

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

What has been the cost of the [Key Information Database] system?

**ANSWER:**

The development and implementation of KiDS cost the Department approximately \$13.1 million to the end of the 2003/04 financial year.

The cost for the implementation of the system was offset by savings of some \$4 million per year from decommissioning the old mainframe system.

Since the end of the 2003/04 year, the Department of Community Services has spent a further \$12.4 million (\$10.1 million in recurrent expenses and \$2.3 million in capital) to expand capacity, to improve system functionality and performance and to accommodate the Department of Community Services' expanded caseworker user base.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Sylvia Hale MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services a question regarding whether the Police and Community Youth Clubs Ltd (PCYC) would inform the Department of Community Services or enter into discussions with the Department if it was proposing to close a centre such as Lakemba PCYC.

**ANSWER:**

Police and Community Youth Clubs Ltd (PCYC) provides young people with a range of sports, arts and leadership programs in locations around NSW. The Department of Community Services does not fund the core activities of PCYC.

The Department of Community Services provides funding to a range of for-profit and not-for-profit organisations through various programs to achieve the Department's objectives. I understand that PCYC receives a number of small grants from the Department to provide Vacation Care.

The Department of Community Services would not expect to be informed about proposals to close specific centres unless the closure would have a direct impact on a service funded by the Department.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

1. To cite the case he referred to as an example of reversing the onus of proof.

The Hon Sylvia Hale MLC asked the Director-General:

2. Did you consult in any way with the Law Society or other relevant groups before proceeding with the legislation?
3. Still it is a big ask, it is a big ask, is it not for a family that may have had very many adverse interactions with the legal system and may not have the nous, the understanding or the wherewithal to receive proper legal representation?

**ANSWER:**

1. The case referred to relates to a judgement by Judge Phelan in the District Court on 14 October 2002. A confidential copy of the transcript has been provided to the Standing Committee.
2. The Department of Community Services consulted with the Ministerial Advisory Committee, the Children's Court and the Legal Aid Commission about proposals to introduce amendments concerning similar fact evidence.
3. Anecdotal evidence and studies of care litigation indicate almost all parents in care proceedings are legally aided.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 6 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

In relation to the DoCS Research Report Program, I think there is a report by Michael Tarren-Sweeney, "Children in Care Study". Would it be possible for the Committee to obtain a copy of that study and presentation?

**ANSWER:**

A copy of the report has been provided to the Standing Committee.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Commissioner for Children and Young People:

Are you monitoring through the ABS process how many child deaths are involved (of NSW children outside NSW)? What do you estimate to be the number of deaths that are not being picked up in this process?

**ANSWER:**

In 2004, the deaths of 30 children and young people from New South Wales were registered in other states.

The 2004 Australian Bureau of Statistics Deaths data were those most recently published before the cut-off date for the 2005/06 Child Death Review Team Annual Report. Australian Bureau of Statistics Deaths data for 2005 will be reported in the 2006 Child Death Review Team Annual Report.

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**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Commissioner for Children and Young People:

Is it possible to provide a little more detail about what reform needs to occur in order to allow the authorities in Queensland, for example, to release information to your committee so that the death of a child who lived in New South Wales and had been transferred to a hospital in Brisbane where the death certificate was issued can be included?

**RESPONSE:**

Third parties – like police, coroners and hospitals – that provide information to Child Death Review Teams do so with statutory protection of the confidentiality of the data they provide.

The Queensland Commission considers that a bi-lateral agreement for exchange of information with NSW Child Death Review Team could threaten the provision of this information to the Queensland Child Death Review Team. This would prevent it from performing its functions effectively. The Queensland Commission has indicated a willingness to consider exchange of information in the future.

Separate bilateral agreements are being sought with Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

## **GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

### **QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

#### **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

#### **QUESTION:**

The Hon Robyn Parker MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

In relation to the emergency \$8.8 million funding to preschools in 2005-06, the Minister stated at the estimates committee on 4 September that each of those 840 community-based preschools had been written to and advised of their ability to apply. Later she corrected herself in Parliament and said that 400 preschools to receive funding were determined by two surveys conducted by the department. When were the surveys conducted and who participated in those surveys? Who determined which preschools received funding?

