

## SELECT COMMITTEES ON ESTIMATES 2008-2009

### Question on Notice

#### Minister for **Children and Young People**

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DR FOSKEY : To ask the Minister for Children and Young People –

**Children Youth and Family Services**

1. Could you please explain why the funding for Output 4.2 shows a decrease in this budget?

**Community Development and Policy**

2. What is the status of the Red Tape Review into community funding?
3. What is the status of the review of Philanthropy?

**MINISTER GALLAGHER** : The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

1. Please refer to the Hansard transcript of the estimates committee proceedings for 28 May 2008 Page 901 and Page 902.
2. The Red Tape Review has been completed. The review report has been considered by the Minister for Disability and Community Services. The report and the Government's response to the report has been published on the DHCS website at [www.dhcs.act.gov.au](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au).
3. The Review of Philanthropy has been completed. The review report has been considered by the Minister for Disability and Community Services. The report and the Government's response to the report will be published on the DHCS website at [www.dhcs.act.gov.au](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au).

*Early Intervention*

Vicki Dunne MLA : To ask the Minister for Children and Young People

In relation to : Early Intervention – Strategic Indicators #4 BP4 p188

1. How many resubstantiations were there:

- a). within 3 months
- b). within 12 months

for the following years:

- i). 2006-07
- ii). 2007-08 (est)
- iii). 2008-09 (est)

**MINISTER GALLAGHER** : The answer to the Member's question is as follows:-

1. 3 & 6 months.

i)The 2006-07 figures are published in Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services Statement of Performance 2006-07, Annual Report Volume 2, Strategic Indicator 4, page 101.

ii) Initial targets set for 2007/8 were a) twenty percent and b) thirty percent. As tabled in the half yearly output report in February 2008 the result for resubstantiations was a) Fifteen percent and b) twenty six percent. Source: December 2007 Half yearly performance report on 2007-2008 outputs ( Tabled January 30 2008).

iii) The target measure estimated for 2008-09 is :

a) Twenty percent and B) thirty five percent. Source 2008-2009 Budget Paper 4, Strategic Indicator 4 p 188.

*Therapy services accountability indicators*

Mrs Dunne MLA : To ask the Minister for Children and Young People

In relation to : Therapy Services Accountability Indicators (a.)

Accountability Indicators

1. How many hours of individual services were provided?
2. How many hours of services to groups were provided?
3. How many people were provided services in groups?

**Minister Gallagher:** The answer to the Ministers Question is as follows:

1. The number of hours of service in the period 1 July 2007 to 30 April 2008 was 40,468.
2. The number of hours of services to groups for the same period was 5051.
3. There were 4125 attendances at groups for this period. The number of separate individuals is not available , as individuals would have attended multiple group sessions.



*Child, Youth and Family support accountability indicators*

Mrs Dunne MLA: To ask the Minister for Children and Young People

In relation to : Child, Youth and Family Support Accountability Indicators (c.)

1. Why has there been no change in the number of children and young people receiving targeted intervention services as it has stayed constant at 536?
2. Is 536 individuals the maximum number that can be catered for in a year?
3. Is there any sign of numbers decreasing in the future?
4. i). In areas with a lack of youth services and awaiting the new high schools to come online, such as in West Belconnen, is there a higher incidence rate of children and young people needing early intervention?  
  
ii). If yes, is this trend developing elsewhere in the ACT also?
5. If you were able to employ one more early interventions case worker, how many extra individuals could be dealt with?

**MINISTER GALLAGHER :** The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

1. The target of 536 is a combined target for the Schools as Communities (SAC), Adolescent Day Unit (ADU) and Youth Connection programs. SAC portion of this target is 420. The ADU and Youth Connection work to a combined target of 116, as the two services operate a single service under one manager. The target has not changed and reflects relatively stable levels of demand and resource capacity.
2. There are seven workers within the SAC program. The workers undertake a combination of individual work with children and their families, group programs and community development activities. Each worker is required the capacity to undertake each of these duties. There are four staff in Youth Connections undertaking case management with ten young people each for approximately six to nine months of support. The ADU caters for very vulnerable young people and has eight clients at any given time. Each client will attend the ADU for approximately six months (one day per week) during which time they will also be supported by ADU staff in any re-entry plan to appropriate school placements. There is therefore a ceiling on capacity
3. No. It is envisaged that current levels will be maintained within the SAC, ADU and Youth Connections programs.
4. i) Families require information and support for a range of different and varying reasons depending on their identified needs. This could relate to parenting, anxiety, relationships, development, mental health etc. To date, no particular trend has emerged for this particular area.  
  
ii) The Family Support sector report that there is ongoing demand for services across the community. Services also report an increase in the complexity and multiple issues faced by families including drug and alcohol and mental health.

