

Guardian for Children
and Young People

2009-10
Annual Report



Government
of South Australia

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Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People

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The Hon Jennifer Rankine MP
Minister for Families and Communities
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Dear Minister

I am pleased to present to you the annual report of the Guardian for Children and Young Persons for the year ended 30 June 2010, as required under Section 52D(2) of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*.

This report provides a summary of the activities and achievements for the 2009-10 financial year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pam Simmons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "S".

Pam Simmons
Guardian

3 September 2010

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What we do

The Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People promotes and protects the rights of all children and young people under the age of 18 years in alternative care. This includes those who are in relative or kinship care, foster care, residential care or secure custody.

The position of Guardian for Children and Young Persons was established in an amendment to the *Children's Protection Act 1993* proclaimed on 1 February 2006.

We work to improve services to children and young people in out-of-home care, to promote and protect their rights and to strengthen their voice. To do this we work in partnership with children and young people, their families and carers, government agencies and non-government organisations.

The Office of the Guardian is an independent government agency and the Guardian advises the Minister for Families and Communities.

Functions

Under the establishing legislation the Guardian has six statutory functions:

- to promote the best interests of children under the guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister, and in particular those in alternative care
- to act as an advocate for the interests of children under the guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister and, in particular, for any such child who has suffered, or is alleged to have suffered, sexual abuse
- to monitor the circumstances of children under the guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister
- to provide advice to the Minister on the quality of the provision of care for children under the guardianship, or in the custody of, the Minister and on whether the children's needs are being met
- to inquire into, and provide advice to the Minister in relation to, systemic reform necessary to improve the quality of care provided for children in alternative care
- to investigate and report to the Minister on matters referred to the Guardian by the Minister

We report against these functions in this annual report.

Our purpose

Making it work for kids in care.

What we believe and value

We believe that children and young people have fundamental rights which include the right to feel good about themselves, the right to live in a place where they are safe and well cared for, the right to get the help they want or need and the right to understand and have a say in decisions that affect them.

We value:

- transparency and integrity
- decisive and clear action
- courage in promoting the rights of children and young people in care
- respect towards our colleagues and the people with whom we work
- active involvement of children and young people in our work

The year in review

The Guardian for Children and Young People promotes and protects the best interests and rights of children and young people under the guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister for Families and Communities. The Office of the Guardian is an independent government office to advocate for children's interests and to advise the Minister.

In 2009-10 the Office of the Guardian:

- Inquired about the policy and practice in the use of physical restraint of children and young people in residential facilities
- Reported on the wellbeing of children and young people in care based on our monitoring of their circumstances
- Assisted four government departments and four non-government organisations to incorporate good information sharing into their policy and practice to better protect children
- Distributed over 2,500 copies of the Charter of Rights to children and young people, accompanied by other 'being in care' products
- Audited 201 annual reviews of the circumstances of children under guardianship of the Minister
- Responded to 120 requests for assistance involving 162 children and young people in alternative care. More than one in four of these requests came from children or young people themselves
- Visited over 350 children and young people living in residential or secure care, with 79 announced visits
- Developed a new website with enhanced search capacity and a new information management system

This is my fifth annual report as Guardian and a good time to take stock.

In South Australia, we are not short of knowledge of what needs to be done to protect children from harm and to provide high quality care to children in state care. There is no shortage of commitment in the workforce and amongst carers. Children demonstrate great strength and ability to heal and achieve. We are short, though, of ambition, aspiration and investment. South Australia could lead the nation in sound child protection practice. South Australians could aspire to provide the best care for children and young people under guardianship. We would need investment to deliver on these goals.

Seven years ago a comprehensive review of the child protection system was finalised. The review, sought by the newly-elected state government and conducted by Robyn Layton QC, had a deep and abiding impact on the shape of things in child protection. The Layton Review Report drew attention to the benefits of looking after our most vulnerable children. It pointed to significant deficits in meeting our responsibilities.

More recently the Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry report (the Mullighan Inquiry) provided stark evidence of past failures to protect children from abuse while in state care. Its findings and recommendations strengthened the case for further reform, particularly in the quality of care provided.

The state government responded positively to the findings of both inquiries. The legislation has been strengthened and child protection policy has been modernised. There have been two significant boosts to budget in this time, the first in 2004-05 and the second in 2006-07. However, the next steps in seeing through the promise of good protection for children are yet to be fully realised.

There is no denying the depth of the challenges in creating a sound sustainable child protection system. Others have referred to the shifts required as like turning the Titanic out of danger. That is how it feels. The looming ice cap, the creaking pace of turn and the terrible cost in lives if we do not succeed.

Evidence of a perilous journey is seen in the 33 per cent rise since 2004-05 in notifications of concern about children and in the 52 per cent rise in the number of children in state care over that same period. It is difficult to believe, but, in a class of 17 and 18 year olds, more than one in four of these young people would have been the subject of a child abuse or neglect report. The good news in this rise in demand for a child protection response is that the community is taking note of children's welfare and we have a child protection system that will respond to the most serious concerns. Our child protection and alternative care expenditure had increased 83 per cent in the five years to 2008-09 most of this in the provision of alternative care. This 2008-09 expenditure is still only 89 per cent of the national average spent per child because South Australia had started from such a low base.

Sadly the expenditure on intensive family support services remains low, at \$3.6million in 2008-09. Real expenditure per child in South Australia on intensive family services in 2008-09 was 20 per cent of the national average.

A child protection system cannot be fully effective if it operates mainly on reports of abuse, investigations, and taking children into state care. Such a system risks neglecting the preventative and early intervention services that are crucial if the escalating social and economic costs of child abuse are to be contained.

Strengthening our family support services, our early childhood and parenting, drug and alcohol, mental health, disability and homelessness services are critical to responding better to families in need and children who are unsafe.

The Titanic challenge is to provide better services to families and children when serious problems first arise, do better at working with Aboriginal communities for child wellbeing, improve the consistency of response and the quality of professional practice, ensure that we are more responsive to children's needs and views and have high quality alternative care for children when removed.

Unlike the fate of the Titanic, it is not too late.

South Australia could be a leader in child safety and wellbeing

South Australia could lead the way with a break-through policy on children, a core part of which would be child safety. It could be based on the rights of children and young people to protection, participation, identity and family. It would include new goals to reduce inequalities in early childhood development and in education and employment outcomes. Child and youth-friendly social and urban planning would be front and centre of all development. All government departments would incorporate outcomes for children and young people in their business planning. A more comprehensive child and youth advocacy structure would be adopted.

