



BRIEFING NOTE

Ref: ADF13/790
MFACS13/158

ISSUE: This brief replaces the previous response of September 2012 on caseworker numbers (MFACS 12/1974) and gives an update regarding current caseworker numbers. The Minister's Office has also asked a number of specific questions that are answered in this brief

CURRENT AS AT: 27 February 2013

1. Current caseworker staffing numbers

In 2010-11 and 2011-12 the base budget allocation from Treasury for Community Services included a component equivalent to salary costs for 2,149 FTE Caseworkers and Casework Specialists (62 FTE), plus an additional 36 FTE for the Helpline, a total of 2185FTE. While this is not the same as an authorised establishment or a fixed number of caseworkers to be funded and employed at any one time, and is included in the total budget rather than as a separate item, it will be used as the proxy measure against which actual Caseworker FTE can be compared.

For 2012-13 the allocation to the division in Budget Paper 3 will include the same level of funding based on 2,185 FTE, but with \$10 million (approximately equivalent to 117 FTE caseworkers) of that to be paid to the non government sector for provision of the Brighter Futures program. This leaves the equivalent of salary costs for **2,068 FTE caseworkers** to be allocated.

The spreadsheet outlining current caseworker staffing numbers are at **Tab A**.

The table one below details the proposed caseworker allocation compared to Financial FTE occupying those positions during December 2012. Column A shows the allocation of caseworkers by Region for the first half of FY12/13 and this is then compared to Column B, Financial FTEs occupying those places during December 2012 with the resulting variance presented in Column D. For example, the proposed allocation in December 2012 for Metro Central was 198.2 caseworkers and of these positions 192.7 were filled resulting in 5.5 vacant positions. Columns C and E then provide insight into the later half of FY 12/13 with proposed caseworker allocations in column C and vacancies if CS retains the same caseworker FTE profile as December 2012 into the later half of FY12/13 (column E).

Table 2: Proposed caseworker allocation FY12/13 compared to December financial FTE

Region	Proposed caseworker allocation Jul 12 - Dec 12	Dec actual Fin FTEs	Proposed caseworker allocation Jan 13 - Jun 13	Variance (actual vs 1st half FY 12/13 proposed allocation)	Variance (actual vs 2nd half FY 12/13 proposed allocation)
Caseworkers (CP, OOHC and SF ONLY)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D) = A less B	(E) = C less B
Hunter and Central Coast	273.6	267.4	291.2	6.2	23.8
Metro Central	198.2	192.7	195.3	5.5	2.6
Metro South West	189.2	181.2	190.9	8.0	9.7
Metro West	260.3	258.7	258.6	1.6	-0.1
Northern	276.1	276.7	309.4	-0.6	32.7
Southern	169.2	155.5	178.0	13.7	22.5
Western	214.8	200.6	245.6	14.2	45.0
TOTAL	1,581.4	1,532.8	1,669.0	48.6	136.2

It is important to note that this table does not capture all frontline staff and only includes OOHC, Child Protection and Strengthening Families caseworkers. It does not include IFBS, JIRT, Helpline, Casework Specialists, Metro ISS, DV Helpline, Adoptions, Records Access and other dedicated specialist teams. The Financial FTEs do not include staff on Maternity Leave or Long Service Leave.

It is also important to note that the proposed distribution of resources (where they are located not how many) was not used for budget allocation this year, as it was intended that regions move towards their proposed allocation over 18 months. In addition, it was expected that the allocation at the CSC level would not be prescriptive and should only be used as a guide by the regions in the process of moving towards their final December 2013 overall caseworker allocation.

2. Staffing situation in the Goulburn Community Services Centre (CSC)

As of February 2013 there were 8.8 fulltime equivalent (FTE) caseworkers at the Goulburn CSC. One of these caseworkers recently commenced maternity leave. Officially, the caseworker commenced paid Maternity Leave on 12 November 2012 and will remain on Leave through a combination of Maternity, Recreation and leave without pay until 1 February 2014. The following table details the current staffing arrangements at Goulburn CSC.

Goulburn CSC Caseworker (FTE)	
Current occupied positions	7.8
One staff on maternity leave	1.0
One staff on workers compensation	1.0
One staff on Higher Duties	1.0
Substantive vacancies	0.9

The Region is accessing the current Caseworker eligibility list to try to backfill the temporary positions and the substantively vacant 0.9 position. If the positions are not filled through this process, during March 2013 recruitment action will be undertaken in consultation with Businesslink.

At the Community Services Senior Executive Forum in December 2012, the issue of staffing matters facing CSCs like Goulburn was discussed. It was noted that review work is to be undertaken in relation to staffing levels at a unit-by-unit level within regions, with a view to a more strategic approach to workforce management considering client need, various reform directions and the distribution of resources within each Region. An internal working group has been established for this purpose and will report at a future Senior Executive Forum.

3. Staffing situation in the Metro Central Region

Over the last three years the funding allocation to Metro Central Region has been maintained at the actual staffing occupancy rate and not staffing establishment. As a result the capacity of the Region to recruit and fill long term absences has been severely limited. The following table details the changes in caseworker numbers for Metro Central due to the RAM and the impact of using occupied positions rather than substantively filled positions.

Metro Central Caseworker Positions	
Substantively filled end June 2012	232 positions
Substantively occupied end June 2012	204 positions
RAM Allocation	198.2 positions
Positions identified to reallocate within RAM	29 positions
Actual positions reallocated	57 positions

To meet the regions allocated budget since 2010/11 Metro Central has had to withhold approximately 60 to 70 caseworker positions to meet the budget. This has meant that Metro

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Central only filled 75% - 80% of positions in SAP HR. This level differed across the CSC's depending on where substantively filled positions were located.

To add to and harness the local resources available Metro Central Region developed initiatives to enhance interagency collaboration to more effectively deliver integrated supports. The following three projects highlight innovative practice that has increased the level of service delivery to children and families, provide a coordinated and effective consultation and response on complex child protection matters and improve outcomes for children and their families.