

QUESTION ON NOTICE – LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
ESTIMATES COMMITTEE No. 2

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

QUESTION NO. 15

Mr Ryan asked:

- (1) In relation to 2 pages tabled by Mr Ryan at the hearing, did the Minister sign a document approving an amount of funding of \$824,000 or thereabouts, for Central Coast Flexible Support Options for Aged and Disability services?
- (2) If so, what happened after the Minister approved the recommendation to fund that group?
- (3) Was there an interference with the funding process leading to another organisation receiving nearly \$1 million in funding?
- (4) If so:
 - (a) who was responsible?
 - (b) has the matter been referred to ICAC?

ANSWER:

- (1) to (4) It is open to an unsuccessful applicant for funding to seek a formal review of a funding decision. There are a number of administrative review mechanisms in NSW – these include the courts, tribunals and other review bodies such as the Ombudsman and ICAC. It is then up to the relevant review body to consider the matter.

Question on Notice – Legislative Council
Estimates Committee No. 2

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

Question No 16

Ms Forsythe asked :

I refer to the operating statement for the Department

- 1) Does your Department have a Public Relations or Communications Unit?
- 2) How many People are employed in this unit and at what cost?
- 3) What is the measure of the effectiveness for both this unit and for the Department?

Answer

- 1) Yes
- 2) Staff numbers will vary from time to time depending on leave or peak periods and costs accordingly will vary.
- 3) The effectiveness of the unit is measured by the number of articles and mentions of the work and specific projects of the Department for Women in the print media and on radio.

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QUESTION No: 17

Ms Forsythe asked:

Regarding Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, p 5-53

- (1) Regarding the Women's grants, have any of these grants been awarded to the NSW Labor Council or affiliated associations and groups?

ANSWER:

- (1) There were no grants awarded to the NSW Labor Council or affiliated associations and groups under the Department for Women's Grants Program since the 1997 round of funding.

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QUESTION No: 18

Ms Forsythe asked:

- (1) How has the Government evaluated the success, or non-success of the recent Women on Wheels tour?
- (2) How much was spent on this tour?
- (3) Will the tour take place again?

ANSWER:

- (1) The Department for Women is currently preparing a report and evaluation on the Women on Wheels project. Feedback from community participants will be collated as part of the report and the individual agency and organisation reports will be included.
- (2) The Women on Wheels outreach project team visited 23 NSW towns and regional centres, conducted 35 different activities and workshops and had team members “on the road” over a twelve day period. The cost to the Department’s Project Budget line item was \$54,000. This was within the budgeted cost.
- (3) Depending on the outcome of the final report and evaluation due at the end of July 2001 the Department for Women has budgeted for a WOW2 Outreach project for 2001-2002.

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QUESTION No: 19

Ms Forsythe asked:

- (1) How much did the Women's Gateway website cost to launch?
- (2) How many people have visited the site since its recent launch?
- (3) How is the Government promoting the site?
- (4) How is the Government promoting the success or failure of the site?

ANSWER:

- (1) The Women's Gateway portal was developed in partnership with the Office of Information Technology as part of the *connect.nsw* capital funding program. The project cost was \$131,000.
- (2) In the period 8 March 2001 to 28 May 2001 there have been 10,813 "user sessions" or "visits" to the Women's Gateway. The average user looked at more than three pages and used the Gateway for over 10 minutes.
- (3) The Government is promoting the Women's Gateway portal through outreach programs such as hands-on training sessions in towns and regional centres; through conferences; through meetings such as the Peak Women's Organisations, the Referral Service Key Reference Group and the Women's Information and Referral Service Key Reference Group; and through a wide range of Department for Women and non-department publications including a specific postcard, the *Womenspace* newsletter, the Rural Women's Network newsletter, the National Women's Justice Coalition newsletter and the Country Women's Association (CWA) newsletter.
- (4) Through the same mechanisms as listed in response 3.

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QUESTION No: 20

Ms Forsythe asked:

- (1) Have any complaints been lodged with the Department for Women about contact with the Department? If so, how many and what were the nature of these complaints?

