



2014 Leneen Forde Public Address

Associate Professor Judy Cashmore

Making decisions in children's matters: The role of social science evidence and children's views

Banco Court, Supreme Court of Queensland,
415 George Street, Brisbane

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Notice to Bar Association of Queensland Members CPD

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Points: 1 CPD point per hour of attendance

The Child Protection Practitioners Association of Queensland (CPPAQ) aims to improve interdisciplinary professional collaboration in the child protection system in Queensland. This event is named in honour of Ms Leneen Forde AC who led the 1999 Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions.

The fourth public address will be delivered by Associate Professor Judy Cashmore, and introduced by The Honourable Justice Colin Forrest of the Family Court of Australia.

Abstract: The decisions that Children's Courts and the Family Courts make in relation to children's care, contact and living arrangements can have a profound impact on their lives. The orders determine how much time children spend with each parent after separation, and for children in child protection matters, whether they are removed from the care of their parent/s, for how long, and how often they will see them. However, little is known about the decision-making process and what the longer-term outcomes are for children. Both jurisdictions rely on various forms of evidence, including specialist professional reports and caseworker assessments and evidence in relation to children's best interests and their views. Various social science concepts such as attachment, early brain development, parenting capacity and permanency are invoked and discussed in specialist reports, casework files, affidavits, and judgments. Legislation also requires children's views to be taken into account. But what do we know about how these decisions are made and what informs them? What is the value, and what issues arise in applying social science evidence in these contexts? How can those who make these decisions learn more about the outcomes for the children whose orders they effect? And how can the translation across disciplines, and research, policy and practice be improved?

About the speaker: Judy Cashmore AO has a PhD in developmental psychology and is a research academic in the Law School at the University of Sydney. Her research is concerned with children's involvement in legal proceedings and other processes in which decisions are made about children's care and protection, and guardianship. The focus of this research has been on children's perceptions, and the perceptions of those who make decisions about children's lives, and the implications for social policy and practice.