

Children and Young People Policy Scan Issue 7, July 2010

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Consultation Opportunities

10-year plan for supporting Queenslanders with a disability: Consultation paper, Department of Communities – Disability and Community Care Services, July 2010

Feedback is being sought on strategies and ideas to develop a 10-year plan to create an inclusive community to improve access to services and public spaces for people with a disability.

Submissions are due on **8 October 2010**.

<http://www.disability.qld.gov.au/community/10-year-plan/index.html>

Reports, research papers, policy initiatives etc

Child Protection

Investing in our future: Children's journeys through homelessness and child protection: A Scan of the Literature, Policy and Practice, Gibson, C. & Johnstone, T. University of South Australia, Australian Centre for Child Protection, April 2010

This review discusses the relationship between homelessness and child protection. While there is no robust Australian data to highlight the pathways between homelessness and child protection or vice versa, evidence points to the likelihood that some families, particularly those with multiple and complex needs, are both homeless and in contact with a child protection system.

The review found that factors contributing to homelessness, such as domestic and family violence, substance abuse, housing affordability and suitability and poverty are the same factors that can cause families to come into contact with the child protection system. The homelessness and child protection service systems both respond to families with complex needs and can end up dealing with the same families.

Some of the findings from the review suggest that:

- no Australian studies have focused specifically on the association between family homelessness and the child protection system
- studies that have been conducted on homeless children suggest that the rate of child protection involvement in homeless families is between 20-50%. However, evidence also suggests that children in highly transient families and who are vulnerable to abuse and/or neglect may be overlooked by the child protection system
- there are few studies that focus on giving voice to or representing the experiences of homeless children and families
- separating homeless children from their families may lead to negative consequences for the children and also, potentially, for their future children
- some parents felt that child protection intervention was prompted by their homelessness rather than concerns about parenting
- problems with systemic processes were identified including inadequate communication between service systems and programs
- there is no evidence of effective collaboration between homeless and child protection service systems in Australia, despite complex interactions between both systems being evident.

http://www.homelessnessinfo.net.au/dmdocuments/childrens_journey_through_homelessness_and_child_services_literature_scan.pdf

Australia's Response to Sexualised or Sexually Abusive Behaviours in Children and Young People, O'Brien, W. Australian Crime Commission, July 2010

This report presents data from a national study of specialised therapeutic services to children and young people who display problem sexual behaviours or sexually abusive behaviours. Responding to children and adolescents with sexualised or sexual offending behaviours presents significant challenges across the allied health, child protection, education and juvenile justice sectors.

The report maps the national availability of specialised counselling services to divert children and adolescents with these behaviours from the criminal justice system and highlights a number of geographic and demographic gaps in service provision, including difficulties with eligibility criteria, referral pathways, funding arrangements and specialised workforce development.

The study suggests that although there is a need for more comprehensive Australian data on prevalence, the issue of children and young people with sexualised or sexually abusive behaviours is one of increasing concern. Whilst the report identifies a number of challenges in the provision of specialised diversionary services, it also highlights a number of initiatives designed to improve services to children and young people with sexualised or sexually abusive behaviours.

This report relates to action 6.2B of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 - "Investigate best practice therapeutic programs for children displaying sexually abusive behaviours".

http://www.crimecommission.gov.au/publications/other/_files/NIITF-PSB-REPORT-2010.pdf

Think Child, Think Family: Child and Family Sensitive Practice within Specialist Homelessness Services: Survey Report, University of South Australia, Australian Centre for Child Protection, April 2010

This report presents the results of a national survey of specialist homelessness services conducted in 2009 to investigate how the needs of homeless children were being addressed. Specialist homelessness workers identified a range of needs of children, including:

- health
 - physical (developmental milestones, safe environment, access to allied health and dental services and adequate nutrition)
 - mental (counselling, healthy family relationships, social interactions, routine, stability and emotional support, love and attention)
- material (safe and long-term accommodation, food and clothing, nappies, bottles and pram, school uniforms, books and supplies)
- educational (enrolment and regular school attendance, early childhood education and care, structured play for you children etc.)

Assistance offered by services to meet children's needs included:

- accommodation
- basic material assistance
- providing and arranging transport
- children's programs/ groups
- recreational experiences
- a focus on children
- providing direct support to parent/s
- providing skilled staff and relevant policies
- linking with education and health
- referral to specialist services

Barriers to agencies assisting to prevent family homelessness included a lack of resources, client-related factors and worker and workforce-related factors.

http://www.homelessnessinfo.net.au/dmdocuments/think_child_think_family_homelessness_survey_report_2010.pdf

The economic costs of child abuse and neglect, Bromfield, L., Holzer, P. & Lamont, A. Australian Institute of Family Studies, National Child Protection Clearinghouse, June 2010

This resource sheet examines expenditure related to child abuse and neglect in Australia. Key findings include:

- the direct economic costs of child abuse and neglect to the community are substantial
- the additional costs associated with the long-term effects of child abuse and neglect make prevention a priority
- real recurrent expenditure on child protection and out-of-home care services per child is increasing in all jurisdictions except the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania, and
- providing adequate support for children transitioning from out-of-home care to independence provides substantial savings to the community in the long term.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs2/rs2.pdf>

Report on the inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians ‘Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm’, House of Representative Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth, 16 July 2010

This report details the findings and recommendations of an inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians. Some of the recommendations include:

- a regular survey on the prevalence, nature and severity of youth violence
- including social development education and training as part of the national curriculum
- partnerships aimed at facilitating referrals of school students to external counselling and support services
- additional infrastructure to support ‘youth friendly’ communities
- new crime prevention grants schemes to support partnerships between police and local communities
- a national youth violence and rehabilitation strategy
- an audit of initiatives and programs aimed at addressing youth violence
- a mechanism to support the evaluation of interventions and programs
- examining the need to review film and television classification categories in relation to violent content
- a “mediasmart” website to assist children and their parents make choices in relation to media content, and
- implementation and evaluation of a social marketing campaign to promote positive images of young people.