ANSWER:

- (1) During the move from William Street to the Department's new premises in Castlereagh Street there were difficulties with the the PABX system built in the new office. Some callers complained that they were unable to reach the Department and temporary lines were installed by Telstra to alleviate the problem. The number of complaints is unknown.

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QUESTION No: 21

Ms Forsythe asked:

Relating to Budget Paper No. 3 Volume 1, page 5 -55

I refer to the budget allocated to special projects.

- (1) What budget allocation has been made for women's crisis accommodation in Kempsey for 2000/2001?
- (2) What was the allocation made in the financial year 1999/2000?

ANSWER:

- (1) \$289,024 was allocated for this purpose in 2000/01.
- (2) In 1999/2000, \$328,366 was allocated. This included a non-recurrent grant of \$50,000 to assist in a restructure of the service.

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QUESTION No: 22

Mr Ryan asked:

- (1) How much has your Department spent on the following forms of stress relief for DoCS officers?
 - a) Counselling;
 - b) Stress management courses;
 - c) In-house therapeutic massages;
 - d) Outside therapeutic massages;
 - e) Alternative relief?
- (2) How many staff were recipients of each of the above forms of stress relief?
- (3) How many DoCS staff went on stress leave during the year 2000?
- (4) How many person-days of work were lost as a result of stress leave?

ANSWER:

(1) to (4)

The NSW Government recognises that its employees are its most significant asset and is committed to providing a safe working environment in accord with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1983*. Our goal is prevention of work related incidents, as opposed to care.

Obviously any decision as to the appropriate treatment for an individual will be a matter for the approved treating practitioner based upon the individual needs under the Workers Compensation Scheme.

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MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES
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QUESTION No: 23

Mr Ryan asked:

Regarding the Helpline

(1) (BP 3 Vol 1 item 35.1.1 at pg 5 – 2 and 22)

How much has been allocated to the operation of Helpline in 2001/02 and at what staff levels?

(1) (BP 3 Vol 1 item 35.1.1 at pg 5 – 2 and 22)

- (a) How many hours of overtime were undertaken in each week to address the fax backlog and what was the cost of the overtime?
- (b) What percentage of faxes received a direct response from a DoCS Officer?
- (c) What was the longest and average time between the receipt of faxes and a direct response?

(3) (BP Vol 1 item 35.1.1 at pg 5 – 2 and 22)

When you were telling Parliament on 27/2 that the longest time to answer a call at the Helpline was 11 minutes were you aware that no accurate statistics were being kept because the clocks indicating waiting times were automatically resetting each time the call was checked by a customer service officer before it was answered by an intake worker?

ANSWER:

- (1) \$12.575 million has been allocated to the operation of the Helpline. Staffing levels will not be finalised until the trend line for calls to the Helpline has been reliably established.

- (2) The handling of faxes at the Helpline is a manual process with a dedicated fax team. The specific information is not readily available and the extensive resources required to produce it cannot be justified.
- (3) I am advised that the longest wait time for the public line on 27 February 2001 was 11 minutes and 23 seconds, as quoted in Hansard. There was no resetting of the clocks as described in the question. The waiting time as stated is accurate. The waiting times are based on aggregates using normal call centre technology statistical methods.

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QUESTION No: 25

Relating to the Transformation

Mr Ryan asked:

- (1) (BP Vol 1 item 35 at pg 5 – 3)

How much money was allocated for the DoCS Transformation in 2000/01 and how much of that was spent?

- (2) (BP Vol 1 item 35 at pg 5 – 3)

What is the current status of the Transformation process?

- (3) (BP Vol 1 item 35 at pg 5 – 3)

Further to the issue of Transformation: Under the heading “Changing Times” on 15/6/2001 a joint statement was issued to DoCS and DAHC staff were issued with a review of arrangements for the change involved in the establishment of DADHC. Anthea Green was announced as having a 3 month contract as a project manager for DoCS. What fees are Ms Green being paid for this role? Further, it identified that a consultant is being engaged to identify “existing funding and asset arrangements of the former agencies”. What costs are involved in the engagement of the consultant and who is doing it?

