lack of engagement with key stakeholders, and
- Indigenous health programs had brought additional, much needed financial resources into the Northern Territory's health system.

The report called for:

- the development of implementation plans, before developing and commencing child health screening programs, to establish links between the health problem, the target population, the health system and social determinants of health
- monitoring and reporting of child health screening programs
- referral services to be given adequate funding and a sufficient workforce to improve service provision, and
- the development of a national policy and guidelines on child health screening specific to remote Aboriginal communities.

http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/oatsih_chci-ehsdi_report

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2.4 Early Years

2.4.1 Early Childhood Development Workforce draft report, Australian Productivity Commission, 30 June 2011.

This draft report examines issues impacting on the early childhood development sector workforce in relation to the impacts of the Council of Australian Governments' agreed strategic framework to guide government action on early childhood development.

The draft report indicates that agreed government reforms in the early childhood education and care sector will require a substantially larger and more highly qualified workforce to meet the targets specified. The report suggests that any increase in early childhood education and care costs will mainly be shared by governments and parents and that this could mean that without further assistance, children from disadvantaged backgrounds could have their participation in early childhood education and care services reduced.

The draft report's findings suggests that currently, the early childhood development services for children with additional needs and for Indigenous children are not meeting the standards commonly available to other children within the community.

The draft report details a series of recommendations, including the provision of sufficient funding in particular areas of need, to address these issues. The Productivity Commission is seeking feedback on its draft findings and recommendations before finalising its report.

<http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/education-workforce/early-childhood/draft>

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2.5 Education

2.5.1 Universal access to early childhood education for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, June 2011.

In November 2008, the Council of Australian Governments made a commitment to ensure that by 2013, every Australian child would have access to a preschool program in the 12 months prior to full-time schooling.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Universal Access Strategy (the Strategy) was developed to support the aim of achieving universal access for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to attend preschool programs.

Achieving universal access to preschool for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children requires a variety of strategies to address a wide range of issues, for example:

- the cost to families
- the quality of program delivery (including cultural appropriateness)
- proximity and transport issues, and
- the relationships between teacher/family/child (and lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff).

The Strategy outlines the current data on preschool enrolment rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the range of improvement strategies that federal, state and territory governments will be implementing.

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Pages/AboriginalTorresStraitIslanderUAS.aspx>

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2.5.2 Facilitating children's transition to school from families with complex support needs, Dockett, S., Perry, B., Kearney, E., Hampshire, A., Mason, J., & Schmied, V. Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education, Charles Sturt University, June 2011.

This research project was funded through an Australian Research Council Linkage grant and focuses on the question '*How can positive transitions to school be facilitated for children from families with complex support needs?*'.

Utilising strengths-based methodological principles, the project included interviews with 44 family members; 10 children starting school; 18 kindergarten teachers and 6 staff from partner organisations. The research was undertaken in diverse areas of NSW during 2006 - 2009.

Some of the research's major findings include:

- key decision points for families included choosing the right school for their child and identifying their child as ready for school
- anxiety was increased when children were unable to attend their preferred school
- all families regarded a 'good education' as essential for their children's later life success and many held high aspirations for positive educational outcomes
- even when school choices were limited, families were anxious that the school environment should recognise their children's strengths and unique qualities
- families were often unsure of the expectations of the school and concerned that their child might be labelled as disruptive or unruly, and
- parents supported the notion of being engaged with the school, but many were unsure about how this might happen.

The research also identified a range of enabling practices, processes and policies that supported a positive transition to school for children from families with complex support needs.

<http://bsllibrary.org.au/children-families/facilitating-children%E2%80%99s-transition-to-school-from-families-with-complex-support-needs-mission-australia-8114/>

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2.6 Health and Wellbeing

2.6.1 Position Statement: Alcohol, Drugs and Suicide Prevention, Suicide Prevention Australia, June 2011.

This position statement examines how Alcohol and Other Drug abuse (AOD) can lead to a higher risk of suicide. Evidence suggests that AOD abuse has been found in 25 to 55% of suicide cases and that AOD abuse can contribute to further personal and social problems such as socio-economic disadvantage, family breakdown, criminality and social exclusion.

The position statement suggests that policy makers need to look at the wider societal view of the causes of AOD abuse and what could be done to prevent AOD abuse and suicide. The position paper recommends that education on the risks of AOD needs to occur from a young age for example, five, and that limiting the advertising of AOD related products may discourage people from engaging in these behaviors when they are in their teens and beyond.

<http://suicidepreventionaust.org.tmp.anchor.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Suicide-Prevention-Australia-Alcohol-Drugs-and-Suicide-Prevention-2011.pdf>

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2.6.2 Before it's too late: Report on early intervention programs aimed at preventing youth suicide, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, 4 July 2011.