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fch/youthviolence/report/fullreport.pdf>

In Loco Parentis, Hannon, C., Wood, C. & Bazalgette, L. Demos (UK), June 2010

This UK-based report considers what the child protection system would look like if it were reconfigured to avoid the delay, instability and abrupt transitions that many children and young people in out-of-home care experience. The report also provides a cost analysis of the different care journeys and later life outcomes of children and young people in care.

The report overviews research findings that emphasise the need to avoid delay in intervening and to initiate permanency plans for children as early as possible if it is unlikely they will be able to return to their family.

It identifies four factors that can significantly impact on a young person’s experience of leaving care and give young people a chance of better adult outcomes:

1. the age at which young people leave care, e.g. 16 versus 18 years of age
2. the speed of their transition, e.g. the timing of young people’s transitions from care
3. preparation before and support after leaving care, e.g. adequate planning and access to quality housing, and
4. stability and attachments, e.g. maintaining links with care leaving teams, foster carers and family members.

The report makes a number of recommendations to achieve permanency, stability of good quality placements and continuity of support. These include:

- improved data on children in care - data should be longitudinal and link care experiences to later life outcomes
- the establishment of permanency planning tracking panels to reduce delays
- mandatory mental health assessments of children entering care, using a standardised multi-disciplinary measure
- transition support guidance be prioritised to include emotional and mental health support
- applying the resilience model to transition planning
- wider availability of supported accommodation
- floating support services made more available, and
- creating a statutory 'right to return' for all care leavers up to the age of 24.

http://www.demos.co.uk/files/In_Loco_Parentis_-_web.pdf?1277484312

Sustaining Families in Challenging Times: 11th Australian Institute of Family Studies conference, Melbourne, 7-9 July 2010

Conference proceedings from the 11th Australian Institute of Family Studies conference proceedings are available on-line. Some of the presentations include:

- Parents' involvement in their children's learning: does it contribute to better outcomes?
- Practice partnerships for children affected by family violence
- Recreating cultural places of safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth
- Child and family sensitive practices within homelessness services
- Identity not just compliance: keeping the child at the centre of the care record, and
- Moving from dependence to independence: a study of the experiences of 18 care leavers in a leaving care and after care support service in rural Victoria.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/conferences/aifs11/>

Demand for government-funded specialist homelessness accommodation 2008-09: A report from the SAAP National Data Collection, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 21 July 2010

This report provides an overview of the expressed demand for government-funded specialist homelessness accommodation during the 2008–09 financial year. On an average day in 2008–09, 357 adults and unaccompanied children and 238 accompanying children had unmet requests for accommodation. More than half (58.3%) of people with unmet requests were aged under 20 years of age.

Three-fifths of those requiring new accommodation in Queensland in 2008–09 were turned away. However, this represented just 3.7% of the total number of people in demand for accommodation as the majority of clients had continuing accommodation. At the national level, couples with children (80.9%) had higher turn away rates than other family types.

More than two-thirds of accompanying children who required new and immediate accommodation could not be accommodated by the end of the day in Queensland. However, 97.3% of accompanying children seeking accommodation were already accommodated. On an average day, 35.8 accompanying children were turned away in Queensland, while 1281.1 accompanying children were already accommodated.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/11236>

Taking First Steps: What family sensitive practice means for alcohol and other drug workers - A Survey Report, Trifonoff, A., Duraisingam, V., Roche, A.M. & Pidd, K., National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction, Flinders University Adelaide, February 2010

This report details the results of a national survey which aimed to determine (i) the extent to which alcohol and other drug (AOD) agencies and workers take into account their client's parenting needs and the needs of clients' children, and (ii) to identify what factors facilitate or inhibit child and parent sensitive practice in the

AOD sector.

The importance of family sensitive practices is underscored by the estimated extent of problematic parental AOD use in Australian cases of child protection substantiations, with estimates ranging from approximately 50% to 80% of cases.

A sample of 271 alcohol and other drug (AOD) workers and managers from government, non-government, private and community-owned treatment agencies participated in the survey. Approximately 60% of AOD workers indicated that about a third of their clients are parents. The majority of respondents also thought that up to 50% of their parenting clients had children in receipt of child welfare services.

The study found that while AOD workers are generally disposed towards child and parent sensitive practice, more steps need to be taken to improve organisational policies and practice.

Key findings and recommendations include the need to:

- develop an organisational checklist to ensure that each organisation has child-friendly policies and procedures in place
- expand the provision of education and training aimed at building the capacity of the AOD workforce to undertake child and parent-sensitive practice
- ensure that appropriate clinical supervision is available for all staff and services where clients have children
- undertake an organisational audit to assess the level of child friendly practice in place
- include questions regarding clients' parenting roles and responsibilities as part of a routine assessment, and
- regularly review procedures related to working with child welfare services.

