

The Research Director
Health and Community Services
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000



Dear Research Director

RE: Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill 2014

I currently work within the health field; my area of work includes working with children, young people and their families.

I am not writing this submission as representative of my organisation rather I am writing as an individual in the community who is able to comment on the proposed changes to the Child Protection Act 1999.

I have significant concern about two of the proposed changes related to this bill.

The first is the exclusion of both child neglect and emotional abuse in the proposed changes (Section 13E(2)(b)- in Clause 6 of the Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill 2014).

Professional Mandatory reporting requirements have previously ensured that those mandated to report have reported all major types of harm to children that is physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and emotional abuse.

There is a plethora of literature related to the long term health outcomes on children from both neglect and emotional abuse. In particular, the long term mental health outcomes for these children and the associated long term costs to the health system.

Akai et al. (2008) state that the effects of poor parenting are cumulative in relation to the effects on the child, and when they occur early in a child's development are predictors of long-term social and emotional problems. Children who are neglected and emotionally abused will often have had poor attachment to their mother. This is important because maternal infant attachment is necessary not only for the well-being of the infant (Pickler, 2009; Schore, 2001), but also affects infant brain development. Traumatic and disorganised attachment leads to inefficient right brain regulatory functions, which can cause maladaptive infant and adult mental health outcomes (Schore, 2001).

There is a plethora of literature that conclusively demonstrates that children who are neglected and emotionally abused have long term poor health outcomes and in particular long term poor mental health.

The second concern that I have is related to the sharing of confidential health information (Clause 22 of the Child protection Reform amendment bill 2014- with amendments being made to both section 159C related to relevant information and the amendment to paragraph (b) about the offer to help..... to stop the child becoming in need of child protection, and Clause 6 section 13B – which relates to giving information from a prescribed entity to a service provider.

I strongly believe that these amendments have a significant impact on health privacy of individuals and families. The current act (Child Protection Act 1999) is clear that only relevant health information can be shared with statutory authorities and Non Government Organisations when there is enough concern about the child's welfare to submit a report to the current authority. This current act really does provide a safety net for families and their right to privacy and the need to protect children.

The issue is that once families know that their information can be passed around they will either not present to health at all which will further increase the risk to the child or in fact they will omit important relevant health information that again will increase risk to the child or young person.

As a concerned community member and a staunch supporter of children and young people's right to be protected, I would urge review of these proposed changes to the legislation.

I am more than happy for you to contact me for any further information or to discuss the above submission. I have attached the references used in the submission at the end of this letter.

Regards,


Karen Berry


Woody Point, QLD 4019

References use in the above submission

- Akai, C. E., Guttentag, C. L., Baggett, K. M., Willard, C. C., & Noria, W. N. (2008). Enhancing parenting practices of at-risk mothers. *J Primary Prevent, 29*, 223–242. doi: 0.1007/s10935-008-0134 z
- Pickler, R. H. (2009). Understanding, promoting, and measuring the effects of mother-infant attachment during infant feeding. [Peer Reviewed Editorial]. *JOGNN: Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing: Clinical Scholarship for the Care of Women, Childbearing Families, & Newborns,, 38(4)*, 468-469. doi: doi: 10.1111/j.1552-6909.2009.01043.x
- Schore, A. (2001). Relationship on Right Brain Development, Affect Regulation and Infant Mental Health. *Infant Mental Health Journal, 22(1-2)*, 6-66.
- Schore, A. N. (2001). The effects of Early Relational Trauma on Right Brain Development, Affect Regulation, and Infant Mental Health. *Infant Mental Health Journal, 22(1-2)*, 201-269.