

## Call for Response (i.e Submission, Discussion Paper, Consultation Paper, Review, Inquiry)

### **Inquiry into Suicide in Australia** *Referred on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2009*

The Senate has referred the following matter to the Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry:

The impact of suicide on the Australian community including high risk groups such as Indigenous youth and rural communities, with particular reference to:

- a. the personal, social and financial costs of suicide in Australia;
- b. the accuracy of suicide reporting in Australia, factors that may impede accurate identification and recording of possible suicides, (and the consequences of any under-reporting on understanding risk factors and providing services to those at risk);
- c. the appropriate role and effectiveness of agencies, such as police, emergency departments, law enforcement and general health services in assisting people at risk of suicide;
- d. the effectiveness, to date, of public awareness programs and their relative success in providing information, encouraging help-seeking and enhancing public discussion of suicide;
- e. the efficacy of suicide prevention training and support for front-line health and community workers providing services to people at risk;
- f. the role of targeted programs and services that address the particular circumstances of high-risk groups;
- g. the adequacy of the current program of research into suicide and suicide prevention, and the manner in which findings are disseminated to practitioners and incorporated into government policy; and
- h. the effectiveness of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy in achieving its aims and objectives, and any barriers to its progress.

**Submissions are due by 20 November 2009.**

Parliament of Australia Senate [http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac\\_ctte/suicide/tor.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/suicide/tor.htm)

### **Reducing Youth Suicide in Queensland: Discussion Paper**

Youth suicide is a key concern in Queensland. The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian has found that on average, 16 children and young people suicide each year in Queensland – a rate which is almost twice the national average.

The Commission is seeking feedback on its *Reducing Youth Suicide in Queensland (RYSQ) Discussion Paper*. Results from the consultation will help better target future efforts to prevent youth suicide in Queensland.

**Submissions are due by 30 November 2009.**

Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian <http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/monitoring/rysq.html>

### **Keeping Country Kids Safe**

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian has identified that children in rural areas of Queensland are more than twice as likely to die as a result of non-intentional injury than those in metropolitan areas, with many fatalities occurring as a result of hazards specific to rural environments, such as dams, tractors, quadbikes, machinery and livestock.

In response to this issue, the Commission has undertaken a detailed review of the 253 child deaths from non-intentional injury in regional and remote areas of Queensland between 1 January 2004 and 31 December 2008. Key findings of the Keeping Country Kids Safe initiative include:

- children riding motorcycles/quadbikes that are too large for their size and strength, and riding without helmets or safety equipment
- parents taking children as passengers on tractors, quadbikes and other mobile machinery not usually equipped for passengers
- children under the age of 5 years left unsupervised for long periods of time, including when a drowning hazard such as a dam was close by, and
- over-estimation of a child's ability to look after themselves or to complete a particular task.

The Commission has commenced an extensive consultation campaign, seeking the views of rural community members, government agencies, peak bodies, locally based non-government organisations and rural industry. Information is sought regarding practical ways government and non-government organisations can help to promote a positive safety culture, as well as information regarding policies and prevention programs.

**Submissions are due by 16 October 2009.**

<http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/monitoring/kcks.html>

### **Primary Schools for the Twenty First Century** *9 September 2009*

The Senate has referred the following matters to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee for inquiry and report:

(a) consideration of the Federal Government's Primary Schools for the 21st Century program, with particular reference to:

- (i) the conditions and criteria for project funding,
- (ii) the use of local and non-local contractors,
- (iii) the role of state governments,
- (iv) timing and budget issues, including duplication,
- (v) requirements for school signs and plaques,
- (vi) the management of the program; and

(b) other related matters.

**Submissions are due by 30 October 2009.**

Parliament of Australia Senate [http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eet\\_ctte/primary\\_schools/info.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eet_ctte/primary_schools/info.htm)

### **Review of voting age** *23 September 2009*

This Green Paper, looking at how the electoral system might be changed to be in line or 'online' with the 21st Century, has been released for comment by the Australian Government.

It floats new ideas including giving teenagers as young as 16 the right to vote. The Australian Greens support lowering the voting age and would like to see 16 and 17-year-olds offered a non-compulsory vote to allow individuals to choose. Very few countries allow people under 18-years of age to vote, however it is permitted in East Timor, Brazil, Cuba, Nicaragua and Iran.

**Submissions are due by 27 November 2009.**

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet [http://www.pmc.gov.au/consultation/elect\\_reform/index.cfm](http://www.pmc.gov.au/consultation/elect_reform/index.cfm)

### **CALL: Child participation in government**

UNICEF is currently conducting research in order to identify examples of children and adolescents interacting directly with parliamentarians. The research will ultimately inform a guidebook on child and adolescent participation within parliamentary processes that will be presented to parliamentarians and other stakeholders across the globe in efforts to enhance participation within these processes.

Examples of children interacting directly with parliamentarians can be emailed to David Ponet at [dponet@UNICEF.org](mailto:dponet@UNICEF.org) who is compiling data for the guidebook. Examples could include children's parliaments, child participation within parliamentary or congressional hearings, informal consultations between children and parliamentarians at the national or district level, or other instances where interaction has had an impact on budgets, lawmaking, or the direction of policy and planning.

**Submissions are due by mid October**

**Reports, research papers, policy initiatives etc**

**CHILD SAFETY**

***Who's chatting to your kids? September 2009***

Queensland Police have released a DVD featuring interviews with sex offenders and victims, in an effort to warn parents about the dangers of leaving children unsupervised on the internet.