The authors suggest that the wider adoption of child and parent-sensitive work practice models is likely to positively impact the safety and welfare of clients' children, and may also improve clients' parenting practices as well as their treatment outcomes.

<http://www.unisa.edu.au/childprotection/documents/NCETAChildandFamilySensitivePractice.pdf>

Leaving care: Young people with a disability, Edwards, R. Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, July 2010

This article summarises the findings of a literature review undertaken as part of a broader evaluation of a program which provides person-centred support to young people with a disability leaving care. It focuses on issues faced by young people when they transition from out-of-home care and highlights that these issues may be compounded for young people with a disability. It identifies that little is known about the experiences of this group while they are in and when they leave care, despite suggestions that the prevalence of children and young people with a disability in care is high.

http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/File/NL105_Leavingcare.pdf

WHAT'S THE PLAN? Campaign launched by CREATE Foundation, July 2010

'What's the Plan?' is a program the CREATE Foundation has put together to help young people to be more prepared when they move out of care and into independence.

CREATE is asking community members, foster carers, case workers, government, sector workers and young people to pledge their support for the What's the Plan? campaign, which aims to provide a resource to every young person between the ages of 15-18 who will be transitioning from care to independence over the next few years.

The goal is to empower young people by providing them with information about their rights under legislation and informing them of the benefits of a Leaving Care Plan, how to get one, what makes a good plan, and who to contact should they have difficulty accessing one.

<http://www.create.org.au/>

Youth Justice

Final Draft [Recommendation Containing] Guidelines of the Committee Of Ministers of the Council of Europe on child-friendly justice, Council of Europe, 25 June 2010

The draft guidelines present practical measures to enable justice systems to better meet the specific rights, interests and needs of children. The draft guidelines aim to:

- improve the ways that children interact with the justice system from beginning to end, and
- encourage the development of justice systems that are accessible, age appropriate, speedy and focus on specific needs and rights of the children.

The draft guidelines identify that for a justice system to be child friendly there needs to be:

- meaningful participation of children in proceedings
- consultation with children and due weight given to their views particularly in matters involving or affecting them
- consideration of the best interests of the child in all decision making
- provisions enabling children access to free legal aid and to have their own separate legal representation
- a specific requirement that detention for children and young people is only to be used as a last resort
- training provided to professionals to enable them to effectively communicate with children and realise that different age groups will have different rights and needs, and
- mechanisms established to protect children's privacy, dignity and identity during proceedings.

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/childjustice/CJ-S-CH%20_2010_%2012%20E%20-%20Final%20draft%20_rec%20containing_%20guidelines%20of%20the%20CM%20of%20the%20CoE%20on%20Child-friendly%20justice.pdf

National Youth Policing Model, Federal Attorney-General's Department, 2 July 2010

The National Youth Policing Model (the Model), collaboratively developed by all Australian Police Ministers, aims to reduce, prevent and respond to youth violence and anti-social behaviour. The Model targets people between the ages of 12 to 24 years and contains 'best practice' principles for policing crime and anti-social behaviour by young people.

Under the Model, jurisdictions will retain the flexibility to adapt responses to youth policing issues to suit their local environments. The Model's principles build on and enhance current police programs through the following high-priority youth policing strategies:

1. **Targeted policing** - to ensure that policing efforts are appropriately directed to the local areas of greatest need and meet the diverse needs and offending behaviours of young people
2. **Strong responses to alcohol and drug abuse** - to reduce access by young people to alcohol and illicit drugs through strict enforcement of legislation
3. **Strong enforcement of road rules** - to reduce young people's involvement in road trauma caused by risky driving behaviour
4. **Early intervention and diversion strategies** - to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system
5. **Collaboration and information sharing between jurisdictions and with other sectors** - to ensure that young people can access appropriate support and services, and
6. **Education and awareness about safety and legal rights and responsibilities** - to ensure that young people can make informed choices about their behaviour and feel confident about their personal safety.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

Child protection and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, Berlyn, C. & Bromfield, L. Australian Institute of Family Studies, National Child Protection Clearinghouse, June 2010

This resource sheet presents a snapshot of data describing the rates of involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and out of home care. Key data show that:

- in 2008–09, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children comprised 25% of all confirmed reports of abuse or neglect in Australia
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were more than 7.5 times more likely than other children to be the subject of a confirmed report of abuse or neglect than non-Indigenous children
- in 2008–09, 31% of all children in out of home care were identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 9.2 times more likely than other children to be placed in care, and
- over twice the numbers of Indigenous children were diagnosed with a sexually transmitted illness compared with non-Indigenous children.

The article also identifies several issues that contribute to the under-reporting of child abuse and neglect specifically in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These include:

- fear, mistrust and loss of confidence in the police, justice system, government agencies and the media
- fear that the child may be removed from the community
- community silence and denial
- social and cultural pressure from other members of the family or community not to report abuse or violence
- a belief in the need to protect the perpetrator because of the high number of Indigenous deaths in custody
- fear of repercussions or retaliation from the perpetrator or their family
- personal and cultural factors of shame, guilt and fear
- lack of understanding about what child abuse and neglect is generally, and lack of understanding about what constitutes child sexual abuse specifically
- language and communication barriers, lack of knowledge about legal rights and the services available, and lack of services for Aboriginal victims, and
- geographical isolation e.g. nobody to report to, no means of reporting and minimal contact with child welfare professionals.

