

Department of



***Community
Services***

**Standing Committee on Social Issues:
Inquiry into Child Protection Services**

Presentation by Carmel Niland
20th May 2002

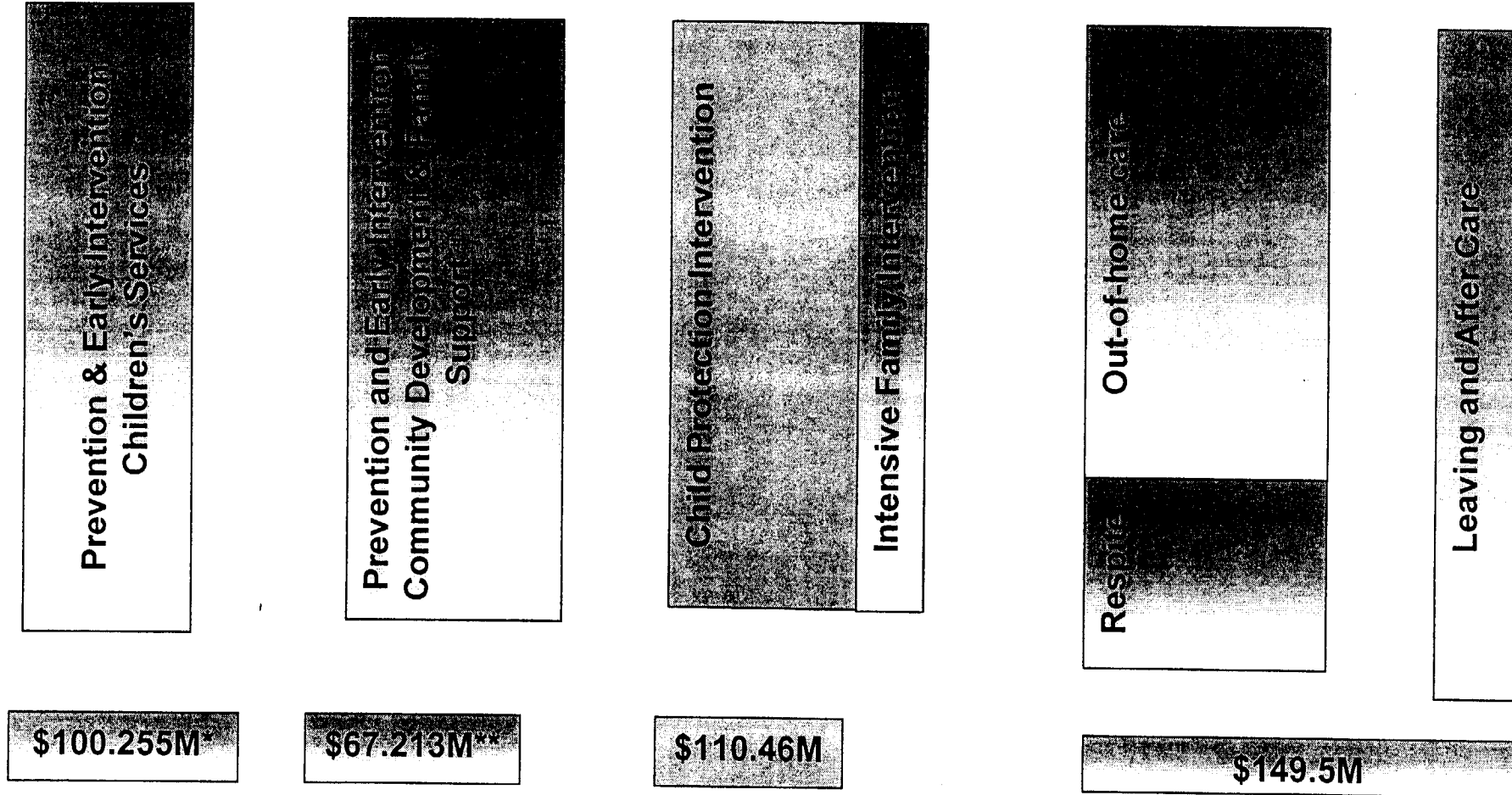
INTRODUCTION

- Our priority is to provide good outcomes for children
- Sometimes we do our job well, sometimes we do it poorly
 - In 2001, we had 140,806 reports of abuse
 - You heard about 50 of them - our failures

