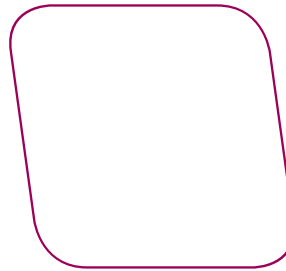


building blocks

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Child Safety marks a year of hard work and achievement

The Department of Child Safety is one year old this month – marking a year of hard work and achievement.

In the past year far-reaching changes have been made in many areas of child protection in Queensland.

The response to 110 recommendations of the Crime and Misconduct Commission report into the abuse of children in foster care has involved every staff member of the department, our community partners and foster carers.

Responses to the CMC report, including a range of practice and service delivery initiatives, had already begun to be put into place but gathered pace with the formal establishment of the new department on 24 September 2004.

New measures and procedures will not only guide and support staff but also ensure service delivery to clients is improved.

Three stages of legislative reform have been passed by Parliament to create a first-class child protection system, one that is focussed on and responsive to the needs of children.

The government has demonstrated its commitment to child safety reform in Queensland with a record increase in spending in 2005-06, taking the department's operating budget to almost \$400 million.

Seven zones have been created across Queensland, administering the 46 Child Safety Service Centres. Zonal Directors have been appointed to each zone and direct communication between the Zonal Directors and central office executives established.

Service delivery has been upgraded through the recruitment of additional staff, their extensive training and range of recruitment and training initiatives.

The Indigenous Support and Development Branch has been established in Cairns to support development of 23 new or expanded Indigenous Recognised Agencies.

A Child Safety Director has been appointed in 10 Queensland Government departments that have a direct responsibility to children, to ensure consistent child protection services.

Strengthening the whole-of-government network has already delivered:

- education support plans for children in care
- an additional 50 Juvenile Aid Bureau positions
- a strengthened safety net for children at risk through revitalising the multi-agency Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect system.

continued on page 3 >



“From the window of my office in 111 George Street, Brisbane, I can see building workers swarming over a soon to be completed high-rise building.”

I wrote those words one year ago for the first edition of Building Blocks. The article went on to link the construction work taking place on a new accommodation high-rise, with the work we were doing building a new Department of Child Safety.

It referred to foundations, and the brick by brick construction of legislation, policies and procedures needed for a strong structure that has, at its core, the safety and wellbeing of at risk children and young people.

The building is now complete. I can see chairs on verandahs and the entrance is advertising apartments for sale and rent. Progress on the building of a new Department of Child Safety has been similarly impressive.

In the past year we have developed and put in place the structure that will ensure a new approach to the vitally important work of protecting and caring for Queensland's at-risk children and young people.

I particularly want to recognise the role and contribution of staff who have carried the burden of change, while at the same time continuing to provide vital care and support for children and young people. It has not been easy, but I am confident that as the new practices and procedures are introduced and the staff numbers progressively increase, we will enter a new era of child protection in Queensland.

As an example of this, the Stage Three *Child Safety Practice Manual*, was launched this month, and will be fully operational in all Child Safety Service Centres by 31 October. It will make a tremendous difference to the way we work and the care and protection we provide.

Our structural changes, the development of new zones and the Child Safety Service Centres throughout Queensland, coupled with a recruitment policy designed to attract and retain committed, professional officers, will have a long-term, beneficial impact on Queensland's child safety service delivery.

We have a whole-of-government approach, with Child Safety Directors in the 10 government departments most involved in child safety issues, and a renewed commitment to working in partnership with funded agencies and individuals, including the so-important foster carers.

A year ago I finished my article by contemplating whether the workers on the building site ever considered that their neighbours were also involved in building work.

They were building apartments. We – all of us in the Department of Child Safety – were and are building a future.

It is a tremendous undertaking and a daunting responsibility. It is also immensely satisfying. We are taking part in a process that will have long-term beneficial results for vulnerable children and young people now, and far into the future.

We are building it strong and we are building it well. We are building it to last.

Robin Sullivan
 Director-General
 Department of Child Safety

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Child Safety marks a year of hard work and achievement

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Multi-agency collaborations are also developing behavioural therapeutic services for children and young people in care who have special or complex needs.

The department has joined forces with community partners to facilitate the reform process through a number of key initiatives including:

- the Child Protection Statewide Partnership Taskforce
- the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Partnership
- the Advocacy and Monitoring Reference Group
- the Child Safety Research Advisory Group.

The department has also been involved in developing improved curriculum in child protection courses with Queensland's key education providers. Course development, coupled with other initiatives such as government scholarships for students studying child protection, is evidence that child protection in Queensland has entered a new era of professional practice.

A number of initiatives have been undertaken to reform Queensland's foster care system, including:

- two increases in the base foster care allowance, including an extra \$40 per fortnight
- funding of \$13.2 million to provide 134 new or enhanced alternative care places and support for children with complex needs
- development of a comprehensive foster carer screening and assessment model
- establishment of a Foster Care Audit Team to continue investigating notifications of harm involving foster carers
- launch of Queensland's biggest ever foster carer recruitment campaign.