The 2004 *Keeping Them Safe* child protection policy launched a different era for child protection services in broadening the planning and responsibility, and improving accountability and transparency. In 2009 the Council of Australian Governments released a national framework for child protection which reinforced the need for a different approach in sharing responsibility, providing earlier intervention for families in crisis and enhancing transparency in performance.

In the core business of child safety, top of my list for action would be intensive services for families with high need. Our most vulnerable children live in families grappling with drug and alcohol dependence, mental illness and violence, sometimes compounded by isolation and poverty. Some of these children may not need to spend their childhood in state care if there was more intensive support to their families.

Set our sights high for children in state care

In June 2006 there were 1,497 children and young people in alternative care. Five years on in June 2010, there were 2,157. This is an average 8.8 per cent growth per annum. The rate of admission, that is the numbers of children brought into care for every thousand children in South Australia, has changed only slightly. Rather, children in care are staying longer and decisions to take action are being made when children are younger. I have seen no evidence of children being in care for no good reason or poor judgement.

In the Office's recent *Report on the Wellbeing of Children and Young People in Care in South Australia* we found that most children in care are safe, live in nurturing environments and have stability in their home life.

The children we are most worried about are those who are not safe, are not treated with kindness, and who have no sustained relationship with a trustworthy adult.

Where deficits were found the report noted areas for attention. Among these were closing the large residential facilities, investigating the timeliness and adequacy of mental health services for children who have suffered trauma, improved planning and quality of rehabilitation programs for young people who have broken the law and increased participation of children in decisions about their lives.

The mandate of the Guardian includes children and young people in custody for alleged and convicted criminal offences. Here too, the numbers have increased, from a daily occupancy of 53 in 2005-06 to 69 in 2009-10. Almost half of these young people are on remand for *alleged* offences.

The average length of time spent on remand in South Australia increased from 19 days in a year in 2005-06 to 31 in 2007-08, the last figures available. The median stay for any one episode of remand in 2007-08 though was only six days. Of the remanded group, 41 per cent were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people.

The problem of high rates of young people remanded to custody is not unique to South Australia. Indeed South Australia does better than most other Australian states and territories in the length of time on remand. However, the trend of young people remanded to detention centres is rising steadily and we could do more to reverse this. Specialist foster care, bail accommodation services and support to find family members who can temporarily care for young people on remand would all help further reduce the time in custody.

Build a robust, safe, responsive alternative care system

It is clear from the rate of growth in numbers of children needing alternative care that the pressure on the alternative care system is significant. Numbers alone though are only half the challenge. Making the alternative care system high quality and more flexible and responsive to children's needs is the other half.

Very recently a consultation document was released by Families SA with strategies for improved alternative care provision. This is an important step in delivering a more robust, responsive system of care.

While there have been two boosts to budget, the last in 2006-07, it is predominantly 'catch-up' expenditure. That is, the additional funding is meeting the previous years' deficits rather than allocations for projected growth. The risk is

that the department and non-government organisations will not be able to meet the demands for secure and stable alternative care in the short term or the long term.

The consequence is that inappropriate alternative care options are used, such as carers employed on shifts looking after children in motel rooms and rented houses, vulnerable children being placed with other children who have serious behavioural problems and siblings living long distances apart. The intention is always that these are short-term arrangements, but too often they stretch on for months, and sometimes years. The department's response has been to do the best with what they have got, by expanding their own residential care facilities and working with non-government organisations to expand both foster and residential care. This has been modestly successful.

It has, though, resulted in a rising proportion of children and young people accommodated in residential care. There was very good reason why we as a community moved away from accommodating children in large residential facilities. They were often more like workplaces for staff than homes for children. We know now to guard against this. Today good quality residential care will suit some young people at some times but it should only ever be a positive purposeful choice in home-like settings.

Of all children in alternative care in South Australia in 2009 we already had 8.6 per cent in residential care compared with the national average of 4.8 per cent. We also have some inappropriate facilities here which accommodate up to 12 children. Among the strategies in the Families SA Directions for Alternative Care draft document it is proposed that residential care will in the future provide accommodation for between four and six young people in each residence. I look forward to supporting an action plan that delivers on this strategy and ask that the timeframe be short for replacing the large residential facilities.

Provide what children need, not what can be spared

The commitment by government to provide priority access to public services for children and young people under guardianship has been successful on many counts, particularly in greater awareness of their circumstances and needs. This has been most evident in schools and pre-schools, in hospitals and dental services, disability services and housing providers. Improved access to services, though, has had mixed results.

Returning to the theme of ambition and aspiration, there is more to be done in timely access to services. If I had to choose priority areas, they would be mental health and leaving care services, and more robust case management to ensure that services were closely related to need. This is not a comment on the people who work in these areas but rather about demand on their time.

No shortage of goodwill and commitment

In our work in the Office of the Guardian, I am reminded every day of the strength of children and young people to recover, strive and achieve and the professional and personal commitment of their carers and workers in child protection and youth justice. At times our relationships are tested by different viewpoints, scrutiny and our intervention. I thank everyone my Office has worked with over the past year for your cooperation and goodwill. The progress reported here is testament to your resolve.

Who we work for

We promote and protect the rights of the nearly seven in every thousand South Australian children and young people who are in the custody or guardianship of the Minister for Families and Communities. This includes those who are in relative or kinship care, foster care, residential care or secure custody.

As at 30 June 2010 in South Australia there were 2,306 children and young people under the guardianship of the Minister through care and protection court orders, not counting the 47 on interim or temporary orders. These 2,306 children and young people had the following characteristics.

age	0 to 1	6.2
	2 to 4	16.4
	5 to 9	29.4
	10 to 14	29.0
	15 to 17	19.0
gender	females	46.7
	males	52.8
	unknown	0.5
Aboriginal		24.8
type of order	long term care and protection order	84.7
	12 month care and protection order	16.3

Source: Families SA Data Warehouse

The living arrangements for children and young people in alternative care¹ are as follows.

care arrangements		%
	foster care	46.6
	relative and kinship care	38.2
	emergency and short term accommodation	7.0
	Families SA residential care	5.8
	NGO residential care	2.2
financially assisted adoption	0.2	

Source: Families SA Data Warehouse

¹The following includes children on interim and/or temporary orders, other person guardianship and voluntary custody agreements.

