

Children and Young People Policy Scan Issue 10, October 2010

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Consultation Opportunities

Queensland Strategy for Reducing Homelessness 2010-2020: Discussion Paper, Queensland Department of Communities (Housing and Homelessness Services), October 2010.

The Department of Communities (Housing and Homelessness Services) is seeking input into a ten year strategy to address homelessness in Queensland. The strategy will aim to provide policy directions and identify joint efforts needed from all spheres of government, communities, business groups and the not-for-profit sector.

The discussion paper and background paper can be accessed through Get Involved. Submissions are due by **13 December 2010**.

<http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/consultqld/index.cfm?go=consultonline.viewIssue&activityID=335>

Maximising Potential: Improving life transitions for young people in care, ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS), October 2010.

Feedback is being sought to improve the services provided by DHCS to young people transitioning from care into independent living.

Submissions are due on **30 November 2010**.

http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/ocyfs/transitioning_from_care

Inquiry into the Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People Bill 2010, Senate Community Affairs Committee, October 2010.

Feedback is being sought on the establishment of a national Children's Commissioner as proposed by the Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People Bill 2010.

Submissions are due on **28 February 2011**.

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/clac_ctte/cwealth_commissioner_young_people/info.htm

Reports, research papers, policy initiatives etc

Child Protection

Views of Children and Young People in Foster Care 2010, Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, September 2010.

The Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian has released the findings from its third biennial survey of children and young people in foster care in Queensland. This repeated cross-sectional longitudinal study not only captures the views and experiences of children and young people in foster care it also monitors changes in these views over time. Since the first survey was conducted in 2006 more than 9000 surveys have been completed.

The surveys, administered by the Commission's Community Visitors (CVs), generate a rich mixture of quantitative and qualitative data on children's and young people's perceptions of their health and wellbeing, education, current placement and carers, having a say in decision making, contact with family and community, satisfaction with Child

Safety Officers (CSOs), and leaving care.

Analyses of responses from 1949 children and young people who participated in the most recent survey reveal a high degree of satisfaction with placements and carers. Consistent with previous years, nearly all reported feeling safe and feel that they are listened to by their carers. The vast majority also indicated that they are happy and feel loved and cared for. Satisfaction with support from CSOs has improved significantly since the last survey with many more children and young people reporting to be happy with the frequency and nature of contact they have with their CSO. Significant increases are also evident in the proportions of children and young people reporting to have health passports and education support plans while the proportion of young people reporting to have a case plan has also increased.

However, the data also point to ongoing challenges for the child protection system to provide necessary support to children and young people. For instance, a considerable number of respondents report having unmet health and educational needs while less than one in four above the age of 16 reported having a leaving care plan. Interestingly, more than half of this group expressed a preference for staying with their foster care family once they turn 18. Stability remains a critical issue with many reporting multiple placement and school changes. Despite feeling happy in their placement, around one in five young people indicated that they are worried that they will have to change placements in the coming months.

Increasingly, findings from the Views research are being used to inform policy and practice among stakeholders in the Queensland child protection and youth justice systems. The research also demonstrates to individual children and young people that they have an important voice in shaping the future directions and priorities within these systems.

<http://www.cycpcg.qld.gov.au/resources/publications/ViewsChildrenYoungPeopleinFosterCare10.html>

Growing them Strong, Together: Promoting the safety and wellbeing of the Northern Territory's children, Report of the

Board of Inquiry into the Child Protection System in the Northern Territory, M. Bamblett, H. Bath and R. Roseby, Northern Territory Government, October 2010.

The purpose of the Inquiry was to review the child protection system in the Northern Territory and make recommendations to substantially strengthen and improve the system to ensure it meets the needs of Northern Territory children. The Inquiry conducted numerous public forums throughout the Territory, visited 16 Aboriginal communities, heard from the representatives of many more remote communities, received 156 written and 80 oral submissions and held many other consultations with individuals and organisations.