This report details the findings of the Committee's Inquiry into the need for, and success of, early intervention programs aimed at preventing youth suicide. The report and its recommendations are presented as complementing the comprehensive report prepared by the Senate Community Affairs References Committee: *The Hidden Toll: Suicide in Australia*, tabled in June 2010.

The report examines the suicide statistics for the 14-25 years age-group (including shortcomings in the data) and reviews the theoretical approaches used to reduce suicide rates, current youth suicide prevention strategies and the role of research and evaluation in developing a robust evidence-base to inform future best-practice strategies.

The statistical evidence presented suggests that the rate of youth suicide has been declining since 1997. However, youth suicide remains the second most common cause of death in young people after transport accidents (at approximately 20% of all deaths of those aged 15 to 24 in 2005).

Evidence presented also suggests that youth suicide rates differ across Australia, between genders and between social groups. For example, in the 15 to 24 year age bracket, suicide rates are three times higher for those living in remote and rural locations than in major cities; the rate is four times higher for Indigenous people than non-indigenous people in the 12 to 24 age bracket, and the rate of suicide for young males is higher than for females.

The Committee's Inquiry was informed by roundtable discussions with young people and community organisations which promote mental health, well-being and resilience among young people. Discussions highlighted the important role that young people themselves play in developing early intervention strategies to assist their peers.

Ten recommendations are made in the hope they will lead to better policy and program outcomes. Broadly they include:

- increasing mental health literacy among young people to help them to better recognise when they need help, and to encourage them to seek it
- more training for professional staff who have regular contact with young people to assist them to better recognise early warning signs and make appropriate referrals
- promotion of collaboration across governments and organisations to improve the availability and access to services for young people who are experiencing difficulties, and
- improvements to data collection, research and evaluation to inform best practice.

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/haa/youthsuicide/report.htm>

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2.6.3 High-Wire Act: Cyber-Safety and the Young: Interim Report on the Inquiry into Cyber-Safety, Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety, tabled 20 June 2011.

This report focuses on how young people can connect safely and ethically to the Internet with full awareness of the risks and benefits, and how government, industry and the broader community can work together to facilitate safer online environments.

It examines the complexity of the online environment, the difficulties of regulating it, specific abuses of cyber-safety (such as cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking, online grooming, sexting, privacy and identity theft) and the range and efficacy of educational strategies and legal, national and international responses.

The report also presents the findings of the Committee's consultation with young people which included two in-school forums – one at Brisbane's McGregor State School with grade 7 students – and two national online surveys. The first online survey involved young people up to the age of 12; the second targeted 13-18 year olds. In total, 33,751 young people completed the surveys.

According to the report, the consultation findings highlight that young people not only hold the key to their own safety, but that their knowledge and risk-management strategies are frequently undervalued.

Significant points to emerge include the need for:

- children and young people to be in control of their own experiences in the online environment through better education, knowledge and skills
- enhanced privacy provisions in the online environment
- research (including a detailed, longitudinal Australian research on how young people are interacting with the online environment and emerging technologies), and
- assistance for parents/carers, teachers and those dealing with young people to be more informed.

The report concludes that promoting safer online environments requires innovative, collaborative solutions with all stakeholders playing crucial roles. For example, governments can play a leadership role and support the development of suitable resources, industry can advance technological solutions and protections and schools can encourage young people to improve their own safety and online ethics.

The report's 32 recommendations include that government:

- assist preschools and kindergartens to provide cyber-safety educational programs for children as part of their development activities
- develop an agreed definition of cyber-bullying
- develop a nationally consistent legislative approach to add certainty to the authority of schools to deal with incidents of inappropriate student behaviour to other students out of school hours
- develop national core standards for cyber-safety education in schools
- fund an online training program for teachers and students addressing bullying and cyber-bullying, and
- introduce youth leadership courses enabling students to mentor their school communities about cyber-safety issues and courses on cyber-safety issues for parents/carers and other adults developed in consultation with young people and delivered by young people.

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jscc/report.htm>

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2.7 Society and Culture

2.7.1 Homelessness prevention for women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence: Innovations in policy and practice. Spinney, A. and Blandy, S. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, AHURI Positioning Paper No. 140, June 2011.

This paper investigates the effectiveness of Staying Home Leaving Violence type schemes, both nationally and internationally, and the barriers which prevent them becoming more widespread across Australia. The paper also discusses the measures introduced in Australia, England and Wales to address these issues.

There is an emerging range of Staying Home Leaving Violence homelessness prevention initiatives being developed in Australia whilst Sanctuary Schemes (which offer people experiencing domestic violence the prospect of staying safely in their own home through enhanced security measures) have become mainstream policy in the UK.