WHAT WE DO

- DoCS has a broad role in the care and protection of children. DoCS' key objectives are that:
 - People and families are better able to care for themselves and their children
 - Fewer families, and men, women and children move into crisis situations
 - Children and young people are cared for in a safe and nurturing environment and are better protected from risk or harm
- Our broad role spans not only crisis intervention, but prevention and early intervention

Continuum of Care



* Includes actual program administration and support costs

**Includes estimated program administration and support costs

CRISIS IN CHILD ABUSE

- In the past 10 years, reports in NSW have increased 7 fold:
 - 20,000 in 1990's to 140,806 in 2001
- AIHW data shows nationally:
 - 26% increase between 1995/96 & 2000/01
- In the USA, reports increased from:
 - 1.15 million in 1980 to 3.19 million in 1997 (almost 3 times) ... expected to increase to 6 million by 2002

CHILD DEATHS

	Non accidental Injury	Known to DoCS	% of cases
• In 1997/98 =	22	16	0.024
• In 2000/01 =	21	13	0.012

- The number of deaths known to DoCS has decreased while the number of reports of child abuse has doubled
- As a % of the numbers of all cases, it has halved in 4 yrs

KEY ASPECTS OF DoCS WORK

1. The social context of DoCS' operates in
2. The challenges we work with
3. Where we have come from & how we are rebuilding the system
4. Lessons we have learnt
5. Issues within the Terms of Reference of this Inquiry

ISSUES WITHIN THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THIS INQUIRY

- Organisational health
- The management of intake and casework
- Response by risk levels
- Growth in reports from mandatory reporters
- Requests for assistance

SOCIAL CONTEXT OF DoCS' WORK

- Divorce
 - Last 20yrs divorce has increased 4 times
 - One in 3 marriages end in divorce
- Mental Illness
 - 27% of young people have mental ill-health episode
 - QLD study: 1 in 5 kids from disadvantaged backgrounds were at risk of suffering a serious mental health problems before the age of 8
- Debt
 - In past 10yrs, credit card debt has quintupled
 - End of 2003, it will probably have grown 10 fold in 17yrs⁹

SOCIAL CONTEXT OF DoCS

- Gambling
 - Household gambling amount has almost doubled since 1990
 - NSW has 10% of all poker machines in the world
- Drug & Alcohol use (D&A)
 - About 80% of our child abuse reports have concerns of D&A
 - US research, estimates their reports are between 70% & 90%
- Domestic Violence (DV)
 - DV rates continue to increase at an alarming rate
 - In 2001, 98,400 DV incidents were reported to the Police
 - Of these, Police reported 45,000 to the DoCS Helpline

THE CHALLENGES WE WORK WITH

- Appalling injuries
- Huge costs of child abuse
- Caseworkers confronting vermin infested houses
- Caseworkers threatened by Client families - enter homes armed only with their wits
- Make line ball decisions in complex environments
- Constant balancing act to protect children by taking them into Child Protection System while engaging families and supporting them so children can stay at home
- The predictable public reaction to a child death ... in USA and Australia ... hold Inquiry, demand resources, sack the head.

WHERE WE HAVE COME FROM?

REBUILDING THE SYSTEM

- The Child Protection System in the last 10yrs:
 - In 1995, DoCS had inadequate funding, poor practice and inadequate services
 - Almost 25% of DoCS' offices in NSW had been closed
 - More than 1,000 jobs were slashed including 77 Child Protection Specialists
 - Police Child Protection Mistreatment Units at Flemington, Wagga Wagga & Campbelltown were closed

