



The Hon. Faye Lo Po' MP

Minister for Community Services
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Women

Received
13 August 2001
Faye Lo Po'

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No.2
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir,

I refer to the General Purpose Standing Committee No.2 and its Budget Estimates Hearing on 22 June 2001.

The attached responses have been prepared to a number of the questions taken on notice, as well as to additional questions on notice placed by committee members at the conclusion of the hearing. The answers to the outstanding questions should be finalised shortly.

Yours sincerely

Faye Lo Po' MP
Minister for Community Services
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Women

QUESTION ON NOTICE – LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
ESTIMATES COMMITTEE NO 2

MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES
MINISTER FOR AGEING
MINISTER FOR DISABILITY SERVICES
MINISTER FOR WOMEN

QUESTION: 1

(Relevant area in Hansard: p2,3)

Mr Ryan asked:

- (1) How much money was allocated to the implementation and operation of Helpline in the 2000-01 budget?
- (2) Was there any money allocated in the supplementary budget?
- (3) How much has been spent to date?

ANSWER:

- (1) \$12.575 million.
- (2) \$5.0 million. This is included in the total allocation of \$12.575 million.
- (3) \$10.145 million. The under expenditure at the Helpline arose from a later than anticipated start date following the delay in the proclamation of the legislation. Funds not spent are reallocated in accordance with treasury guidelines to other service priorities in DoCS.

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MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES
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QUESTION No: 2

Mr Ryan asked:

(Relevant area in Hansard: p3)

- (1) With your new improved data collection can you tell us the total number of reports recorded, the total number of cases allocated to Community Services Centres (CSCs)?
- (2) How many of the cases reported to CSCs have then become unallocated?

ANSWER:

- (1) As you are aware, the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* was introduced on 18 December 2000 and this has brought a change in the ways child protection reports are recorded.

The Department is currently collating data for the Annual Report, taking into account the significant change in the handling of child protection reports.

In light of these considerations, it is not possible to provide meaningful statistics in response to this question.

- (2) The term “unallocated” is both misleading and open to misinterpretation as every report received by DoCS is assessed and prioritised.

As with any human service agency, case loads are prioritised on a daily basis by CSCs and these priorities may change depending on the nature of risk assessments.

It is therefore not possible to provide the type of data you have requested.

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QUESTION No: 3

Ms Forsythe asked:

(Relevant area in Hansard: p4)

How many faxes has Helpline received each month since it commenced?

ANSWER:

The monthly figures for faxes to the Helpline are:

February	- 1,175
March	- 2,009
April	- 2,805
May	- 2,822
June	- 2,806

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QUESTION No: 4

Mr Ryan asked:

(Relevant area in Hansard: p4)

Could you provide information on what the increase in child abuse notifications has been during the current financial year and how that compares with the previous financial year?

ANSWER:

The total number of notifications in 1999/2000 was 60,303. In the previous financial year, 1998/1999, there were 57,834 notifications. This was an increase of 4.3%.

DoCS is currently collating data for 2000/2001 and this will be published in the Annual Report.

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QUESTION No: 5

Mr Ryan asked:

(Relevant area in Hansard: p5,6)

- (1) How much money has been allocated to the DOCS transformation process from 2000-01?
- (2) How much of that was spent?

ANSWER:

- (1) \$356,164.
- (2) \$272,414. Real savings resulted from salary savings and also through an earlier than budgeted for completion for work. Funds not spent are reallocated in accordance with Treasury guidelines to other service priorities in DoCS.

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QUESTION No: 6

Dr Wong asked:

(Relevant area in Hansard: p8)

1. What resources and funding are provided for in the budget for intensive support services for children in care?
2. In what specific ways have these services improved or deteriorated since the closure of Ormond and Minali, in particular referring to outcomes for children such as increased or reduced health and behaviour problems, access to family members, drug or prostitution drift?
3. What are the comparative pre-closure and post-closure statistics on children who were or would have been institutionalised since the closure of those institutes?
4. What is the comparative per capita cost on a daily or weekly basis of placing children in previous institutional care versus current accommodation services in non-institutionalised care, including the cost associated with staff or other supervision?

ANSWER:

1. In 2001/2002, \$5,123,382 has been allocated for the provision of crisis and short term Intensive Support Service throughout NSW. A further \$5,618,612 has been allocated for longer term Intensive Support Services provided by Community Partners and DoCS services directly.
2. Children and young people who would have been eligible to access the services previously offered by Ormond and Minali now enjoy a service structure that focuses on providing as much normality in their lives as possible. Services are provided based on assessed individual need.