5. The amount of work undertaken by caseworkers is generally dependent on the complexity of the families they are working with. Families with multiple and complex needs may require more intensive longer term work which reduces the ability of workers to take on additional clients. Early intervention care workers may be undertaken on a one on one or group basis. Each worker in Youth Connection case manages around twenty young people in a year.

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*Care and protection*



*Care and protection*

Mrs Dunne MLA : To ask the Minister for Children and Young People

In relation to : Care and Protection

1. How many case workers are currently employed by Care and Protection?
2. On average, how many cases would a case worker be handling at any one time?
3. i). Is there a maximum number of cases set that a case worker can handle at any one time?  
  
ii). Is there a target set to reduce the amount of cases each case worker handles in a financial year?  
  
iii). For the following financial years could you give an average of how many cases a case worker would handle in that financial year:
  - a. 2004-05
  - b. 2005-06
  - c. 2006-07
  - d. 2007-08

**Minister Gallagher** - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. As of 2 June 2008 there were 81.6 operational staff in Care and Protection Services (CPS).
2. Caseloads are dependent on the level of experience and skill of staff, the functioning of the operational area and the intensity of client needs. Staff of varying levels may case manage between 5 and 16 cases of varying complexity. Caseloads are regularly reviewed by management.
3. i) As explained above, caseloads vary between workers depending on experience, skill and complexity of the case. Caseloads consist of a mixture of low risk to high risk cases. There is not a specific identified number as the maximum cases one worker can manage.  
  
ii) Targets are not set regarding the number of cases a caseworker may handle within a financial year. A case worker may be involved with a case for one day or the entire period of the financial year. The number of cases a caseworker may handle in a financial year is dependent on the operational functions performed by the staff member and is influenced by the number and complexity of Child Protection reports received and staff turnover within any financial year.  
  
iii) Data is not collected on the number of cases a caseworker may handle within any financial year.

*Care and protection*

Vicki Dunne MLA : To ask the Minister for Children, Youth and Family Services

In relation to : Care and Protection

1. What is the time frame from when a report is first made to Care and Protection about a child at risk of abuse, neglect or in need of care and protection, to when it is first actioned?
2. How long is it from when a report is made to Care and Protection to when it is first handled by a case worker?
3. i). Is there a backlog of reports on children at risk waiting to be actioned by Care and Protection?  
ii). If so, how big is the backlog of unallocated cases?

**Minister Gallagher** - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. Care and Protection Services (CPS) responds to child protection reports in accordance with the intake policy and procedure. Upon receipt of the report, care and protection workers immediately commence an initial risk and needs assessment. The timeframes for which the initial assessment must be completed is determined by the presenting level of risk. An action plan must be identified for all reports at completion of the initial assessment.

Reports that indicate an immediate safety concern must be assessed and an action plan developed as soon as possible within the same day. Where required other services such as ambulance and police are contacted when the intake caseworker determines an immediate response is required.

Reports that indicate a high risk of exposure to abuse and or neglect are assessed and an action plan developed within 24 hours.

Reports that indicate a medium risk to abuse or neglect should be assessed and an action plan developed within 72 hours.

Reports that indicate a low risk of abuse or neglect should be assessed and an action plan developed within seven days.

Reports that indicate risk to a child under the age of two years must be assessed and an action plan developed within 48 hours.

Action plans can involve any of the following:

- No further action
- Advice and referral provided and no further action
- An initial safety visit.
- Assessment and Support
- Proceed to appraisal (investigation)

Reports that proceed to appraisal are assessed to determine the timeframe for commencement of the appraisal.

- i. Care and protection workers (case workers) receive child protection reports via the Centralised Intake Service. The case worker commences an initial assessment upon receipt of the report. The timeframes for which the initial assessment must be completed within is determined by the presenting level of risk as described above.