There were 1,013 admissions to youth training centres in 2009-10 of which 40.3 per cent were Aboriginal children and young people and 16.2 per cent were under the guardianship of the Minister at the time of admission.

Functions and outcomes

The Guardian has six functions defined in section 52C of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*.

- To promote the best interests of children under the guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister, and in particular those in alternative care
- To act as an advocate for the interests of children under the guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister and, in particular, for any such child who has suffered, or is alleged to have suffered, sexual abuse
- To monitor the circumstances of children under the guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister
- To provide advice to the Minister on the quality of the provision of care for children under the guardianship, or in the custody of, the Minister and on whether the children's needs are being met
- To inquire into, and provide advice to the Minister in relation to, systemic reform necessary to improve the quality of care provided for children in alternative care
- To investigate and report to the Minister on matters referred to the Guardian by the Minister

In this section, I report on the work and outcomes of the Office in relation to meeting the statutory functions of the Guardian.

Promote

Statutory function

To promote the best interests of children under the guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister, and in particular those in alternative care

Our goal

Effective early intervention services ensure only those who need state care are taken into care.

In October 2008 State Cabinet adopted the *Information Sharing Guidelines for Promoting the Safety and Wellbeing of Children, Young People and their Families* (ISG). The ISG is the first of its kind in Australia and should be of significant benefit in coordinating services to families where it is anticipated that children may be harmed. The Guardian was requested to actively promote and monitor their proper use across all relevant government agencies and non-government organisations. A Principal Advisor (Information Sharing) was appointed in January 2009 to assist with the implementation of the guidelines. In 2009-10 four major government departments and four major non-government organisations implemented or commenced implementation of the guidelines. The number of non-government organisations using the guidelines will escalate in 2010-11.

Considerable work was done in partnership with the Office of the Commonwealth Privacy Commissioner and the non-government sector in South Australia to attempt to resolve inconsistencies between National Privacy Principles and the requirements of the ISG. This issue has not been resolved. However, proposed changes to national privacy legislation would ensure that information could be shared without consent if necessary, where serious harm could be anticipated but the harm was not necessarily imminent.

Our goal

Care and services for children in care are focussed on the child achieving her/his full potential.

About being in care

The 'being in care' products have been developed by young people in care for children and young people in care, with the assistance of this Office. The product range now includes a booklet, contact cards, a social worker checklist, back-packs, 'rights' wristbands, key-rings, tattoos, two comic books and a soft toy for younger children. These products are provided free to children in care and are available to agencies that have endorsed the Charter of Rights. Oog, the safety symbol for children in care, was again in the Credit Union Christmas Pageant.

Voice of children and young people

Core to our purpose is strengthening the voice of children and young people in care. Reports, newsletters, policy advice and presentations emphasise what young people have said about the matter. We source their views through focus groups, interviews, reference groups and our Youth Advisors' meetings.

Services Bank and Dame Roma Mitchell Trust Fund

We work closely with Families SA, Community Connect (DFC), and the Board of the Dame Roma Mitchell Trust Fund for Children and Young People in finding additional goods and services for children. In 2009-10 the Dame Roma Mitchell Trust Fund achieved deductible gift recipient status for its Foundation and fund-raising efforts can now begin in earnest.

Our goal

All decisions that affect children in care take into account their views and are made in the best interests of the child.

Promotion of children's participation in decisions

We continue to promote children and young people's participation in decisions and this year we have focused on this in the audits of annual reviews. The results of the audit though are discouraging, with a decline in the participation of children in the annual review process to only 16 per cent. However, in 65 per cent of cases reviewed the social worker demonstrated thorough knowledge of the child's views.

'Carla', 9, had recently moved to a temporary residential placement from long-term foster care. She continued to attend the same primary school but had recently been suspended for poor behaviour. Carla said that she was unhappy at the school, that she gets teased and was aware that, in response, she picks on other students. Carla had told residential staff that she wanted to go to the school where the other residents go. Residential staff had suggested she make the move. However the case managing office thought she should stay at her school to give her some stability. There was therefore disagreement among Families SA staff about what was in her best interests and how much weight to give the views of a nine-year-old.

A case conference and a school re-entry meeting did not resolve the issue and Carla's behaviour deteriorated. Families SA requested assistance from the Office of the Guardian to ensure Carla's wishes were heard by someone independent of the disagreement. The advocate from the Office contacted the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) inter-agency support services about the planned second re-entry to school meeting. The advocate asked that Carla attend. The DECS convenor of the meeting, who had met Carla, was happy to include her and meet her ahead of the meeting to prepare her for it.

Report on the significance of quality contact between children and their case worker

In August 2009 we released the report of the inquiry into children's views about good contact with their social workers. Among other topics the report documented their views and the case file evidence of participation in decisions. Two young researchers who had care experience were engaged to assist with the project and particularly with the interviews with children.

In 2009-10 the Guardian promoted the findings at forums of social workers, and recorded social workers' views about obstacles to achieving quality contact with children.

Modelling participation in decision making

We monitor our performance against our youth participation strategy, which requires the active contribution of children and young people in our work and decisions. This year young people have participated in our systemic inquiry, projects, selection panels and information provision. Our Youth Advisors have prepared advice on the need for community visitors, mental health services for young people and a review of the GCYP youth participation policy.

Community visitor program for children in care

In June 2010 the Guardian convened a roundtable discussion on the wisdom of having independent visitors for all children in state care. At present this Office visits children in residential care and secure custody and the visits are usually only once every three to six months. The participants concluded that independent visitors who can link to or provide an advocacy service are beneficial. However, if the financial resources did not stretch to this, they chose to strengthen case work and mentoring services, with the addition of independent visiting to those in residential care, secure custody, relative care and in the first years of their care experience. A report on the findings will be released in 2010.

Individual advocacy

We provide a trouble-shooting service for children in care who may be seriously harmed or distressed about decisions or lack of services [see below, p 15]. This requires adopting the child's perspective as part of the advocacy process.

Advocate

Statutory function

To act as an advocate for the interests of children under the guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister and, in particular, for any such child who has suffered, or is alleged to have suffered, sexual abuse

Our goal

Issues in the best interests of children under the guardianship, or in the custody of, the Minister are continually raised and followed through by the Guardian.

