

GWENN MURRAY REPORT

3079. Dr E. Constable to the Minister representing the Minister for Child Protection

With reference to the recommendations contained in Gwenn Murray's report on the quality assurance and review of substantiated allegations of abuse in care, titled *A Duty of Care to Children and Young People in Western Australia* and published in December 2005:

- (a) will all of the recommendations in the report be implemented; and
  - (i) if not, why not (by recommendation);
- (b) of those recommendations that will be implemented, which recommendations have not yet been implemented; and
- (c) for each recommendation that will be implemented, but has not yet been implemented, what is the timeframe for implementation (by recommendation)?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

- (a) The majority of recommendations have been implemented. A few recommendations are yet to be fully implemented, but action has occurred or is occurring on these.
  - (i) The following recommendations have not been fully implemented:

- Recommendation 7.2 recommends that 'the Department employ workers and placement officers to support carers at a ratio of 1:50'.

The 2006/07 budget provided increased support for carers for a ratio of 1:100. The Department continues to work towards achieving funding to support a ratio of 1:50.

- Recommendation 7.3 recommends experienced carers are encouraged to complete training units and that this be recognised in a practical way with a higher subsidy.

Increases in subsidy payments to carers have not been directly linked to completion of training. However more training is being provided to carers and subsidies have been increased. In recognition of the increasingly complex needs of children, in July 2007 the government increased the subsidy paid to general and relative foster carers by \$50 per week. Further increases will be made annually through to 2010/11 for a further \$50 per week. Completion of essential core training units for new and existing foster carers is a requirement. Further, training that focuses on increasing their skills and knowledge in caring for children is offered throughout the year to experienced carers. Long serving carers are recognised by Carer Awards.

- Recommendation 10.1 recommends 'that the Duty of Care Unit be expanded to incorporate additional senior officers to undertake assessments of abuse in care allegations with case workers. The officers would attend District offices when allegations of abuse in care are received or notified. These officers would team with case workers and lead the investigations of the allegations, assessment action, outcome findings and recommendations.'

In response to this recommendation from the Murray report, the 2006-07 Budget provided additional funding to the Duty of Care Unit for three senior investigation officer positions. The Unit works alongside Districts and quality assures all abuse in care allegation notifications and investigation outcomes. It also provides direction and consultation, and directly undertakes investigations when best positioned to do so. However, it is not feasible for the Unit to undertake the direct investigation of all abuse in care allegations throughout the state.

- Recommendation 15.1 recommends that 'only' Managers and Team Leaders have the authority to update records and complete the investigation screens on the Department's electronic client information system.

All investigation outcomes require Team Leader and Manager endorsement. It is the investigation officer however, who updates the electronic records once endorsement has been received.

- Recommendation 15.2 recommends that abuse in care allegations be completed electronically and 'automatically reported to the Duty of Care Unit and Director General'.

All notifications of alleged abuse in care are automatically reported to the Duty of Care Unit. The Director of this Unit and District Directors each have a responsibility to ensure Executive Directors and the Director General are advised as quickly as possible of serious matters.

- (b) Recommendation 17.1, regarding the development of a model for participation of children and young people in care in decision making, is yet to be implemented. It was recommended by the Murray Report that this task be undertaken by the departmental Advocate for Children in Care. It is relevant to note that the department has advanced the process of forming an advisory group of children and young people in care that will be supported by CREATE, the relevant consumer based organisation.
- (c) The target date for completion of 17.1 is 30 December 2008.