

Answers to Questions Taken On Notice

The Commission has responded to several questions taken on notice during the public hearing held on Wednesday 10 October 2007.

QUESTION

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK MLC: Could you advise the Committee on the status and effectiveness of the national sex offender register?

RESPONSE:

ANCOR (the Australian National Child Offender Register) is a web-based system designed to assist police to register, case manage and share mandatory information about registered persons as required by legislation. It also enables alerts to be generated when registered persons notify that they are planning to travel interstate or overseas.

It has only been operating nationally since last year, so it is probably too early to comment on its effectiveness. The NSW register has been operating since 2000 and NSW Police have reported that they find it helpful in tracking and monitoring offenders.

There is no one solution to keeping children safe. A register such as this is one of the range of measures needed to provide an effective safety net for children.

QUESTION

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK MLC: In relation to the 'No-one to Turn To' report, is it possible to get a copy of the 2005 evaluation? Secondly, has there been an update since 2005 of that evaluation?

RESPONSE:

The advice on the effectiveness of recommendations in influencing change included the following:

An analysis of responses provided by agencies indicates that recommendations can be effective in supporting change.

In some cases, respondents identified that they had implemented the change prior to the recommendation, in one case the respondent was very clear that the change was made as a direct response to the recommendation.

Some of the recommendations appeared to reflect current changes in agency or community thinking more generally. The recommendation may have been reinforcing the outcomes of previous review or inquiry processes or may have articulated views that are beginning to gain credence more generally.

The limitations of making recommendations was also evident from the agency responses. Some of the limitations noted included:

- Recommendations are open to interpretation. Agencies can attribute existing activities to meeting the recommendation. This may be theoretically correct,*

however, it is not clear that making the recommendation has assisted the agency re-think its approach.

- Some of the recommendations required a significant level of resources or coordination to implement. In this case, recommendations alone are unlikely to be a sufficient incentive to drive change.*
- If the recommendations do not reflect an understanding of agency constraints or context they can be dismissed by agencies. It may be more beneficial to specify the desired outcome without recommending the method.*

The review of agency responses has indicated that making recommendations can be important in articulating improvements to policies and programs. They can be effective in bringing about change. However, there are also limitations.

The making of recommendations does not allow for agencies to gain a better understanding of the issues involved or to develop feasible responses that make the most of opportunities within agencies or systems.

The remaining recommendations from this report are being followed up as part of the Commission's routine monitoring of responses to significant recommendations.

QUESTION

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK MLC: Could the Commission provide additional information about the use of its website?

RESPONSE:

In 2006-07, the Commission site recorded 1,183,906 page downloads, a 6 percent rise on the previous year.

The new site has been notably successful in reaching children and young people, with the kids' section, TheZone, figuring strongly in web traffic.

The games pages in the TheZone recorded 7,071 downloads during April-June, coinciding with the Commission's Youth Week activities and the release of our postcard for kids. This was an increase of more than 1,000 percent on the previous quarter.

QUESTION

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK MLC: Are any outstanding matters or recommendations arising from the 2004 Review of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998* by Ms Helen L'Orange AM?

RESPONSE:

Action is completed on all but three of the report's recommendations. The remaining three relate to extending background checking.

As outlined in responses to the pre-hearing questions on notice and during the hearing itself, one of the best ways to prevent harm to children in workplaces is for organisations to adopt an overall risk management framework.

Background checking is only as good as the records that are held and many people don't have records.

The Commission has developed the *Child-safe, child-friendly* program to help organisations reduce their risks when caring for children and young people.

QUESTION

Mr STEVE CANSDELL MP: Would the collation of statistics be made retrospective to enable the Commission to make comparisons in relation to deaths of children and young people who were normally resident in New South Wales but whose death certificate was issued in another jurisdiction?

RESPONSE:

With the exception of Victoria the child death review teams in other jurisdictions have been recently established and have only collected information from the time they were established. This means it is not currently possible to work with retrospective data.

QUESTION

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK MLC: Made reference to Question No 8 on Notice relating to the Child Death Review Team 2005 Annual Report, and asked whether there are any outstanding recommendations to which the Committee's attention could be drawn, in order for the Commission to champion their uptake.

RESPONSE:

The 2006 Annual Report will be tabled very soon. I will provide this advice after tabling.

QUESTION:

Ms MARIE ANDREWS MP: Has the introduction of the 40 kilometres per hour speed limit around schools zones impacted upon the reduction in the number of traffic fatalities among children and young people?

RESPONSE:

We have reviewed the CDRT annual reports back to 1999/2000. There were no children reported who died as a result of being hit by a vehicle outside a school. The one fatality was in an internal school car park.

QUESTION

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK MLC asked two questions relating to coronial enquiries into child deaths:

- Has the Commission ever examined the Coroner's pattern of deciding whether or not to investigate?

Are coronial recommendations being captured, understood and worked through by the Government and the community?

RESPONSE:

The CDRT 2005 Annual Report was the first time the Team began reporting on the pattern of dispensing with inquests. The Team will continue to do this in future years. The special research study *Trends in Child Deaths in NSW from 1996 to 2005* will look at trends and patterns in coronial investigations over the period 1996 to 2005.

The *Coroners Act 1980* does not provide any power for the Coroner to require others to act on her recommendations. I am advised that the Coroner writes to the relevant agency informing them of any recommendations and records any advice received back.