The maltreatment type most frequently experienced by Indigenous children was child neglect. Child sexual abuse is the least frequently substantiated maltreatment type for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. However, this is likely to be an underestimation of the actual incidence of child sexual abuse for a number of reasons. It is important to keep in mind that there are significant variations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Patterns of sexual assault will vary in relation to community location and factors such as substance use and family and community dynamics.

The reasons why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children might be more likely to be abused or neglected are complex, and need to be approached with consideration of multiple historical, social, community, family and individual factors.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs10/rs10.pdf>

Community development approaches to safety and wellbeing of Indigenous children: A resource sheet, Higgins, D.J., Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, June 2010 (released 26 July 2010)

This resource sheet examines child abuse and neglect in Indigenous communities and applies a community development framework to understand effective strategies for reducing risks and enhancing children's safety and wellbeing.

The resource sheet outlines evidence of principles and practices that show 'promise' for preventing and responding to maltreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, including:

- actions that take into account the historical context and prioritising cultural identity to develop resilience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- control of services and responsibility for outcomes resting with Indigenous-managed agencies that provide holistic services, and which are appropriately resourced and supported
- providing support for all families when they need it, as well as targeting services for vulnerable families that address the risk factors for child maltreatment, including parental risk factors such as substance misuse, family violence, mental illness, and poor parenting skills
- empowering families to make decisions to protect children or create safe arrangements for their care, and
- community-level strategies based on social inclusion and situational crime prevention principles.

The resource sheet also outlines principles and practices which don't appear to work, including:

- current data trends regarding child protection service activity (i.e. escalating demand for services, represented by increases in notifications, substantiations, and children placed in out-of-home care) show the limitations of adversarial risk management-driven/ forensic systems that do not support families in need, and
- limited evidence to show whether voluntary child health screening is useful in identifying child sexual abuse, or that alcohol bans or pornography restrictions alone are useful responses.

The authors state that further evaluation is required to:

- determine whether economic strategies to improve the financial wellbeing of families (e.g. employment, income support, income quarantining, voluntary income management, housing, etc.) actually reduce the incidence of child abuse or, in particular, neglect, in Indigenous communities.
- 'promising practices', if coordinated and comprehensively rolled out, lead to reductions in actual rates of child abuse and neglect at the community level.

http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/documents/resource_sheets/ctgc-rs01.pdf

The Early Years

Engaging disadvantaged and socially isolated families with young children in child and family services, McDonald, M., Family Relationships Quarterly, June 2010

This article summarises a practice sheet for engaging hard to reach families and children. It identifies a number of challenges faced by service providers in engaging disadvantaged and socially isolated families, including:

- making initial contact, for example, finding out where disadvantaged and socially isolated families gather in a community
- complex needs such as homelessness, poverty and trauma
- community infrastructure, for example access to transport can impact upon clients' ability to engage with services
- staff turnover, for example, high staff turnover can have a negative impact on the development of relationships with clients, and
- time, for example, building relationships with disadvantaged and socially isolated groups requires a greater investment of time.

The article highlights methods that child and family services can use to engage disadvantaged and socially isolated families more effectively, including:

- go to where the families are
- promote and deliver services in a non-stigmatising and non-threatening way
- employ strategies that empower families, and
- develop relationships with other service providers.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/newsletter/frq016/frq016-3.html>

Australian Social Trends 2010: Child Care, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 30 June 2010

This article presents data on the usual child care arrangements of children aged 0-12 years in Australia. Data in this article mainly come from the ABS 2008 Childhood Education and Care Survey. The data show that in 2008:

- 1.5 million children aged 12 years or less had regular formal or informal child care arrangements in place
- the most common type of child care was informal care (29%), with 22% of children attending formal care
- 9% of children aged less than 12 months were in formal child care
- long day care was the most common type of formal care used, with around one in four children aged 0-5 years attending
- the average number of hours spent in child care was 17 hours a week, with 47% of children spending less than 10 hours per week in care; 37% attended child care for 10-29 hours per week and 16% attended child care for more than 30 hours per week, and
- 16% of 6-8 year olds attended before or after school care, compared with 8% of children aged 9-12.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features50Jun+2010>

Education

Re-engaging Students in Education - Success factors in Alternative Schools, Mills, M. & McGregor, G. Youth Affairs Network Queensland Inc (YANQ), 14 July 2010

The report examines the extent to which 'alternative' schools are able to meet the needs of young people disengaged from the mainstream schooling sector. Five 'alternative' schools in the South East corner of Queensland were visited to explore some of the options for young people disengaged from the mainstream schooling sector.

A number of key findings and recommendations were developed in relation to the following issues: funding, students, environment, curriculum, pedagogy, post-schooling pathways, and staffing. Some of the recommendations include:

- further research needs to occur on disengaged young people who are no longer receiving any formal education and on their perspectives of effective schooling
- recognition that class size and staff-student ratios make a difference, especially for young people marginalised within schools
- mapping existing educational services available to young people and the pathways and curricula they provide, and
- connect the curriculum to young people's worlds, support students in their learning, value the diversity of the student population and provide learning opportunities that are intellectually challenging.

http://www.yanq.org.au/images/stories/Documents/yanq_report_final-art_press_compress.pdf

Working Together: A Toolkit for effective school based action against bullying, Queensland Government, May 2010

The *Working Together* toolkit provides Queensland schools with a collection of practical strategies to address student bullying in all its forms. The toolkit is a compilation of national and international best practice. It provides schools with a framework for addressing bullying in schools, which was a recommendation of the report *Enhancing responses to Bullying in Queensland Schools*, prepared by Dr K. Rigby.