The DVD aims to prevent child abuse and neglect at the hands of child sex offenders who prowl on internet chat sites.

Queensland Police Service <http://www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/personalSafety/childProtection/default.htm>

### ***A stitch in time saves nine: Preventing and responding to the abuse and neglect of infants***

*Jordan, B. & Sketchley, R. Australian Institute of Family Studies, September 2009*

The focus of this paper is child abuse and neglect in infants aged 0-3 years, who are identified as one of the primary client groups of child protection services. The authors cite AIHW data which show that in 2007-08, 44.7% of all verified cases of child abuse and neglect and 42% of all children admitted into care involved an infant aged 0-4 years. Infants' physical fragility and almost total dependence on others to meet their needs means that they are also the group most vulnerable to fatal abuse.

Owing to their particular vulnerabilities, infants require an immediate response to child protection reports or notifications. The authors argue, however, that the need for tertiary level intervention can be reduced by a service system that values primary prevention and health care models and encourages and supports vulnerable families earlier, in order to be able to provide optimal outcomes for infant development.

This paper commences with a discussion on the over-representation of infants in child protection services, the vulnerability of infants and infancy as a foundational developmental stage for later outcomes and parental risk factors. The way in which a public health model enriched by a human rights perspective might inform service delivery to protect infants from abuse and neglect is also explored. Attention is also given to some of the key challenges for protecting and caring for infants who have been removed from their families, including:

- the role and expectations of foster parents in developing an emotional connection with a traumatised infant
- addressing the health care needs of infants in out-of-home care
- providing infant contact with parents while in out-of-home care and the associated issues, including breaks in continuity of experience with foster or kinship carers, disruption to infant's daily routine
- The relationship between frequency of visits and reunification

The authors conclude that Australia is well placed to embrace change in its approaches at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of intervention. Possibilities include enriched primary health and welfare services, health promotion campaigns, specialist early child care and education programs, an expanded infant-sensitive focus for adult-based support services and increased access to infant mental health services. A rights-based perspective also requires the social investment and commitment to those infants who have been harmed by abuse and neglect to ensure that their rights take precedence over parents' rights. The authors suggest that ultimately the aim is to minimise the negative impacts of abuse and neglect on infants and facilitate their best possible developmental outcomes and opportunities for full participation in society into the future.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/issues/issues30/issues30.html>

### ***Views of Young People in Residential Care, Queensland, 2009***

*Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, September 2009*

This report presents the latest findings of an ongoing study investigating the experiences and perspectives of young people in residential care in Queensland.

A total of 221 young people participated in the last round of research in late 2008. The sample is broadly representative of the residential care population and includes 169 young people (or 34% of those) placed in residential care as part of a child protection order.

Each young person completed a self-report questionnaire with the assistance of the Commission's Community Visitors who regularly visit all young people in the state's residential care facilities to monitor their safety and wellbeing.

The findings show that a majority of young people are reasonably happy with most aspects of their care and accommodation. More than nine out of ten feel safe and well treated where they are living. The vast majority also indicated feeling relatively comfortable in their living environment and that they are supported and cared for by residential facilities staff.

Almost half, however, do not feel that they are better off since coming into their current living situation. The three areas that young people least commonly expressed satisfaction with are having sufficient contact with their families, having a say in what happens to them, and being able to do the same sorts of things that young people outside the residential care system can do.

The findings suggest there is a shortfall in the support being provided to young people in the care of the department. A significant number indicated difficulty contacting their Child Safety Officer (CSO) when they need to, inadequate frequency of CSO visits, lack of confidence in the department to follow through on promises made to them, and lack of involvement in or information about decisions related to their care.

The survey also highlights various vulnerabilities of young people in residential care. Many indicated experiencing considerable instability in their care and education, 26% identified as having a disability, 21% were taking medication for ADHD, and 19% reported a current health issue of concern to them. Fifty-seven per cent reported being excluded from school now or in the past and 30% said they have a problem at school that they have not, to date, been able to get help with.

The Views of Young People in Residential Care research is part of a larger research project being conducted by the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian that also includes biennial surveys of children and young people in foster care and detention centres. These are available on the Commission's website.

<http://www.ccyipc.qld.gov.au/about/publications/reports.html>

## INDIGENOUS ISSUES

### ***Experimental Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 1991 to 2021***

*Australian Bureau of Statistics, September 2009*

This publication contains population estimates and projections of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Australia, based on results of the 2006 Census of Population and Housing for the period 30 June 1986 to 30 June 2021.

Projections presented are an assessment of what would happen to the size and structure of the Indigenous population if the assumed levels of the population change through births, deaths and migration over the projection period. Some of the projections include:

- Across Australia, the total fertility rate will decrease to 2.1 babies per Indigenous woman by 2021.
- The number of births of Indigenous children in Queensland is projected to increase from 4,000 in 2007 to 6,000 in 2021.
- The number of Indigenous children (0-14 years) is projected to increase from 194,200 in 2006 to between 242,600 and 243,400 in 2021 (an increase of 25% over the period).
- The number of young adults (15-24 years) increases by a similar proportion (29%), from 99,700 to between 128,600 and 128,800.
- The proportion of Indigenous children aged 0-14 years decreased from 39% in 1991 to 38% in 2006, and is projected to decrease to 34% in 2021.
- Queensland's share of Australia's Indigenous population is projected to increase from 28.0% in 2006 to 29.8% (between 212,900 and 215,100 people) in 2021, an average growth rate of 2.6% to 2.7% per year.
- The Indigenous population of Queensland is projected to exceed the Indigenous population of New South Wales in 2016.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0?OpenDocument>

## EDUCATION, including Early Childhood Education and Care

### ***National Summary Report: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy 2009***

*National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy, September 2009*

The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) has released the 2009 results of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

The NAPLAN tests are conducted in May each year for all students across Australia in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. All students in the same year level are assessed on the same test items in the areas of Reading, Writing, Language (Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation) and Numeracy.