To date, 70 of the CMC's 110 recommendations have been fully implemented and the reform agenda is well on track to deliver on the remaining recommendations over the next 18 months as planned.

Twelve months ago, the new Department of Child Safety made a commitment to improve services to Queensland's children and young people. It would do this by implementing fundamental reforms to its work practices and service delivery, by working more effectively with government and community partners and foster carers, and by being open, honest and accountable.

One year later, that commitment still stands. The department has made good progress in developing a leading child protection system and is dedicated to the on-going improvement of the system to give our children and young people the best chance for a positive and fulfilling future.

One year ago we marked a very special day for child protection in Queensland with the creation of the new Department of Child Safety.

It signalled the start of a fundamentally new approach, one in which children and young people are better protected and cared for, and given the best chance possible for a full and fulfilling life.

Our first year has been an important time. We have built a solid foundation for a child protection structure centred on the child's need and based on the recognition that no one organisation can do it alone.

Everyone has a role to play in protecting our children and we have called on Queenslanders to work together as a community, as colleagues, neighbours, friends and families for our children's future and the future of Queensland.

We have declared in categorical terms that there is no place and no excuse for child abuse and neglect. We have learnt from the mistakes of the past, and we continue to learn as we strive to achieve our objective, which is the ongoing safety of vulnerable children and young people.

Everybody in the Department of Child Safety has dedicated themselves to this challenge, to being part of making a difference in the lives of children and their families.

Since the department came into being one year ago we have reached several key milestones. We have implemented 70 of the 110 recommendations handed down by the Crime and Misconduct Commission in 2004.

We have new legislation, new policies and procedures, new structures, many new staff, and an increased appreciation of our colleagues and partners in the important work we do.

I would like to make a special mention of the foster carers of Queensland, who are the mainstay of the child protection system.

In successive budgets, the Queensland Government has moved decisively to give child protection the attention it demands and the funding priority it deserves. This year's budget provided the highest level of funding to child protection ever made in Queensland — a record 45 per cent increase in funding taking our operating budget to \$394 million, with a further \$58 million allocation in capital funding.

More money means more staff to provide more services, more offices, increased skills, stronger links with community organisations, other government departments and learning institutions such as universities, and, as a result of these, greater protection for Queensland's most vulnerable children and young people.

As I have already noted, child protection is everybody's business and whole-of-government initiatives and enduring partnerships with non-government agencies are central to the department's service delivery model.

I am confident that the work we have done so far, and the work we do in the future, will make a difference for the children and young people of Queensland.

Hon Mike Reynolds AM MP
Minister for Child Safety

Stage Three Child Protection Amendment Act

Training resources are being developed to ensure staff and stakeholders are prepared and able to implement the latest round of child safety legislation reforms.

Stage Three of the *Child Protection Amendment Act* 2005 was passed by Parliament on 24 August 2005 with the substantive amendments to take effect on 1 April 2006.

The amendments are the third stage of legislative reforms to support the implementation of the *Blueprint*. They address regulating voluntary placements, regulating all carers, refining the Indigenous child placement principle and consulting Indigenous agency stakeholders.

In addition to these specific reforms Stage Three includes a range of amendments to align the legislative framework for child protection with policy developments currently taking place within the mandate of the *Blueprint*.

The impact of the legislative reforms on day-to-day practice of staff and external stakeholders - particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers - community and individuals is significant. To ensure that staff and stakeholders are prepared and able to implement these changes training resources are being developed for both Child Safety staff and external partners.

Regulations to underpin the legislation are being developed in consultation with stakeholders, and supporting operational guidelines and procedures will be finalised by early 2006.

More information on the legislative reforms is available on the department's website, www.childsafety.qld.gov.au

Minister urges Queenslanders to foster a future

WANTED: Five hundred caring, dedicated and loving families with a place in their heart and a space in their home for vulnerable children.

This is the challenge that Child Safety Minister Mike Reynolds put to Queenslanders at the launch of the department's major foster carer recruitment campaign on 9 September.

Launching the state's largest ever foster carer recruitment campaign, Mr Reynolds said that throughout Queensland the need for more foster carers, including kinship and respite carers, continued to grow.

"There are currently more than 5,000 children and young people in out-of-home care in Queensland and the department is urgently seeking more families to provide safe and caring homes. If we are going to really focus on meeting the needs of children and young people in care, then quite simply we need more dedicated and passionate Queenslanders to ensure that all children are provided a safe, stable and supportive home environment," he said.

Mr Reynolds said an area of continuing concern for him was the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system and the corresponding lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander foster carers to care for these children.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children currently represent approximately 22 percent of children in care, yet only 17 percent of foster care families are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander," Mr Reynolds said. "The campaign will include a particular focus on recruiting carers from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure these children are cared for in a way that respects their culture and allows them to maintain their cultural identity," he said.

Mr Reynolds said that the campaign was not only significant because of its size, but also because of the innovative methods being introduced to recruit more carers.



CHILD SAFETY MINISTER MIKE REYNOLDS SET THE TARGET OF 500 FOSTER CARERS AT THE LAUNCH OF THE FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

"The campaign will involve radio and print advertising, public events and displays designed to raise public awareness about the need for foster carers and what the role involves.

