

**Policy Environment Scan
October 2008**

Source	Topic	Content
Western Australian Minister for Training Media Release	<i>New training program will prepare Aboriginal students for employment</i>	A new training program will be introduced into Western Australian schools in 2009 to enable Aboriginal students to gain skills to secure meaningful careers. Training Minister Peter Collier announced the Aboriginal School Based Training Program, which will receive funding of \$11.5 million over 3 years. Mr Collier said the program would initially target students entering Year 10 in 2009 and is open to all Aboriginal students at public and private secondary schools around the State. Students will learn basic work readiness skills and will then be guided into a relevant apprenticeship or traineeship to meet their career goals.
Australian Policy Online	<i>Responding to young people disclosing sexual assault: A resource for schools</i> (Antonia Quadara published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies)	<p>This paper informs about young people's experiences of sexual assault including the barriers they face to disclosing such experiences and the process of disclosure for young people. Young people's experience of sexual violence and unwanted sexual behaviour includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual harassment; • sexualised bullying; • unwanted kissing and sexual touching; • sexual pressure and coercion; and • sexual assault, including rape. <p>Australian schools have made a significant commitment to reducing violence, including sexual assault, in schools and supporting students who have been victims of violence. This paper outlines principles for positive responses at 3 levels - the individual level, the leadership level and whole-of-school level.</p> <p>(http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/pubs/wrap/w6.html)</p>
Australian Policy Online	<i>Family relationships and mental illness: Impacts and service responses</i> (Elly Robinson, Bryan Rodgers & Peter Butterworth published by the Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse)	This paper gives an overview of mental health problems, including types and prevalence, causes of mental illness and importantly, discusses family-related risk and protective factors. It explores the impact of mental health problems on family relationships and discusses the role of carers and the relationship issues resulting from or contributing to the presence of a mental health problem. The effects of mental illness on families can be significant, and the quality of support and service delivery to families and affected family members is crucial. The paper discusses approaches to helping families deal with mental health problems.
Australian Policy Online	<i>Eye health among Australian children</i> (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare)	<p>This report is the second in a series of national reports providing an overview of eye health in Australia, following on from a report on eye hospitalisations. This report contains recent national information from a range of data sources.</p> <p>Some of the main findings in this report are given below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • along with allergies and asthma, eye disorders are the most common long-term health problems

		<p>experienced by children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are more than 411,000 cases of long-term eye disorders among children in Australia. Most of these are long and short sightedness. • about one in six 10–14 year olds wear glasses or contact lenses. • about 420,000 GP consultations per year deal with eye problems for children. 62% of these consultations are for conjunctivitis infections. • in addition to the 420,000 GP consultations, there were about 600,000 other eye related Medicare services provided to children in 2006–07. The vast majority of these were for optometric services. • there were nearly 9,000 hospitalisations for children with eye diseases and disorders in 2006–07. One-year-olds had the highest rate of these hospitalisations among children. • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have a similar rate of eye hospitalisations to other Australian children, although Indigenous girls have a significantly lower rate of hospitalisations for eye disorders. Infectious problems such as trachoma, as well as eye-related head injuries, are more common among Indigenous children.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership, Queensland Government via Australian Policy Online.	<i>Quarterly report on key indicators in Queensland's discrete Indigenous communities: April-June 2008</i>	<p>This report provides a summary of the progress being made to improve the quality of life for Indigenous Queenslanders living in discrete Aboriginal and mainland Torres Strait Islander communities. This report outlines the key outcomes of the various key Queensland policy and program reforms with the distinction between what has been already implemented and what is yet to be implemented. It includes an overview of the key indicators of community wellbeing, building on the previous January-March 2008 report (including indicators relating to child safety). An individual outcome report for all participating communities across Queensland for four key indicators is also provided.</p> <p>(http://www.atsip.qld.gov.au/partnerships/partnership-qld/documents/quarterly-report-apr-jun-08.pdf)</p>
Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth via Australian Policy Online	<i>Children's agency in communities</i> (Jarrah Hoffmann – Ekstein and Others)	<p>This paper considers the literature, policy and practice which explain and shape the Australian approach to supporting children living in disadvantaged communities. The paper finds that these theoretical, policy and practice frameworks seek to support and protect children in communities, but do not acknowledge or work with children's capacity to act in and shape their environments. The paper also considers the literature which explores children's agency, and examines the limited body of research which points to the benefits of adults engaging with children's agency. It then draws together key principles and suggested methods from the literature which can assist adults who wish to explore and engage with children's agency in communities.</p> <p>(http://www.aracy.org.au/AM/Common/pdf/3-07-22-2_SF3_Michaux-Paper-Childrens_agency_in_communities.pdf)</p>

Parliament of Australia, Bills of Current Parliament	<i>Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws—General Law Reform) Bill 2008</i>	<p>The purpose of this Bill is to eliminate discrimination against same-sex couples and the children of same-sex relationships in a wide range of Commonwealth laws. Amongst other things, this Bill seeks to extend the meaning of ‘de facto partner’, ‘child’ and ‘parent’ to include same-sex relationships. The Bill provides that someone will be considered to be a person’s child where the child is the product of a relationship (either opposite-sex or same-sex). To be a product of the relationship, the child must be either the biological child of at least one of the persons in the relationship or must be born to a woman in the relationship. The use of the term ‘product of the relationship’ is designed to encompass children who are the result of a same-sex couple deciding to have children by artificial conception using donated gametes for one or both of the genetic parents. It also caters for situations where the mother carries a child whose genetic material has been donated and does not come from the mother.</p> <p>The pre-existing definitions in various laws which incorporate adopted children and other categories of children will remain, with the changes aimed to incorporate children specifically born into same-sex relationships and children of all de facto relationships conceived through surrogacy arrangements. The definition of ‘child’ has been one of the most controversial aspects of this Bill.</p>
Parliament of Australia, Bills of Current Parliament	<i>Family Law Amendment (De Facto Financial Matters and Other Measures) Bill 2008</i>	<p>The Bill amends the <i>Family Law Act 1975</i> (Family Law Act) to provide de facto couples access to the federal family law courts on property and maintenance matters. The primary purpose of the Bill is to enable the federal family courts to deal with both financial and child-related matters arising for separated de facto couples in the one proceeding. As a result, the Bill aims to avoid the unnecessary additional costs and inconvenience on de facto couples, as well as reduce the administrative burden on the federal and state court systems. The Bill seeks to include a child of a de facto relationship within the definition contained in the Family Law Act. This Bill was passed by both houses on 11 November 2008.</p>

<p>Queensland Law Reform Commission</p>	<p>Shaping Queensland's Guardianship Legislation: Principles and Capacity</p>	<p>The Queensland Law Reform Commission's (QLRC's) review of the Guardianship and Administration Act 2000 (Qld) and the Powers of Attorney Act 1998 (Qld) has been conducted in two stages. The first stage looked at the confidentiality provisions of the legislation which was proposed in the Administration and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2008 (the Bill). The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian made a submission to the Department of Justice and Attorney – General in response to its request for feedback on the Bill in April 2008. The QLRC has released a discussion paper seeking a response in relation to the second stage of the review which involves a more general review of the legislation. The discussion paper deals exclusively with the threshold issues of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the General Principles and the Health Care Principle; and • the nature of decision-making capacity, and its assessment under the legislation.
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