Queensland improved across most domains for most year levels from the scores in 2008 in mean scores and the proportion of children meeting national standards, yet still achieved below the national average in terms of children meeting the national minimum standards.

<http://www.naplan.edu.au/>

***Education at a Glance 2009: OECD Indicators***

*Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) ,8 September 2009*

This report provides comparable indicators across OECD countries which measure the state of education internationally. Key measures outlined in the report and of relevance to Australia include:

- In general, in 2006 Australia spent more per enrolled student from primary school through tertiary education than the OECD average.
- In Australia, spending per student in:
  - pre-primary was considerably lower than the OECD average
  - primary school was slightly lower than the OECD average
  - secondary education was higher than the OECD average.
- On average, Australia spent less in 2006 on education as a percentage of GDP than other countries in the OECD.
- In 2007 the OECD average for classroom size in primary school was 21 students per class. Australia is slightly higher, with around 24 students.
- In 2007 Australia was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> among OECD countries with regards to the number of intended hours of instruction (compulsory and non-compulsory parts of the curriculum).
- Across the OECD, students aged 9-11 spend 23% of the compulsory curriculum on reading, writing and literature. Australian students spend 13% of their time on reading, writing and literature. However, while many OECD countries prescribe the amount of time to be spent on particular subjects, Australia has a much higher proportion of student lesson time allocated to compulsory flexible curriculum, which may incorporate reading, writing and literature activities.

[http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_39263238\\_43630976\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en_2649_39263238_43630976_1_1_1_1,00.html)

***Building an international research collaboration in early childhood education and care: Background materials for a workshop funded by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth***

*D. Brennan, Social Policy Research Centre, August 2009*

At the conclusion of its thematic review into Early Childhood Education and Care policy and provision in 2006, the OECD called on researchers to use its findings as a springboard for research. In particular it called for 'further cross-national work, focusing on...critical issues and challenges' including:

- the rationale for different ways of organizing ECEC policy and provision
- the balance of investment between parental leave and services for infants and toddlers
- responses to the shortages of skilled and qualified staff
- how best to promote parent engagement in ECEC, and
- how policy can help parents to balance paid work and family life.

In response to this call, an international network of scholars and non-government organisations has been established, supported by the Australian Research

Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), the Academy of the Social Sciences of Australia, the British Academy and the Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW. The network aims to encourage policy-relevant research across and between Australia, the UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand and Sweden. The network also includes strong representation from non-government organisations.

<http://apo.org.au/research/building-international-research-collaboration-early-childhood-education-and-care>

## **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

## ***Juveniles' contact with the criminal justice system in Australia: Monitoring reports no. 7***

*Richards, K. Australian Institute of Criminology, September 2009*

This report presents the first collection of data on juveniles' contact with the criminal justice system as both alleged/convicted offenders and complainants/victims in most Australian jurisdictions.

Key data show that:

### Juveniles as complainants and victims of crime

- Juveniles comprised 13% of all homicide victims from 1989-2006/07. Over half of these were under three years of age or in the 16-17 years age range. The rate has remained stable over this period.
- Assault, followed by sexual offences were the most commonly recorded alleged crimes against juveniles.

### Child protection

- In 2006-07, 309,517 child protection notifications were made. Of these, 58,563 (19%) were confirmed by child protection services.
- Males and female children were fairly evenly represented among child protection substantiations for physical and emotional abuse and neglect. Female children comprised a greater proportion of substantiations relating to child sexual abuse.
- Indigenous children were five times as likely to be the subject of child protection substantiations as other children.
- Children aged less than one year were most likely to be the subject of a substantiation, accounting for 14% of substantiations in 2006-07.

### Juveniles' contact with the police as alleged offenders

- A disproportionately high number of Indigenous juveniles came into contact with the police in all jurisdictions where data exist.
  - In Queensland, police apprehended Indigenous juveniles in relation to 12,276 offences (33%), despite Indigenous 10-16 year olds comprising only 6% of the total Queensland population of 10-16 year olds. Non-Indigenous juveniles were apprehended in relation to 24,465 offences (67%).
- Juveniles aged 15 to 17 years comprised a majority of juveniles who came into contact with the police.
  - Queensland police apprehended juveniles aged 10-17 years in relation to 19% of all offences during the 2006-07 financial year.
- Juvenile offenders typically came into contact with the police in relation to property crimes rather than crimes against the person.
- Data from NSW, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory indicate that females comprised a greater proportion of juveniles that came into contact with police for offences against the *person* rather than against *property*, which was an unexpected finding of the report.
- Police dealt with most alleged juvenile offenders via diversionary measures (eg. cautions) rather than proceeding to court, however, this varied according to gender, age and Indigenous status.
  - During 2006-07 in Queensland 41% of juveniles were processed via caution, 24% via arrest, 23% via conference, 4% via 'other' measures and less than 1% via warrants or summonses.
  - In Queensland, Indigenous juveniles were more likely to be processed by way of arrest (39%) than any other method. Non-Indigenous juveniles were more likely to be dealt with via caution (49%).