The toolkit identifies the following ten elements of effective school based action against bullying:

1. create a caring, respectful, inclusive and supportive school culture
2. establish a clear whole school definition of bullying
3. establish a clear anti-bullying policy developed in collaboration with staff, students and parents/carers, which addresses all forms of bullying (including cyber

bullying)

4. collaboratively develop procedural steps to respond appropriately to bullying incidents that are clearly documented and define the roles and responsibilities of staff, students and parents/carers
5. establish teaching and learning programs that promote personal development and address all forms of bullying through the teaching of language skills, social-cognitive abilities, social skills, assertiveness, coping strategies, group mechanisms, motives for bullying and being effective bystanders
6. provide professional development to assist school staff to understand the anti-bullying policy, implement teaching and learning programs, and provide support for students at high risk times and in high risk settings.
7. consult students regularly to monitor and determine the types of bullying behaviour and in what school and social contexts bullying (including cyber bullying) occurs.
8. create physical environments in the school and staff supervision practices that limit the incidences of bullying (including cyber bullying).
9. support and engage families by maintaining regular, clear communication and through systematic parent awareness raising and skill building, and
10. establish a process for regularly reviewing and celebrating the effectiveness of school policies, programs and procedures.

The toolkit includes examples of fact sheets for staff, students and parents, an example anti-bullying policy and links to additional resources.

http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/docs/working_together_toolkit.pdf

Law and Justice

Shared Care Parenting Arrangements since the 2006 Family Law Reforms: Report to the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department, Professor Katz, I. Delaney, M. Dr Eardley, T. Dr Patulny, R. Redmond, G. Rajkovic, M. Sitek, T. Cashmore, J. Parkinson, P. Single, J Dr Baxter, J. Qu, L. & Weston, R., Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, May 2010

This study examines the circumstances under which shared care arrangements work, and do not work, in the best interests of the child. It also develops a socio-economic profile of the population of parents who engage in shared care, the economic costs associated with shared care and the dynamics of shared care.

The study was conducted using three large data sets augmented with surveys and interviews including a survey of more than 1000 parents (which included both parents who had shared care arrangements and those who did not) and an online survey of 136 children.

The research presents a positive picture of shared care in terms both of parental satisfaction and children's wellbeing. However only a relatively small minority of parents share the care of the children and fewer still manage to sustain it for a substantial period of time. Around 8% of parents who do not live together have a shared care arrangement, with 4% having an equal time arrangement.

The authors conclude that much of the success of shared care derives from factors other than the care arrangement itself. The parents' relationship, whether the arrangement was imposed by a court, equitable sharing of financial resources, and parents sharing decisions are more significantly associated with children's wellbeing than the amount of time the child spends with each parent.

The research indicates that children generally fare better when they have the involvement of both parents in their lives than when they are in one parent's care only and do not see the other at all. However, the study also found there are some parents who share care who do not have a cooperative relationship, and some children whose experience of shared care is not positive.

Some of the findings from the study show that:

- many children reported positive benefits from shared care
- a number of children who were not in shared care wanted more time with their non-resident parent (mainly fathers). Some specifically wanted a shared care arrangement
- conversely, there were some children in an equal time arrangement who wanted to live primarily with one parent
- children reported that the main benefit of shared care was maintaining a relationship with both parents. Having equal time was also seen to be fair

- having some respite from one parent in the move to the other was also a perceived benefit for some children
- the disadvantages of shared care were the moves back and forth, the lack of one place to call home, especially with the demands of the senior years of high school, and the risk of leaving things behind. Some children perceived these to be issues for them, while others did not, and
- mothers are more likely than fathers to organise and take them to medical or dental appointments and to buy their clothes, or for these responsibilities to be shared reasonably equally.

http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/File/AG_Shared_Care.PDF

Family Violence and Family Law in Australia: The Experiences and Views of Children and Adults from Families Who Separated Post-1995 and Post-2006, Volume 1, Bagshaw, D. Brown, T. Wendt, S. Campbell, A. McInnes, E. Tinning, B. Batagol, B. Sirfis, A. Tyson, D. Baker, J & Fernandez Arias, P., Australian Attorney-General's Department, April 2010

This report details the findings of a study of parents and children from families who separated post-1995 and post the 2006 family law reforms, to examine how family violence has affected their access to courts and dispute resolution services, and post-separation parenting arrangements. More than 1000 adults and 112 children, across four states, including Queensland participated in the study.

The researchers conclude that the family law system needs to be overhauled to give children's safety the highest priority. They argue that despite the intent of the 2006 reforms, the family law socio-legal service system does not place adult and child safety above all other principles, and unless it can move to do this, family violence will remain a serious problem for those families who separate as a way of ending family violence, or who experience violence as a result of separation.

