

CHILD PROTECTION WORKERS - KIMBERLEY REGION

1156. Hon SHELLEY ARCHER to the Minister for Child Protection:

- (1) How many child protection workers are currently employed in the Kimberley region?
- (2) Where are those officers located?
- (3) How many positions for such officers are currently vacant throughout the Kimberley, and for how long have these positions been vacant?
- (4) If there are vacant positions, what is this government doing to ensure that these vacant positions are filled?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) There are 38 child protection workers currently employed across the Kimberley who undertake direct statutory child protection work. This figure indicates field workers, team leaders and community child protection workers, but excludes a range of other support staff such as residential care, case support staff and administration and management staff. The total full-time equivalent staff in the Kimberley is 91.5.
- (2) The staff are located at Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Wyndham, Kununurra and Kalumburu.
- (3) Over and above those currently employed, eight child protection worker positions are currently vacant. Positions have generally been vacant for up to a few months. One position, the community child protection worker in Fitzroy Crossing, was vacant for approximately 12 months due to difficulties in providing housing. However, an appointment is expected to be made to that position shortly.
- (4) Vacant positions are advertised for filling as soon as is practicable. In addition, informal expressions of interest within the department have been invited from people willing to work in the Kimberley. The department now offers an attraction and retention benefit of between \$5 500 and \$7 500 per annum in addition to normal salary for child protection workers. In addition to normal salary, the department's field staff in many remote locations receive a district allowance of \$12 490 per annum, dependant rate, or \$6 245 per annum, no dependants; government housing provision and rent subsidy; airconditioning and gas subsidy; five days' additional leave; five days time off in lieu of after-hours disturbances and travel; and a free return trip to Perth in conjunction with annual leave. Staff in these locations are supported and supervised by visiting staff from Broome. The department supports new staff through the Start Up training program. A Working in Partnership with Indigenous People training program was run in the Kimberley which improves support to these staff. In addition to formal recruitment processes, an indigenous workers' development officer in Perth works to attract indigenous staff to the Kimberley through informal networks.