THE TRANSFORMATION

- The Transformation of DoCS was designed to create a contemporary and professional organisation in which front line staff were fully supported to do their jobs
- Through the Transformation, introduced the following major improvements:
 - Separated the Child & Family business from Disability Services
 - Established 8 Directors Child & Family, Manager Client Services, 8 Senior Practitioners and Casework Specialist positions
 - Established 20 new positions of Directors Partnership & Planning & increased the number of Community Program Officers and Children's Service Advisors
 - Reduced supervision ratios (Managers to Caseworkers) from 1:12 to 1:6
 - Reduced the number of Areas from 16 to 8

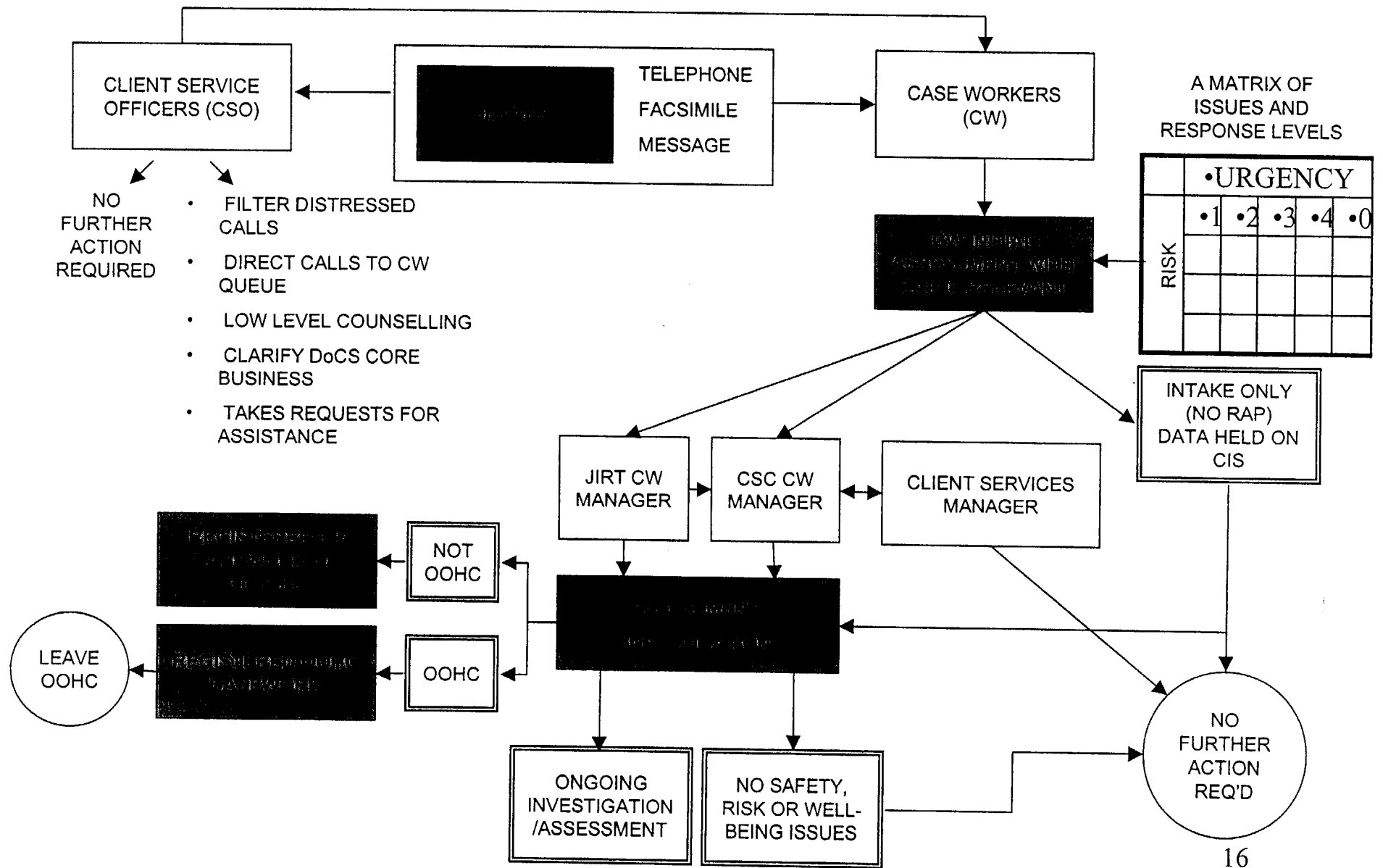
SERVICE 2000

- In parallel with the Transformation, I introduced Service 2000, a program of change needed to make our policy and practices contemporary.
- Our central elements of Service 2000 were required to underpin our core child protection work and included:
 - Establishment of the Helpline
 - Development of the new CIS
 - Major upgrade of DoCS computer system - additional 625 desktop computer for front line staff