This paper highlights why it is important that women and children should not be subjected to domestic and family violence and notes that:

- it has become generally accepted that women and children are the ones who are expected to lose their home in order to leave an abusive relationship
- as a result of leaving the family home, women and their children experience considerable financial disadvantage and social and personal disruption including the loss of important supportive relationships
- domestic and family violence is currently the major reason for women seeking assistance from homelessness support services in Australia with most of these women being aged between 25 to 45 with children
- one in four children who have experienced domestic violence have serious social and behavioural problems. For example, the homelessness often associated with leaving situations of domestic and family violence can be a severe source of stress for children who are more likely to exhibit significant psychological distress, health problems (such as poor nutrition), poverty, and disruption to support, education and medical services as a result of high rates of mobility, and
- women who have experienced domestic and family violence need to decide what is best for them and their children which may include remaining in the family home or starting again somewhere else, however in exercising this right of choice women need the community, professionals and policy-makers to understand what constitutes domestic and family violence and how it can impact on women and children.

The next stage of this project will involve case studies from Australia, England and Wales to identify and investigate key examples of innovative policy and practice in these areas. A discussion paper will be presented to invited policy and practitioner delegates at workshops in Queensland, South Australia and Victoria. The final report to provide guidance on how such policies could be implemented across Australia is anticipated to be published in late 2011.

<http://www.apo.org.au/research/homelessness-prevention-women-and-children-who-have-experienced-domestic-and-family-violenc>

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2.7.2 A picture of NSW children, New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People, May 2011-October 2011.

A picture of NSW children, is an online databook produced by the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People in collaboration with the Social Policy Research Centre at University of New South Wales.

Chapters will be released progressively between May and October 2011 and draw together information about New South Wales children and young people from major data sources including the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, Centre for Epidemiology and Research and NSW Health.

Chapters include economic well-being, child care and education, health and well-being, safety, children in communities and children who offend.

<http://picture.kids.nsw.gov.au/>

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2.7.3 A multicultural future for us all – Queensland multicultural policy 2011, Department of Communities – Multicultural Affairs Queensland, 19 July 2011.

The aim of this policy is to foster community cohesiveness and promote a sense of belonging amongst all Queenslanders, regardless of their cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds.

The policy seeks to improve multicultural service delivery in regional areas, provide opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people to participate in and contribute to the economic, social, cultural and political life of Queensland and to encourage communities to be more inclusive.

The policy proposes that these aims will be achieved through a number of key actions including:

- increasing the use of interpreters and the availability of translated information
- ensuring information about Queensland laws, community and personal safety are accessible and culturally appropriate
- supporting newly arrived migrants and refugees to increase their English language skills
- designing and delivering mental health services and programs to address the particular needs of CALD people, particularly refugees
- addressing chronic disease among CALD people, and
- providing CALD people with fair access to affordable housing.

<http://www.multicultural.qld.gov.au/media/queensland-multicultural-policy-a-multicultural-future.pdf>

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2.8 Children's Rights

2.8.1 Review of the national classification scheme: Achieving the right balance, Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee, 23 June 2011.

This report details the findings of the Senate Committee's review of the Australian film and literature classification scheme and makes 30 recommendations for change.

Notably, two Senate Committee members dissented saying they believe that the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) current review is a more appropriate forum in which to consider reforming the National Classification Scheme.

The dissenting Senators only expressed support for recommendations 3, 12 and 30, namely that:

- the establishment of a Senate inquiry to review the progress being made by industry bodies and others in addressing the sexualisation of children in the contemporary media, and specifically, the progress made in relation to the Senate Committee's 2008 report on this issue
- the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General consider, as a matter of priority, the development of uniform standards for the display and sale of material with a restricted classification, and
- the Attorney-General specifically direct the ALRC to consider, as part of its current National Classification Scheme review, all the findings, proposals and recommendations put forward in the Committee's report.

Other recommendations made by the Committee included:

- the inclusion in the National Classification Code of a clarifying statement that the four key principles applied to classification decisions are given equal consideration in all cases. (A key principle is that "minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them".)
- expanding the fourth principle in the Code to take into account community concerns about the sexualisation of society and the objectification of women

- the removal of the “artistic merit defence” from child pornography offences
- for Category 1 and 2 Restricted publications where displayed and sold in general retail outlets, to be removed from public view and secured in a separate area which cannot be accessed by children, and
- prohibiting the exhibition, sale, possession and supply of X18+ films in all Australian jurisdictions.

The Committee support a continued role for industry self-assessment for classification decision making but argues that this “must be balanced with appropriate oversight, spot checks and compliance checks, and include harmonised standards across all media”. Recommendations to this end include:

- accreditation for industry bodies wishing to exercise classification decision-making functions
- monetary fines for transgressions of classification requirements within industry codes of practice, and
- the establishment of a 'Classification Complaints' clearinghouse.