Some key findings from the study include:

- for most respondents (68.7% of women and 52.2 % of men) the consequence of family violence was that suitable and safe arrangements for themselves and their children were not achieved after separation
- a constant complaint was that instead of receiving sympathy and support from the service providers, they received disbelief and disregard in relation to their experiences of family violence and their concerns for their children's safety
- adult victims were frequently advised by lawyers and others not to report family violence for fear of losing their children and if they did, they were often not believed, or were accused of trying to alienate the child from the other parent
- judges were criticised for not taking reports of violence into account in their decisions, especially with regard to overnight contact for young children, and for ignoring child protection and police reports and state-based domestic violence orders
- many respondents reported domestic violence and child abuse as coexisting, or as indistinguishable from each other
- reports from parents and children themselves suggest that children who had been abused prior to the separation were continuing to be abused after the separation, and that opportunities for abuse increased when the non-abusive parent was not present
- both male and female adult respondents were extremely concerned that allegations and denials of child abuse were rarely investigated by the state child protection agencies when they were reported
- the majority of children reported that their experiences of family violence reduced for them after their parents separated
- 39% of all children surveyed said they did not feel safe with their father after separation and just under 10% said they did not feel safe with their mother. Furthermore, they reported feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness
- children said they needed more professional support and services than they had received and that they wanted more involvement with their extended family
- children were concerned about their distance from decision-making and wanted more involvement, some by being consulted by their parents, some by the court and some by a court advisor, or a mediator or even someone at school
- some children resented the lack of opportunity to express their views about their parents' separation and post-separation parenting decisions, in particular, the arrangements made for their care
- children criticised their lack of opportunity to present their views to the courts and criticised judges for their distance from the children, their views and their experiences
- children indicated that the existence of family violence should substantially restrict their parenting time with the perpetrator. They reported that the courts'

emphasis on children having contact with a violent parent was inappropriate and unsafe, and

- 16.3% of children wished the abusive parent to be removed completely from their lives. A small number reported ongoing severe violence.

In June this year, the Commission provided a submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission and New South Wales Law Reform Commission's Federal Family Violence Inquiry: *Improving Legal Frameworks Consultation Paper*. The Inquiry examines how family violence interacts with other legal frameworks, including family law.

Some of the Commission's recommendations regarding family violence in the family law context included that:

- the *Family Law Act 1975* be amended to direct state and territory courts varying parenting orders to prioritise the protection of family members from violence over a child's best interest in having contact with both parents
- section 69ZW of the *Family Law Act 1975* regarding state and territory agencies providing information relating to child abuse to family courts be legislatively clarified to ensure child protection agencies' compliance with subpoenas requesting such information
- the 'friendly parent' provision in the *Family Law Act 1975* be amended to ensure that parents are able to act protectively of their children when appropriate and disclose allegations of violence without fear of penalty, and
- section 117AB of the *Family Law Act 1975*, which allows the court to make a costs order against parties who knowingly make false allegations, be repealed.

[http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/rwpattach.nsf/VAP/\(9A5D88DBA63D32A661E6369859739356\)~FLB+-+Monash+Family+Violence+Research+-+FINAL+REPORT+Volume+1+-+April+2010.pdf](http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/rwpattach.nsf/VAP/(9A5D88DBA63D32A661E6369859739356)~FLB+-+Monash+Family+Violence+Research+-+FINAL+REPORT+Volume+1+-+April+2010.pdf/$file/FLB+-+Monash+Family+Violence+Research+-+FINAL+REPORT+Volume+1+-+April+2010.pdf)

Health and Wellbeing

The Hidden Toll: Suicide in Australia, Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee, 24 June 2010

In 2009, the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee commenced an inquiry into and report on the impact of suicide on the Australian community including high risk groups such as Indigenous youth and rural communities. The inquiry produced a series of 42 recommendations, including:

- the commission of a comprehensive economic assessment of the cost of suicide and attempted suicide in Australia
- the implementation of reforms to improve the accuracy of suicide statistics
- the mandatory ongoing training of personnel who work with persons at risk of suicide
- the development of a national suicide prevention and awareness campaign, which should include a targeted approach to high-risk groups including young people and people in rural and remote areas
- that suicides by children should be officially reported, and
- the setting of an aspirational target for the reduction of suicide by the year 2020.

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/suicide/report/index.htm

Housing and children's development and wellbeing: a scoping study, Dockery, A.M. Kendall, G. Li, J. Mahendran, A. Ong, R. & Strazdins, L.. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, July 2010

This study reviews the existing literature on the connections between housing and childhood development and wellbeing. While the connections between housing and childhood development are well-recognised in the international literature, there is a dearth of empirical evidence about the nature of these connections in Australia.

The findings indicate that:

- some of the links between various housing variables and child development outcomes are irreversible and continue into adulthood, such as the negative effects of toxicants on child development

- unaffordable housing affects children most during early childhood via its adverse impact on the family's ability to access basic necessities, while neighbourhood effects are strongest on adolescents - in particular their educational outcomes due to the influence of peers
- housing can impact on children's development and wellbeing through both direct and indirect mechanisms, for example, the inability to afford housing is linked to frequent moves, shared housing with other families, crowding, or even homelessness, and
- housing aspects can exert strong indirect influences on children's development via influences of parental practices, especially for infants and young children who spend most of their time indoors under parental supervision.

The report identifies three issues that are a policy concern and in need of further research attention in Australia:

- statistical data shows that children make up a significant proportion of the homeless population in Australia
- the housing experiences of Indigenous children are significantly worse than those experienced by non-Indigenous children, and
- housing stress is particularly prevalent among households with children in Australia.