 - Developed new decision making and risk assessment tools for the Act and trained over 1,000 staff in the new approach
 - Developed on-line policy & procedural manuals for Caseworkers
 - Enhanced training for all frontline staff in all aspects of new Act
 - Introduced ADR & trained 80 mediators
 - Worked with OOHC indirectly to reform the funding of OOHC
 - Introduced Adoptions Act and reformed Adoptions
 - Refocussed business on early intervention & prevention and opened the Parenting Centre
- We introduced a new financial system SAP, reformed the Foster Care Allowance System & brought in a new Payroll & HR system

LESSONS WE HAVE LEARNT

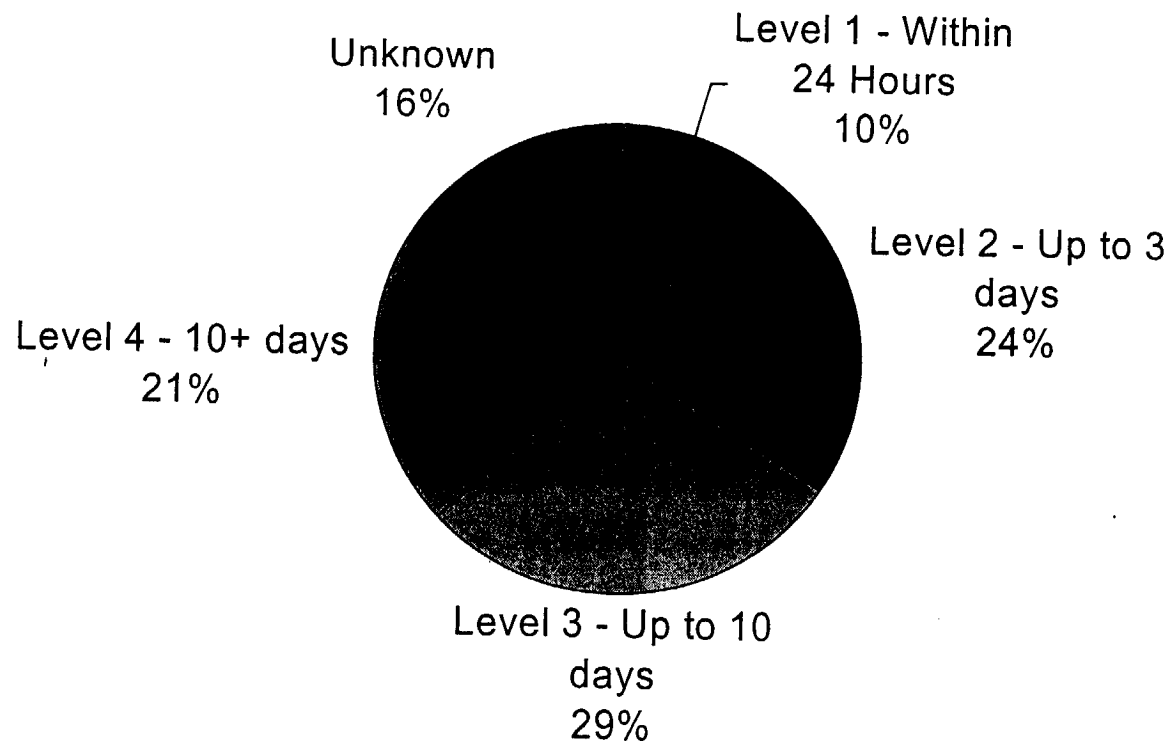
- Data and the Kibble Inquiry
- Kibble Inquiry to report in June will settle the disputes over data between DoCS & PSA and look at resourcing issues
- In 2001, the volume of reports was 76% higher than in 2000 and 96% higher than in 1999
- The Helpline and its problems:
 - Staff resistance & complaints about quality
 - Massive increase in reports
 - Inadequate staffing
 - Refocussing to become Child Abuse line
 - Long waiting times to strategies to reduce them
 - Impact of the Criminal penalty (\$22,000 fine on mandatory reporters)
 - Problems with faxing