Over 77 percent of all children notified to child protection are Aboriginal, along with 74 percent of children in out-of-home care, therefore, there is a strong emphasis throughout the Report on responses to the needs of Aboriginal children and their families.

The report, contains 147 recommendations aimed at improving systems, programs and processes. There are three clusters of recommendations that focus on key areas of reform:

- The first group focuses on the functioning of the current statutory child protection system. The Report found that the system is overburdened by an enormous and chronic backlog of investigations and case work, and staff in child protection and out of home care are overwhelmed with the demand. It calls for the Northern Territory Government to immediately move to address the significant staffing shortages and unrealistic caseloads being carried, along with problems around training, support and supervision that have been identified.
- The second group calls for the adoption of a population or a public health approach with a greater focus on working with families to prevent the need for statutory intervention as well as a significant new investment in supporting and working with families so children can be returned to safe, nurturing family environments.
- The third group of recommendations covers better child protection decision-making and referral services, a greater role for non-government agencies, better collaboration between agencies and alternative pathways for referrals.

http://www.childprotectioninquiry.nt.gov.au/report_of_the_board_of_inquiry

“She will do anything to make sure she keeps the girls”: Inquiry into the circumstances of a 12 year old child under the Guardianship of the Secretary, Commissioner for Children, Tasmania, July 2010.

In February 2010 an internal review was conducted into a child prostitution case involving a young girl who was subject to a care and protection order. One of the recommendations of that review was that an external review of the case be conducted. The external review was conducted by the Commissioner for Children. A version of the review report, edited to ensure the anonymity of the subject child, is now publically available. The report makes 45 recommendations including that:

- the Tasmanian Government commence negotiations with the Commonwealth Government around income management for families where child neglect is present
- the Court takes more active responsibility for decisions it makes and be given greater discretion to transfer guardianship for any period of time it deems necessary to protect the wellbeing and safety of a child
- changes be made to decision making within the department including the introduction of measures to combat “group think” and to include better evidence of families’ internal dynamics
- the State take on the role of a “Model Parent” in dealing with children in care
- the Minister consider expanding the Commissioner for Children’s powers
- the government consider reform to laws regarding prostitution and child prostitution, and
- a Commissioner of Inquiry be appointed to consider the Crown’s decisions around the prosecution or otherwise of persons suspected of having had intercourse or indecent dealings with the subject child.

Tasmanian Government response to recommendations in the Commissioner for Children’s report on his inquiry into the circumstances of a 12 year old child under guardianship of the Secretary, Tasmanian Government, October 2010.

This report outlines the government’s response to each of the recommendations made in the Commissioner for Children’s report. Of the 45 recommendations 15 were accepted, 19 were accepted with qualifications and 11 were not accepted. Brief rationales for non-acceptance are also provided.

Both the report and the Government’s response to the report can be accessed at:

http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/news_and_media/report_on_case_of_12-year-old_under_guardianship

Family Matters No. 85, 2010 Violence, abuse and neglect, Australian Institute of Family Studies, October 2010.

This issue of the Australian Institute of Family Studies’ (AIFS) research journal, *Family Matters*, focuses on violence, abuse and neglect. The issue features a number of relevant, peer reviewed articles including:

- Family is for life: Connections between childhood family experiences and wellbeing in early adulthood (R. Price-Robertson, D. Smart and L. Bromfield)
- Who cares? Young people with parents who use alcohol or other drugs talk about their experiences with services (T. Moore, D. Noble-Carr and M. McArthur)
- “What is the justice system willing to offer?” Understanding sexual assault victim/survivors’ criminal justice needs (H. Clark)
- Family violence: Key findings from the Evaluation of the 2006 Family Law Reforms (R. Kaspiew, M. Gray, R. Weston, L. Moloney, K. Hand, L. Qu and the Family Law Evaluation Team)
- Developmentally sensitive parental contact for infants when families are separated (C. Humphreys and M. Kiraly)
- Kinship care: A review of issues (H. Boetto)

Abstracts of articles can be accessed from the AIFS website. Hardcopy and online full-text of the journal can also be ordered through AIFS.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/fm2010/fm85.html>

History of Child Protection Services, A. Lamont and L. Bromfield, National Child Protection Clearinghouse, October 2010.