Due to the fact that housing and outcome variables may have very different connotations for Indigenous and non-Indigenous families, it is argued that outcomes for Indigenous children need to be investigated separately.

http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/download/80551_fr.

Mental Health of Young People, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 19 July 2010

This article provides an overview of the mental health of young people aged 16-24 years in Australia. It includes information on the prevalence of mental disorders for people in this age group, as well as their socioeconomic characteristics, level of impairment and the health service usage of young people with mental illness. Data are sourced from the 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Key findings show that in 2007:

- 76% of all young people assessed their own mental health as excellent or very good. However, 26% of all young people had a mental disorder in the previous year
- young people were more likely to have anxiety disorders (15%) and substance use disorders (13%) than affective disorders (6%)
- young women (30%) were more likely than young men (23%) to have had any mental disorder in the year prior to the interview
- young women were also around twice as likely as young men to have an affective disorder (8% compared with 4%) or an anxiety disorder (22% compared with 9%), and
- substance use disorders involving harmful use of, or dependency on, alcohol or other drugs, were more common in young men (16%) than in young women (10%).

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbyReleaseDate/25C95D1E36F1B968CA257762001AC54B?OpenDocument>

Conceptualisation of social and emotional wellbeing for children and young people, and policy implications, A research report for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010

This report discusses the concept of social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) in children and young people, proposes indicators of SEWB and considers the use of these indicators in policy and practice.

While some aspects of development and wellbeing are reasonably well-defined and there is a level of consensus about appropriate indicators (e.g. education, health and economic wellbeing) there are no widely accepted indicators relating to social and emotional aspects of human wellbeing, either in general or in relation to children's and young people's development. Therefore, achieving a consensus in the conceptualisation of SEWB for children and young people and in its operationalisation is important for contemporary social policy and research.

The report:

- develops an understanding of SEWB that may help to determine national headline indicators for children and young people's social and emotional development
- considers how indicators of children's and young people's SEWB might be used by policymakers and practitioners to monitor policies and programs aimed at supporting their development and transition to adulthood, and
- considers the feasibility of adopting indicators of SEWB that are relevant to different age groups of children and young people, and that are comparable within Australia and also internationally.

[http://www.aracy.org.au/cmsdocuments/SEWB%2007_071%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.aracy.org.au/cmsdocuments/SEWB%2007_071%20(2).pdf)

Kids Central, Moore, T. & Layton, M. Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University, ACT Department of Disability Housing and Community Services, July 2010

The Kids Central toolkit aims to help practitioners and services place children at the centre of their work. The resource was developed in response to a research project conducted on experiences of homelessness for accompanying children. One of the key messages that came out of the research was that services greatly benefited from adopting a child-centred approach.

http://www.homelessnessinfo.net.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1539:kids-central-toolkit-to-support-children-affected-by-homelessness&catid=136:homelessness&Itemid=98

Society and Culture

Families then and now: 1980 to 2010, Hayes, A. Qu, L. & Gray, M. Australian Institute of Family Studies, 6 July 2010

This fact sheet examines broad family trends and how Australian families have changed. It reaffirms the common belief that today's families are different from those of past generations, particularly in the areas of family composition, birthing trends and financial responsibility. The findings show that:

- marriage rates are continuing to decline while cohabitation rates are rising
- families are becoming smaller and are more likely to consist of couple families living with dependent children
- the number of lone parent families is increasing, however, they are not all headed by mothers
- more women are delaying motherhood until later in life, which restricts the numbers of children they are likely to have, and
- more couples are working full-time resulting in increasing demands for formal child care and a greater reliance on family members, such as grandparents, to provide informal child care services.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/factsheet/fs2010conf/fs2010conf.html>

Media and communications

Digital handcuffs or electronic nannies: Children, privacy and emerging surveillance technologies, Arnold, B, paper presented at the *Watch this Space: Children, young people and privacy conference*, Melbourne, 21 May 2010

This paper considers the impacts of current and emerging digital surveillance technologies on children's privacy. It concludes that, potentially digital surveillance technology poses a substantial threat to children's privacy primarily because:

- children have no specific privacy protection laws to prevent parents or carers invading their privacy
- surveillance of individuals is generally accepted by the community as a normal part of daily life
- emerging technologies will allow parents to easily track their children's movements through devices such as:
 - automated monitoring of SMS
 - internet filtering and monitoring
 - remote home video surveillance
 - location tracking devices implanted in mobile phones, bracelets and watches
 - radio frequency identification devices surgically implanted into children, and
- parents are increasingly eager to embrace new surveillance technologies in a desire to ensure their children's safety.

<http://www.apo.org.au/research/digital-handcuffs-or-electronic-nannies-children-privacy-and-emerging-surveillance-technolo>

Submissions prepared by the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian

Working document National Standards for out of home care, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 4 August 2010

The Commission supports the intent and general direction of the draft National Standards and makes the following recommendations:

- the standards should recognise the importance of infant attachment relationships in placement decisions as a crucial prevention measure
- the standards should acknowledge the importance of children in out of home care being placed with a relative or member of their extended family
- the implementation principles should include:
 - the voices of children and young people who live in out of home care as a core element of the systemic monitoring of the standards, and
 - a requirement for all child protection placement decisions to be accurately captured by counting all of a child's movements in and out of care no matter how short, starting from the first time a child enters care and include any reunification attempts.
- tangible targets and timeframes are established within the monitoring framework as a mechanism for continuous improvement, and
- wording used within the document should be strengthened.