#### **ANSWER:**

As advised at the previous Estimates Hearing on 4 September 2006, \$8.3 million in emergency funding was provided in 2005-06 to more than 400 preschools known to be under immediate financial pressure.<sup>1</sup>

The figure of \$8.8 million refers to ongoing viability funding to be provided each year from 2006/07 to improve the sustainability of community-based preschools and increase access and affordability for hard working families.<sup>2</sup>

I advised the Committee on 4 September 2006:<sup>3</sup>

*These services were identified through two surveys of DoCS regional staff, drawing on their expert knowledge of the needs of community-based preschools in the area as well as information provided by services in their annual reporting documents. All community-based preschools were advised by letter of the preschool investment and reform plan, including the allocation of emergency funding. Preschools that had not received an allocation in the initial emergency funding round or that were dissatisfied with the amount of emergency funding allocated were able to contact the department by phone, email, letter, the department's web site or through their local MP or peak group. All services that made contact were given the opportunity to have their position considered for the second round of emergency funding.*

As the transcript above indicates, preschools receiving emergency funding were chosen through two surveys and all preschools were then advised of the four year Preschool Investment and Reform Plan and whether or not they had received an allocation under the first round of emergency funding. Preschools who were dissatisfied could apply for funding under the second round.

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<sup>1</sup> CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT: General Purpose Standing Committee No 2, Community Services and Youth, 4 September 2006, p 17.

<sup>2</sup> Loc cit

<sup>3</sup> Loc cit

I re-iterated this information – without alteration or correction – in the Legislative Assembly on 19 October 2006:<sup>4</sup>

*I take this opportunity to clarify matters for the honourable member for Willoughby. If the honourable member had been listening carefully at the estimates hearing she would not be quite as confused as she appears to be today. For the benefit of the honourable member I will repeat the facts.*

*Preschools which received funding in the initial round of more than \$8 million were identified through two surveys by Department of Community Services regional staff, as well as information provided by services in their annual reporting documents. As I explained during the estimates committee hearing, preschools which missed out in the initial allocation of funding were able to contact the department, their local member of Parliament or even my office. Every service that expressed an interest in funding had its position considered for the second-round funding. More than 400 preschools were allocated funding in June.*

In response to the further questions raised at the supplementary estimates hearing of 7 November, the Department of Community Services advises:

- Two field based surveys were carried out by the Department of Community Services, drawing on the expert knowledge of regional staff about the needs of community-based preschools in the area and on information provided by services in their annual reporting and accountability documents.
- The first of the surveys was conducted in November 2005, with an update conducted in May 2006.
- The results of these regional surveys were assessed by the Department of Community Services' Office of Child Care.

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<sup>4</sup> CORRECTED COPY: Legislative Assembly Hansard, 19 October 2006



## **GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

### **QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

#### **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

#### **QUESTION:**

The Hon Robyn Parker MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services a question related to the Department's closure of the Manly Community Services Centre:

Where will the outpost in Manly be, given that the honourable member for Manly advised that you would be providing one?

#### **ANSWER:**

Staff at Manly and St Leonards Community Services Centres (CSCs) relocated to new, larger premises on 12 December 2005. The opening of the Chatswood CSC has seen a 43 per cent increase in the number of caseworker positions, including the establishment of an Early Intervention Team.

The Chatswood CSC covers the same geographic area as the Manly and St Leonards CSCs. Its physical location does not affect the quality of service as caseworkers spend most of their time on the road visiting families in their areas.

Where appropriate, staff from Chatswood CSC meet local non Government service providers at local community centres or NGO offices on the Northern Beaches. For example, DoCS caseworkers attend local interagency meeting such as Child Protection Committees and Domestic Violence Committees.

These improved facilities and increased resources have, and will continue to provide, effective services for vulnerable families and children in Manly, St Leonards, Chatswood, the Northern Beaches and surrounding areas.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Robyn Parker MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

In the Minister's press release on 6 June it was stated that \$52.2 million was allocated in the 2005-06 year for out-of-home programs. Could you provide a breakdown of where this money was, or will be, spent?

**ANSWER:**

The allocation referred to in the statement is part of the Government's \$1.2 billion Department of Community Services reform package.

The amount of \$52.2 million is the annual increase in the 2006/07 year relative to the previous year arising from the implementation of the Out-of-Home Care components of that package. It represents only one of a number of changes to the Out-Of-Home Care budget in 2006/07 when compared with 2005/06.

The major components being funded by this increment in the package are: the recruitment of an additional 25 Out-of-Home Care caseworkers; the general expansion of the Out-of-Home Care service system by the purchase of new and increased services from external service providers; and increases in benefits and support paid to departmental foster carers.