This resource sheet traces the rise of the state's role in the protection of children beginning in the 19th century with philanthropic and charitable endeavours aimed at responding to instances of cruelty to children, through to the modern era of risk assessment and the public health model. The resource sheet includes information about developments originating in other jurisdictions, however, it has a distinctly Australian focus with references to key milestones and developments in jurisdictions across Australia.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs22/index.html>

“Help Break Down the Wall” Community Attitudes Survey, R. Donovan, L. Wood, G. Jalleh and P. Ivery, NAPCAN, June 2010.

This report, funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, presents the findings of a large online survey of attitudes towards child abuse and neglect during child protection week. It should be noted, however, that the survey “was conceived as a way of allowing concerned people a means of expressing that concern during National Child Protection Week” and as such, the sample, although large (with 21,050 responses), is not representative of the community at large. The report states explicitly that the survey was “never intended to be a survey of the general population’s feelings about child protection”, noting that results reflect the sentiments of concerned people only. Notably, 80% of respondents were female and 60% had university level qualifications.

Results of the survey include that:

- the vast majority of respondents considered child abuse and neglect to be a serious problem
- just under half of respondents thought the problem of child abuse and neglect was not given sufficient recognition from the general community
- parents, extended family, schools and child protection authorities were considered mainly responsible for child wellbeing and safety, and
- businesses, the media and neighbours were considered to have the least responsibility for child wellbeing and safety, although the majority of respondents considered all three to be at least partly responsible.

<http://www.preventingchildabuse.com.au/view-survey-results.html>

Evaluation of the Child Protection Scheme of Income Management and Voluntary Income Management Measures in Western Australia, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, September 2010.

This report presents the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs’ (FaHCSIA) evaluation of two income management schemes in place in the Kimberly region and Perth metropolitan area since November 2008. Under the Child Protection Scheme of Income Management (CPSIM), the West Australian Department for Child Protection (DCP) is able to request that Centrelink manage a percentage of a person’s support payments where mismanagement of finances is considered to be contributing to the neglect of a child. Under Voluntary Income Management (VIM), recipients of Centrelink payments are able to request that a portion of their payments be managed. Under both schemes, managed income cannot be spent on particular prescribed products (including alcohol, tobacco, pornography and gambling). Participants in both schemes were offered free non-compulsory Financial Management Support Services (FMSS) to improve financial management skills. The schemes aim to provide short-term benefits for children by increasing resources directed towards their immediate needs. Long-term benefits of improved financial awareness and management are also sought.

The evaluation draws on administrative data from Centrelink and DCP, client surveys conducted with CPSIM and VIM participants as well as a non-participant reference group, surveys of staff and other stakeholders (including Centrelink staff, DCP staff, financial counsellors and welfare groups), and focus groups with community leaders.

The findings of the evaluation were generally positive. Key findings included:

- the majority of participants believed income management had improved their lives
- two thirds of CPSIM clients have or plan to recommend income management to someone else, while over 80% of VIM clients have or plan to recommend income management
- during income management, clients were less likely to report being unable to pay for something essential

- clients whose income was managed showed greater improvements in the amount of food, fresh food and personal clothing compared to the reference group
- some concerns were expressed that clients of the schemes may become dependant on the system and be unable to manage their finances in the future without income managements.
- the referral and take-up rates of the FMSS were found to be low and there was some confusion amongst participants about the non-compulsory nature of these services, and
- findings about the implementation of the schemes are also reported.

http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/families/pubs/cpsim_vim_wa/Pages/default.aspx

Are social marketing campaigns effective in preventing child abuse and neglect? B. Horsfall, L. Bromfield and M. McDonald, Australian Institute of Family Studies, October 2010.