"Specific components of the campaign will target ethnic, church, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities."

Mr Reynolds took the opportunity to thank past and existing foster carers for devoting their lives to what is often a challenging, but rewarding field of community service.

"A government agency, no matter how well-intentioned or dedicated, cannot provide the home and family environments in the way that foster carers do," Mr Reynolds said.

"Without carers, the Department of Child Safety cannot provide safe and caring homes for children and young people who have been subject to abuse or neglect and are unable to live at home.

"In many ways foster carers are our unsung heroes and I urge relatives, friends and members of the community to give carers a pat on the back and the encouragement they need to keep up the good work," he said.

Mr Reynolds said that while the target of 500 new carers was ambitious, he was confident that Queenslanders would support the campaign by helping children and young people in need.

Child protection achievers honoured

Seven leading child protection workers and organisations were honoured for their contribution to the protection of Queensland's vulnerable children and young people during Child Protection Week, 4-10 September 2005.

An annual event, the Child Protection Awards are an occasion to publicly acknowledge the efforts, commitment and unreserved energy of many people who make a significant contribution to our community.

Child Safety Minister, Mike Reynolds, who hosted the awards said he was inspired by the stories of foster carers, Child Safety Officers, advocates, community workers and others involved in child protection.

"Their tireless commitment to protecting Queensland's children from abuse and neglect is incredible," Mr Reynolds said.

"The work recognised by the 2005 Child Protection Awards goes above and beyond the call of duty," he said.

"I hope the achievements highlighted here will inspire others to work for the continued safety of Queensland's children and young people.

"Child protection is not a nine to five job. It's unpredictable, confronting, emotional and challenging.

"Everyone working in child protection has a strength of character I truly admire.

"The increase in the number of award nominations in 2005 reflects the hard work, dedication and advancements in the child protection field, by both volunteers and professionals."



MEMBERS OF THE CHERBOURG CRITICAL INCIDENT WOMEN'S WORKING GROUP

Child Protection Week award winners

A record number of nominations were received for the Child Protection Week Awards on Sunday, 4 September this year.

The event honoured child protection workers for their contribution to the protection of Queensland's vulnerable children and young people.

The winning organisations in the seven categories were:

Youth Participation

Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council

Professional

Damian Bartholomew
Youth Advocacy Centre

Volunteer

Volunteer Support Mentoring Program
Western Districts Child Protection Service

Public Sector

The Future Families Program
Royal Children's Hospital and Health Service District

Research

Child Protection and Mental Health Research Project Team
Dr Yvonne Darlington, Associate Professor
Judith Fenney and Kylie Rixon

Funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council
www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/

Education Initiative

Building Blocks Child Protection Kit
Queensland Council of Social Service,
Indigenous Children's Services Unit

Regional

Cherbourg Critical Incident Women's Working Group
Lillian Gray, Lillian Hopkins, Rosetta Harrison, Lorraine Murray, Anita Langton and Grace Stanley



MINISTER FOR CHILD SAFETY MIKE REYNOLDS, CHAIRPERSON OF THE CHILD PROTECTION WEEK COMMITTEE TERESA SCOTT AND CHANNEL 7 NEWS PRESENTER AND CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE KAY MCGRATH

The Pyjama Foundation: Radiating sunshine into the lives of children



The Pyjama Foundation is a community organisation committed to giving children in care the same opportunities in life as all other children by delivering the Love of Learning Program which targets literacy and self-esteem.



PYJAMA FOUNDATION DIRECTOR, BRONWYN SHEEHAN, HELPS CHILDREN TO DEVELOP THEIR READING SKILLS

Love of Learning revolves around sending volunteer reading mentors to children's homes.

These mentors are called 'Pyjama Angels'. They read to their nominated child, play developmentally focussed games and conduct crafts and other learning activities each week in the foster carer's home.

The Brisbane-based foundation was established in September 2004 and has programs running across Brisbane, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast with another starting in the South Burnett this month.

Pyjama Foundation Director, Bronwyn Sheehan, said the organisation plays an important role in discovering and empowering the natural abilities of all children whilst creating an environment of fun, love and laughter.

"The Pyjama Foundation empowers children to be whoever they want to be," Ms Sheehan said.

"We support children by inspiring confidence, self worth, and a love of life and learning," she said.

The 'Pyjama Angels' who work for the organisation are all volunteers with Blue Cards who spend an hour each week with their nominated child and carer, reading and doing a number of activities designed to immerse the child in literature.

Well-know educator, literacy consultant and children's author Mem Fox said the Love of Learning Program plays an important role in the development of reading and writing skills for children in care.

"Being read to is an indicator of literary success, emotional wellbeing and educational self esteem," Ms Fox said.

"Children to whom books are read aloud regularly associate books with feelings of safety and happiness and pick up literacy skills without too much trouble and sometimes before they start school," she said.

"Children in care need literacy of course, but it's through the warmth and care of loving adults that their education experience of literature will occur and this is a special experience for all children, especially children with lives fractured by uncertainty."