This submission complements the Commission's earlier submission on the National Standards from March 2010 which can also be accessed from the CCYPCG website.

<http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/resources/submissions.html>

Events and Conferences

A Thousand Good Reasons – Early Intervention and Socially Excluded Young People Conference, Youth Development Australia, Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre, Preston, Victoria, 5 August 2010

This conference is aimed at those working with disadvantaged and marginalised young people as well as those working across homelessness, substance use, employment services, education, mental health services, youth justice and child protection/leaving care.

<http://yda.org.au/>

Early Childhood Australia's 2010 Biennial Conference - 'Garla Bauondi': Fuelling the Fire, Adelaide Convention Centre, South Australia, 29 September-2 October 2010.

The themes for the 2010 Early Childhood Australia Conference address the arts, professional leadership and creating inspiring environments.

<http://www.ecaconference.com.au/>

2010 National Conference - Connecting and Collaborating: moving towards holistic approaches when working with children, families and communities, Australian College for Child & Family Protection Practitioners, Hotel Realm - Barton, Northern Territory, 15 – 17 October 2010

This conference provides a forum for ideas and strategies to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and individuals, families and communities in difficulty.

http://www.accfpp.org.au/documents/ACCFPP_Call_For_Papers.pdf

Health, Hope and Resilience: Fostering better health for Australians children and young people in out-of-home care, University of Melbourne, Woodward Conference Centre, Melbourne University, 18 – 19 October 2010

The symposium is presented by the University of Melbourne in collaboration with General Practice Victoria and the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, Victoria.

The symposium will consider the best way to assess the health needs of children in out-of-home care, factors likely to impact on achieving the national standards for child health assessment and management, and the minimum requirements for change in health and child protection sectors to meet the proposed new standards in relation to child health.

Event organisers are seeking submissions from people interested in presenting at the symposium. Submissions are due on **Wednesday 1 September 2010**.

<http://www.gp.unimelb.edu.au/FosteringHealthSymposium/>

Media Releases and Speeches

Preparing kids for disasters and emergencies, Federal Government, 30 June 2010

Education materials are available to help school students better understand and prepare for natural disasters and emergencies. The materials are available from the Emergency Management Australia website at www.ema.gov.au/schools.

http://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/www/ministers/mcclelland.nsf/Page/MediaReleases_2010_SecondQuarter_30June2010-Preparingkidsfordisastersandemergencies

BPA Baby Bottle Phase Out, Federal Government, 30 June 2010

The phase out by major retailers of baby bottles containing Bisphenol A (BPA) has been announced and began on 1 July 2010.

[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/0D1BD3415FBE24B4CA25775200179277/\\$File/mb040.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/0D1BD3415FBE24B4CA25775200179277/$File/mb040.pdf)

National standards for out of home care, Federal Government, 7 July 2010

- The draft national standards for out of home care have been released. The 14 draft national standards aim to provide a national benchmark for the children in out of home care. The standards focus on key areas, including access to health, education and training, increased support for carers and enhancing transition planning for all young people.

The final standards and how they will be measured and monitored will be considered by Community Services Ministers in late 2010. Implementation of the national standards will commence from July 2011.

The national standards for out of home care working paper is available at http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/families/pubs/Pages/working_doc_dnsfohm.aspx

The KPMG National Standards for Out of Home Care Final Report is available at http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/families/pubs/kpmg_final_report_nsfohc/Pages/default.aspx

http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2010/pages/nat_standards_children_in_care_7jul10.aspx

Helping out families initiative, Queensland Government, 8 June 2010

\$55 million has been allocated over the next four years to the *Helping Out Families* initiative in Queensland. The initiative will be piloted in three south-east Queensland locations to assist families located in Beenleigh/Eagleby/Nerang area and the Logan area from October, and the Gold Coast from early next year.

<http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/MMS/StatementDisplaySingle.aspx?id=70097>

Funding to support young carers, Federal Government, 13 July 2010

\$25 million will be invested over the next three years to support young carers across Australia. The funding extension will allow 53 Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres to continue to deliver respite, education and support services to young carers.

http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2010/pages/helpinghandforyoungcarers_12jul10.aspx

Custody arrangement information to be shared with child protection agencies, Federal Government, 15 July 2010

New information sharing protocols will support custody arrangement information to be shared with state child protection agencies. The protocols provide for the sharing of information about child custody arrangements, a child's medical and immunisation history, addresses, and other children in a person's care.

http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2010/pages/help_protect_children_15jul10.aspx

Programs for parents and carers of children and teenagers with disability, Federal Government, 15 July 2010

Funding has been allocated to extend the operation of the MyTime support groups for parents and carers of children with a disability to include families with children up to 16 years of age. Funding has also been allocated to provide for the continuation of the Outside School Hours Care for Teenagers program which provides outside school hours care and vacation care for teenagers with a disability.

http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2010/pages/supporting_carers_children_teenagers_15jul10.aspx

Funding for Referral for Active Intervention in south-west Brisbane, Queensland government, 8 July 2010

Mission Australia's Wacol office will receive \$3.3 million over three years to provide Referral for Active Intervention services for young people in south-west Brisbane. The funding will enable Mission Australia to help up to 270 families a year in the local area.

<http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/MMS/StatementDisplaySingle.aspx?id=70573>