

Your ref: D24/028667

The Hon Helen Dalton MLA  
Chair, Committee on Children and Young People  
NSW Parliament  
Macquarie Street SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via email: [childrenyoungpeople@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:childrenyoungpeople@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Ms Dalton

### Consultants engaged in 2023-24 financial year

Thank you for your letter of 20 June 2024, in which you sought details of the consultants engaged in the 2023-24 financial year.

I provide the following information in response to your request.

1. Barristers Elizabeth Bennett SC, Philippa Kelly, and William Philips have been engaged in 2023 to review the adequacy and effectiveness of our existing arrangements relating to the application of legal principles in the exercise of our key functions. Their combined fee to date has been \$130,250.

The Children's Guardian makes a number of complex administrative decisions in relation to its functions, requiring the need to carefully consider and apply relevant law and legal principles, and to balance fairness considerations with the protection of children and other vulnerable people. The reports provided so far by Elizabeth Bennett, Philippa Kelly and William Philips are informing a review of our operations and practices. The issues canvassed so far include:

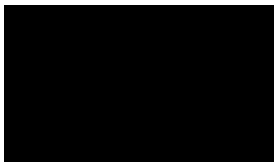
- The processes which operationalise both the WWCC and the NDISWC statutory functions, including the extent to which proactive inquiries are required in risk assessments; the evidentiary rules and thresholds relevant to assessment decisions; and the application of administrative law principles;
  - The OCG's powers to share personal information obtained in the course of its activities internally, between operational directorates of the OCG;
  - The scope of the application of the reportable conduct scheme under Part 4 of *Children's Guardian Act 2019* to certain entities, and the trigger for duty of notification under the reportable conduct scheme.
2. In January 2024, Anne Cosgrove, an experienced People and Culture Senior Executive, was engaged in response to issues raised by our staff in the 2023 "People Matter Employment Survey" (the PMES). In light of the results of the PMES, we took the view that it was important that we engaged an independent expert to carry out this work to strengthen our culture. Staff responded very well to our appointment of an independent expert, and Anne was able to interview over 80 employees who were keen to provide their perspectives on what we do well, what issues and pain points employees may have, and how they can be addressed.

The executive leadership team worked closely with Anne to determine how to best strengthen our culture and support our employees. She shared a final report with recommendations that have been incorporated into a new people strategy. Anne Cosgrove's fee was \$108,800.

3. In early 2024, Social Ventures Australia was engaged to work with the OCG executive and staff to develop our 3 year strategic plan. In March 2024, we held an all-staff planning meeting to bring employees together, and discuss our future direction. Social Ventures Australia planned and facilitated the all-staff planning day, and generated thoughtful and valuable discussions. Drawing from those discussions, we now have a new strategic plan that outlines an ambitious hope for the future, a new purpose, and clear articulation of our role. Feedback from staff about the planning day was extremely positive and we plan to run a similar session every year. The cost of the Social Ventures Australia consultancy was \$59,500.
4. In recognition of the foster carer shortage in NSW, and the need to better support foster carers in their critical roles, the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) is proposing to establish an external Carer Engagement and Advisory Committee to work on identified priorities in the sector. Sandra Heriot was engaged to conduct scoping work to inform development of the Carer Engagement and Advisory Committee. Her consultancy fee was \$6807. It is envisaged that the Carer Engagement and Advisory Committee will also provide critical advice to senior leaders in the out-of-home care sector, carer representative organisations and peak bodies.

If you or members of the Committee would like to discuss these matters further, please contact me on 02 9273 3934 or email [steve.kinmond@ocg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:steve.kinmond@ocg.nsw.gov.au)

Yours sincerely



**Steve Kinmond OAM**  
**Children's Guardian**