The Love of Learning Program is a free service offered through the Pyjama Foundation. For more information phone 07 3868 4222 or visit their website at www.thepyjamafoundation.org.au



"The Pyjama Foundation empowers children to be whoever they want to be."

PYJAMA FOUNDATION DIRECTOR, BRONWYN SHEEHAN

Blue Card: Who does it apply to?

Volunteers and paid employees who work with children or young people in the following categories of employment must apply for a Blue Card (subject to some exemptions).

This includes:

- residential facilities
- school boarding houses
- schools (other than teachers) including non-teaching staff*
- child care
- churches, clubs and associations
- child counselling and support services
- private teaching, coaching or tutoring
- education programs outside of school*
- child accommodation services including homestays
- religious representatives*
- sport and active recreation
- emergency services cadet programs*
- school crossing supervisors.*



The Working with Children Check is a detailed national check of a person’s criminal history, including any charges or convictions.

The Commission for Young People and Child Guardian also takes into account information from certain police investigations into allegations of serious child-related sexual offences, and disciplinary information held by certain professional organisations for teachers, childcare service providers, nurses, midwives and health practitioners.

If a person has no police or disciplinary information relevant to their Blue Card application that could pose a risk to the best interests of children, they will be issued with a Blue Card.

If a person’s application is refused, they are issued with a negative notice and are not allowed to operate businesses, or work in areas that bring them into regular contact with children.

A Blue Card is valid for two years from the date it is issued, unless cancelled earlier, for example due to a change in a criminal history.

* These categories are retrospectively screened. This means all people who work in these categories of employment must hold a Blue Card regardless of when they started work.

Young advocates in the northern zone

On Saturday, 17 September the Townsville Young People in Care Advocacy Leadership Group (TYPICAL G) was officially launched in North Queensland.



The group shared stories about being in care and presented their logo to the Child Safety Minister, Mike Reynolds, senior departmental staff and non-government service providers.

TYPICAL G is a group of eight young people in North Queensland who are providing a voice to children and young people in care.

The group was formed with the help of Jan Metcalfe, Northern Zonal Director.

“The Department of Child Safety has long recognised the need for representation for young people in care,” Ms Metcalfe said.

“The Young Advocates was set up to enable young people to have a voice and to assist other young people in care to expand and enhance their lives,” she said.

TYPICAL G plans to set up a web site for young people in care to log on and talk with each other. They also plan to produce a newsletter for children in care.

Department of Child Safety Recognition of Excellence Awards 2005

Minister for Child Safety, Mike Reynolds, and Acting Director-General, Norelle Deeth, hosted the Department of Child Safety Recognition of Excellence Awards on Tuesday, 16 August.

The Recognition of Excellence Awards provide an opportunity for the department to stop and recognise not only the award recipients, but also the contributions that each and every member of the department is making towards building Queensland's new child protection system.

The awards are evidence of the department's commitment to building a new workplace culture, that is open and accountable, focussed on protecting Queensland's most vulnerable children and young people, and supporting outstanding staff.

The five categories, finalists and winners were:

Focussing on Our People Award

Identifies a project or initiative, which enhances the quality of life for the Queensland community and provides services that strengthen the social infrastructure of communities.

The finalists were the Training and Specialist Support Branch, and the Workplace Health and Safety Advisory Team, Human Resources Branch. The winner was the Training and Specialist Support Branch.

Innovation and Creativity Award

Identifies a project or initiative, which demonstrates innovative approaches or creativity through new concepts, new technology or policy development.

The finalists were the Employee Support Service, Human Resources Branch, the SCAN Implementation Project Team, Child Safety Implementation Unit, and Sue Smith, Project Leader, Child Safety Implementation Unit. The winner was the Employee Support Service.

Engaging Communities Award

Identifies a project or initiative, which promotes the participation of citizens and communities within the wider Queensland community.

The finalists were the Maryborough Child Safety Service Centre, and Janeen Miesch, Zonal Planning and Partnership Officer, Central Zone. The winner was Janeen Miesch.



Partnerships and Reconciliation Award

Identifies a project or initiative, which promotes and facilitates reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their respective communities through a demonstrated recognition of rights, a reduction in disadvantages, and the sustainability of the reconciliation process.

The sole finalist and winner was the Community Support Service, Logan and Brisbane West Zone.

Leadership Excellence Award

Identifies a project or initiative, which demonstrates leadership in best policy and management practice, openness and accountability, presenting at the same time an inspirational role model for the Queensland Government public sector, through professionalism and achievement.

The finalists were Sue Davison, Senior Advisor, Human Resources Branch, the Complaints, Case Review and Investigation Branch, and Kimberly Arnold, Senior Practitioner, Emerald Child Safety Service Centre. The winner was the Complaints, Case Review and Investigation Branch.

Finalists and winners of the five award categories each received a \$2000 learning and development voucher.

The 2005 award categories reflected the annual Premier's Awards for Excellence for Public Sector Management categories and all winners of the department's Excellence Awards are automatically nominated for the Premier's awards.



TOP: THE TRAINING AND SPECIALIST SUPPORT BRANCH, FOCUSSED ON OUR PEOPLE AWARD (WINNER).

