

CHILD DEATH REVIEW COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT

Statement by Minister for Community Development

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah - Minister for Community Development) [2.17 pm]: The Child Death Review Committee is an independent, external committee established by the state government to examine cases in which there was some contact by the Department for Community Development with a child or a child's family within two years of a child's death. I table the fourth report of the committee.

The 24 cases reviewed in the 2005-06 financial year belong to a group of outstanding reviews that have accumulated since 2003. As such, as the committee reviews child deaths that have occurred a number of years earlier, this report does not entirely take into account developments and improvements resulting from previous reports. The cases examined by the committee this year reflect a range of complex problems such as family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental health problems. While the reviews undertaken by the committee found examples of good practice, they also revealed several instances where better service and care could have been provided through better critical analysis and assessment, a strengthened focus on the best interests of the child and improved interagency collaboration and coordination.

The committee notes that the Children and Community Services Act 2004, which was implemented in March this year, should result in major reform to the protection of Western Australian children. We are also in the midst of a major review of the department, which is due to report to the Premier early next year and which I hope will provide us with a better way forward.

Members would know that this year the Carpenter government massively increased funding to the Department for Community Development for child protection. The budget process included additional resources for the Child Death Review Committee. This government created this independent, transparent review process to ensure the department constantly revises and improves its service and care and, ultimately, to ensure we keep doing everything humanly possible to prevent these tragedies from occurring in the future.

I thank the committee chair, Dr Denzil McCotter, and the other review committee members for their work. I also publicly acknowledge the work of the late Lani Kaszanski, a valued adviser to the committee, who recently passed away.

[See paper 2289.]