

31 March 2008

The Principal Research Officer
Community Development and Justice Standing Committee
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Sir

**Re: *Enquiry into Collaborative Approaches in Government
'Joined-Up Government'***

Parkerville Children and Youth Care has been caring for children for 104 years, originally as an orphanage and, since 1973, as a group of specialised services caring for abused children and young people.

Parkerville's services are spread throughout a number of metropolitan suburbs. The Organisation's recent expansion into the high needs Armadale corridor has resulted in seven new units in the process of being built for homeless and abused youth.

In the next twelve months Parkerville Children and Youth Care will establish Australia's first Child Advocacy Centre.

A Child Advocacy Centre is a one stop shop where a multi-disciplinary team consisting of doctors, police, social workers, psychologists, forensic experts and play therapists come together to provide services to care for all the needs of a child or young person who has been abused, and their family. The services are delivered by one team in one place closest to the child or young person's home.

The Child Advocacy Centre methodology of best practice care originated in the USA in the 1980's in response to criticism of system induced trauma on children who had been harmed.

There are some 640 centres across the USA and Northern Europe.

The Child Advocacy Centre model of service delivery is a tangible way for children and communities to see how agencies change the way they do things and come together to make services less complicated and more comprehensive.

Parkerville Children and Youth Care's Child Advocacy Centre will enable services for the whole community of Armadale and surrounding suburbs. The child friendly facility will be a place of hope for children and young people who have been abused. It will bring together child abuse professionals who will support the needs of child victims and their families.

The idea already serves as a catalyst for inspiring government, non government and communities to develop a vision for ending child abuse in Australia. Discussions with leaders in health (Princess Margaret Hospital), police (Central and Armadale) and welfare (Department for Child Protection and other not for profit organisations) has sparked a desire to work together to achieve better outcomes for this vulnerable group of children and young people.

This Child Advocacy Centre will become the visible service in the community. Children and parents will be aware, through community programmes, campaigns and websites, and the centre will provide leadership in developing the skills of others who work with children.

In an ideal world, no child would be abused. The reality is that too many are. Developing Child Advocacy Centres in Australia is an exciting possibility.

Parkerville Children and Youth Care is committed to this innovative cause.

The proposed capital expenditure target for building and land is \$4 million which the Organisation is in the process of raising. At the same time, the Organisation's Chief Executive is speaking with key stakeholders in health, legal and welfare sectors to motivate interest in this methodology of practice.

In October the Organisation will bring three key leaders, a paediatrician, a social worker and a prosecutor from the San Diego Chadwick Child Advocacy Centre to create awareness and inspire people to establish Child Advocacy Centres in Australia.

This is an excellent opportunity for government and a not for profit organisation to radically change the way services are delivered for abused children, young people and their families. It is also an opportunity for communities in the area in which the Child Advocacy Centre is centred to play a leadership role in protecting and caring for their children and, in turn, stem the tide of abuse.

We hope you will be interested in the work of this Organisation and in the methodology of Child Advocacy Centres.

Yours sincerely



Chief Executive