

**Policy Environment Scan
May 2009**

Source	Topic	Content
Research Findings, Reports and Policy papers, etc		
Australian Institute of Family Studies, Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse http://www.aifs.gov.au/afr/c/pubs/newsletter/newsletter12.html#lawyer	<i>Lawyers and family dispute resolution practitioners: Achieving the child-focused ideal in practice</i> Banks, C., 2009	<p>This article discusses how the new child-focused policy and legislative reforms in family law are shaping the practices of lawyers and Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) practitioners.</p> <p>Research indicates that there is no clear shared understanding of the term child-focused between FDR practitioners and lawyers. While both groups believe being child-focused is a process to follow in order to achieve the best interests of the child, the definition of best interests differs. Overall, the process of establishing the best interests of a child is a therapeutic one for FDR practitioners and legalistic for lawyers.</p>
NSW Department of Community Services http://apo.org.au/research/effective-strategies-and-interventions-adolescents-child-protection-context	<i>Effective strategies and interventions for adolescents in a child protection context</i> Schmied, V. and Tully, L., January 2009	<p>This paper is a review of the literature on effective strategies and interventions for young people 12 to 18 years of age within the child protection system. The purpose of the paper is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide an overview of the nature and characteristics of adolescence and the risk and protective factors as well as risk behaviours that influence outcomes for young people who are referred to a child protection agency • describe strategies that are effective in casework practice with young people, particularly strategies to establish relationships and facilitate engagement • review the evidence for effective interventions and therapeutic approaches that can support young people and their families. <p>Overall, the report emphasised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a continued focus on individual and family problems and interventions or treatments to address deficits, rather than strengths-based approaches which involve obtaining the young person's perspective and their participation • interventions need to focus on social skill development, integration and community development programs particularly for young people 'at risk' and those within the child protection system, and • the importance of working with the families of young people and effective interagency work.
Australian Bureau of Statistics http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4529.02009?OpenDocument	<i>Conceptual Framework for Family and Domestic Violence</i> 2009	<p>The aim of this paper is to present a Conceptual Framework for Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the complexities in developing definitions of FDV and describe the components of different definitions • provide a Framework and elements through which to view FDV, and • identify the research and policy questions around FDV. <p>The paper recognises that FDV is difficult to measure and define. Also, the issues surrounding FDV do not fit easily into existing frameworks. The paper suggests that it is best to consider FDV as a multi-disciplinary issue, requiring its own framework. The elements of the Framework are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Context</i> - The contextual factors relate to both potential victims and potential perpetrators. The two major components of this element are environmental and individual psychosocial factors. • <i>Risk</i> - The risk element represents the likelihood of being a victim or an offender. The report suggests victimisation surveys provide the most comprehensive measure of the prevalence of FDV. • <i>Incident</i> - The incident element provides for the description of characteristics of incidents, victims and perpetrators.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Responses</i> – Responses are actions that may be taken following an incident of FDV and are classified as informal (eg; family or friends) or formal (eg; government services). • <i>Impacts/Outcomes</i> – This element includes the short, medium and long-term impacts and outcomes for victims, perpetrators, their children, family and friends and the community. These may affect a wide range of areas of wellbeing including population, family and community, physical and mental health, education, employment, economic resources, housing, crime and justice and culture and leisure. The paper recognises that the impacts and outcomes for a child that experiences or witnesses FDV may be very different to those of an adult. Exposure to FDV by young children may have serious implications for their cognitive, social and emotional development. • <i>Programs, research and evaluation</i> – This element encompasses the broader range of activities that can occur in relation to FDV to assist in understanding and intervention to reduce the prevalence of FDV in the future. The paper emphasises a strong research base to understanding the elements in this framework, to inform social policy responses and prevention of FDV and provide best practice support to victims and perpetrators. It is suggested that there has been limited evaluation of FDV-related programs in Australia, making it difficult to develop a good understanding of what works, what does not work, and why.
<p>National Youth Affairs Research Scheme http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/youth/programmes_funding/nyars</p>	<p><i>Young Carers: Their characteristics and geographical distribution</i></p> <p>Hill, T., Smyth, C., Thomson, C. and Cass, B., 2009</p>	<p>This report presents the findings of a study undertaken by the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) for the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) which comprised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a literature review of the known characteristics of young carers and strategies to identify hidden young carers • the development of a discussion paper and stakeholder consultation to determine strategies to identify and support young carers • an analysis of nationally representative data sets to identify the number and characteristics of young carers and trends over time, and • an analysis of the geographical distribution of young carers. <p><i>Definitions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the report defines young carers as a term used in Australia to describe children and young people who provide unpaid help, support or assistance to family members or friends with a disability, chronic illness, mental health, and drug or alcohol issues, and • the report defines potential young carers as those aged 12–14 years who lived with a person with disability or those aged 15–24 years who lived with a person with a disability and did not identify as a carer. <p><i>Report findings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a higher prevalence of caring was identified among young women, Indigenous communities and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities • a higher rate of potential caring was found among young people who were aged 15–19 years, Indigenous, of CALD backgrounds and young men • young carers are more likely to live in low-income households and have lower levels of participation in employment and education • a significant amount of care provided by children and young people may be hidden due to factors such as non-recognition of providing 'care', stigma, fear of unwanted intervention from services and lack of information and access to services, and • feedback from stakeholders supported specific interventions for young carers under the age of 8 years and a consistent definition of 'young carer'.