3. This information is not available. Since the decision to close these facilities, children have not been assessed in terms of their suitability for institutionalisation.
4. There was a varied range of institutionalised care arrangements operated by both government and non-government agencies, and comparative cost data, if available, would have varied over time and according to the type of facility, unique features of individual facilities, and the target group of residents. Today's costs are based on providing a support "package" for the children or young people concerned, rather than basic accommodation and custodial care.

It would therefore be very difficult to make accurate and meaningful historical cost comparisons. The decision to place children in out-of-home care rather than in institutions was based on the best interests of children and not on costs.

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QUESTION No: 7

Dr Wong asked:

(Relevant area in Hansard: p8)

The Department has allocated 2% of its total budget for asset acquisition or 12.6 million to be spent on system design, specification and implementation of a new financial management system.

- (1) What specific objectives, including performance criteria changes, are expected from the new system?
- (2) What were the shortcomings of the previous system?
- (3) What research and analysis on the availability of such systems has preceded the allocation of this budget?
- (4) What are the tender specifications for the new system?

ANSWER:

- (1) The new financial system is called SAP (System Application Project). The key objectives of the project are:
 - A financial management system that will provide a foundation for improved financial management and accountability at all levels of the organisation.
 - Corporate financial sustainability through access to more timely and reliable financial information for analysis and modelling.
 - Improved predictability of Budget outcomes.
 - An Integrated Management System to determine the costs of providing client services and improved resource allocation which is integrated with

other demand drivers, ie. client numbers, client contacts, accommodation support.

- A system that will enable DoCS to respond quickly and effectively to financial reporting needs.
 - Introduction of best practice business processes, where possible, to reduce the cost of corporate services.
 - Improved planning and funds allocation processes across DoCS.
 - A flexible system that meets current and future organisational requirements.
- (2) The previous system was introduced in December 1991. It will increasingly not meet the financial requirements for a contemporary government agency in terms of systems integration, reporting capability at today's standards and as required by regulatory agencies. The long term support of the product may be questionable.

(3)&(4)

DoCS' objective is the successful implementation of a new financial management system by July 2002. To achieve this timeframe, it is essential that implementation commence in September 2001. Experience indicates that a Request For Proposals (RFP) process involving the documentation of Functional Requirement, the evaluation and selection of a system and contract negotiation, even when limited to Government Selected Application Systems (GSAS) products, can take up to 6 months.

DoCS believed that it would be more time and cost effective to acquire and implement the SAP Financial Management System under the terms of the GSAS Contract without entering into a lengthy RFP process.

DoCS will leverage off the experience of the Department of Housing where SAP was successfully implemented in 1999 to meet similar financial management and reform objectives to DoCS. This will enable DoCS to meet its objectives of successfully implementing a Financial Management System by July 2002.

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QUESTION No: 8

Dr Wong asked:

(Relevant area in Hansard: p8)

What standards are being applied for out-of-school hours care?

ANSWER:

The National Standards for Outside School Hours Care, which were endorsed by New South Wales in 1995.

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QUESTION No: 9

Dr Pezzutti asked:

(Relevant area in Hansard: p9)

Under the risk assessment process applying in child protection cases, what are the time frames in which a client should be seen for each risk category, and what are the performance figures?

ANSWER:

There are four response categories for initial assessment of child protection cases. These are:

1. Within 24 hours
2. Within 72 hours
3. Within 3 – 5 days
4. No further action required.

Performance figures are not currently available. DoCS is currently collating data for 2000/2001.

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QUESTION No: 10

Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked:

(Relevant area in Hansard: p11)

What is the timetable for implementation of the child care protection legislation?

ANSWER:

A significant amount of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* was proclaimed on 18 December 2000. The proclamation of the remaining sections of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* will be phased in over the next year.

The following have already been proclaimed in July 2001:

- ❑ Children's Court Clinic (Section 58)
- ❑ Children's Guardian provisions (Sections 179, 180, 185-190)
- ❑ Who is a "designated agency" (Section 139)
- ❑ Rights of children and young persons in out-of-home care (Charter of Rights, Section 162)
- ❑ Reciprocity between States and Territories (Section 255)

I expect Permanency Planning amendments to be considered by the Parliament in the Spring session.