Individual advocacy

Our individual advocacy work is consciously linked to our advocacy on systemic issues. Trends or repetition of problems are identified and pursued. In 2009-10 the Office received 156 requests for intervention on behalf of children and young people. Of these, 120 fell within our mandate, that is, they were requests about children and young people under guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister. This is down from 141 the year before.

A single matter sometimes affects more than one child or young person in care. We therefore assisted or advocated on behalf of 162 children. The type of assistance is within a range of intervention, from information about policies or rights at one end through to a full review of the circumstances of the child with advocacy for change. We reviewed ten cases, affecting 17 children.

The 120 requests that were within our mandate were made by:

Child/young person	34
Families SA	21
Carer (foster/relative)	11
Parent/guardian	11
Other relative	9
Alternative care	8
Legal services	8
Health services	6
Member of Parliament	2
Other ²	10

² Those categorised as 'other' identified as advocates for the individual child(ren) for whom they were making contact, and included friends, mentors and child care providers.

The presenting issues were³:

Care arrangements	59
Support services (not specified)	33
Family contact (sibling and parent)	21
Mental health services	21
Education	11
General health services	10
Leaving care arrangements	9
Relationship with social worker	8
Disability services	7
Staff conduct	7
Other	20

'Josh', 9, and 'James', 7, live separately to their sibling 'Chad', 3, who was in a relatively new placement. Chad was allocated to a social worker from a different office than that of Josh and James. Since Chad had moved to his new foster family the contact between the siblings had reduced.

When Josh and James' carer spoke to the Office of the Guardian the children had not seen each other for six weeks. The carer reported that the two offices in Families SA had agreed that the carers could arrange the contact between the children. However the carers had different views on what was appropriate contact.

Josh and James's carer felt that she could not advocate to the Families SA office with responsibility for Chad. Advocacy from her placement support worker had been unsuccessful. It was agreed that given the children's ages and the attempts already made to resolve the matter, the Office of the Guardian would seek further information from the two Families SA offices.

One Families SA office explained that they were attempting family reunification for Josh and James. The other office was committed to the long-term foster placement for Chad. Families SA staff had thought that the two carers would ensure the siblings had monthly contact. They acknowledged the different parenting approaches and carers' different views of placement stability. The two Families SA offices offered to facilitate the participation of both carers in the development of a family contact plan to ensure Josh, James and Chad saw each other regularly.

³ There is often more than one presenting issue in a request and one issue may affect more than one child. Our reporting is the number of children directly affected by the issue.

Alleged sexual abuse of children in care

In accordance with recommendations 20 and 24 of the Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry, our Office is notified by the Special Investigations Unit (DFC) of allegations of sexual abuse of children in care. Our role is to monitor the progress of the investigation and to ensure that the child has an advocate. This is done with the cooperation of the Special Investigations Unit, the South Australian Police and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In 2009-10, 68 notifications were referred to us for monitoring. In the reporting period, our Office received more than one notification for 11 individual children and young people.

The notifications of alleged sexual abuse were in the following care arrangements:

Foster care (inc. respite)	31
Residential care	25
Relative care	8
Agency care	3
Secure care	1

Review of programs in secure care

In March 2008 we released a report on the effectiveness of programs provided to young offenders in the youth training centres. The eight recommendations were accepted for implementation by Families SA, who are responsible for services to young offenders. Progress reports were prepared in June and November 2008 and again in June 2009 and January 2010. Significant improvements have been reported in case management but progress on the other recommendations has been slow.

Prevention of sexual abuse in care

Our advocacy on this topic dates back to 2005 and the public documents are available from our website. Many of our recommendations made in 2005 were taken up in the Mullighan Inquiry and accepted by government. Since 2007 we have been working closely with Families SA on addressing the issue of children who run away from placements and are at high risk of exploitation. This project is ongoing.

Children in temporary accommodation

In 2005 we began to monitor the number of children in motel-like accommodation and in early 2006 made recommendations for improvements to the quality of care provided. These recommendations were largely implemented. We continue to monitor the number and length of stay. In May 2008 there was a high of 87 children accommodated in motel-like accommodation with 59 children staying over 60 days. This peak was reached again in November 2009 with 87 children in motel-like accommodation but with only 55 staying over 60 days. By the end of the 2009-10 year the numbers were down to 39 with 29 staying over 60 days. The opening in 2010 of new short term accommodation for children entering care should see this figure continue to fall.

Domestic violence law reform

In 2009 the Office participated in a cross-government working group on domestic violence law reform following a 2007 review by Maureen Pyke QC for the Attorney General. The Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Bill passed in December 2009, but has yet to commence. Among the significant changes were specific reference to the impact of domestic violence on children and that children can be applicants in their own right for intervention orders.

Improving educational outcomes for children in care

As part of the implementation of strategies from our 2008 report on improving educational outcomes for children and young people in care, we worked with the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology and the three major universities to produce a brochure encouraging young people in care to anticipate going to university. The 1,200 brochures were distributed through Families SA, the Department of Education and Children's Services and the universities.

Raising public awareness

We aim to maintain an active program of public speaking and writing to raise awareness of issues for children in care and in child protection more generally. Eleven public presentations were made in addition to presentations about the Charter of Rights and information sharing guidelines.

Our goal

More children and young people in care feel good, feel safe and cared for, get help, and understand and have a say.

Charter of rights

In 2005 children and young people in care wrote their own Charter of Rights with assistance from the Office of the Guardian, CREATE, Families SA and the Child and Family Welfare Association (SA). On the young people's behalf we have the responsibility for ensuring its implementation. An implementation committee met throughout the year to report on progress in endorsement, distribution and compliance with the rights. As at 30 June 2010 43 agencies had committed to uphold the 37 rights. Six other agencies are in the process of endorsement.

After four years of promoting the charter the implementation committee recommended moving to the next phase of reporting on compliance. In June 2010 we issued the first endorsing agency compliance survey. The results of this survey will be released later in 2010.

Monitor

Statutory function

To monitor the circumstances of children under the guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister

Our goal

We know what is happening for children and young people in care.

Implementation of monitoring framework

In 2007 we introduced a framework for our monitoring activities so that we could report against standards deemed acceptable by children. There are 12 quality statements based on the rights in the children's charter. In April 2010 we released the first public report on the findings of our monitoring work.