BOTTOM LEFT: SUE DAVISON, SENIOR ADVISOR (HR BRANCH), LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARD (FINALIST) WITH CHILD SAFETY MINISTER, MIKE REYNOLDS AND ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL, NORELLE DEETH.

BOTTOM RIGHT: SUE SMITH, PROJECT LEADER, CHILD SAFETY IMPLEMENTATION UNIT, INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY AWARD (FINALIST) WITH CHILD SAFETY MINISTER, MIKE REYNOLDS AND ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL, NORELLE DEETH.

Creating safe environments for children and young people

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian is committed to promoting safe environments for children and young people.

Since 2001, the Commission has screened people conducting businesses, or working or volunteering in certain areas which have regular contact with children and young people. The Working with Children Check, or Blue Card, was introduced to screen those not checked through other recognised screening processes, such as the Board of Teacher Registration or Queensland Transport.

Recent changes to *The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000* have tightened the Act even further to provide more protection for children and young people. This includes an expansion of the categories of employment the Commission screens to include:

- child accommodation services including homestays
- religious representatives
- sport and active recreation
- emergency services cadet programs
- school crossing supervisors.

In other changes, volunteers must hold a Blue Card before they start volunteering in any area of regulated employment, and regardless of how often they come into contact with children and young people. However, although the Blue Card is an important element in protecting children and young people, it can never replace vigilance by parents, families and communities.

Regulated businesses and employers (who require Blue Cards), are now required to have a written child protection risk management strategy in place by January 2006. To help organisations meet their responsibilities, the Commission is offering free training workshops around the state to help businesses develop their own risk management strategies.

The Commission is also developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategy to ensure that the Blue Card system is accessible and culturally appropriate. This will help to ensure that as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as possible take part in services and activities provided for children and young people.

For more information about the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian contact 07 3247 5525 or visit ccypcg.qld.gov.au.



New managers appointed in Child Safety Service Centres

The Department of Child Safety has recently appointed 42 Child Safety Service Centre Managers across Queensland. Four of the recently appointed managers include Choon Thor, Ralph Laksa, Jennifer Blackshaw and Sharon Lowe.

Choon Thor has been appointed manager of the Wynnum Child Safety Service Centre. He was previously with the Youth Justice Service of the Department of Communities and has worked in other areas including health and drug and alcohol abuse. Mr Thor wants to encourage more people to find out about foster care and to consider becoming foster carers.

Ralph Laksa moves to his new position as Manager in the Innisfail CSSC after 24 years in the Police Service, including 19 years as a police prosecutor and 12 years as Officer in Charge, Police Prosecutions Branch. Mr Laksa wants to increase community confidence with the service centre and the Department of Child Safety.

Experienced child safety practitioner and academic Jennifer Blackshaw will head the Thuringowa CSSC after almost 12 years in the department.

Jennifer wants to develop closer links with stakeholders and the community to encourage community participation in child abuse prevention.

Experienced child safety practitioner Sharon Lowe has been appointed manager of the Mt Isa CSSC.

Sharon will also be responsible for developing a child safety hub on Mornington Island and developing another hub at Normanton.

More information about other new members of the management team will feature in the October edition of *Building Blocks*.

“Although the Blue Card is an important element in protecting children and young people, it can never replace vigilance by parents, families and communities.”

New specialist staff to support young people with a disability in care

Three teams of specialist staff joined Disability Services Queensland in August as part of the department's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the 2004 CMC Report *Protecting Children: An Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Foster Care*.

The group of psychologists and speech and language pathologists will make up the first three of DSQ's new Child Safety Behaviour Support Teams, to be located on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and in Townsville. There will also be three additional teams, earmarked for other areas of the state, commencing duties in early 2006.

Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, Warren Pitt, said the teams would provide behaviour support services to children and young people with a disability who are in the care of the Department of Child Safety, and who have challenging behaviour and extreme and complex support needs.

"Our staff will focus on working positively with these young people, to help them learn new skills and increase their level of community participation," Mr Pitt said.

Before commencing duty, staff will complete a comprehensive induction and training program covering information on positive behaviour support, Autism Spectrum Disorder, children with a disability in the child safety system, dual diagnosis and conduct disorders.

The establishment of the new teams is the result of the Child Safety Interagency Therapeutic and Behaviour Support Services, a collaboration initiative between DSQ, the Department of Child Safety, Queensland Health and the Department of Education and the Arts.

For more information contact 07 3836 0530.



DSQ CHILD SAFETY BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT TEAMS TOGETHER WITH THE CHILD SAFETY PROJECT TEAM, COMMUNITY AND SPECIALIST SERVICES

Cultural training with a difference

Gold Coast West Child Safety Service Centre staff recently participated in the Paradise Dreaming cultural tour on the Gold Coast.

The Paradise Dreaming tour conducted by Kombumerri elder Uncle Graham Dillon, visits sites of cultural and historical importance to the Indigenous communities of the Gold Coast area. Gold Coast West CSSC staff participated in the tour to enhance their cultural awareness and training and put their existing knowledge into a local context. The tour visited historical sites such as burial sites and a bora ring. Uncle Graham explained the historical significance of the sites and the rich social and cultural history of the local people.