### Juveniles' contact with the children's courts as alleged offenders

- Criminal matters in children's courts comprised 7% of all criminal court matters during the 2006-07 financial year. There has been a decline in the number of cases being heard in the children's court during the last decade.
- Children's court hearings overwhelmingly resulted in conviction during the 2006-07 financial year with 96% of defendants convicted.
- In 2006-07, 92% of convicted juveniles were sentenced to non-custodial penalties such as fines or community supervision.
- Indigenous juveniles, males and those aged 16-17 years were over-represented in children's court statistics in 2006-07.

### Juvenile offenders and corrections

- In 2006-07 there were 10,675 juveniles under juvenile justice supervision in Australia.
- The number of juveniles under community-based supervision was highest in Queensland and Tasmania (96%) and lowest in NSW (67%).
- Indigenous juveniles are overrepresented among those in both community (39%) and detention based (53%) supervision.
- The rate of juveniles in detention has declined substantially since AIC's data collection began, falling from 65 per 100,000 at 30 June 1981 to 29 per

100,000 as at 30 June 2006.

- In June 2006, 58% of juveniles in detention were on remand awaiting trial or sentencing, representing a slight increase in those on remand.
- The proportion of juveniles in detention who were on remand rather than sentenced varied by gender and Indigenous status.
- There were 37 juvenile deaths in custody between 1998-2007, with 34 deaths occurring in police custody (26 in motor vehicle pursuits, 1 in a police shooting and 7 in other types of police custody) and three in juvenile detention.

<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/mr/1-20/07.aspx>

### ***The specific deterrent effect of custodial penalties on juvenile reoffending***

*Weatherburn, D., Vignaendra, S. & McGrath, A. Australian Institute of Criminology, September 2009*

According to data AIHW data cited by the authors, on an average day in 2006-07, 941 young people were held in detention across Australia. Although the costs associated with juvenile detention are very high, little research has been conducted on the effect of custodial sentences on juvenile recidivism.

This study aims to identify whether, all things being equal, juveniles who receive a custodial penalty are less likely to re-offend than juveniles who receive a non-custodial penalty. Data were obtained from a longitudinal cohort study of juvenile offenders: 152 who were given a detention sentence and 243 who were given a non-custodial sentence. They were interviewed about their family life, substance abuse, association with delinquent peers, school performance, and their prior criminal records were established and then followed up to determine what proportion in each group was reconvicted of a further offence.

Although 52% of the sample had a proven subsequent offence during the follow-up period, the study found no significant difference between juveniles given a custodial penalty and those given a non-custodial penalty in the likelihood of reconviction.

<http://www.aic.gov.au/en/publications/current%20series/tbp/21-40/tbp033.aspx>

### ***Out of Trouble: Reducing child imprisonment in England and Wales – lessons from abroad***

*Solomon, E & Allen, R., Prison Reform Trust and International Centre for Prison Studies, 3 September 2009*

This UK report identifies a number of international approaches to reducing child and youth imprisonment and cutting crime. England and Wales have one of the highest child custody populations in the western world, and the number of children sentenced to custody more than tripled between 1991 and 2006.

This report examines policies and programmes in countries with effective youth justice systems and looks at how policymakers in Canada and New York responded to costly and damaging levels of youth custody by rethinking their approach to dealing with youth crime. For example:

- In New York State, the total number of children in custody declined 27% between 2000 and 2006, and the state has closed four juvenile jails. The system has sought to increase the number of children diverted from prosecution and introduce new alternatives to prison including functional family therapy for children sentenced for serious offences and after-school centres for those on remand.
- In Canada the government introduced legislation in order to reduce the number of children young people in prison. New laws passed in 2002 enshrined the principle of custody as a last resort and the aim of sentencing as promoting “rehabilitation and reintegration”. The rate of admission to secure custody fell by a third from 2003/4 to 2007/8 and youth crime has declined since 2003.

<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/standard.asp?id=1933>

***If You Want to Change Violence in the ‘Hood, You Have to Change the ‘Hood***

Comack, E. Dean, L., Morrisette, L. & Silver, J., *Canadian Centre for Alternative Policy, September 2009*

This Canadian report provides insight into the views of six Aboriginal street gang members in Winnipeg and highlights their opinions about what is needed to address violence and street crime.

Although all participants had experienced life in prison/juvenile detention, they did not see imprisonment (or other existing strategies aimed at reducing crime and violence) as a solution. Going to prison gave them recognition among gang members, taught them to be better criminals and how to fight due to the level of violence they were exposed to.

Participants stated that street gangs and violence are a product of poverty and systemic racism, and all their consequences, including addictions, violence, family disintegration, neglect and abuse. All of the participants grew up under such circumstances and considered gang life as 'normal'; however, they did not want the next generation of children to go through what they had gone through.

The authors conclude that meaningful change to address violence and street crime will require long term solutions aimed at addressing the poverty and systemic racism – it will also require a shift in how we approach the problem. Building pride and self-esteem through the provision of the right kinds of jobs and investing in and rebuilding the community are seen as important steps.