Source	Topic	Content
		<p><i>Report recommendations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase awareness of caring roles and identification as a carer among all young people • develop methods to disseminate age, culturally and geographically appropriate information • support schools and teachers to identify and help young carers to maintain their participation in education and to contact services • develop awareness among health professionals, social workers and service providers of young carers and the potential of whole-of-family approach • support young carers to participate in employment • develop culturally appropriate supports for specific groups of carers • develop strategies for identifying and supporting Indigenous young carers, and • develop consistency in definitions of young carers in policy and data collection.
<p>The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ireland)</p> <p>http://www.childabusecommission.ie/</p>	<p><i>Executive Summary</i></p> <p>2009</p>	<p>The Irish Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA) was established in 2000 with functions including the investigation of abuse of children in institutions in the State. The investigation relied upon people giving evidence. The CICA published its final report on 20 May 2009.</p> <p>Evidence was heard from over 1,000 witnesses who reported their childhood experiences of abuse in Irish institutions between 1914 and 2000. In most instances the reported abuse occurred while witnesses were in the care of the State. They reported being physically, sexually and emotionally abused and neglected by religious and lay adults who had responsibility for their care, and by others in the absence of adequate care and supervision.</p> <p><i>Report conclusions</i></p> <p>The report makes a number of conclusions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical and emotional abuse and neglect were features of the institutions • oppressive discipline imposed on children and staff • sexual abuse was endemic in boys' institutions, and while it existed in girls' institutions was not systemic • the system of inspection by the Department of Education was fundamentally flawed and incapable of being effective • complaints by parents and others made to the Department were not properly investigated • cases of sexual abuse were managed with a view to minimising the risk of public disclosure and consequent damage to the institution and the Congregation. This policy resulted in the protection of the perpetrator • poor standards of physical care were reported by most complainants, and • a disturbing element of the evidence before the Commission was the level of emotional abuse that disadvantaged, neglected and abandoned children were subjected to generally by religious and lay staff in institutions. <p><i>Report recommendations</i></p> <p>A number of recommendations were made which sought to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alleviate or otherwise address the effects of the abuse on those who suffered, and • prevent where possible and reduce the incidence of abuse of children in institutions and to protect

Source	Topic	Content
		<p>children from such abuse.</p> <p>These recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • counselling and educational services should be available • childcare policy should be child-centred. The needs of the child should be paramount • it is important that rules and regulations be enforced, breaches be reported and sanctions applied • a culture of respecting and implementing rules and regulations and of observing codes of conduct should be developed • independent inspections are essential. Requirements for a system of inspection include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a sufficient number of inspectors - inspectors must be independent - inspectors should talk with and listen to the children - objective national standards for inspection of all settings where children are placed - unannounced inspection should take place. - complaints to an inspector should be recorded and followed up - inspectors should have power to ensure that inadequate standards are addressed without delay, and • children who have been in childcare facilities are in a good position to identify failings and deficiencies in the system, and should be consulted.
<p>Crime and Misconduct Commission</p> <p>http://www.cmc.qld.gov.au/asp/index.asp?pgid=10743</p>	<p><i>Interactions between police and young people</i></p> <p>April, 2009</p>	<p>This paper presents the results of three separate but related studies and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an analysis of complaints against police made to the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) and the Queensland Police Service (QPS) by young people, and • the results of two school-based intervention programs designed to reduce injury and risk-taking by young people and improve young people's attitudes towards and perceptions of police. <p>Key points reported about the above studies include:</p> <p><i>Study one: CMC analysis of complaints against police by young people</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the majority of incidents that result in a complaint by a young person usually occur on the street, and involve a male who is in the company of one or more friends • allegations against police most commonly related to excessive force without a weapon or an officer's demeanour and attitude, and • many of the young people were engaged in illegal or risk-taking behaviour prior to their interaction with police and almost half of the young people were charged by police for an offence. <p><i>Study two: Preventing risk-taking behaviour and injury in youth</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the intervention is a school-based program designed and implemented by the Queensland University of Technology to reduce injuries and risk-taking behaviour by young people • the results indicate some preliminary support for the intervention program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at a three month follow up, 32% of young people considered to be high-risk takers moved to a lower risk classification following the intervention, and - at a six month follow up, students who did not receive the intervention program reported significantly higher risk-taking behaviour than those students in the intervention group whose risk-taking behaviour did not significantly increase. <p><i>Study three: Police-youth interaction study</i></p>