The highlight of the tour was a visit to the Dreaming Mountain Theatre where dancers performed to rhythmic and vocal music while a narrator told the story of the dances. After the dancers finished staff were blessed in a traditional oaka blessing.

Acting Manager of the Gold Coast West CSSC, Geeta Chhatbar, said the tour was a wonderful opportunity to educate staff about the Indigenous culture of the area. "The Paradise Dreaming tour opened our eyes to the richness of Aboriginal life," Geeta said. "It also provided us with a wonderful opportunity to network with our key local Indigenous agency, Kalwun," she said.



UNCLE GRAHAM DILLON AND GOLD COAST WEST CHILD SAFETY SERVICE CENTRE STAFF

Number of children in care

As at 31 May 2005, there were 4,994 children and young people placed in out-of-home care in Queensland.

While the final figures for 30 June 2005 have not been officially released, the number of children and young people placed in out-of-home care is expected to have risen to more than 5,000.

This compares with 4,413 children and young people placed in out-of-home care as at 30 June 2004.

US child safety experts train Queensland staff

Representatives of the Children's Research Centre from Wisconsin, United States of America, visited Brisbane in September for two weeks of training with Department of Child Safety Senior Practitioners, Lead Trainers, and Team Leaders.

Kathy Park, Assistant Director of the Children's Research Centre, and John Wilson, Senior Research Associate at the CRC, assisted with the implementation of Structured Decision Making in the department. SDM was developed by the CRC as a body of decision-making tools, which are designed to guide child protection practices.

The CRC is a non-profit research organisation, established in 1986 as a division of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency of the United States of America - founded in 1907.

Stage Three of the *Child Safety Practice Manual*, launched on 16 September in Townsville, supports the implementation of the SDM in the department. Ms Park said SDM is designed to assist child protection workers to demonstrate consistency and validity in decision-making when faced with a confronting range of child abuse and neglect cases.

"SDM is an evidence-based assessment model for making critical decisions in child protection," Ms Park said.

"SDM has a demonstrated ability to promote the reliability, validity and equity in the assessment of situations when working with families, children and young people."

SDM was first introduced to departmental officers in December 2004 and training will be rolled out across the state through September and October 2005. From Monday, 31 October, all Child Safety Service Centres will be using SDM in their work with children and families.

Ms Park's visit to the department in August 2005 was her third visit to Queensland since December 2004 to assist the department to implement SDM.

"I was very impressed with the support of the department's Practice Standards Project Team in their enthusiasm and leadership in implementing SDM in the department," Ms Park said. "The drive and enthusiasm of members of the Practice Standards Project Team and its director Marilyn Leeks is a credit to the department."



FROM LEFT: MARILYN LEEKS, KATHY PARK AND CAROL STRAWBRIDGE WITH A COPY OF STAGE THREE OF THE CHILD SAFETY PRACTICE MANUAL.

New Child Safety Practice Manual launched

The Minister for Child Safety, Mike Reynolds, launched Stage Three of the *Child Safety Practice Manual* at the Townsville Child Safety Service Centre on Friday, 16 September 2005.

The practice manual has been designed as part of child protection reforms to ensure the safety of vulnerable children and young people.

Mr Reynolds said the launch of the practice manual is a significant milestone for the department that will improve workplace practices for staff of the department, especially Child Safety Officers.

Every day Child Safety Officers work in partnership with the community to keep children safe from the risk of abuse or neglect. The practice manual provides guidance in the conduct of these duties.

The practice manual is being released in stages, with Stage One launched in March this year, Stage Two in April, Stage Three in September and a fourth stage to be released in December 2005.

Mr Reynolds said the complete practice manual would assist child protection workers to demonstrate consistency in practice standards, when faced with a confronting range of child abuse and neglect cases.

"The practice manual covers child protection practices from the moment the department receives information relating to the safety of a child, right through to closure, when the department finalises the case with the family," Mr Reynolds said.

"The practice manual also features information for effective service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families," he said.

Mr Reynolds said Stage Three of the practice manual supported the implementation of the Structured Decision Making.

The department purchased SDM from the Children's Research Centre of the United States of America in 2004 and from Monday, 31 October 2005, all Child Safety Service Centres will be using SDM in their work with children and families.

Stage Three of the practice manual will be distributed to all Child Safety Officers, Team Leaders and Senior Practitioners at the SDM training, which will be rolled out across the state in September and October 2005.

Stage Three of the practice manual will be distributed as printed copies and will also be available on the department's Infonet, Internet and on CD.





Procedures: Responding to matters of concern

The Stage Three Child Safety Practice Manual contains revised guidelines and procedures for assessing and responding to matters of concern.

There are two areas that constitute a matter for concern. The first, Child Placement Concern Reports, is a response to inadequate or poor quality care of a child in an out-of-home care placement, that fails to meet the statement of standards and does not meet the threshold for a notification.