This paper presents the results of a systematic review of literature about social marketing campaigns related to the prevention of child abuse and neglect, and to parenting problems. It aims to identify the characteristics of campaigns in this area and the evidence regarding their effectiveness.

Thirty-six international publications were identified about child maltreatment campaigns, which related to 21 distinct social marketing campaigns implemented between 1995 and 2009.

Of the 21 campaigns identified, 15 had some form of evaluation but only 12 had reported evidence of impact and/or outcome evaluations. Australian social marketing campaigns were less likely to have published evidence from impact and/or outcome evaluation.

The authors report that while some social marketing campaigns can improve attitudes about child maltreatment and have the potential to have a positive impact on people's knowledge of child maltreatment and behaviours, it is possible for a social marketing campaign to have no impact or even a negative impact if the content is presented in a way that does not resonate with the target audience.

The authors state that there is relatively little evidence regarding the effectiveness of social marketing campaigns in preventing or reducing child maltreatment. In addition, social marketing campaigns alone are unlikely to bring about a reduction in the actual prevalence of child maltreatment. An intensive program that incorporates a media campaign and a range of other activities and that is implemented over an extended period of time, however, may lead to a reduction in the actual prevalence of child maltreatment.

Based on the strengths and limitations of the identified campaigns, six key areas emerged for optimising future social marketing campaigns that aim to address child maltreatment in Australia. These are:

- a comprehensive evaluation
- pairing mass media with a community-level strategy
- issues relating to reliance on television advertising
- aligning campaigns with support services
- assessing the needs of the target audience, and
- using a suitable theoretical framework.

The report concludes that future Australian social marketing campaigns that aim to address child maltreatment need to be empirically informed, designed with a theoretical foundation, be rigorously evaluated and embedded in a wider community strategy for the benefits of child abuse prevention and effectual interventions to be achieved.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/issues/issues32/index.html>

Youth Justice

Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001 Investigation into conditions at the Melbourne Youth Justice Precinct, Ombudsman Victoria, October 2010.

This report details the findings of an investigation by the Victorian Ombudsman into conditions in the Melbourne Youth Justice Precinct. The Victorian Department of Human Services (the department) is responsible for the management of the Precinct, which contains all three of Victoria's custodial facilities for children. The investigation was prompted by allegations of staff misconduct and general mismanagement of the facilities within the Precinct, which the Victorian Ombudsman determined to be a public interest disclosure pursuant to the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001*.

The Ombudsman's investigation into the Precinct included interviews with current and former staff, a review of incident reports and related documents, a review of previous complaints received by the Ombudsman, a review of staff emails, and site visits to the facilities within the Precinct. Based on its investigation, the Ombudsman has concluded that the living conditions for young people in the precinct are "unacceptable" and "disgraceful". Some of the notable findings from the investigation are that:

- The facilities within the Precinct have design flaws, unhygienic living conditions and a level of overcrowding that places young people at risk of harm and makes the Precinct an unsuitable environment for juveniles. Moreover, many of these problems are of a structural nature that are beyond remedy through regular maintenance and repair.
- Several staff have alleged that their colleagues have encouraged or ignored physical fights between detainees, have provided contraband to detainees, have provided inadequate supervision for young people during night shifts, and have fraudulently claimed expenses and/or stolen goods from storage facilities.
- The department has failed to take appropriate action in response to allegations of misconduct by staff at the Precinct. Moreover, the Precinct lacks appropriate mechanism to investigate and monitor staff misconduct.
- The Precinct lacks appropriate external oversight and scrutiny, including having no official visitor program for young people residing in the Precinct's facilities.
- More than one third of the Precinct's staff who are legally required to have a working with children check to work at the Precinct do not have a working with children check documented on their personnel file.
- The Precinct is struggling to adequately meet the needs of children who are seriously mental ill, suicidal and/or self-harming.

