

CHILDREN IN STATE CARE - ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR
INVESTIGATING SUCH ALLEGATIONS

1435. Dr E. Constable to the Minister for Community Development

- (1) How many allegations of abuse of children in the care and protection of the State were received in -
 - (a) 2003-2004;
 - (b) 2004-2005; and
 - (c) 2005-2006?
- (2) How many substantiated allegations were recorded in each of the years referred to in (1)?
- (3) Who is responsible for investigating allegations of abuse in care and what are their positions and qualifications?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

- (1) (a) 110
In 2003 - 2004 the Department expanded the definition of abuse in care to include all allegations of abuse of children in care, and is not limited to allegations involving carers. The figures for 2003-04 and later years cannot be directly compared with earlier years.
 - (b) 139
 - (c) 138
- (2) (a) 51
(b) 63
(c) 26 (figures in relation to 2005/06 remain incomplete as some investigations are ongoing)
- (3) Normally two field officers, generally the case manager for the child and, where possible, a senior officer with specialist experience in child protection, are responsible for conducting the investigation of any abuse in care allegation relating to a child in the CEO's care. For serious allegations of sexual or physical abuse the Department discusses a joint response with WA Police in order to reduce the number of interviews a child may need to undergo to assess what has occurred. In that instance the Child Interview Unit (metro area) or Specialist Child Interviewers in the country may undertake the interview as part of a planned joint response and investigation. Where appropriate other professionals such as Senior Officers Children's Services, Psychologists and staff from the funded placement agencies will be consulted.

Every investigation is quality assured by a Team Leader and Manager and then further quality assured by the Duty of Care Unit. Resources in the 2006-07 budget will increase the capacity of the Duty of Care Unit so that allegations of abuse in care will be centrally investigated and led by a social worker with significant child protection experience working alongside the case manager for the child.

Generally field officers, Team Leaders and Managers have tertiary qualifications in the social sciences, usually in social work. All Specialist Child Interviewers participate in a 2 week course on specialist child interviewing.