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/reports/2009/09/article2305/>

LAW

**"and there's no real way that you could ... make it totally fair": Children's understandings of post-separation decision-making about them**

*Campbell, A., Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse, September 2009*

This document reports on the findings of a study undertaken with 16 children and young people, aged between seven and 17 years, which focused on their experiences and perceptions of their rights and "best interests", decision-making processes, and arrangements that affected them following their parents' separation.

In describing their parents' decision-making processes immediately following separation, children indicated that they were rarely consulted. The majority of children perceived that at separation, their parents' decisions were made without apparent deliberation and reflected traditional gender roles rather than planning for a long-term future.

Children's needs to be "fair" to their parents post-separation suggest that they will sometimes make significant sacrifices to try to ensure fairness: not for themselves, but for their parents.

While the concept of equal parenting time may be eminently appropriate for some children and their parents, the findings of this study indicate that there are complex and often competing arguments both for and against the concept of equal parenting time.

Due to the small sample size, the issues raised in this study may not be able to be generalised, and further research is needed. The study however indicates that family law professionals may need to carefully consider these arguments in detail in attempting to reach decisions that most appropriately meet the best interests of the children at the centre of family law disputes.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/newsletter/newsletter13.html#understandings>

HEALTH

***Burden of disease due to asthma in Australia 2003***

*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, September 2009*

In 2003 asthma was the leading cause of burden of disease in Australian children aged 0-14 years (followed by anxiety and depression), contributing 17.4%

of total disability adjusted life years (DALYs) and the eleventh-leading contributor to the overall burden of disease in Australia, accounting for 2.4% of the total number of DALYs.

Around 61% of the burden of disease associated with asthma was borne by children aged 0-14 years, with a higher proportion among Indigenous children.

It is predicted that asthma will continue to rank as one of the major causes of disease burden in Australia for the next two decades, particularly among females.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10749>

### ***Disability in Australia: Multiple Disabilities and Need for Assistance***

*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, September 2009*

This report examines the severity of disability and complex support needs of people with multiple disabilities in Australia.

Data for 2003 that is specific to children and young people include:

Four per cent of all children under 15 years had two or more of the following types of disability: intellectual, psychiatric, sensory/speech, acquired brain injury and physical/diverse disabilities

Among all children with a disability, 49% had two or more disabilities.

Half of the children aged 0-14 with a psychiatric disability or acquired brain injury had three or more disabilities, followed by over one-third of children with sensory/speech or intellectual disability.

Over half of children with psychiatric disability and two or more other disabilities had a nervous or emotional condition or mental illness causing restriction, or requiring help or supervision.

Around 87% of children with one or more disabilities had their health care needs fully met. The proportion having their health care needs met decreases alongside an increase in the number of disabilities present.

The more disabilities a person has, the more likely they are to need help with 'core' daily activities or self-care, mobility and communication. A substantial proportion of care for people with multiple disabilities is provided by family members and friends. The more disabilities a person has, the less likely they are to have all of needs for assistance met.

Among children aged 0-14 years with multiple disabilities, the most commonly reported need for assistance was with communication only.

Among school students aged 5-19 years with severe or profound core activity limitation were more likely to attend a special class or school than students who had a disability but with no such limitations.

Students aged 5-19 years with multiple disabilities were much more likely to attend a special class or school than those with one disability, regardless of whether they had severe or profound core activity limitation. This appears to be related to intellectual disability.

School students with a mix of intellectual and other disabilities were more likely than other students with a mix of disabilities to have schooling restrictions and to rely on special support or arrangements at school.

Eight per cent of children aged 0-14 with one or more disabilities use a mobility aid.

Over half of children with psychiatric disability and two or more other disabilities had a nervous or emotional condition or mental illness causing restriction, or requiring help or supervision.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10788>

### ***The Salvation Army's Alcohol Awareness Study 2009***

*Prepared by Roy Morgan Research, September 2009*

Research commissioned by the Salvation Army into community awareness of the NHMRC *Australian Guidelines to Reduce the Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol* focuses particularly on the consumption of alcohol by children and young people aged under 18 years.

The study, conducted with a representative sample of 687 Australian's aged over 14 years asked about alcohol consumption habits. Key findings from the research include:

- Two thirds of Australians first consumed alcohol when they were under the age of 18, with one third aged less than 15 years. Around 13.% of Australians had their first sip or drink of alcohol when they were just 10 years of age or under (mean age was 15.4 years).
- Almost half of all Australians first consumed alcohol with their family, with 38.6% consuming alcohol for the first time with friends.
- The most common place where alcohol was first consumed was at home (39.8%) followed by at a friend's house (14.9%).
- In 16.5% of cases, parents suggested the first consumption of alcohol, while 14.8% of friends suggested the initial alcohol consumption.
- 56.2% of Australian's think it is safe for someone under the age of 18 to be given occasional sips of alcohol, with nearly a fifth reporting that it is safe for someone under the age of 15 to have an occasional sip of alcohol. Twenty per cent of Australians believe it is safe for a 16 year old to be given occasional sips of alcohol.
- More than two thirds (68.5%) of Australians reported that they are not aware of the new alcohol guidelines.

The paper concludes that there is limited awareness of the consequences of underage drinking, as set out in the NHMRC guidelines is low amongst Australians, particularly young people.

<http://salvos.org.au/about-us/media-centre/media-releases.php>

### ***Injury deaths, Australia 2004-05***

*Henley G & Harrison J., Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 25 September 2009*

Accidental falls, suicide and transport-related injuries are common causes of death in the Australian community. This report finds that overall, rates of injury death in Australia during 2004-05 increased with the remoteness of the injured person's residence, with those who resided in very remote areas having a rate more than double that of the national rate.