The Ombudsman has made 27 recommendations to the department in its report. These include:

- Reviewing the suitability of the Precinct, with a view to replacing it with a new facility.
- Reviewing policies and practices to ensure living conditions comply with human rights principles.
- Installing Closed Circuit Television in all common areas of units throughout the Precinct, program areas and recreational areas as a priority.
- Reviewing the processes used to investigate allegations or suspicions of staff misconduct.
- Reporting to the Ombudsman any staff who are working without an approved or current Working with Children Check and advise of the department's remedial action.

http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/resources/documents/Investigation_into_conditions_at_the_Melbourne_Youth_Justice_Precinct_Oct_20101.pdf

Views: Life inside Ashley Youth Detention Centre, Commissioner for Children, Tasmania, October 2010.

The Commissioner for Children, Tasmania has collated and presented in a short, young person-friendly booklet the views of the residents of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Views are expressed in short responses to questions, poetry and artwork and cover a range of topics including what's good about detention (for example, the best thing about detention, how detention may have helped young people and what young people hope to learn while in detention) as well as the difficulties (including the worst thing about detention, what young people miss and experiences of not being listened to).

The booklet is inspired by Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provides that children be allowed to express their views freely in matters affecting them.

<http://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au/news-events/posts/view/1081/Ashley+Views+Book+-+Views+of+Young+People+in+Ashley+Youth+Detention+Centre/>

Preventing youth violence: What does and doesn't work and why?: An overview of the evidence on approaches and programs, S. A. Hemphill and R. Smith, Centre for Adolescent Health, Department of Paediatrics, University of Melbourne, for Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), October 2010.

This report explores the issue of youth violence and examines existing evidence about the effectiveness of various prevention programs. In line with ARACY's preference for approaching complex problems through prevention and early intervention, developmental pathways models and considering multiple influences, the authors focus their analysis on children aged 10-14 years, which they believe is "before violent and antisocial behaviour have become entrenched in young people's lives". The report outlines a wide variety of "risk factors" and "protective factors" that are argued to contribute to and detract from the problem of youth violence at an individual, family, school and community level.

The authors list a number of prevention programs they consider to be effective, promising, requiring more research or ineffective. Links with full details of the original evaluations are provided where available.

http://www.aracy.org.au/publicationDocuments/Preventing_Youth_Violence_final.pdf

Don't Go There: Young people's perspectives on community safety and policing, M. Grossman, J. Sharples, Victoria University and Victoria Police, Region 2 (Westgate), May 2010.

This paper investigates young people's perspectives of community safety and police interaction on these issues.

The project surveyed 500 young people between the ages of 15-19 years in the Brimbank area of Victoria. A further fifty-eight young people, of whom forty-four were of Sudanese and Pacific Islander backgrounds, participated in focus group discussions which considered strategies for improving youth-police consultation.

The key findings were:

- Defining safety
 - Safety for participants was seen as the absence of anxiety, not feeling that they were in danger, and not needing to be vigilant about security.
- Gangs
 - Three-quarters of participants thought that there were gangs operating in their local area
 - A third reported having encounters with gangs with young men being twice as likely to have had a run in with a gang than young women
 - 50% reported having some fear of gangs while 20% said they were very scared of gangs
- Violent crime
 - One-fifth of participants reported having been the victim of a violent crime in public, with twice as many reports of being a victim from young men compared to young women.
- Weapons

