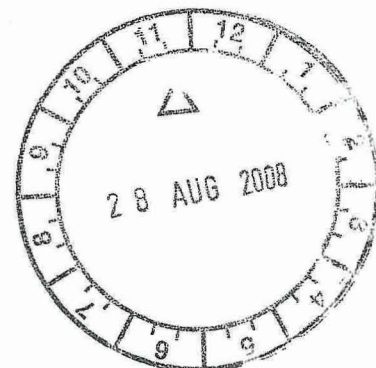




Our Ref: 23-003156

Mr Paul Grant  
Clerk Assistant (Committees)  
Western Australia Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000



Dear Mr Grant

**COMMITTEE REPORTS: GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**  
**Legislative Council Standing Order 337**

Thank you for your letter dated 3 June 2008 regarding the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations *Report No.12: Balga Works Program – Recommendation 5*.

This response is in two parts. Firstly, an overview of the Department for Child Protection's Care Planning process describes how service provision arises directly from, and is monitored in relation to, consideration of a child's needs. Secondly, information is provided about the standards and monitoring policy being implemented as a result of an Internal Audit branch review of the Balga Works Program that occurred as soon as major concerns were identified.

As a result of enactment of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* on 1 March 2006, the Department for Child Protection must prepare and implement a Care Plan for a child as soon as practicable after a child comes into the Chief Executive Officer's (CEOs) care. It is Departmental policy that the Care Plan be completed within 20 days for all children entering the CEO's care. The Care Plan identifies the needs of the child, outlines steps or measures to be taken in order to address those needs and sets out decisions about the care of the child including decisions about placement.

The Care Plan may be modified at any time it is considered appropriate to do so, and must be reviewed at regular intervals not exceeding 12 months. The development and management of Care Plans provides an unprecedented level of Departmental oversight of the wellbeing of children in the CEO's care.

In August 2007, the Department for Child Protection's Internal Audit branch undertook a review of the Balga Works Program examining the contracting and payment processes in place at the time. As a result of this review, the following measures have been developed and have been, or are in the process of being, implemented:

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- All placement services must have signed contracts with service providers. The contracts must clearly specify the service(s) to be undertaken, duration of the agreement, fee to be paid, payment details and any other conditions pertinent to the service required. Unless specifically negotiated and stated otherwise, all contracts state that payments will be paid in arrears of service.
- The establishment of a centralised process that reviews the contract formation, examines identified risks and provides ongoing review of procedures and policy concerning contracts. In addition, supporting documentation is held on file covering the request for placement, the approval for placement and related costs and a copy of the signed contract. This information is held centrally to facilitate the payment process. Local offices are sent a signed copy of the contract to support case management of the client placement and as back-up to the central copy.
- The creation of a standardised checklist and electronic application process to ensure compliance with contractual and referral requirements.
- The creation of an electronic tracking system to ensure that all contracts are current, invoices are correct and payments are made in a timely manner.
- Through a joint executive memorandum, relevant staff have been reminded of the required approval processes to support full and accountable fee for service placement arrangements.

In addition to the above, a due diligence review has been undertaken of contracting arrangements with organisations that are not signatory to an existing service agreement. Such organisations can be engaged on a 'fee for service' basis to provide placement services for children and young people in the care of the Department. No fee for service placement arrangements will be entered into with an organisation unless it is endorsed as an approved service provider by the Department. In the longer term, and as funding allows, the Department will undertake an open tender process to establish a panel of placement service providers.

Yours sincerely



Sue Ellery MLC

**MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION; COMMUNITIES;  
WOMEN'S INTERESTS; SENIORS AND VOLUNTEERING**

27 AUG 2008