Monitoring activities

We undertake the following activities to monitor the circumstances of children and young people in care:

- Receipt of aggregate data available from Families SA
- Audits of annual reviews (10.8 per cent of children on long term orders)
- Enquiries lodged at the Guardian's Office (7.4 per cent of children on care and protection orders)
- Visits to residential and secure care units (79 visits, approximately 8 per cent of children in alternative care)
- Review of records of safety in secure care (twice per annum)

Report on Wellbeing of Children and Young People in Care

In April 2010 we released the first full report on the wellbeing of children and young people in care, which summarised the findings of all the monitoring activities for 2008-09.

The Office concluded that:

- More than four out of five children in care live in kind and nurturing environments and nine out of ten are in stable placements.
- Most children in care are safe and feel safe.
- Ninety per cent of children in care have significant people in their lives who show them care and affection in a trusting relationship.

- There have been noted improvements over the past few years in timely access to health and disability services.
- There is ongoing improvement in the attention paid to the educational needs of children.

Each chapter of the report noted areas for attention, where deficits were found. These included:

- The need to reduce the number of residents in some residential facilities to a maximum of four, or, in some circumstances, to six, and to replace the large facilities over time with smaller home-like residences.
- More intensive therapeutic and case management services for young people who run away frequently.
- The development of an alternative care plan that articulates future directions for achieving security, choice and stability.
- A review of the timeliness and adequacy of mental health services for children who have suffered trauma and instability.
- Improvements in the quality of rehabilitation programs for young people who have broken the law.
- Further reductions in the rate of suspension and exclusion from schools.
- Increased use of Life Story Books to assist children to keep track of, and understand, their history and current circumstances.
- Increased participation of children in decisions about their lives.

Aggregate data

Aggregate data is primarily sourced through and with the cooperation of Families SA. The most current and all-purpose data is available from the Guardian's website. Notable changes are:

- The numbers of children on 12 month and long term care and protection orders has risen from 1,552 in June 2006 to 2,306 in June 2010, an increase of 48.6 per cent. In the 12 months of 2009-10 the increase was 9.1 per cent.⁴

⁴ Children and young people under care and protection orders and those under alternative care are overlapping populations; that is most, but not all, children in alternative care are on a custody or guardianship order, and similarly, most, but not all, children under the guardianship of the Minister are in alternative care.

- In 12 months, the number of children in South Australia aged 0 to 17 years on care and protection orders has increased from 6.2 per thousand in 2008, to 6.7 per thousand in 2009, the latest figure available at the time of publication.
- The proportion of children and young people in family based alternative care has declined steadily from 88.3 per cent in December 2006 (when the current counting rules were introduced) to 85.0 per cent in June 2010. In the same period, the proportion in residential care has risen from 6.0 per cent to 8.0 per cent and the proportion in all forms of emergency short term care has risen from 5.8 per cent to 7.0 per cent.
- The proportion of Aboriginal children placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives, in Aboriginal residential care and with Aboriginal foster carers decreased from 75.9 per cent in June 2006 to 70.3 per cent in June 2010. However, the proportion placed with Aboriginal relatives increased from 32.6 per cent to 37.7 per cent in the same period.
- The proportion of children under 12 month and long term orders who are Aboriginal grew from 22.8 per cent in June 2006 (4.4 per cent unknown) to 24.8 per cent in June 2010 (1.0 per cent unknown).
- The total number of admissions of children and young people to secure care increased from 1,025 in 2005-06 to 1,097 in 2008-09 and declined to 1,013 in 2009-10. The rate of average daily occupancy increased from 53 in 2005-06 and declined from 72 in 2008-09 to 69 in 2009-10.

Audits of annual reviews

The Senior Advocate audited 201 annual reviews at 19 Families SA offices. Some offices scheduled regular reviews and were visited on more than one occasion. Annual reviews are only conducted for children and young people placed under long-term guardianship orders. We audited 10.8 per cent of reviews that were to be conducted, up from 5.8 per cent in 2008-09.

A report on the audit is provided to the Minister annually. The major findings for 2009-10 were:

- Four out of five children and young people whose circumstances were reviewed were in stable, long-term placements.
- Nine out of ten children and young people whose circumstances were reviewed had at least one significant adult in their life.
- Three out of four school-aged children and young people had current Individual Education Plans.

- There is considerable work to be done to ensure the active participation of children and young people in the annual review, as well as the inclusion of others significant to the child in the decision-making process.
- Regular contact between siblings in separate placements remain an issue.

In 2010-11 we will continue to focus on the participation of children and young people, the inclusion of others in decision-making and the implementation of the culturally appropriate Life Story Books for all children in care.

Visits to residents of residential and secure care

Families SA has seven residential care units and 20 transitional accommodation houses⁵. There are another 15 residences operated by non-government organisations. In 2009-10 the GCYP advocates made 52 visits to residential facilities to meet and talk with the residents and staff. Written feedback is provided promptly to the relevant manager and any specific concerns have been quickly responded to.

In 2009-10, the advocates made 27 visits to residents in different units within Magill and Cavan youth training centres. Written feedback is provided promptly to the relevant manager. Specific concerns have been quickly responded to. The findings from these visits are included in our annual wellbeing report and are discussed with the agencies affected.

'Jodi', 15, had been remanded in custody on allegations of assault. Jodi had previously been assessed as having an Autism spectrum disorder. In the youth training centre Jodi was having significant difficulties with sensory overload from other residents yelling and witnessing physical aggression. Despite efforts by staff, she also had difficulties in following instructions and at times was in trouble for not communicating with staff. She became more withdrawn and unresponsive.

The Office of the Guardian became aware of Jodi's situation on a monitoring visit to the centre. The advocate was informed that the other residents often spoke about Jodi in front of her, as if she was not there, but otherwise they were protective of her. Further enquiries confirmed that Jodi had been remanded in custody while further psychological assessments took place. Jodi was known to external services such as CAMHS, Autism SA and Disability SA, although she had not been allocated a Disability SA worker.

The advocate spoke to a Disability SA manager and a case worker was allocated. A case conference soon followed. Liaison continued between the youth training centre, Families SA and Disability SA. Jodi was released from secure care to live with her family, with Disability SA providing support.

⁵ A new residential care unit commenced operation in 2010, as did a new transitional accommodation complex with eight houses.