Apart from the specific expenditure on the 25 new Out-of-Home Care caseworkers, the other improvements to the Out-of-Home Care service system are financed from the overall Out-of-Home Care budget and it is not possible to identify any individual payment that is financed exclusively from this particular budget increment.

## **GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

### **QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

#### **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

#### **QUESTION:**

The Hon Robyn Parker MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services a question regarding resources and funding allocations for the Department's supported accommodation program (SAAP):

The annual report for 2005-06 in relation to supported accommodation assistance [SAT] (sic) programs states that 38 per cent of SAT resources were for services for unaccompanied people under 25.

Where was the balance of SAT funding allocated and what changes to these arrangements do you envisage for 2006/07?

#### **ANSWER:**

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program is commonly referred to as SAAP. Unaccompanied young people under 25 are defined in the national data collection as Young People.

The 2005-06 Department of Community Services Annual Report has not yet been publicly released. The question, therefore, appears to relate to the 2004-05 Annual Report which states:

*Over \$40 million per annum, more than 38 per cent of SAAP resources, is dedicated to services for unaccompanied young people under 25 years old, who represent one third of SAAP clients.*

Source: Department of Community Services Annual Report 2004-05, p 21

NSW Supported Accommodation Assistance Program resources in 2005/06 were allocated as follows:

1. Young People – 38%
2. Women (and children) experiencing domestic violence – 29%
3. Families – 5%
4. Single men – 13%
5. Single women – 4%
6. Multiple groups – 11%

Funding for the program is renewable or ongoing. This means that the client group distributions in 2006/07 will be broadly the same as those for 2005/06.

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**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

Can you provide a list of the department's officers with staff entitlement and the staff establishment for each office and the actual number of positions that are filled?

**ANSWER:**

It is not clear from the wording of this question what is required, particularly in relation to the use of the term "officers with staff entitlement".

## **GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

### **QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

#### **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

#### **QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

In relation to offices such as the Wilcannia office, I understand that the practice is to fill positions in Wilcannia and have staff located in another place, such as Dubbo. Is that practice still used in relation to difficult-to-staff positions?

#### **ANSWER:**

Wilcannia is the only Community Services Centre in the Western Region with allocated staff working from a different location.

Several initiatives are underway to attract qualified staff to remote locations. For example, ongoing recruitment strategies employ community Information Sessions and a mix of media including web advertising together with radio interviews, media releases and articles profiling the role of caseworker.

The Department of Community Services participated in the Sydney Morning Herald Employment and Careers Expo on 28 - 29 July 2006 to promote departmental positions across the State and also participated in the Country Week Expo in Sydney on 11-13 August 2006 to showcase opportunities to work in non metropolitan areas of NSW. The Department has established a short-term secondment register for caseworkers to work in rural areas and is working closely with several NSW universities to offer student placements and to encourage students about to graduate to apply for departmental positions.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

How many children who are in care are also clients of the Department of Juvenile Justice?

**ANSWER:**

The provision of current information would require a data matching exercise with the Department of Juvenile Justice to identify children and young persons in out-of-home care who are joint clients of that Department and the Department of Community Services.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

In relation to the Ombudsman's report of reviewable deaths in 2004, case study 24 involves a decision by DOCS to place a child in out-of-home care with a family. But no criminal record check was conducted on that family or that household, and a five-month-old Aboriginal boy died as a result of domestic violence injuries that appeared to be sustained between the carers. The Ombudsman reports that there was, subsequent to that, an audit of criminal record checks undertaken on carers throughout the department. Can you tell us the results of that audit?

**ANSWER:**

The New South Wales Ombudsman's Report of Reviewable Deaths in 2004 refers to an audit of checks undertaken in a particular region (ie not the entire department) and advises that "checks were completed for those not previously checked."

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Robyn Parker MLC asked the Commissioner for Children and Young People:

Has the implementation (of Child Safe Child Friendly resources developed by the Commission for Children and Young People) been reviewed at all?

**RESPONSE:**

Web hits to the opening page of the Child-safe and Child-friendly section of the Commission's website have increased by 9.5 per cent over the past 12 months. In 2004/05 there were 11,078 hits to this page, increasing to 12,127 in 2005/06.

The "Getting Started" page is where organisations go to start making changes. Web hits to the "Getting Started" page of the Commission's Child-safe and Child-friendly website increased by 23.5 per cent. In 2004-2005 there were 4,207 hits to this page increasing to 5,196 in 2005-2006.



**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Robyn Parker MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

How much funding was provided to children leaving out-of-home care once they turned 18?