THIS IS HOW INTAKE AND CASEWORK ARE CURRENTLY MANAGED



PROPORTION OF TOTAL CONTACT REPORTS BY LEVEL OF RESPONSE

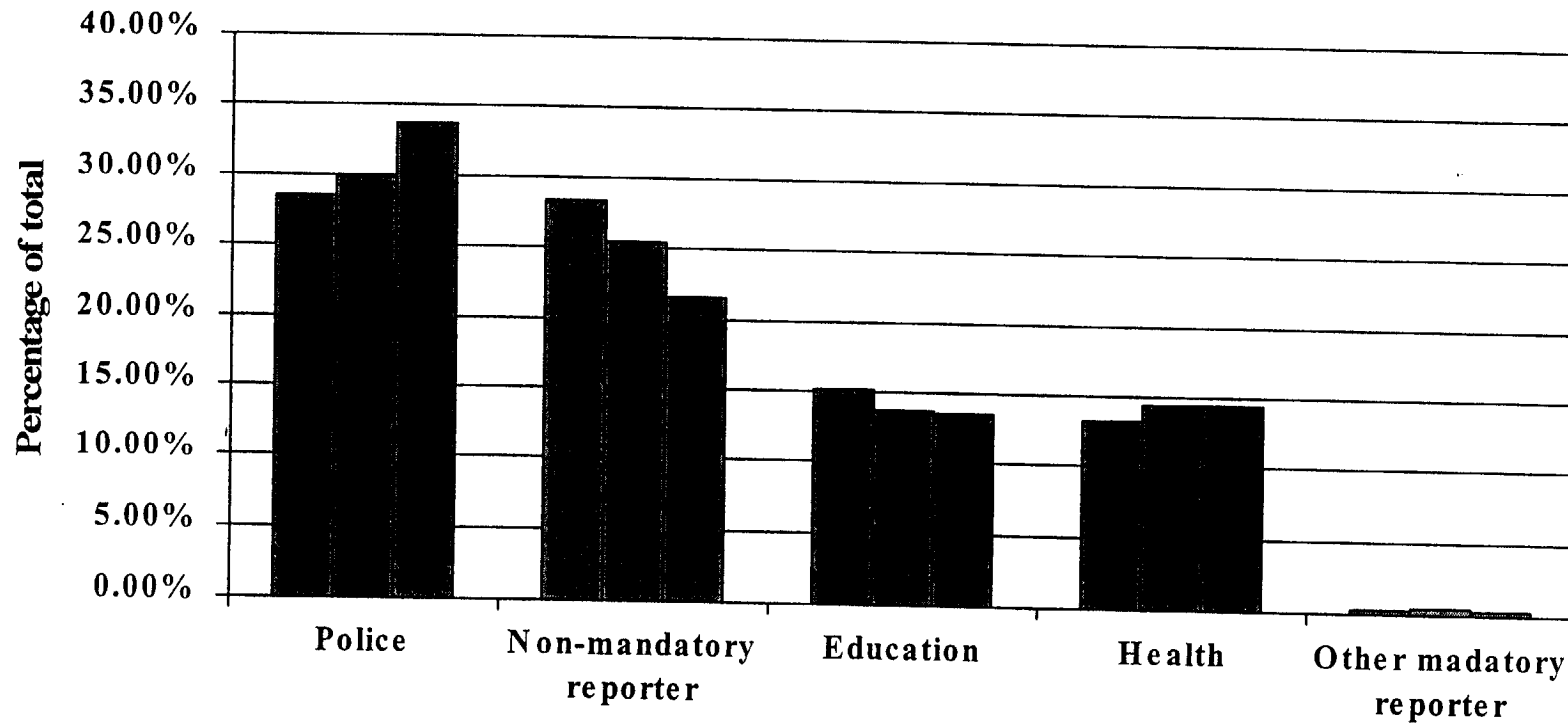
Total contact reports by level of response, Oct-Dec 2001