Review of records of safety in secure care

Twice a year we visit the two youth training centres for the purpose of reviewing their records that relate to the physical safety of residents.

This past year has seen good response overall to residents' feedback, with a well-used complaints system and regular residents' advisory groups. Training has significantly improved with the addition of relationship-based training and skills for working with children with special needs. I continue to hold the view though that a different approach to the 'use of force' training should be adopted. There has been no noticeable progress in the quality of rehabilitation programs or in an individualised approach to programs. A new risk assessment process appears to be mostly well received and should result in improved advice on responding to residents at high risk.

Youth advisors and participation

Knowing what is happening to children in care is our goal but the knowledge is imperfect. We cannot be where all the children are. However we do take every opportunity to hear from young people in care about their experiences. Our six Youth Advisors are at the heart of this advice to us and they, in turn, encourage other young people to participate in our consultations. Our youth participation policy and strategy strengthen our engagement with children and young people.

The Youth Advisors assist the Office with most projects, the selection of staff and contractors, initiate projects of their own, do some public speaking and contribute to planning and policy advice.

Advise

Statutory function

To provide advice to the Minister on the quality of the provision of care for children under the guardianship, or in the custody of, the Minister and on whether the children's needs are being met

Our goal

Advice to the Minister is credible, actionable, practical, informed by children and young people and has significant benefit for children and young people.

Advice and inquiry

In 2009-10 one major inquiry, on the use of physical restraint of children, was conducted and advice provided to the Minister as a result of this. This is reported in the following section, Inquire.

Other advice provided and reported on elsewhere in this annual report is:

- The quality of youth justice rehabilitation programs (see p 17)
- Report on the wellbeing of children and young people in care (see p 20)
- Review of safety records in youth training centres (see p 24)

Residential care

In 2005 I first drew attention to the unsafe conditions for children accommodated in the six large residential facilities. These facilities house up to 12 young residents, most with high needs. Experience and evidence about institutions tells us that the risk of harm is higher when staff have only limited control over the 'mix' of residents and when a resident's high needs can make peer relationships threatening or hostile. In larger residential facilities these risks are hard to avoid. In 2007 I was greatly disappointed that the government decided to build two additional 12-bed facilities. In 2010 the first of these was opened. The design of the new facility is a vast improvement on those built three decades ago. The point remains though that it is inappropriate and unsafe to accommodate 12 children with high needs in one residence.

My advice to the Minister since 2005 has consistently been to replace the large facilities with smaller home-like residential care. The evidence from our monitoring of conditions in residential care confirms the unsuitability of housing so many children in a single facility.

While there is still no firm commitment to replace the larger facilities, the recently released consultation paper on alternative care directions includes a strategy to provide group home accommodation for between four and six young people in

each residence. I hope the action plan to follow will include a timeframe to replace the larger units sooner rather than later.

In 2007 the Office conducted a limited inquiry into the issue of children missing from residential care. Following agreement with Families SA on strategies to better address their needs, two progress reports have been written and a third is underway. Progress is evident in greater control over admissions, ongoing discussion with SAPOL for prompt retrieval, and legislative changes which make it an offence to harbour, conceal or communicate with a specific child against the Chief Executive's written direction. In 2009 an intensive therapeutic service commenced with 21 young people who are at high risk of exploitation. The Second Story youth health service now provides all health assessments to residents and has commenced protective behaviours training with some residents.

Information sharing and national privacy principles

Advice was provided to the Minister on the inconsistencies between the state government's requirement for information sharing when children are at risk and the National Privacy Principles in the *Privacy Act 1988*. These inconsistencies affect non-government organisations that have contracts with both the state and commonwealth governments. The issue has yet to be resolved.

Care planning and alternative care policy

Advice was provided on the need for strategies and action on developing a more robust and responsive alternative care system. In 2007 alternative care directions had been released but had not been followed by implementation.

Just recently, in July 2010, a draft strategy document for alternative care has been released for consultation.

Feedback from social workers on the significance of quality contact with children

Following the release of our inquiry report on what children had to say about their contact and relationship with social workers, I sought further opinions from social workers on what would assist them to better meet the expectations of good contact with children. This feedback was provided to the Minister and to the Families SA Executive Director.

Charter of Rights and the Children's Protection Act 1993

Recent amendments to the *Children's Protection Act 1993* requires that a Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care be developed in consultation with children, accepted by the Minister for Families and Communities and presented to Parliament. Advice on this matter was provided to the Minister and is being considered.

Contributions to policy development

In addition to the advice to the Minister we provide our view to others on policies that affect vulnerable children or children in care. In this past year we have provided written comment on:

- CAMHS Model of Care
- Victims of crime compensation procedures
- Children's Protection Amendment Bill
- Practice Governance in Families SA
- National standards for out of home care

Inquire

Statutory function

To inquire into, and provide advice to the Minister in relation to, systemic reform necessary to improve the quality of care provided for children in alternative care

Our goal

Inquiry is timely and based on sound monitoring and contact with children.

The use of physical restraint of children in residential facilities

In April 2009 I commenced an inquiry into the current policy and practice in the use of physical restraint of residents in South Australian residential facilities for children. The inquiry was completed in November and the report released in January 2010. Two external researchers were engaged, Associate Professor Andrew Day, Deakin University and Dr Michael Daffern, Monash University. Both were assisted in the interviews with young people by a young researcher, Ms Emily Rozee.

The major findings of the inquiry included:

- Restraining children is a dangerous practice that can cause significant injury and even death to children and young people.
- At least since 2007 there have been no incidents of serious injury to children and young people that occurred as a result of a restraint in residential care in South Australia.
- Significant reductions have occurred in the use of restraint in recent years, and that there is now much greater awareness, training and accountability in the use of restraint than there had been previously.
- Ongoing review of incidents is important given that there is typically a reduction in the use of restraints when behaviour management practices come under scrutiny.
- There is a general consensus that restraint should be used as an intervention of last resort and in a planned fashion that minimises the risk of harm and maintains the dignity of the child. Notwithstanding this consensus, there is also a need to reinforce the use of approaches to the management of challenging behaviour that do not involve direct physical intervention.