- 50% of participants knew of other young people who regularly carried weapons such as poles, bats, knives and guns
- Participants who reported being a victim of a crime were more likely to admit that they carried a weapon
- Young people thought that the main reasons for carrying weapons were to feel safe, for self-defence and protection
- Public conflicts
 - The main reasons given by young people for public conflicts were acting tough, looking for a fight, relationship issues, racism, not wanting to back down, being cool or seeking reputation, and using physical aggression to resolve conflict
- Staying safe in public
 - Participants felt that the best way to keep safe in public was going out in groups, not getting involved with bad company or fights and avoiding places where violent people or groups hang out.
- Young people and relationships with police
 - Half of participants reported that they trusted or completely trusted police, a quarter weren't sure and the remaining quarter reported a lack of trust
 - Over half reported feeling safer when they saw police on the streets
 - Participants felt that relationships with police could be improved if police increased their communication, friendliness and approachability and were more polite and respectful to young people
 - Participants felt that police could make them feel safer if they had greater visibility, better response time, use their power of enforcement and listened to what young people had to say
- Improving community safety
 - Young people felt that community safety could be improved if there were more police on the streets, greater reporting of crime by young people, more security cameras and guards, and the police and community members worked collaboratively.

<http://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/mcd/pdfs/dont-go-there-study-may-2010.pdf>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

School attendance and retention of Indigenous Australian students, Issues Paper 1, N. Purdie and S. Buckley, Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, September 2010.

This issues paper examines school attendance and retention of Indigenous students and strategies for improvement.

A combination of home, school and individual factors are involved in students' absence from school, although the relative importance of the various causes is contested. The paper highlights that available data on attendance and retention are limited and outlines some reasons why. The evidence available on retention rates for Year 7/8 to Year 12 Indigenous students shows improvements over the last 10 years, from 35% in 1999 to 45% in 2009. The data also show that the gap in school attendance and retention between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is large, for example the retention rate from Year 7/8 to year 12 in 2009 was 45% for Indigenous students compared with 77% for non-Indigenous students.

The paper provides information on the different approaches that have been used to improve attendance and/or retention. However, a review of the literature that evaluated which programs work found that there were very few high-quality evaluations that had been conducted in this area and therefore a lack of strong evidence about which strategies work.

http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/documents/issues_papers/ihw/33/12176.pdf

The Early Years

An Integrated Approach to Early Childhood Development, T. Moore and A. Skinner, Centre for Community Child Health for The Benevolent Society, September 2010.

This background paper includes: a synthesis of evidence regarding societal change and its impact on children, families and communities; the response of governments to these changes; and what is known about effective services, service systems and government policies. The paper also includes a review of evidence regarding integrated service delivery, service systems and policies, and an analysis of current opportunities in NSW and Queensland for greater service integration. The authors suggest that a reconfiguration of the early childhood support system is necessary to keep pace with social changes. Specifically, a more integrated system would contribute to better outcomes by improving access to services and helping to identify problems earlier.

Four levels of integration are discussed:

- government/policy integration
- regional and local planning integration
- service delivery integration, and
- teamwork integration.

The paper draws on experiences from both international and local initiatives.

http://www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ccch/TM_BenSoc_Project_09.pdf

Education

Working together: Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence Report October 2010, Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence, October 2010.

The Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV) Report provides recommendations and a summary of information and advice about how best to respond to bullying and violence in Queensland schools. Professor Ian O'Connor, Vice Chancellor of Griffith University, was the chair of this cross sector body. The Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Elizabeth Fraser, was a member of QSAAV and lead the student consultation on behalf of QSAAV.

All eight QSAAV recommendations have been accepted by the Minister for Education and Training, including those that recognise the importance of giving students a voice. The report recommendations were to:

- urge Queensland schools to adopt a cyber-safety strategy
- promote and maintain existing resources and develop new resources
- commission an external review within 18 months to assess schools progress in implementing the work of QSAAV
- engage an anti-bullying expert to provide ongoing advice
- develop a promotional campaign to improve students' and parents' awareness of bullying and cyber-bullying
- endorse ongoing collaboration between stakeholders through annual meetings
- develop a strategy to communicate with students about bullying and violence, including the use of social media, and
- raise a number of issues at a national level including:
 - development of nationally recognised professional development for school staff on bullying, cyber-safety and violence
 - a process for evaluating anti-bullying and anti-violence programs in schools, and
 - a mechanism to continue to identify high quality research to help schools implement evidence-based practice.

