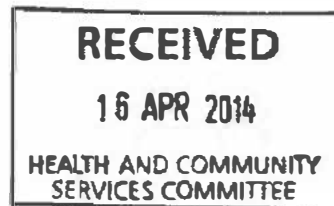


The Research Director
Health and Community Services
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

14th April 2014



Dear Research Director

RE: Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill 2014

I am a professional who works within the health field. My area of work includes working with families (parents and their young children).

I am writing this submission as an Individual in the community, not as a representative of my organisation. It is important for me to comment on the proposed changes to the Child Protection Act 1999.

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

1. Section 13E (2)(b) – in Clause 6 of the Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill 2014 : The exclusion of both child neglect and emotional abuse.

The requirements of Professional Mandatory reporting have previously included all major types of harm to children (physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect).

Comfort, nourishment, shelter and care should be things that a child can take for granted. There is a multitude of literature related to the long term consequences of emotional abuse and neglect of children. This includes physical health consequences (such as failure of the brain to develop properly due to malnutrition and other medical issues), psychological consequences (such as isolation, fear, an inability to trust, low self esteem, depression and relationship difficulties), behavioural consequences (such as youth delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, crime or abusive behaviour) and societal consequences. Plus the associated costs to the health system.

The immediate emotional effects of emotional abuse and neglect – isolation, fear, and an inability to trust – can translate into lifelong psychological consequences, including low self esteem, depression, and relationship difficulties.

2. Section 159C(b) Clause 22 and Section 13B Clause 6 of the Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill 2014: The sharing of confidential health information.

I believe that there will be a significant impact on the health privacy of individuals and families. At this stage the current Child Protection Act 1999 clearly stipulates that only relevant health information can be shared between statutory authorities and Non Government Organisations – where the concern for the child's welfare is enough to submit a report to the statutory authority. Currently the act provides a safety net for families and their right to privacy and the need to protect children.

The concern is that when families learn that their information can be shared they will develop mistrust of the health department. Consequently, they may not present to health or will intentionally omit important health information. This further increases the risk to children.

I urge you to review the proposed changes to the legislation.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

Kerrilee Brown

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