- There is no evidence to suggest that restraint effectively reduces either the frequency or intensity of challenging behaviours. The only rationale for restraining a child relates to actions that are required to protect the child or young person, or others around them, from immediate and serious harm.
- Restraint is most commonly used in Community Residential Care settings, although also regularly occurs in Transitional Accommodation and Secure Care units. Non-government providers have generally much lower levels of restraint, with some not using restraint at all.
- The introduction of the non-violent crisis intervention training package appears to have significantly reduced the number of reported restraints across the Community Residential Care and Transitional Accommodation units.
- Young people expressed concern about the use of restraint, and described instances when, in their experience, it had been used to secure compliance or as a punishment.
- Concern was expressed by residential care staff and managers about the high rate of restraint in some settings, and the difficulties in engendering organisational and cultural change amongst some groups of staff. Ongoing work is required to monitor and review such practices.
- Residential care staff and managers believed that much more rigorous training was required in the area of both restraint and behaviour management.
- The size and design of residential units can exert a profound influence on the use of restraint and there is a need to develop purpose built facilities that are informed by contemporary principles and approaches to residential care for children.
- There is little empirical basis to determine the psychological impact of restraint, and consequently there is the need for systematic research into the effects of restraint and behaviour management practices on both the levels of challenging behaviour and the social and emotional well-being of children and young people.

The recommendation to provide a common policy on the use of physical restraint was accepted. Proposed legislative change to amend the *Family and Community Services Regulations 2009* to remove compliance from the permitted reasons to use force was not accepted. Under discussion still are recommendations related to external monitoring, the replacement of large residential facilities and on-site training and supervision.

Our goal

Reform is focussed on improving the quality of care

Children in motel-type accommodation

We began monitoring the numbers of children in motel-type emergency accommodation in February 2005. In January 2006 we made seven recommendations to Families SA for improving the quality of care to children accommodated in motels. A progress report was written in January 2007 which concluded that the major issues about quality of care had been addressed but that, due to the lack of alternative placements, the numbers of children had increased. An emergency accommodation strategy was introduced in mid-2006 and has had a steadying impact on growth in numbers. However in 2009 the numbers had crept up again to 87 children. By the end of 2009-10 the numbers were down to 39. This is in the context of a 7.0 per cent rise in the number of children in care this year. The opening in 2010 of new accommodation for children entering care should see this continue to decline. At 30 June 2010, 29 children had had stays of over 60 days compared with 37 children in June 2009.

Investigate

Statutory function

To investigate and report to the Minister on matters referred to the Guardian by the Minister

Our goal

Systemic and individual investigations result in recommendations that are practical, acted on and that improve outcomes for children.

No matters were referred to the Guardian by the Minister.

Our organisation

Legislation

The position of Guardian for Children and Young Persons was established in an amendment to the *Children's Protection Act 1993* (the Act) proclaimed on 1 February 2006.

Governance

Under the Act, the Guardian is appointed by the Governor. The Guardian has statutory functions and reporting requirements which are discussed elsewhere in this report. The functions are broadly those of monitoring conditions of care, investigating matters of concern and advocating for children and young people under guardianship or in the custody of the Minister. The Guardian provides advice to the Minister for Families and Communities on these matters.

The Guardian is not subject to directions from the Minister which inhibit inquiries or investigations, prevent or restrict communications or which limit the content of advice, reports or recommendations made in fulfilling the statutory functions.

The Guardian has powers necessary, expedient or incidental to the performance of the Guardian's functions.

The Act explicitly gives the Guardian the power to require information from organisations and people that is necessary to fulfilling the Guardian's functions.

As at 1 January 2010 the Guardian must establish and maintain a Youth Advisory Committee. The Committee's primary function is to assist the Guardian in the performance of the Guardian's functions by ensuring that the Guardian is aware of the experiences of, and receives advice from, children who are, or have been, under the guardianship or in the custody of the Minister.

The Guardian makes frequent use of other consultative bodies to inform projects and develop advice and recommendations but these have no formal governance role.

Location

The Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People is located at Level 4, East Wing, 50 Grenfell Street, Adelaide.

The office hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

Access

The office at Level 4 East, 50 Grenfell Street, has been designed for wheelchair access and, within workplace imperatives, for children.

The Guardian's website is built on a self hosted Wordpress platform which is compliant with the World Wide Web Consortium's web content accessibility guidelines.

Complaints

The grievances and complaints policy is available from the website and is provided when someone complains about the service.

There have been no complaints made to the Office about the service in 2009-10.

Energy management

The Office of the Guardian has participated in the Department for Families and Communities energy efficiency and waste reduction program. In compliance with this program all waste paper is recycled, rubbish is sorted for recycling and power standby features are engaged. The Office uses a fuel-efficient hybrid vehicle.

Freedom of information

Legislation exempts information about individual cases from disclosure under the *Freedom of Information Act 1991*. There has been one request under FOI to this Office during 2009-10.

Strategic and organisational planning

The Office released its strategic plan for 2007-10 in October 2007. The Office has an annual work-plan which is reviewed quarterly.

The Office reviewed the strategic plan and reassigned some priorities in June 2009 and the annual work-plan was adjusted accordingly.

The Office commenced a review of its effectiveness and performance in April 2010.

Employee numbers, gender and status

Total number of employees (including Guardian) at June 30 2010	
Persons	8
FTEs	7

Gender	% Persons	% FTEs
Male	25	23
Female	75	77

Number of persons during 2009/10	
Separated from agency	1
Recruited to agency	1

Number of persons at 30 June 2010	
On Leave Without Pay	1

Number of employees by salary bracket at June 30 2010			
Salary bracket	Male	Female	Total
\$0 - \$49,199			
\$49,200 - \$62,499	1	1	2
\$62,500 - \$80,099	1	2	3
\$80,100 - \$100,999		2	2
\$101,000 +		1	1
Total	2	6	8

Status of employees in current position at June 30 2010					
Persons	Ongoing	Short term	Long term	Other	Total
Male	2				2
Female	3	2	1		6
Total	5	2	1		8

Executives by gender, classification and status in current position								
Classification	Ongoing		Term Tenured		Term Untenured		Totals	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
EXA						1		1
Total						1		1

Workforce diversity

Number of employees by age bracket by gender at June 30 2010					
Age bracket	Male	Female	Total	% of Total	Workforce benchmark (%)
15-19					6.1
20-24					10.6
25-29					10.5
30-34		2	2	12.5	9.4
35-39		2	2	25.0	11.2
40-44					11.1
45-49	1		1	12.5	12.2
50-54		2	2	25.0	11.0
55-59					9.2
60-64	1		1	12.5	6.0
65 +					2.9
Total	2	6	8	100.0	100.0

