

## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

1. The Hon Dr John Kaye asked the Director-General of Community Services –

- (1) Whether the Department of Community Services would be able to make available the data to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare for the second stage of their national study of educational achievement of children in out-of-home care?
- (2) Is the data reliable?

**ANSWER:**

- (1) The educational outcomes of children and young people in statutory care are the focus of a Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) and the NSW Department of Education and Training, finalised in December 2005. Since May 2006, DoCS has been working with the NSW Department of Education and Training to identify children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) who have sat for statewide literacy and numeracy tests at key stages of schooling namely, Years 3, 5 and 7.

The NSW Department of Education and Training has now provided DoCS with individual scores for literacy and numeracy tests (Basic Skills Test, English Language and Literacy Assessment, Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program) for the 2004 and 2006 calendar years. DoCS is currently analysing the results for this cohort of children (year 3 in 2004 / year 5 in 2006).

DoCS has agreed to participate in the second stage of the national study on educational achievement of children in OOHC and will be providing the data to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). At present, AIHW is consulting with child protection and education departments regarding the draft project specifications for the second stage of the study. The data collection phase is due to commence in April 2008 and will not be completed until November 2008. The Report should be published in May 2010.

- (2) Collection of data for this project has required collaboration between the education and community services agencies. The educational outcomes data that will be provided to AIHW will be based upon OOHC children attending a NSW government school. The data that NSW will provide to the AIHW will be reliable and accurate. However, it should be noted that there are differences between jurisdictions in legislation, policies and practices in relation to care and protection orders, and each jurisdiction has different literacy and numeracy tests and its own scaling system for these tests.

2. The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of Community Services -

Does the figure of 23 for the number of local adoptions in 2005/2006 include the adoption of children in out-of-home care?

**ANSWER:**

No.

3. The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of Community Services –

Last year Dr Shepherd was able to provide the committee with data on permanent placements. It listed the age of children, the length of time of the placement and average number of placements that a child would have during that period in care.

**ANSWER:**

The latest statistical information relating to children and young people in permanent placements is available in the Annual Statistical Report on the NSW Department of Community Services website [www.community.nsw.gov.au](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au)

4. The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Minister for Community Services –

Whether an internal review had been completed for the Baby Tyra case and if completed, general findings arising from the review.

**ANSWER:**

The confidential review has been completed. A copy will be made available to the Coroner as part of the Department's submission to the inquest into the child's death. It addresses issues including support and supervision of staff in regional and remote locations, including inexperienced staff; recruitment and retention of staff in remote locations; and aspects of case allocation, planning and monitoring of casework.

5. The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of Community Services –  
How many complaints are there annually of abuse of children in care, and is information available about the outcomes of these complaints?

**ANSWER:**

The numbers of reportable conduct investigations and their outcomes were reported by the Director-General at the Estimates hearing.

6. The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Minister for Community Services -

Who owns and what is the capital cost of Brewarrina Village?

**ANSWER:**

The NSW Department of Community Services does not own Brewarrina Village and is unable to confirm who owns it or its capital cost.

7. The Hon Dr John Kaye MLC asked the Director General of Community Services –

What proportion of children in out-of-home care (other than the high needs kids) have an allocated caseworker?

**ANSWER:**

At 30 June 2007, there were an estimated 7,300 non-high needs children and young persons in out-of-home care who had an allocated caseworker. Unallocated cases are generally those children and young people in long-term stable placements.

8. The Hon. Catherine Cusack, MLC asked the Minister for Community Services –

A Senate Committee Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care, which reported in August 2004, recommended that special support be given to State wards from previous generations who suffer the scars of emotional deprivation and neglect. What action has been taken by this Government to address these recommendations that were made three years ago? What specific funding has been given to the Care Leavers Australia Network [CLAN]?

**ANSWER:**

The Australian Government tabled its response to the report recommendations of the Senate Committee Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children* on 10 November 2005. It referred a number of the report's recommendations to the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Council (CDSMAC) for a national response. The NSW Government is participating in this forum to progress recommendations of cross-jurisdictional interest.