Source	Topic	Content
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this study involved a school-based program designed to improve young people's perceptions of police. The research examined relations between young people aged 13–14 years and police in Queensland, and • the results revealed that there was consistency among the majority of students who did and did not participate in the program with regard to their general attitudes towards police (positive or negative) and their overall image of police (positive or negative).
<p>Crime and Misconduct Commission</p> <p>http://www.cmc.qld.gov.au/asp/index.asp?pgid=10743</p>	<p><i>Public Perceptions of the Queensland Police Service: Findings from the 2008 Public Attitudes Survey</i></p> <p>April, 2009</p>	<p>In addition to presenting the most recent findings from the 2008 Public Attitudes Survey, this report provides information about trends over the last 17 years. The report also highlights areas where the police are performing well from the perspective of the general public.</p> <p><i>Report findings</i></p> <p>The key findings which specifically relate to younger respondents (generally aged between 18 and 24 years) include that younger respondents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are significantly more likely than older respondents to express negative views about the police • are less likely than older people to report having had a recent satisfactory experience with a police officer, and were more likely to report having had an unsatisfactory personal experience with police in the preceding 12 months, and • were significantly more likely to have been contacted by police. <p><i>Areas for improvement</i></p> <p>The report suggests that given the high rates of contact between young people and the police, young people's negative perceptions of, and experiences with, police continued attention should be given to improving these interactions.</p>
<p>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</p> <p>http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10772</p>	<p><i>Demand for SAAP accommodation by homeless people 2007-08</i></p> <p>28 May 2009</p>	<p>In 2007-08, SAAP funded 1,562 non-government, community and local government organisations to provide support and/or accommodation to people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. This report presents an overview of the demand for SAAP accommodation in during that period.</p> <p><i>Report findings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAAP agencies are operating to capacity with the demand for SAAP accommodation unable to be completely met • SAAP or Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) accommodation was able to be provided directly to clients and their accompanying children in the majority of cases (87% and 85%, respectively) • when accommodation could not be provided directly, clients were referred on to other organisations in 8% of cases and remained unmet in 5% of cases for clients and in 7% of cases for accompanying children • an estimated 385 people (consisting of 241 adults and unaccompanied children and 144 accompanying children) who required immediate accommodation were turned away on an average day • individuals without children are more likely to receive SAAP accommodation than other groups, with family groups experiencing particular difficulty obtaining accommodation • children accompanying an individual or individuals who were not a couple were more likely to be accommodated in SAAP than children accompanying a couple • children accompanying couples had requests for SAAP or CAP accommodation referred on in 11% of cases, with their requirement for accommodation remaining unmet in 17%; far higher than the 6% unmet for children accompanying individuals • family groups may find it harder to get into accommodation because once they are accommodated,

Source	Topic	Content
		<p>these groups, particularly couples with children, tend to stay longer and hence places for them become available less often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family agencies had by far the lowest proportion of direct provision (57%), the highest proportion of remaining unmet (26%), and the highest proportion of referrals (18%), further supporting the suggestion that family groups find it harder to obtain SAAP accommodation • on a state and territory basis, Queensland reported the largest proportion of valid unmet requests for accommodation (28%), followed by New South Wales (25%), and Victoria (19%). The Northern Territory reported the smallest (1%) • across the states and territories, the predominant reason why valid unmet requests for SAAP accommodation could not be met was because of a lack of accommodation, either because insufficient accommodation was available at the agency itself or because a referral agency was unable to refer the group on because they had no vacancies on their books, and • the numbers of unmet requests, people who made those requests, and people turned away, presented in the report are underestimates because only data from agencies that participated in both the Client Collection and the Demand for Accommodation Collection was used.
Events/Seminars		
<p>Early Intervention Unit Child and Youth Mental Health Service</p> <p>http://www.auseinet.com/ stateinfo/diary/index.php</p>	<p><i>Priority One - promotion, prevention, early intervention, from infancy to youth 2009 conference</i></p> <p>31 August 2009 to 1 September 2009, Logan Entertainment Centre</p>	<p>The conference aims to showcase the latest developments and activities in the area of child and youth Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention (MHPPEI) at the international, national and local level. There will also be art exhibitions, musical performances and dances. Key Note speakers include: Prof Graham Martin, Jennie Parham, Rita Prasad-Ildes, Dr. Toni Noble and Dr. Michael Daubney.</p>
Media Releases/Speeches		
<p>Premier and Minister for the Arts, The Honourable Anna Bligh</p> <p>Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women, The Honourable Karen Struthers</p> <p>http://www.cabinet.qld.go v.au/MMS/StatementDisp laySingle.aspx?id=64054</p>	<p>Media Release <i>Strategy to stamp out the scourge of domestic violence</i></p> <p>25 May 2009</p>	<p>The Queensland Government will establish an expert Death Review Panel comprised of both government and non-government members to identify gaps in services for victims of domestic and family violence and prevent further deaths in the future.</p> <p>The Department of Communities will also conduct a review of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act.</p>

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