**ANSWER:**

The *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* makes provision for assistance to be given to young people who are transitioning from out-of-home care to independent living, based on an assessment of need.

Support can take the form of help to obtain accommodation, undertake education and training or access income support and health care. It may also include referrals to counselling services.

Further information on the support provided to children leaving out of home care is available in the Department's Annual Reports.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Commissioner for Children and Young People:

Is that in forward estimates as well?

(This question refers to whether there has been any net loss to bottom line Net Cost of Services as a result of merging the Commission for Children and Young People with the Office of the Children's Guardian to form the Office for Children.)

**RESPONSE:**

There is no net loss to the bottom line in forward estimates arising from the merger.

In 2006/07 the Office for Children's Accounting Net Cost of Services is \$11.864 million.

In 2007/08 the Office for Children's forecast Net Cost of Services is \$11.799 million.

The \$65,000 (0.55 per cent) reduction reflects the Office for Children's contribution to the efficiency dividend applied across all NSW Government agencies.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Robyn Parker MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

What is the total of applications during 2005-06 for places under the SAAP and how many were granted by region and sub-region in metropolitan areas?

**ANSWER:**

Data for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) for 2005/06 is currently unavailable. Under the national Multilateral Agreement with the Commonwealth, SAAP data is managed independently of Government by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. It is anticipated that 2005/06 data will be available in early 2007.

Annual data from 2000/01 to 2004/05 indicates that between 24,000 and 26,000 clients each year receive more than two million days of support and 800,000 nights of accommodation from the SAAP.

Regional data in the form requested is not routinely provided by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

In response to information provided by the Director-General of the Department of Community Services concerning allocation of cases, the Hon Robyn Parker MLC asked:

So you must have, region by region, data that you can provide us with, in terms of caseloads if you are doing that sort of analysis?

**ANSWER:**

On average, 193 reports are referred to Community Services Centres per caseworker each year. These referrals may require varying levels of intervention depending on the identified level of risk and required response time.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Sylvia Hale MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

1. Is it true that the department has decided to cease funding five youth support positions within the schools comprising Chifley College and two associated outreach positions that are currently funded under the Community Solutions and Crime Prevention program?
2. Is there any proposal to renew funding for these positions? Has there been any evaluation of the work done by those seven workers? If that program is to be discontinued—and I am referring to the community solutions program—there are other things such as money to facilitate a roundtable to provide 13 mentally ill young people with a clear pathway from health to rehabilitation services to employment support services in Mount Druitt. There is a range of other things. If the program is not to be continued where are these youth support services now to come from?
3. Can you advise the Committee whether there are specific plans to follow it up with additional funds?

**ANSWER:**

Community Solutions and Crime Prevention was an innovative, time-limited program to promote crime prevention and stimulate community strength in 28 priority locations. The Strategy provided \$50 million from 2001/02 to 2005/06.

Given the time-limited nature of the program, a specific requirement of funding was the development of an appropriate exit or sustainability strategy post the Community Solutions funding period.

The Chifley Centre Project and the Youth Outreach Project are run through the Chifley Centre which has received over \$1.5 million since it commenced in 2003.

The funding was provided through the Department of Education and Training as Community Solutions and Crime Prevention education, training and skills for employment projects. The ongoing responsibility for education, training and skills for employment rests with the Department of Education and Training.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

In answering a question by The Hon Sylvia Hale MLC on whether the Department sets benchmarks or goals against which its performance is measured to determine whether it is meeting its objectives in the delivery of community services, the Director-General of the Department of Community Services said he would check details regarding the tendering process for the Longitudinal Study of Children in Out-of-Home Care and provide them to the Committee.

**ANSWER:**

Tender documents were recently published to attract interested parties to undertake a longitudinal study of children and young people in Out-of-Home Care. This information is available on the Department of Community Services' website. The longitudinal study is a research project which is linked to a separate, large-scale evaluation of the Out-of-Home care program, the tender documents for which should be issued in the near future.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services a question regarding the number of reports and the number children reported. In particular:

What has been the increase in demand over the last 3 years? Are you saying 50 per cent in reports or 50 per cent in children over the last 3 years?

**ANSWER:**

Over the last five years, the total number of child protection reports received by the Department of Community Services has increased from 159,643 in 2001/02 to 241,003 in 2005/06, representing a 51 per cent increase.

84,965 children and young people were reported to DoCS in 2001/02, compared to 109,568 in 2005/06, a 29 per cent increase.

