

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: 39

Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked:—

Regarding the incorporation of Home Care into the new Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

Relevant area in the budget papers: 39.1 page 5-50 Budget Paper No 3- Vol 2 .

- (1) When were staff in Home Care services informed of the proposed incorporation?
- (2) When were staff in ADD informed of the proposed incorporation?
- (3) What are the estimated savings in operation costs resulting from this incorporation?
- (4) How will the quality of service delivery levels be assessed and when will they occur?

ANSWER

- (1) Home Care staff were advised of the creation of the new Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care at 4.00pm on 5 April 2001.
- (2) Staff in ADD were informed of the proposed creation of the new Department on April 5 through an e-mail message from the Director General and then through a series of meetings held across the workplace.
- (3) The motivation of the incorporation was to give greater emphasis within government to the coordination of services for people with disabilities and to older people and their carers. Consequently, there are no estimated savings. The cost of any future realignment of structures and shared corporate agencies is yet to be determined.

(4) As part of the ongoing reforms in the HACC Program, Home Care is now required to collect new data as part of the HACC Minimum Data Set (MDS) and report this data to the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and the Commonwealth.

The MDS involves continuous collection and is based on actual service provision to known individuals. It will allow an accurate estimate of the number of people using HACC services for the first time. NSW has been at the forefront of developments in supporting the introduction of the MDS.

Many Home Care service users are younger people with long term disabilities and many people receive services from both Home Care and disability services. DADHC is participating in the national redevelopment of the Commonwealth/State Disability Agreement (CSDA) MDS. It is anticipated that the new CSDA MDS will be implemented from April 2002.

In addition, a new monitoring framework will be implemented for all services funded by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care under the HACC and Disability Services Programs. This, in conjunction with the implementation of the HACC National Standards, will provide a strong focus on the quality of services in 2001/2002.

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ESTIMATES COMMITTEE No.2

MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES
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QUESTION No: 40

Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked:

Relating to 35.1.1 Line item: community based residential care

- 1) What does the term 'community based residential care' mean?
- 2) Has all of the \$2.5m allocated last year to non-government services for service innovation, including the \$1m allocated specifically to Aboriginal services, been spent?

ANSWER:

- (1) The name 'community based residential care' describes approved grants to community based non-government organisations who provide support, accommodation and assistance to children and young people.
- (2) The amount was not \$2.5 million but rather \$2 million allocated for service enhancement. An Expression of Interest process was undertaken and the amount of \$1,498,391 was spent.

Of the \$1 million allocated for Aboriginal services, \$533,392 has been spent. The balance of funding will be expended in the 2001/2002 financial year.

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QUESTION No: 41

Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked:

Relating to 35.1.2 Children's services. Line item pre-schools and day care centres

- (1) What criteria will be used to distribute the \$1 m set aside to assist struggling rural pre-schools?
- (2) How many pre-schools will be assisted with this funding?
- (3) What is the expected impact of the extension of special needs funding to vacation care and occasional care services, given there is only \$1.2m additional (making a total of \$10m) allocated on top of a base that has been frozen for 10 years?

ANSWER:

- (1) Services proposed to receive this increased funding will be identified and prioritised within each Department of Community Services (DoCS) Area through comparison of an output based funding formula against their current funding level.

The formula is based on service operating characteristics such as hours and weeks open, number of licensed places and number of families earning under \$40,000. The result will be compared across services and examined in light of services' financial viability, utilisation trends, fee level and to assure maintaining access to services in small rural communities.

- (2) DoCS is currently developing proposals for this funding for my consideration.

- (3) The \$1.2 million growth funding for the children with additional needs funding scheme represents an increase of over 13.5% on the current funding level for the scheme.

A considerable number of Vacation Care services are eligible for the Commonwealth Government's Special Needs Subsidy Scheme and therefore would not be eligible for the State's scheme. There are also a number of occasional care services that fall into this category.

The extension of eligibility to these services will enable them to receive financial help in supporting children with additional needs. It also provides parents who have children with additional needs, the opportunity to access a greater choice of services.

MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES
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QUESTION NO: 42

Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked:

Was there any new additional funding for the Care for Carers program in this State Budget? (Refer page 6 of the DADHC 2001/2002 Budget Fact Sheets.)

ANSWER:

Under the Care for Carers Program funding for carer supports is being enhanced by an additional \$12.9M over the four years 1999 - 2003.

The Program is managed by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and NSW Health.

NSW Health is the budget holder for \$12.5M, while the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care is the budget holder for \$0.4M.

The allocations over 4 years are as follows:

- 1999/2000: \$0.6M
- 2000/2001: \$2.1M
- 2001/2002: \$5.1M
- 2002/2003: \$5.1M

This means that in 2001/2002, funding has increased by \$3 million on the previous year.

The \$5.1 million is a recurrent allocation from this year.

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QUESTION NO: 43

Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked :

There was an additional recurrent \$0.5m allocated to court support for people with intellectual disability announced in the 2000/01 State Budget. Is it correct that this allocation has not been spent yet?

ANSWER

The additional \$0.5 m recurrent for court support for people with intellectual disabilities referred to by the Hon Dr Chesterfield-Evans is the same allocation referred to in question 38, part 3, by Mr Ryan. My response is therefore the same.