The report also details the basis of QSAAV's recommendations and other actions of QSAAV including the *Action Against Bullying* Education series, the *Working Together* suite of resources, student consultations, and initiatives in cyber-safety and cyber-bullying.

The report and the resources developed for parents and schools are available through the Department of Education and Training's website.

Resources for parents include:

- Working Together: A toolkit for parents to address bullying
- A series of webisodes presented by Dr Michael Carr-Greg entitled Six Quick Tips for Parents about Bullying, and
- Vodcasts of the Action Against Bullying Education Series

Resources aimed at schools include:

- Toolkits for schools to for school based action on bullying and for creating a Community Alliance Against Violence and Bullying
- Working Together: Understanding student violence in schools, and
- Working Together: Good practice in Queensland schools - Case studies of effective school based *action against bullying*.

<http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qaav/index.html>

Children's Rights

Position Statement – Physical Punishment of Children in the Home, Commissioner for Children, Tasmania, September 2010.

The Tasmanian Commissioner for Children identifies in this statement his opposition to the use of corporal punishment on children. The Commissioner frames the issue as one of child rights rather than whether or not parents should have a right to discipline their children with physical force. In addition, the position statement makes the argument that corporal punishment is ineffective as a form of behaviour management.

The Commissioner argues for law reform to remove the defence of parental chastisement to allow laws relating to assault to operate between parents and children as they do between other citizens. The position also calls for simultaneous action to educate parents and the community more broadly to complement any changes to the law.

http://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au/uploads/file/Tasmania_CfC_Position_Statement_Physical_Punishment_FINAL.pdf

Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Report of the Secretary-General, United Nations General Assembly, August 2010.

The Secretary-General's Report on the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child has a specific focus on implementing child Rights in early childhood.

The report focuses on promoting respect for the rights of the young child in national policies and programmes and in everyday settings, including ensuring protection from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation and ensuring that the young child has the right to be heard within families, in childcare, health and education services, in legal proceedings and in the development of policies and programmes. It encourages States to implement a number of recommendations, including:

- a) establish a framework of laws, policies and programmes ensuring that the rights of the child are implemented within a continuum of care (maternal, newborn, child health), education and protection throughout the early years of life
- b) promote comprehensive community-based strategies that are cross-sectoral in their scope and organisation
- c) implement pro-equity strategies for early childhood
- d) strengthen awareness and recognition of rights in early childhood
- e) in collaboration with United Nations agencies, establish a global alliance to advocate for the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols in early childhood, to leverage resources and to monitor progress towards the fulfilment of every young child's rights throughout early childhood.

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a%2F65%2F206&Lang=E

Health and Wellbeing

Snapshot 2010: Children and Young People in Queensland, Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, October 2010.

The *Snapshot 2010* statistical report, the eighth in the series, is a collation of relevant information on the key domains of health and wellbeing, and the key issues affecting children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable in our society.

Snapshot continues to evolve through the inclusion of emergent issues where new data collections become available. The specific chapters featured in Snapshot 2010 are: key statistics; age cohorts; population; family; health; lifestyle and social issues; deaths; child protection; early childhood education and care; education; crime and justice; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing.

<http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/resources/publications/snapShot/snapShot10.html>

Unemployment and the wellbeing of children aged 5 to 10 years, M. Taylor, B. Edwards and M. Gray, Australian Institute of Family Studies for The Benevolent Society, October 2010.

This report, prepared by the Australian Institute of Family Studies for the Benevolent Society aims to estimate the potential impact of an increase in unemployment rates on children's behavioural and emotional outcomes in New South Wales. Data from the three waves of the *Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* (combined with Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 Census data for Statistical Local Areas (SLA)) were used to estimate the association between living in a jobless family on the likelihood of children 4–5 years and 8–9 years experiencing a range of behavioural and emotional problems.