The initial assessment can include seeking further information from the reporter, requesting information from other services and agencies in accordance with the information sharing provisions of the *Children and Young People Act 1999* or undertaking a home visit to discuss the report with the family when the details of the reported situation are unclear or there are concerns regarding the immediate welfare of the child.

3. i) All reports are actioned through an initial assessment by care and protection workers. Assessment can involve any of the actions described in the previous answer.

ii) As of 30 May 2008 all reports requiring a same day or 24 hour appraisal were allocated. As of 30 May 2008 there were 7 families assessed as requiring an appraisal that had not yet been actioned. These reports are managed by a Team Leader until a caseworker is given full case responsibility.

*Care and protection*

Mrs Dunne MLA: To ask the Minister for Children and Young People

In relation to : Care and Protection

1. Is it common place to split siblings up when they are taken into Care an Protection?
2. Why would siblings be split up by Care and Protection Services, what circumstances would warrant this to happen?
3. How many siblings are currently split up in Care and Protection from other siblings?

**Minister Gallagher** - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- (2) It is not common practice to split siblings up when they are placed in care. Where at all possible and it is in their best interests all efforts are made to keep siblings together.
- (3) Priority is always to place siblings together. In some circumstances, it may not be in the best interests of a child or young person to be placed with their sibling, for example where there is a risk of one sibling abusing or harming another or where siblings have no prior relationship to each other. A decision to place siblings separately involves careful consideration and would be made at the Department's Placement Review Committee.
- (4) Data is not readily accessible in relation to the number of siblings in care and protection that are split from each other.

*QTON - Percentage of children from refugee families*

**Ms Porter :** To ask the Minister for Children and Young People

Could you take a couple of things on notice and get some information back to us later. What percentage of children would come from refugee families or families who have experienced trauma in their own country of origin? Do you have some specific training for those staff dealing with those particularly difficult issues?

**Minister Gallagher :** The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

The Department of Disability Housing and Community Services (DHCS) does not currently collect statistics on the number of children from refugee families Care and Protection Services (CPS) works with. In early 2008 CPS identified that contact between refugee families and CPS is a significant issue and initiated regular meetings with Companion House (an accommodation and support service for refugees) to improve service delivery to this vulnerable cohort.

DHCS provides *Working with Refugee Clients* training for ACT Housing staff and CPS staff. This training is facilitated by Companion House. The training includes (but is not limited to) an examination of the refugee experience, issues relevant to working with refugees in the Canberra community, working with interpreters and the role and service of Companion House.

DHCS also provides a two-day orientation program for CPS workers that includes an overview of the Human Rights Act 2004 and an introduction to the Human Rights Commission.

*QTON - Gungahlin Youth Centre*

Mr Seselja: To ask the Minister for Children and Young People

In relation to : Output 2.2 Children Youth and Family Support

**MR SESELJA:** Gungahlin Youth Centre

Minister, can you or one of the officials tell us:

1. what are the current funding levels, specifically, how many full-time equivalent staff there are: and
2. what is the ratio of staff to regular clients and how that compares to other youth centres around town?

**Minister Gallagher:** The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

1. The current annual funding for Gungahlin Youth Centre is \$207,234.78 (GST inclusive). The equivalent full time staff is three with an additional part-time staff member and .25% of FTE Manager position, to oversee the Youth Program.
2. There are eight youth centres across the ACT running a range of different programs and services. No information is available on staff client ratios.

*QTON - Bimberi fencing*

Mr Seselja: To ask the Minister for Children and Young People

In relation to: Output 4.1 Children and Young People Services

**MR SESELJA:** Bimberi fencing

What was the total cost of the fencing facilities? We heard, I think, that the cost of the Alexander Maconochie Centre fence was \$15 million. How does it compare to that?

Minister Gallagher: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

There are two fencing contracts for the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. The first contract is to supply and install a 5m high main perimeter fence. This has a length of 850 metres and costs \$906,000 ex GST. This equates to approximately \$1,066 per metre. The second fencing contract has a value of \$381,000 ex GST. This contract covers the supply and installation of 9 different fencing types, including 1 km of rural stock fencing around the site boundary. There are other barriers, such as brick fences and building walls which form part of the perimeter. These are included as part of building costs and are not easily quantifiable.