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- ❑ Chapter 3, Section 28 – Records of reports and subsequent action
- ❑ Remaining sections of:
 - Chapter 8, Out-of-home care
 - Chapter 9, Special medical treatment
 - Chapter 10, Children's Guardian provisions
 - Chapter 12, Children's Services, Sections 199-220
 - Chapter 16, Section 245 – Decisions that are reviewable by Administrative Decisions Tribunal

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- The remainder of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*
- Chapter 7, Sections 123 –1 33B, Compulsory Assistance
- Chapter 11, Child Death Review Team
- Chapter 13, Children’s Employment and
- Chapter 15, Section 236 – Entry without warrant into premises – places of employment

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QUESTION No: 11

Dr Wong asked:

(Relevant area in Hansard: p11)

What qualifications are required to be a child care protection case worker?

ANSWER:

The Child Protection Caseworker position description states “*The position requires tertiary qualifications in social welfare, psychology or behavioural sciences or equivalent experience to provide a basis for understanding the issues encountered, and the psychological, developmental and legislative issues involved.*”

“Equivalent experience” would be relevant work/life experience combined with either the minimum qualification requirement or a non-preferred qualification. Successful completion of the entry level Caseworker Development Course, formerly known as the District Officer Training Course, and 1 year’s satisfactory service as a Child Protection Caseworker, formerly known as District Officer, is also considered as meeting the essential educational requirement.

The specific qualification criteria for the Child Protection Caseworker position are “*Degree, Diploma, Associate Diploma in Social Work, Social Science, Welfare or related discipline or completion of the DoCS entry level Caseworker Development Course (formerly known as District Officer training course), followed by one year’s satisfactory service. Previous experience in the fields of social work, child development/protection within family and community environments and an understanding of the needs of disadvantaged groups and cross-cultural issues*”.

The minimum qualification requirement is a 2 year full time qualification at the Associate Diploma level.

There are some qualifications that are more highly congruent with Child Protection Caseworker competencies than others and are, therefore, preferred by the Department

of Community Services (DoCS), for example: Bachelor of Social Work, Bachelor of Social Welfare, Bachelor of Social Science, Diploma in Community Welfare.

The Strategic Agreements with Universities highlight the institutions and qualifications that are considered to be preferred qualifications.

These are:

The University of Newcastle	Bachelor of Social Work
	Bachelor of Social Welfare
Australian Catholic University (ACT)	Bachelor of Social Work
University of New South Wales	Bachelor of Social Work
Southern Cross University	Bachelor of Social Welfare
University of Western Sydney	Bachelor of Social Work
	Bachelor of Social Welfare
University of Sydney	Bachelor of Social Work
Charles Sturt University	Bachelor of Social Work
	Bachelor of Social Welfare

These courses all contain a practical component of varying lengths. Some TAFE courses also have a practical component. The inclusion of a practical component increases the positive view of a qualification as it indicates at least a basic level of experience in the field. In the case of the institutions listed above, a certain number of students undertake their field placements with DoCS, thus increasing their knowledge and experience prior to applying for DoCS positions.

Other qualifications outside the preferred range (for example nursing, teaching or psychology) and those that do not include a practical component are considered in conjunction with the work experience of the applicant. For courses that are less clear in their connection to the position being applied for (for example Bachelor of Arts), it is important to look at course content to establish its relationship to Child Protection Caseworker competencies. In these cases the individual's work experience is also important.

QUESTION ON NOTICE - BUDGET ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES
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QUESTION NO: 12

Mr Ryan asked :

(Relevant area in Hansard: p16)

In respect of the 3 properties the Minister indicated had been purchased for community based accommodation for people with disabilities (together with the 9 properties that are proposed to be purchased), if these properties are fully occupied how many people can be accommodated?

ANSWER

As at 11 July 2001, 9 properties have been purchased with a further 5 property titles expected to exchange before 31 July. Investigation is continuing with regard to another 10 identified properties. These properties will provide accommodation for 105 people. As service proposals are finalised, property acquisition will be extended in line with the needs of people involved.

QUESTION ON NOTICE - BUDGET ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES
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QUESTION NO. 13

Ms Forsythe asked:

(Relevant area in Hansard: p17)

- (1) How many school leavers with moderate to high support needs will graduate in New South Wales Schools this year?
- (2) How many will be provided with a post-school option or Adult Training, Learning and Support (ATLAS) placement?
- (3) How are the placements to be funded?

ANSWER

- (1) The Department of Education and Training, The Association of Independent Schools and The Catholic Education Commission has estimated that there will be a total of 628 school leavers this year who require assessment to determine their eligibility for ATLAS support. This is an increase on previous estimates.
- (2) The actual number of these school leavers who require an ATLAS program will be determined over the coming months as the needs of these school leavers are assessed.
- (3) It is envisaged that eligible school leavers will receive a combination of ATLAS, employment and training services funded from Commonwealth and State funds.