The specific aim of the report was to estimate the number of additional children who experience behavioural or emotional problems in each SLA during a recession, which appeared inevitable due to the global financial crisis at the time the report was prepared.

Results showed that living in a jobless family is associated with an increased probability that a child has clinically significant behavioural or emotional problems across five measures of childhood wellbeing:

- Behavioural/emotional problems – +13.0%
- Conduct problems – +13.4%
- Peer problems – +7.6%
- Emotional symptoms – +7.5%
- Hyperactivity – +7.2%

In addition, increased unemployment was estimated to affect several thousand children aged 5–10 years across New South Wales who would develop clinically significant behaviour or emotional problems.

The report also investigated geographic distribution across NSW, identifying areas likely to experience the greatest increase in at-risk children.

<http://www.bensoc.org.au/uploads/documents/AIFS-report-unemployment-and-the-wellbeing-of-children-aged-5-to-10-yrs.pdf>

Children and Young People's Views on Wellbeing, Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia, June 2010.

This study, conducted for the Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People, explores what children and young people think is most important in determining their wellbeing. An online survey of 582 children and young people aged between 10 and 17 was conducted alongside a range of qualitative data collection methods including focus groups, artwork and story telling sessions, an interactive forum and a photographic activity. In all, 959 children and young people aged between 5 and 18 participated. Respondents were drawn from the Perth metropolitan area (67%) as well as regional and remote areas (33%) and included Indigenous children and young people (10%), children and young people with a disability (6%) and children and young people living in foster care (4%).

The study found that children and young people consider the most important contributors to their wellbeing to be:

- a loving, supportive family
- good friends,
- fun and activity
- being safe
- a good education
- the basics (such as food, clothing, shelter and enough money to live)
- acknowledgement, and
- freedom and independence.

Within these broad categories, children and young people identified a range of issues that facilitated or acted as barriers to achieving these things.

<http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/content.aspx?cid=326>

Resources

Are disadvantaged families “hard to reach”?: Engaging disadvantaged families in child and family services, M. McDonald, Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia, September 2010.

This practice paper draws on research, particularly the *Engaging Hard to Reach Families and Children Study*, to present practical ideas for policy makers and practitioners to engage disadvantaged families, who are often considered hard to reach.

The paper provides suggestions about locating and delivering services in existing environments, promoting services in a way that is non-stigmatising, employing strategies that empower families and building relationships at the family and community level as well as with other service providers.

The paper also includes a short case study of a successful program and provides a variety of references to obtain further information.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/pubs/sheets/ps/ps1.html>

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

Student Consultation Report: Students’ views about bullying

On behalf of the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV) the Commission conducted a series of focus group discussions with a sample of Year 6 and Year 9 students from several Queensland schools to hear their views about bullying in schools. Discussion focused on how bullying is defined, what actions a school anti-bullying policy might include and how students would like to be consulted in regards to policy development and implementation. The consultation process helped to test, and further inform, the anti-bullying materials developed by QSAAV and provided strong confirmation that students want to be involved when schools develop and implement anti-bullying policy at the local level.

The Student Consultation report and QSAAV's anti-bullying materials can also be found on the Department of Education and Training's website.

http://education.qld.gov.au/student-services/behaviour/qsaaav/school-resource.html#consultation_report

Events and Conferences

Queensland Youth Affairs Conference 2011, Brisbane, 20 – 21 July 2011

After a break since 2005, the Youth Affairs Network Queensland has announced the return of its conference program. The next to be held is in mid-2011. The conference is an opportunity for members of the youth sector for networking, professional development, skills development and collective advocacy.

http://www.yanq.org.au/images/stories/Documents/conference_2011_nn_article_1.doc