Data relevant to children and young people show that:

- Twenty-three or 10% of unintentional deaths from drowning occurred to children aged 0-4 years.
- Eighteen or 8% of homicide deaths involved children aged 0-4 years.
- Adolescents (15-19 years) were among the highest rates of transport-related deaths.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10777>

### **Doing better for children**

*Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 1 September 2009*

This report presents indicators of child well-being across OECD countries in six key areas: material wellbeing; housing and environment; education; health and safety; risk behaviours; and quality of school life. The indicators show that no one OECD country performs well in all areas and that every OECD country can do more to improve children's lives.

Australian specific indicators show that spending on children is just below the OECD average. Like other OECD countries, Australia spends considerably more on older children. The report recommends that Australia could benefit by spending relatively more on young, disadvantaged children.

However, Australia does well in terms of good outcomes in both housing and environment and educational well-being for children. One in five Australian children lives in crowded conditions, compared to just under one in three on average across the OECD. Australian children do well at school, with average educational performance comparing well (6<sup>th</sup> best in the OECD), with the gap between high and low performing children smaller than in most OECD countries (again, the 6<sup>th</sup> best in the OECD).

The report states that more could be done in terms of both material and health outcomes, with health and risk outcomes for Australian children being in the middle of the OECD.

Family incomes and child poverty rates are around the OECD average, but the number of children who lack key educational possessions (eg. a computer, access to the internet, a dictionary, a desk etc) is slightly above the middle of the OECD.

A range of broad policy recommendations for improving child well-being for all OECD countries are offered, including:

#### **How to invest to enhance child well-being**

- Concentrate spending early in the child life cycle.
- Risk-load spending disproportionately on vulnerable children at all parts of the child life cycle.
- Structure interventions for children to reinforce positive development across the child's life cycle and across a range of well-being outcomes.
- Establish targets for child well-being outcomes.
- Regularly collect more high-quality information on children's well-being that is nationally and internationally comparable.
- Continuously experiment with policies and programmes for children.

#### **What to do across a child's life cycle**

- Improve the quality of the in-utero environment, for example, by reducing parental smoking and improving maternal diet.
- Introduce greater targeting in pre- and post-natal care towards mothers and infants at higher risk of poor outcomes within the overall framework of a universal system.
- Make policy changes to support the choice of exclusive breastfeeding for infants.
- Provide targeted, quality and intensive early childhood education and home visiting programmes for vulnerable children.
- Re-allocate existing resources within compulsory schooling to disadvantaged children.

#### **Things to do less of and things to keep an eye on**

- Spend less on highly medicalised, universal programmes surrounding childbirth.
- Spend less on interventions captured by advantaged children late in the child life cycle.
- Re-assess long-duration single-parent benefits.
- Monitor the results of evaluations of programmes to keep families with children together and their effects on child well-being.

<http://titania.sourceoecd.org/vl=6591292/cl=28/nw=1/rpsv/ij/oecdthemes/99980142/v2009n13/s1/p11>

### **Children need Dads too: Children with fathers in prison**

*J. Rosenberg Quaker United Nations Office Human Rights and Refugees Publications July 2009, uploaded on 4 September 2009*

This paper brings together information on paternal imprisonment in order to identify issues, raise awareness, promote further research and encourage changes in policy and practice. Due to the majority of prisoners being men, the number of children with incarcerated fathers is far higher than those with incarcerated mothers.

Research shows that children with incarcerated fathers experience many of the same problems as those with incarcerated mothers, including coping with loss, environmental disruption, poverty, stigmatisation, health problems and all of the difficulties involved in visiting a parent in prison. It appears that there are also some difficulties specifically associated with paternal imprisonment, such as a higher risk of juvenile delinquency and strained relationships between the mother and child.

The report outlines the high rate of children of incarcerated fathers in the U.S. foster care system and cites US state law which permits foster care agencies to petition for the termination of an incarcerated parent's rights.

Research gaps exist regarding the needs of children of incarcerated fathers and data on the numbers of children affected by paternal imprisonment are lacking, as is information on how to maintain a healthy relationship with incarcerated fathers, positive parenting by men in prisons and how to deliver and evaluate family strengthening and child support programmes aimed at this group.

Australian research is cited, which shows that 38,500 children experience parental incarceration per year, with 145,000 children currently under 16 years of age who have lived through the incarceration of a parent.

The report concludes that:

- greater emphasis on restorative justice, and alternatives to pre-trial detention and imprisonment is needed.
- children should be the central concern in all cases of parental imprisonment.
- needs assessments and care provisions for children should be conducted to mitigate the impacts of imprisonment.
- where children are allowed to reside in prisons with their father, strict safety precautions must be in place, and facilities provided to ensure children's well-being.
- contact with imprisoned fathers should be facilitated as long as it is in accordance with the child's best interest.
- parenting classes and work schemes should be available in prison.
- provisions for imprisoned fathers needs to include young fathers and those in the juvenile detention.
- follow up with post-prison support for ex-inmates and their children should be conducted.

<http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=20813&flag=report>

### **Orphans of Justice. In search of the best interests of the child when a parent is imprisoned: Legal Analyses**

*Tomkin, J. Quaker United Nations Office Human Rights and Refugees Publications, August 2009*

Globally, there are millions of children affected by the imprisonment of a parent, which can impact significantly on a child's development.