The second, notifications, involves allegations of harm and risk of harm to children in out-of-home care by persons providing direct care, including staff of licensed care services and approved foster carers.

Key procedural changes in the third stage practice manual include:

- departmental officers assess all concerns, regardless of whether the response is a child placement concern report or notification
- Child Safety Service Centre Managers make the final decision about whether the response constitutes a child placement concern report or a notification
- guidelines for when matters of concern involve multiple Child Safety Service Centres
- letter templates for relevant stakeholders, including an information sheet for carers and service staff regarding support and advocacy options
- improved information provided to children, including advice of available review mechanisms and an information sheet outlining matters of concern procedures and support or advocacy options
- a review of the carer's suitability when more than three matters of concern have been recorded about the same carer or staff member.

Funding approved for attraction and retention of workers in community services sector

The Department of Child Safety will lead a sub committee focussed on addressing structural issues in the workforce as part of the Community Services Minister's Advisory Council.

At its July meeting, the Council endorsed the Structural Issues in the Workforce sub committee's proposed 2005-06 work program with a significant boost in funding of \$230,000 for its implementation.

Members of the sub committee met on 2nd September to discuss the implementation of the following strategies for 2005-2006:

- implement a formal research project to profile the community services workforce (government and non-government) through collection and reporting of data on its size, constitution and characteristics
- launch and enhance the SIW workforce web site and extend access to the non-government sector
- coordinate ongoing updates of web site data and information and continue to manage and monitor the discussion forum.

The sub committee has identified the workforce profile as critical to an effective and strategic approach to system-wide attraction and retention concerns. An accurate workforce profile is pivotal to workforce planning, the development of national strategies, comparisons with other workforce sectors and analysis of labour market supply and trends for both government and non-government sectors.

Attraction and retention of workers is the key focus of this sub committee, chaired by Department of Child Safety Director-General, Dr Robin Sullivan. Its membership comprises representatives from government agencies within the community services sector in all Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand.



DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL, NORELLE DEETH, WITH MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES MINISTERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

Child Safety funds for universities

The Minister for Child Safety, Mike Reynolds, has met representatives from the University of Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology, Central Queensland University, Griffith University, and James Cook University to discuss curriculum development in child protection courses.

The department's recent allocation of \$250,000 for the development of child protection courses is a significant milestone in the government's partnerships with key education providers.

Mr Reynolds said that the course development, coupled with other initiatives such as government scholarships for students studying child protection, had highlighted that child protection in Queensland has entered a new era of professional practice.

He told representatives from the universities that the specialised stream of undergraduate courses in child safety would further assist the department with its recruitment of well-trained and highly qualified Child Safety Officers.

"By working closer with our non-government partners and by improving child protection curriculum at the undergraduate and postgraduate level, we have a better chance of ensuring the most vulnerable children in the community are protected," Mr Reynolds said.

"Improvements will promote a child-focussed approach and more attention to theory and practice around families with complex and multiple needs," he said.

"Improvements will also include the development of compulsory course material relating to Indigenous children, families and communities."



JULIE EDWARDS (RIGHT) WITH MAJELLA RYAN AND BERNIE WILLIAMS

Julie Edwards: One of Child Safety's achievers

Child Safety Officer and new graduate, Julie Edwards joined the former Department of Families in 1998 as a Youth Worker on the Gold Coast.

After being with the department a few months, Julie took on the role of Family Community Worker and developed her passion for working with Indigenous children.

Julie participated in and expanded programs that educated Indigenous children of their cultural history and their culture today. Her passion for giving children the best possible start to a rich and fulfilling life took her to special places and taught her a lot about herself and the children she worked for.

"I have discovered a lot about myself over the past few years," Julie said. "I have also discovered the enormous warmth and generosity of the many people working with children, and have seen it on display," she said.

"I have seen a group of people who represent that spirit as well as any group we can find anywhere in Australia."

While working on the Gold Coast, Julie was awarded a Youth and Community Care Queensland and Disability Services Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Scholarship.

Julie then started a degree in Human Services at Griffith University, which she undertook while continuing her work for the department.

In 2004 Julie was offered, and accepted, a position as a Child Safety Support Officer on the Gold Coast. Julie was part of a team that developed new programs to teach her colleagues and the children she worked for, the rich history of Indigenous culture. For many of the people touched by Julie's passion and commitment, the possibilities she created for them will remain forever.

On Tuesday, 6 September Julie graduated from Griffith University before moving to Cairns where she was offered a position as a Child Safety Officer.

"I am looking forward to everything associated with my new position," Julie said. "I am keen to work in the remote areas of Queensland where staff are so desperately needed and where I'm going to shape some of the best Indigenous stories in Australia," she said.

"Having access to a safe and supportive environment where children can get a well-rounded education, and using education, and valuing education is so important to the future of every young Queenslanders, whether they're Indigenous or not."

Operational Performance Review

The **2004 Blueprint** for implementing the reforms prescribed in the recommendations of the Crime and Misconduct Commission Report recognised a need to create a new and improved culture within the Department of Child Safety.

The *Blueprint* recommended that an improved organisational structure could be achieved by fostering an open and supportive culture, adhering to best practice standards of therapeutic intervention and specialised services and building reward into the culture.