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees at June 30 2009				
Male	Female	Total	% of Total	Workforce benchmark (%)
1		1	12.5	2

Cultural and linguistic diversity					
	Male	Female	Total	% of agency	SA community (%)
Number of employees born overseas	1		1	12.5	20.3
Number of employees who speak languages other than English at home				0	16.6

Employees with ongoing disabilities requiring workplace adaptation			
Male	Female	Total	% of agency
	1	0	12.5

Leave management

Average days leave taken per full time equivalent employee	
Leave type	2009-10
sick leave	9.89
family carer's leave	1.52
miscellaneous special leave	0

Employees using voluntary flexible working arrangements by gender at 30 June 2009			
	Male	Female	Total
purchased leave			
flexitime	2	5	7
compressed weeks			
part time job share			
working from home			

Performance development

Documented review of individual performance development plan	
Employees with ...	% total workforce
a review within the past 12 months	100
a review older than 12 months	
no review	

Consultants

CPD Biz Consulting was engaged to undertake the review of performance and effectiveness of the Office for a fee of \$16,000.

Occupational health, safety and injury management

In 2009-10 there were no incidents resulting in workplace injury.

Financial

Revenue

The source of revenue for the Office is an allocation made for the child protection reform program and the Information Sharing Guidelines and administered through the Department for Families and Communities. The revenue for 2009-10 was \$810,799.00

Expenditure

Financial services are provided by the Department for Families and Communities. The financial operations of this Office are consolidated into and audited through the Department. Accordingly, full financial reports are not provided as part of this annual report. A financial summary of expenditure is provided below.

Financial summary of expenditure			
Item	Actual	Budget	Variation
Salaries and wages	623,034.24	632,038	9,003.76
Goods and services	151,556.49	178,761	27,204.51
Total	774,590.73	810,799	36,208.27

The staff team

During the 2009-10 financial year, nine paid staff members and six unpaid Youth Advisors worked in the Office.

Guardian

Pam Simmons

The Guardian is responsible for meeting the statutory functions of the position and reporting on these, including the circumstances of children and young people in custody or guardianship of the Minister and improvements to the system of care.

Pam was appointed to the position of Guardian in June 2004. She has 25 years work experience as an advocate for social justice and change in Australia and overseas.

Senior Advocate

Amanda Shaw

The Senior Advocate leads the advocacy team, audits annual reviews of children and young people under guardianship and supports the involvement of the Youth Advisors in the work of the Office.

Amanda has spent ten years working in the youth and community services sectors in Australia and Canada and she has a passion for youth issues.

Office Administrator

Yvette Roberts

Yvette is responsible for the day to day running of the office as well as undertaking other tasks contributing directly to the Office's work.

Yvette has had a wide range of experience in administration including three years in aged care prior to joining the Office in January 2006.

Project Officer - Communications

Malcolm Downes

Malcolm researches and writes materials for publications, edits and designs materials for electronic and paper communications, collects and maintains statistical information, monitors the implementation of the Monitoring Framework and provides ad hoc support and services to Office staff on communications and information matters.

Prior to joining the Office in January 2006, Malcolm spent seven years working on sector development and public policy with the South Australian Council of Social Service.

Senior Policy Officer

Kendall Crowe

Kendall conducts research and consultations and prepares policy papers and reports for the Guardian. She has nearly ten years experience in the public sector in South Australia and interstate, working predominantly in immigration and child protection policy.

Advocates

Lisa Firth (to April 2010)

Lisa is an advocate for children and young people, with special interest and skills in the area of disability. She has worked in the disability sector for over 15 years with government and non-government agencies. She has been involved with the provision of behaviour intervention, personal support, case management, youth camps, vacation care and education and training.

Belinda Walker (from September 2009)

Belinda is an advocate for children and young people with experience in a variety of sectors undertaking different roles in counselling, group work, case management, advocacy and case work.

Gino Iuliano

Gino is an advocate for children and young people, with special interest and skills in Aboriginal issues. He has worked for 16 years in Aboriginal child protection and the alternative care system in the government and non-government sectors. Gino is a Kaurua and Narunga man through his mother and identifies strongly with both of these communities.

Principal Advisor – Information Sharing

Donna Mayhew

Donna oversees the implementation and monitors application of the state wide *Information Sharing Guidelines for Promoting the Safety and Wellbeing of Children, Young People and their Families*. Previously, she has led a number of public policy development and change management activities, including transport, economic development, education, mental health, social inclusion and as transport manager for the largest venue for the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

Youth Advisors

The Youth Advisors work with staff to provide advice, suggestions and guidance on matters that affect children and young people under the guardianship or in the custody of the Minister. The role is designed to ensure that the voice and experience of young people who have been in the care system are incorporated wherever possible in any projects or activities undertaken by the Office.

Mellita Kimber

Mellita is Consumer Adviser Officer at the Royal Adelaide Hospital As well as assisting the Office of the Guardian, she serves on the Council for the Care of Children and on the Board of the Dame Roma Mitchell Trust Fund.

David Wilkins

David assists the Office on a part time basis. He is currently an Electorate Officer in the office of the Federal Member for Adelaide.

Eduard King

Eduard has recently made the transition into independent living. In his own words, 'I want to use this role to encourage young people in care to have a voice and to make sure that their voice gets heard in the places that matter.'

Rachel Hopkins

As well as being a Youth Advisor to the Guardian's Office, Rachel devotes her energies and skills to the CREATE Foundation where she assists in the office and on training programs for young people in care.

Sara Bann

Sara works for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the South Australian Government and continues to contribute her knowledge of the issues facing young people in the care system.

Benita Brinkworth

Benita has been under guardianship since she was eight years old. She joins us after a long association with CREATE including completing the Mission:Be program. She is particularly interested in Spanish, travel and the arts including photography, music and drawing.

Membership of external committees

- Inter-Ministerial Committee on Child Development - Pam Simmons, Guardian
- Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians - Pam Simmons, Guardian
- Across Government Guardianship Steering Committee - Pam Simmons, Guardian

Learning and development

- Records management
- Aboriginal cultural sensitivity and respect
- Certificate IV in Business
- Child safe environments