NSW has enacted legislation and established initiatives and systems which address many of the *Forgotten Australians* report recommendations. Reforms resulting from previous inquiries have transformed the child protection and out-of-home care system to ensure improved service delivery for the care and protection of children and young people in NSW. The budget enhancement of \$1.2 billion being injected into the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) over five full years to 2007/2008 demonstrates the Government's commitment to improving current service provision and outcomes for children and young people who are unable to live with their families.

In response to the Senate Committee's recommendation that all former providers of institutional care apologise to victims of abuse, my colleague, the former Minister for Community Services, the Hon. Reba Meagher MP, provided an apology to former wards in the NSW Parliament on 23 June 2005.

In response to the recommendation to erect memorials commemorating care leavers, DoCS is currently progressing the NSW memorial for those who experienced institutional care as children. Care leaver support organisations, non-government organisations and past institutional care providers are being consulted in this process.

The Department funds a number of services to support the needs of care leavers who experienced institutional care as children, including counselling services and family information and tracing services. Under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, care leavers are entitled to have access, free of charge, to personal information relating to their time in care.

DoCS has previously provided two one-off grants of \$10,000 to the Care Leavers of Australia Network (CLAN) to assist with the costs of its free-call telephone referral, advice and information service for older care leavers.

9. The Hon Dr John Kaye MLC asked the Minister for Community Services –

For a response to a proposal to mark the health care cards of children and young people in out-of-home care so that they can be readily identified by health care providers and professionals, and go to the top of the queue in which they may be placed for treatment.

**ANSWER:**

The NSW Department of Community Services recognises the importance of timely intervention to address the health needs of children and young people in out-of-home care.

Decisions about prioritising treatment would ordinarily be made by health professionals on the basis of clinical criteria, and it would be inappropriate in many instances for a child's status to override these clinical decisions.

There is an existing Memorandum of Understanding with NSW Health which is intended to secure priority access for children and young people in the agreed target group to services provided by NSW Health.

The Department is also currently undertaking an expression of interest process to increase the availability of services specifically targeted to meet the placement and support needs, including health, of children and young people in out of-home care.

10. The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC ask the Minister for Community Services –

What properties does the NSW Department of Community Services own in Brewarrina?

**ANSWER:**

The NSW Department of Community Services owns two properties in Brewarrina:-  
Office accommodation at 26 Bathurst Street.  
Residence at 10 Bokhara Street.

11. The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Director-General of Community Services –

The figures for children and young persons in the Parental Responsibility of the Minister as at 30 June 2006 and 30 June 2007.

**ANSWER:**

30 June 2006 - 6,402.

30 June 2007 - 7,790.

12. The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Minister for Community Services –

Do you know what percentage of four-year olds are currently accessing preschools in New South Wales?

**ANSWER:**

Approximately 83 per cent of NSW children access a preschool program prior to school entry whether in a preschool or long day care centre.

13. The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Minister for Community Services –

The number of children who have been notified to the Department who have died between December 2006 and the Budget Estimates hearing on 19 October 2007?

**ANSWER:**

Reporting on the number of reviewable deaths is a matter for the Ombudsman and he produces a report on this matter each year.

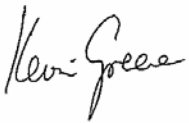
14. The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC asked the Minister for Community Services –

A breakdown of child protection notifications by region, and the number that were assessed as being at risk that were followed up with a home visit and assigned a caseworker.

**ANSWER:**

Information on child protection notifications by region is available in the Annual Statistical Report on the NSW Department of Community Services website [www.community.nsw.gov.au](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au)

It is estimated that DoCS caseworkers conducted over 35,500 home visits 2005/2006 in relation to those reports, involving over 72,600 children and young people.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Greene". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kevin Greene MP  
**Minister for Community Services**