Reba Meagher MP  
**Minister**

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

Ms Sylvia Hale asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

We were talking about the increase in demand for DoCS services. Has the department's workforce increased in this time? If so, by how much? Has the department's funding increased in that time? If so, by how much?

**ANSWER:**

Over the last five years, the total number of child protection reports received by the Department of Community Services has increased from 159,643 in 2001/02 to 241,003 in 2005/06. This represents a 51 per cent increase.

In December 2002, the NSW Government announced a \$1.2 billion five full year reform of the Department of Community Services.

A key aspect of the reform is the recruitment of an additional 1,025 caseworkers.



**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

What was the result of the Department's valuation of "Bidura"?

**ANSWER:**

The Department of Community Services commissioned a value management study of its Bidura property in early 2006. That study suggested a range of possible market values for the site on a "highest and best alternative use" basis, ranging from \$6.3 million to \$9.7 million.

Should the property become surplus to requirements, the Government would have first call on that site.

## **GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

### **QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

#### **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

#### **QUESTION:**

The Hon Sylvia Hale MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

What did the Department spend on legal fees in 2005/06?

#### **ANSWER:**

NSW public sector agencies may engage the Crown Solicitor's Office or private legal professionals to engage in non core (general) legal work for government agencies. The Department of Community Services also has a Legal Services Branch to support its work in care proceedings in the Children's Court.

The Crown Solicitor acts for:

- the State of NSW
- persons suing or being sued on behalf of the State
- Ministers of the Crown
- A body established by a law of the State
- An officer or an employee of the Public Service or any other service of the State or of a body established by a law of the State
- A person holding office under a law of the State or because of appointment to that office by the Governor or any Minister of the Crown, and
- Any other person or body approved by the Attorney General.

Agencies must engage the Crown Solicitor to perform core legal services in respect of matters which:

- have implications for Government beyond an individual Minister's portfolio
- involve the constitutional powers and privileges of the State and/or the Commonwealth
- Raise issues which are fundamental to the responsibilities of Government, and
- Arise from, or relate to, matters falling within the Attorney General's area of responsibility.

Providing additional specific information in response to this question would be an unjustifiable diversion of public resources.

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**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

When do you expect the first parental responsibility contracts to be registered?

**ANSWER:**

The Department of Community Services is rolling out appropriate and necessary processes, procedures and training as quickly as possible with proclamation of the legislation expected early in the new year. It is likely that the first parental responsibility contracts will have been registered shortly thereafter.

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**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

Are you familiar with Magistrate Crawford's discussion paper called "Supervision: A proposal for reform"?

**ANSWER:**

The Legal Services Branch of the Department of Community Services is aware of the paper.

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**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services:

On what date did the Department submit its annual report to the Minister?

**ANSWER:**

The Department's Annual Report was submitted to the Minister for Community Services on 31 October 2006.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Community Services a question regarding programs for children displaying inappropriate sexual behaviour, children who are not sexual offenders but who might be identified as being at risk of becoming sexual offenders. The Director-General was specifically asked:

Whether the Department is funding individuals or services for such children?

**ANSWER:**

The Department of Community Services works with Youth Off The Streets and NSW Health to provide services for children in Out-of-Home Care who display sexual offending behaviour.

Youth Off The Streets is funded on a fee-for-service basis to provide therapeutic residential care services for children and young people.

NSW Health currently funds a program called New Street to work with children and young people that are sexual offenders and who display inappropriate sexual behaviour.

In addition to funding these services caseworkers may support children and families to access private practitioners. The Department of Community Services makes payments to these private practitioners for the duration that the child requires the service.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO 2**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – 13 NOVEMBER 2006**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2006/07**

**QUESTION:**

The Hon Sylvia Hale MLC asked the Commissioner for Children and Young People:

The report of the Child Death Review Team indicates that a number of young people who had received services from DoCS committed suicide over the last five years. How many of the young people who committed suicide in that time were receiving services from DoCS at the time of their death?

**ANSWER:**

The Child Death Review Team reports on the number of children who were identified as vulnerable. Vulnerable in this context means they or a sibling were reported as being at risk of harm to DoCS within the three years before their death. The Team does not collect information on whether a child was receiving services from the Department of Community Services at the time of their death.

The Child Death Review Team first began to identify vulnerable children in this way in 2003. Information on the number of vulnerable children who have died by suicide can be found in Child Death Review Team Annual Reports from 2003, 2004 and 2005.