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/legcon_ctte/classification_board/report/report.pdf

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3. Submissions Prepared by Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian

3.1 **Draft Commonwealth guidelines for the classification of computer games**, Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians joint submission to the Attorney-General's Department and the Standing Committee of Attorney-Generals, July 2011.

The purpose of the draft guidelines is to provide a tool for classifying computer games.

The Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians (ACCG) confirm the importance of refusing classification for any computer games which include descriptions or depictions of child sexual abuse or any other exploitative or offensive descriptions or depictions involving a person who is, or appears to be, a child under the age of 18 years would be refused classification.

The ACCG recommended:

- a review of the guidelines to ensure that the M classification category is subject to a stricter test regarding what is acceptable, particularly where there are depictions of sexual violence
- that the potential impacts of depictions of domestic and family violence be expressly taken into account when classifying or refusing to classify material
- the implementation of a public education campaign to develop community awareness about the types of materials which may be present in computer games available for purchase in Australia, and
- delaying a final decision on the introduction of an R18+ classification for computer games until the Australian Law Reform Commission has completed its review of the National Classification Scheme and any subsequent recommendations which provide for the safety and wellbeing of children have been implemented.

<http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/pdf/submissions/ACCG-Submission-re-proposed-guidelines-for-the-classification-of-computer-games.pdf>

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3.2 **Consultation paper on minimum standard non-parole periods**, Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian submission to the Sentencing Advisory Council, July 2011.

The purpose of the minimum standard non-parole periods scheme (SNPP) is to provide greater consistency of sentencing decisions in Queensland.

The Commission supported the:

- SNPP's aim to provide consistency and transparency in sentencing decisions and to impose just and appropriate sentences in individual cases, and
- suggestion for a minimum SNPP scheme to include child sexual offences, insofar as the scheme provides consistency and transparency in sentencing for offences, providing consideration is given to appropriate aggravating and mitigating factors.

The Commission recommended:

- that offenders, particularly young offenders, be given effective and appropriate rehabilitation opportunities, particularly community-based rehabilitation, which can produce more enduring reductions in recidivism than institution- based treatments alone
- the exclusion of young offenders, under 18 years of age, from any SNPP scheme in an effort to provide greater intervention and rehabilitation opportunities to these young people and to reduce the rate of recidivism
- raising community awareness about the most effective and appropriate interventions and rehabilitation options for young offenders, and

- basing rehabilitation options for young offenders on relevant and current research evidence.

<http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/pdf/submissions/S297-Submission-to-Sentencing-Advisory-Council-re-minimum-standard-non-parole-periods-consultation-paper.pdf>

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4. Events and Conferences

- 4.1 **National Conference on Volunteering 2011**, Volunteering Australia, 28-30 November 2011, Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre, Broadbeach Qld.

This conference provides delegates with the opportunity to discuss key emerging trends in volunteering, initiate new strategies and identify and examine ways to ensure the continued sustainability of the volunteering sector.

http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/html/s02_article/default.asp?nav_top_id=55&nav_cat_id=210

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- 4.2 **National Foster and Kinship Carer Conference 2011 – “Communities together – foster the future”**, Foster Care Queensland, 7–9 October 2011, QT Gold Coast (formerly Gold Coast International Hotel) Surfers Paradise, Qld.

This three day conference focuses on ways to deal with traumatised children or those with challenging behaviours, creating supportive environments, improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care transitioning from care and relative and kinship care.

http://www.fcq.com.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=57&Itemid=78

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- 4.3 **The 2011 Power of Play National Playgroup Conference – All Together Now**, 12-14 October 2011, Park Hyatt Melbourne.

This conference examines the importance of play in the early years for improving the health and wellbeing of children and strategies for supporting families and building communities.

<http://www.playgroupaustralia.com.au/index.cfm?objectid=EB6EA4C4-E7F2-2F96-3481259FF6C045F9>

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- 4.4 **End Youth Homelessness Conference 2011**, Yfoundations, 22-24 November 2011, Novatel Brighton Beach, Sydney.

This conference provides delegates with the opportunity to discuss and examine policies, practices and research which aim to end youth homelessness in Australia.

http://www.yfoundations.org/index.php?option=com_eventlist&view=details&id=11:yfoundations-youth-homelessness-conference&Itemid=19

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- 4.5 **Bond Talks, Dr Vicki Bitsika on assessment and treatment of autism spectrum disorders, 28 September 2011, 5.30 pm – 7.00 pm**

This is part of a community lecture series presented by Bond University.

Dr Vicki Bitsika is the Director of Bond’s Centre for Autism Spectrum Disorders. She has specialised in the assessment and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder for 25 years. Her current research is focused on sensory processing patterns in school children with an autism condition, support programmes for siblings, psychological outcomes for parents of children with an autism condition, and classroom techniques for working with the challenging behaviour of students with an autism condition.

http://www.bond.edu.au/about-bond/news-and-events/events/BD3_018481

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