The first part of this publication focuses on the legal rights of children and the international legal framework, and defines the interests of the child and the role of the judiciary in assessing the best interests principle. The second part analyses the effects of imprisonment on the child's right to development.

It explores the issues of primary prisonisation (where the child lives in the prison with the incarcerated parent) and secondary prisonisation (where the child is separated from the imprisoned parent), and draws general recommendations for developing countries.

In its concluding remarks the author observes that "During sentencing the child's best interests must be considered and more imaginative, community based, restorative justice approaches should be utilised in place of prison terms. Where these alternatives are not an option, if the child's best interests dictate regular contact with the parent, then all must be done to facilitate such contact in accordance with Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of the

Child. This contact must be assured in a child-centred way, always cognisant of the effects and risks to all the child's rights including, in particular, the child's right to development."

<http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=20796&flag=report>

### **Parental Time with Children: Do Job Characteristics Make a Difference?**

*Baxter, J. Australian Institute of Family Studies, September 2009*

Both children and parents benefit from shared parent-child time, but competing time demands often lead to dissatisfaction with the amount of time parents can spend with their children.

This paper examines how parental employment characteristics are associated with differences in the time parents and children spend together. Parental employment characteristics taken into account include hours of work, flexibility of hours, frequency of weekend and evening work, type of job contract, occupational status and the holding of multiple jobs.

The paper uses data from the first wave of *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)*. The analysis of mother-child time and father-child time in this paper confirms that, on average, mothers spend more time with children than do fathers. It also shows that mothers and fathers spent more time with their children on the weekend than on weekdays, which is in part due to the effects of parental employment. However, fathers who often worked on the weekend spent a little longer with their child/ren during the week.

The most important job characteristics for explaining differences in parental-child time were hours of employment and the frequency of weekend work. These factors relate to parental availability, and show that time with children is constrained by hours of employment. However, this paper has only explored the existence and total amount of parent-child time. It does not take into account the *quality* of interactions that occur between parent and child during those shared times.

The author concludes that access to family-friendly work arrangements are likely to result in positive outcomes for parents and children in ways other than simply increasing the total amount of time they have together.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/rp44/rp44.html>

## **CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

### **Tasmania: Children in adult psychiatric wards a 'human rights breach'**

*ABC News, 3 September 2009*

The Tasmanian Children's Commissioner says the State Government is breaching the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by not providing a dedicated youth psychiatric unit.

Psychiatrists have no choice but to treat mentally ill children and teenagers in adult units or paediatric wards because Tasmania is the only state in Australia without a specialised psychiatric ward for young people.

Tasmania's Commissioner for Children Paul Mason says putting children in adult wards should be illegal.

"It is important, I think, in the new mental health act that is being considered by the Tasmanian Government, that it be specified that children should not be admitted to involuntary mental health care other than in the segregated unit," he said.

The Government says it is not breaking the UN convention and is actually acting in the best interests of children by treating them in adult wards.

But the United Nations is also concerned.

Matilda Bogner, the UN's Regional Representative for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, says the UN will not decide if the Tasmanian Government is breaching the convention until someone makes a complaint.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/09/03/2675291.htm>

## **MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS**

### ***Children's Television Standards 2009***

*Australian Communications Media Authority, 1 September 2009*

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has released new *Children's Television Standards 2009* (the standards) for commercial television following a review to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness. Key features of the new standards include:

- Australian children will continue to be uniquely catered for on commercial television through the maintenance of quotas for children's (C) and preschool children's (P) programs.
- The new standards will make it possible for broadcasters to create viewing destinations for children through the introduction of block programming arrangements. This gives licensees the option of broadcasting all C programming in minimum 60 minute periods on at least two days per week to fulfil quota obligations.
- Advertising will continue to be banned during P programs while advertising restrictions during C programs have been strengthened.
- The use of popular characters in advertising during C programs is prohibited, unless the popular character is part of a toy or game, or part of a general non-commercial campaign such as road safety.
- There will be no further implementation of general restrictions on food and beverage advertising under the new standards. On this point, the ACMA concludes that the relative contribution of advertising to childhood obesity is difficult to quantify and that a causal relationship between these may not be possible to determine, but states that there is currently no consensus in the research as to whether the association between food advertising and obesity is anything more than the 'modest' association.
- The obligations under the new standards will commence on 1 January 2010.

[http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC\\_310262](http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_310262)

## **Media Releases/Speeches**

### **Sharing information to protect Australian children**

*The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs & The Hon Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Human Services, 7 September 2009.*

Medicare Australia can now provide information to state and territory child protection agencies to help protect and support children at risk of abuse or neglect. The information sharing protocol formalises the process for passing on client details to child protection agencies, where a child is at serious risk of harm or in the interests of their health or welfare.

With the inclusion of Medicare, important medical information can now be shared. For example, if a child is placed into the care of a child protection agency their medical and immunisation history and Medicare number can be accessed quickly and efficiently.

This helps foster or other carers best meet the health needs of children in their care.

The new protocol can also assist in investigations of serious medical neglect cases, by allowing child protection authorities to access a child's history of

doctor visits.

Sharing information across jurisdictions can prevent vulnerable children becoming lost to child protection agencies when families move from one location to another.