GROWTH IN SHARE OF TOTAL REPORTS BY ALL REPORTERS

Growth in share of total reports by all reporters

(Jul-Dec 2000, Jan-Jun 2001, Preliminary Jul-Dec 2001)



CLIENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (CIS)

- In 2000, after tendering in 1999, DOCS contracted DMR to provide a *custom built* CIS to cover:
 - child & family services;
 - disability services;
 - community grants;
 - the Helpline; and
 - a service directory

at a cost of \$6.3 million over 2 years, no suitable packages existed and other CIS, in other States although in second generation, were at end of their shelf life

CLIENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (CIS)

- Project abandoned after contractual difficulties - Total paid DMR was \$2.67 million
- \$1 million of deliverables DMR produced could be reused
- Significant changes in DoCS including the removal of Disability Services and move to whole of Govt grants administration, meant restructure of the project
- During 1999 to 2001, suitable packaged solutions emerged including Customer Relationship Management packages
- New business case to Treasury approved Dec 2001 at \$8.5 million - Tender process almost completed

IS DoCS A HEALTHY ORGANISATION?

- Staff Turnover (Permanent Staff)
 - Our total turnover fell below industry medians
 - Staff retention rates nearly 3% better than industry figures & 2% better than the public sector (2000 Benchmarking Report)
 - Our turnover for Caseworkers in 2000/2001 was 10.7% (industry median is 8.3% & public sector median is 7.79%)
- Sick Leave
 - Total for Caseworkers is 3.5 days per 100 (public sector is 3.065% & all industry is 3.49%)
- Exit Surveys (Respondents in 2000/01)
 - 78% said DoCS was a good place to work
 - 84% felt part of a team while 74% agreed they had sufficient training
 - 83% thought their roles & responsibilities were clear
 - Main inhibitors were workload, and poor supervision
 - Transformation caused the most dissatisfaction - slow implementation and media criticism the next most dissatisfaction

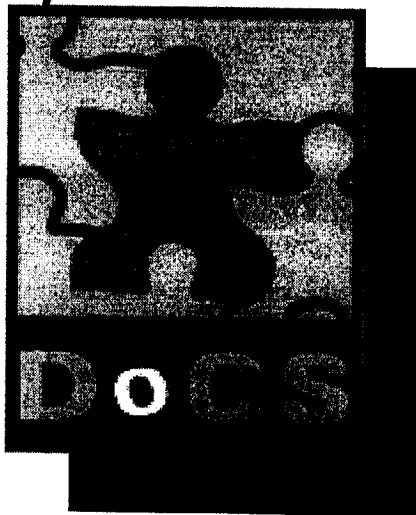
IS DoCS A HEALTHY ORGANISATION?

- Training
 - DoCS is strongly committed to Learning & Development
 - Since April 2000, 17,806 days of extensive training had been provided to our Caseworkers
 - Courses covered all key aspects of Caseworkers including risk of harm assessment, OOHC proclamation & alternative dispute resolution
 - Additionally, every Caseworker receives 21 days training per year through Practice Solutions sessions every Thursday morning
- Acting Arrangements
 - There is a current common belief that all DoCS staff act in other position, and there's no stability
 - However, current figures show as at pay period 9/5/02, only 17 Caseworkers were receiving higher duties allowances
 - For the financial YTD, 108 Caseworkers have received higher duties allowances

RESPONDING TO REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

- Under Sections 20 & 21 a child, young person or parent can request my help and I am required to take what action I consider necessary
- This includes offering ADR to resolve family conflict
- Ensuring the child is adequately supervised or enabling their access to services
- I can request other services and Departments help
- Requests for assistance separately coded, are captured mainly as level 3s and sent to the CSCs
- Re-engineering of this process is occurring now
- Will provide further advice at later stage

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