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QUESTION NO: 44

Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked:

(1) The former DOCS Disability Services has consistently, in the last 3 years, overspent its projected budget by up to \$30m per annum. The Budget papers show that the overspending this year is more than \$30m. (Refer p5-45, 5-46 of Budget Estimates 2001-02) In 2001/02, the former DOCS Disability Services plans to deliver the same outputs to the same number of clients as last year but with \$20m less.

- (a) How will this overspending be managed?
- (b) Will the number of clients be reduced?
- (c) What is the capacity of the new Department to absorb consistent overspending without reductions to other programs?
- (d) If the overspending is so consistent, does the increased amount more accurately represent the cost of provision of government Disability Services?

ANSWER

(a) Refer to Question No. 35 (2) asked by Mr Ryan. regarding \$20m. Measures are being implemented by DADHC to assess the cost structures and identify potential strategies to improve efficiency.

(b) No.

(c) Accurate assessment of and analysis of cost structures is a priority for DADHC in allocating funding to disabilities service providers.

(d) See (c) above.

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QUESTION No: 45

Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked:

The State Budget Papers show no additional funding to day services for young people leaving the Adult Training Learning and Support Program (ATLAS) program at the end of 2001. How will the government provide on-going services to the 380 people leaving the program without loss of continuity and without additional funding?

ANSWER

The outcomes of the ATLAS Review and Reform project will inform Government decision making and funding across the whole of the ATLAS program.

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QUESTION No: 46

Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked:

What is the budget, both in terms of money and other resources, that DoCS has allocated for research related to the outcomes for children and young people in the child protection and out-of-home care systems?

ANSWER:

In 2000/2001, DoCS' Research Coordination Section (RCS) spent \$95,714 in direct spending on research related to outcomes for children and young people in the child protection and out-of-home care systems.

The RCS also administered the provision of support in-kind for 17 projects on such research. Support in-kind provided by DoCS included facilitating access to staff and clients, extraction and analysis of data, computer access, use of office space and conference rooms, mentoring and project management. The cost of support in-kind has not been valued for each research project.

The projected budget for 2001/2002 to be spent on research related to outcomes for children and young people in the child protection and out-of-home care systems amounts to \$153, 652. The RCS has also costed an additional \$24,150 of support in-kind for 2 research projects funded through the Australian Research Council Linkage program.

DoCS' Office of Childcare has also been responsible for the commissioning and/or project management of research as it relates to the links between the child protection system and children's services in NSW.

In 1999/2000 the Office of Childcare spent \$35,000 on research relating to this topic. Outcomes of this project led to a successful grant under the Australian Research Council Linkage Program.

In addition, the in-kind support for the Linkage project is valued at \$36,640 and includes facilitating access to staff and clients; use of staff time; extraction and analysis of data; computer access; use of office space and conference rooms; mentoring and project management.

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QUESTION No: 47

Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked:

- (1) What is the budget for attaining and carrying out access visits for children in care?
- (2) What loss in information to assessments of ‘how things are going’ for children does this involve?
- (3) How many unallocated cases are there?

ANSWER:

- (1) In 2001 / 2002, the budget estimate is \$1.18 million.

- (2) Question is unclear.

Access visits for children and young people in out-of-home care are important to keep families connected, wherever possible, and are determined by the needs of the child or young person and as defined in the case plan.

Arrangements for access are made after an assessment of the individual circumstances, based upon identified need, level of risk, restoration planning and accessibility of family for contact.

Family contact and access can involve access supervised by a paid escort or DoCS case worker, access facilitated by a foster carer as well as unsupervised access, letter and phone contacts.

Barriers to access can be the unknown whereabouts of the parents, Court Orders and limited availability for access due to parents’ whereabouts eg incarceration, interstate.

- (3) 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: 48

Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked:

- (1) How many children in care are there in NSW?
- (2) How many children in care do not have an allocated worker?

ANSWER:

- (1) As at 30 June 2000, 8,517 children and young people were in out-of-home care in NSW.
- (2) Allocation of a caseworker is based on a needs assessment in each case.

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QUESTION No: 49

Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked:

- (1) The Helpline was set up and had some teething problems. Now that it has had time to settle and has had procedures tightened, can the following details be provided:
- a) What is the increase in calls to the Helpline over this year?
 - b) What is the minimum recorded wait time for callers to speak with Helpline staff?
 - c) What is the maximum recorded wait time for callers?
 - d) What are the mean and average wait time for callers?
 - e) Does any increase in number or time waiting indicate an increase in recording of potential incidents or an increase in reporting.
 - f) How many of the calls involve substantiated reports? (c/f last years figures)

ANSWER:

- a) This question cannot be accurately answered until the Helpline has been operating for a full 12 months..
- b) Three seconds.

- c) No caller to the Helpline now has to wait longer than 10 minutes before they are given the option to leave a message and their call will be returned when their message progresses to the top of the queue.
- d) The average waiting time per day for callers in July was 11.6 minutes.
- e) No.
- f) For the period 18 December 2000 to 30 June 2001, 4,526 reports to the Helpline were substantiated following assessment of abuse and neglect. This is a preliminary figure because many reports are still being investigated and is likely to increase when final figures are prepared for the Annual Report.

For the corresponding period last year, there were 4,458 reports to DoCS' Community Services Centres where the assessment determined abuse and neglect. However, because of changes relating to the introduction of the new *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, these figures are not directly comparable.