[http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/protect\\_children\\_07sep09.htm](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/protect_children_07sep09.htm)

### **First Communities for Children Plus sites**

*The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 11 September 2009*

The Australian Government is providing \$17.4 million, over four years, to establish eight *Communities for Children Plus* sites in communities of high disadvantage. Tasmania, Victoria and Queensland are the first three states to receive *Communities for Children Plus* services to help reduce child abuse and neglect in communities of high disadvantage.

The first *Communities for Children Plus* site in Queensland will be established in Ipswich from early 2010. The existing Ipswich *Communities for Children* site will be expanded under the new model.

*Communities for Children Plus* sites will address the risk factors for child abuse and neglect before they escalate, and help parents of children at risk to provide a safe, happy and healthy life for their children. They will have stronger links to child protection authorities, and adult services, including mental health, drug and alcohol, family violence and housing services for parents at risk of child abuse and neglect.

*Communities for Children Plus* targets children under the age of 12 who need extra support to reach their full potential. This new initiative will ensure a more coordinated approach by linking services for children and vulnerable families and may include case management, intensive parenting services, breakfast and homework clubs, peer support for children with drug addicted parents, and home visiting services.

[http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/communities\\_children\\_11sept09.htm](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/communities_children_11sept09.htm)

### **Government invests \$970 m in high quality early childhood education**

*The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, The Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, 17 September, 2009*

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, and the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, Kate Ellis have announced that all State and Territory governments have signed on to the Rudd Government's \$970 million Universal Access to early childhood education initiative. Of this major investment, \$955 million will go directly to the states and territories to achieve universal access to early childhood education."

Working in partnership with State and Territory governments, this investment will help make preschool services more affordable and accessible for all Australian families. The initiative will ensure that by 2013, all children will have access to 15 hours a week of quality early childhood education delivered by a university-trained early childhood education teacher for 40 weeks a year, in the year before they start school.

The initiative will also be supported by a range of early childhood reforms, including the implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework, which began in July 2009 and which will ensure quality and consistency in the delivery of early childhood education programs across the country.

The Government has also committed \$126.6 million nationally over four years to support the training and retention of more, better qualified early childhood professionals.

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Ellis/Media/Releases/Pages/Article\\_090917\\_144644.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Ellis/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090917_144644.aspx)

### **\$252 million for kindergartens in Queensland**

*The Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth & The Hon Geoff Wilson MP QLD Minister for Education and Training, 17 September, 2009*

The Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth Kate Ellis has announced \$252 million to help build a world-class early childhood education system in Queensland. The funding will be used to boost the number of kindergarten hours that eligible Queensland children will receive in the coming years. Up to 240 extra kindergarten services will also be provided.

The QLD Minister for Education and Training, Geoff Wilson said, "Only about 15,000 of Queensland's 53,000 kindy-age children participate in a quality early education program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher.

"We want to boost those numbers because taking part in a quality early childhood education program lays strong foundations for future learning.

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Ellis/Media/Releases/Pages/Article\\_090917\\_103758.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Ellis/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090917_103758.aspx)

### **Increasing school attendance and enrolment in Queensland**

*The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs  
Anna Bligh MP, Queensland Premier, 18 September 2009*

Families in the Logan suburbs of Woodridge, Kingston, Logan Central and Eagleby, and the communities of Doomadgee and Mornington Island will take part in a trial linking school enrolment and attendance with welfare payments.

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, and Queensland Premier, Anna Bligh, today said the attendance component of the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) would start in term four 2009. The enrolment component will begin in term one 2010, following data exchange.

These new measures are aimed at increasing school enrolment and attendance by encouraging parents to take positive steps to lift their children's school attendance.

Around 2000 parents receiving income support in the trial sites will be required, if requested, to demonstrate to Centrelink that their children are enrolled, and that they are taking reasonable steps to make sure their children attend school regularly. Thirty schools will be involved in this measure across the trial sites.

Parents who fail to enrol their children in school or fail to take reasonable steps to get their children to school may have their income payments suspended until the problem is resolved.

The Australia Government has provided \$21.4 million to establish and administer the trials in the Northern Territory and Queensland.

[http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/jm\\_m\\_qldschoollattendance\\_18september2009.doc.htm](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/jm_m_qldschoollattendance_18september2009.doc.htm)

### **Measuring early childhood development**

*The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education & The Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, 20 September 2009*

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, and Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, Kate Ellis have announced the completion of the first stage of data collection for the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI).

The AEDI is a population measure that provides information on the development of children at the local community level. Local communities will be able to access the preliminary results for their community online from December 2009.

The results will help the Government provide better targeted services and support for all children in their early years and their families.

Between May and July 2009, data was collected for over 261,000 children, or 98% of all Australian children in their first year of full-time school. The information was collected through a questionnaire completed by teachers for children in their first year of formal schooling. The questionnaire covered physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge.

<http://alp.org.au/media/0909/mseceed200.php>

### **Australia urged to help stop child trafficking**

*ABC News, 4 September 2009*

United Nations agency UNICEF wants Australia to boost its role in reducing child trafficking, with a report finding little success despite years of effort.

The UN agency's report says despite a decade of working to reduce child trafficking in China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, the approach has failed.

It highlights a lack of preventative programs and weak enforcement of new laws as some of the reasons.

UNICEF Australia's Martin Thomas says Australia has led the approach but needs to do more.

"We would like an increased focus on this, particularly in the issue of the lack of resources and the lack of coordination," he said.

UNICEF says Australia needs to ensure all programs targeting child labour and juvenile justice are integrated and equally funded because they are crucial in fighting child trafficking.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/09/04/2676790.htm>