ANSWER:

- (1) In 2000/01 an amount of \$356,164 was allocated towards the DoCS transformation process. Against this allocation, an amount of \$272,414 was expended. Funds not spent are reallocated in accordance with Treasury guidelines to other service priorities in DoCS.
- (2) The Transformation process was officially completed in May 2001.
- (3) Anthea Green has been contracted for three months on a fixed price contract. Details pertaining to consultants are contained in the Annual Report.

The establishment of DADHC project is being managed by Premier’s Department.

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QUESTION No: 26

Mr Ryan asked:

Relating to the Community Services Commission

1. (BP Vol 1 item 36 at pg 5 – 7)
Given that last year your D-G stated that the Community Services Commission would regularly investigate child deaths that the Department had had some involvement with, do you believe that to be part of the role of the Commission?
2. What statistics are available as to the current welfare of children who are subject to care orders, the people we used to call state wards in regard to:
 - a) the number of children subject to orders
 - b) the number who died during the year
 - c) their educational outcomes
 - d) the number who came into contact with the criminal justice system
 - e) the number of children who have been detained in the juvenile justice system
 - f) the number who have the subject of a report for child neglect or mistreatment
 - g) the number who have disabilities with high support needs
 - h) the number living in institutions
 - i) other information relating to their welfare the Department of Community Services could provide.

ANSWER:

1. I am advised that the Community Services Commission can investigate child deaths where the investigation does not exceed the Commission's legal jurisdiction. The Crown Solicitor has advised that certain statutory child protection functions are outside the CSC's jurisdiction.
2. a) DoCS is currently collating the data for 2000/2001 and further data will be available later this year in the Annual Report. The 1999/2000 figures indicate that 7,661 children and young people were subject to care orders (the source is

the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Child Protection Australia Report, 1999-2000).

b to g, and i)

Much of the statistical information requested is not directly available for children subject to care orders. However, you will note from my answers to questions 69, 72 and 73 that measures are being taken to enhance data collection capabilities; in some cases these involve coordination with the government agencies which have primary responsibility for the collection of such information. For example, initial discussions are taking place between the Department of Education and Training and Department of Community Services to assess the feasibility of collecting the information referred to in c).

The Office of the Children's Guardian will also report on the welfare and wellbeing of children and young people in out-of-home care.

- h) The number of children in facility based care as at 30 June 2000 was 331. Facility based care includes supported accommodation, residential care and family group homes. DoCS is currently collating the data for 2000/2001 and further data may be available later this year in the Annual Report.

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QUESTION No: 27

Mr Ryan asked:

(BP Vol 1 item 35 at pg 5 – 19)

How much did you spend from your discretionary fund this year and on what projects?

ANSWER:

The allocation and expending of these funds is at my discretion. The projects receiving the grants must fit the activities of the Departments or agencies within the portfolio. There is no minimum or maximum level to the amount of the grant that may be provided.

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QUESTION No: 28

Mr Ryan asked:

(BP 3 Vol 1 item 35.1.1 at pg 5 – 5 and 22)

Can we have a CSC by CSC breakdown of number of notifications and active staff levels for 2000/01?

ANSWER:

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 engaged in an exercise to provide accurate information 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.

Staffing levels have varied during the course of the year because of the Transformation and the creation of the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

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QUESTION No: 29

Mr Ryan asked:

(BP 3 Vol 1 item 35.1.1 at pg 5 – 5 and 22)

With how many children who died during 2000/01 had DoCS had some contact?

ANSWER:

The Child Death Review Team is responsible for reporting on child deaths in NSW. Information relating to the 2000/2001 year will be included in the Review Team's next Annual Report to Parliament.

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QUESTION No: 30

Mr Ryan asked:

Can we have a CSC by CSC breakdown of the number of cases that are at present unallocated?

ANSWER:

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.