The establishment of performance revision will enable the department to review its own performance, learn from experiences in order to improve performance, tell other people about experiences or achievements and demonstrate accountability.

The reform process to date has introduced a zonal management structure – which has divided the department into seven zones with 46 Child Safety Service Centres – to provide efficient state-wide service delivery. This has also facilitated a flexible operational management approach, suited to the contrasting needs of communities across Queensland.

It is also important in the process of reform that the department develops a system that will focus on performance across the organisation and provide strong direction in communicating the department's strategic goals, key operational priorities and the impact these have on the Queensland community.

The aim of the Operational Performance Review process is to facilitate a close analysis of the department's performance in a way that encourages using all the information available to identify and target child protection issues such as children in foster care and intake notifications.

There will be two annual performance reviews attended by the Director-General, Zonal Directors, Office Managers and progressively a greater number of other departmental staff. One will be a formal review held in zonal offices, and a second written review that will outline for Zonal Directors and Office Managers information for them to consider and use in their management, as well as an opportunity for feedback.

As a learning organisation the Department of Child Safety is committed to looking at what happens in our workplaces, consider why it is happening and then address the issues to the best of its ability.

Putting a process in place where the department can evaluate its performance, identify best practice and identify strategic issues, is valuable for being open, accountable and professional in achieving a child-focussed department.



EXECUTIVES AND MANAGERS MEET IN THE IPSWICH AND WESTERN ZONE FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S FIRST OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Department's first operational performance review

The department's first Operational Performance Review took place in the Ipswich and Western Zone on Thursday, 1 September 2005.

The OPR, hosted by Deputy Director-General, Norelle Deeth, saw the identification of a number of performance issues and a range of active solutions.

Ipswich and Western Zone Office Manager, Adrian James, said the first OPR had been a very positive experience for the zone and provided the rare opportunity for managers and executives to meet.

"Having a meeting where zonal managers and executives sat down and talked openly about our issues of concern created an understanding for both parties about why current situations exist and where people are coming from," Adrian said.

"It was such a good opportunity to learn about the department as whole and see that everyone involved was really listening," he said.

"We have all taken away a lot of information that can be implemented to create better practice, and already real change is being made to improve service delivery in the zone."

Toowoomba North Office Manager, Brett O'Connor, said an opportunity for managers to sit down and talk to executives about issues affecting individual offices had been a great exercise.

"The reviews are a wonderful new initiative in the department and managers should be looking forward to them and the opportunities they're going to bring," Brett said.

Director-General appointed to the Australian Council for Children and Parenting

Director-General, Robin Sullivan, has been appointed to the Australian Council for Children and Parenting.

The council is an independent advisory body that provides vital advice to the government in the areas of improving the outcomes for children, parenting, child protection and foster care.

Membership is made up of an Australian Government representative, three state/territory government representatives and 12 community members who are appointed for a term of two years.

Ms Sullivan's appointment was announced by the Federal Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Kay Patterson.

New Carer Directory

In November 2005, the Integrated Client Management System project will deliver the first release of the Department of Child Safety's new Carer Directory.

The Carer Directory is Queensland's first statewide directory containing accurate and up-to-date information about carers and care services. The first release will provide alternative care staff with the ability to view relevant, statewide carer information from November 2005. The second release, due in April 2006, will provide an expanded suite of Carer Directory functions.

The Carer Directory is an important milestone that will support more effective case management for Queensland's children and young people.

Senior practitioner induction training

Thirty-five senior child safety practitioners completed Senior Practitioner Induction Training in Brisbane recently.

Trainers from the Practice Standards Project Team encouraged senior practitioners to reflect on their role as 'process leaders' when implementing Structured Decision Making and facilitating quality assurance in Child Safety Service Centres.

Training included the formulation of a plan to inform office practice to better support workers integrating SDM into Child Safety Service Centres.

Child Safety Officer Graduate Bridging Scholarship

Child Safety Officers are at the front line of the department's focus, the protection of children and young people from abuse and neglect.

As a CSO, people work directly with vulnerable children and their families.

If you have the motivation to be a practitioner in child protection and have a high standard of interpersonal skills and an undergraduate degree but don't meet the mandatory qualification requirements for the CSO position, why don't you apply for a CSO Graduate Bridging Scholarship?

The Department of Child Safety is offering 40 scholarships to people interested in working for the department as Child Safety Officers.

Priority on the allocation of scholarships will be given to applicants seeking employment in rural and remote locations and applicants that identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

Scholarships will take the form of financial assistance to undertake a full-time accelerated postgraduate qualification in child protection practice. Courses are offered at the University of Queensland or James Cook University in conjunction with a work experience program based at a Child Safety Service Centre.

The Graduate Bridging Scholarships will ultimately lead to employment as a Child Safety Officer with the department once all mandatory requirements are met.

For further information contact 1800 089 515 or visit www.childsafety.qld.gov.au

Note: Internal applicants should refer to the Infonet.



CHILD SAFETY STAFF LARISSA BROWN, LEISA SHANKS AND WENDY FAATAAPE

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