

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE - PROTOCOLS

1481. Dr K.D. Hames to the Minister for Community Development

- (1) What protocols are in place for dealing with reports of abuse of children in the Department for Community Development?
- (2) Are the classifications of CMG and CCR still in use?
- (3) Are time limits in place for assessment of such complaints?
- (4) Are protocols in place for dealing with children deemed to be at increased risk?
- (5) Were the classifications changed after the Labor Party was elected in 2001, and what processes are now in place for high risk children?
- (6) Are protocols different for children of indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds?
- (7) If protocols are in place, what review is undertaken by the CEO and/or the Minister in assessing the success of case managers in meeting them?
- (8) If response times are part of these protocols, will you provide statistics on the effectiveness of the department in meeting these targets in regard to children deemed to be at increased risk?
  - (i) If not, why not?
- (9) If no target response times exist, why not?
- (10) Was the case of Wade Scale listed as a priority?
- (11) In the case of Wade Scale, what protocols were required to be met and were they adhered to?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

- (1) The process (or protocol) which is followed when the Department receives a concern about a child's wellbeing (CCW) is:
  - The preliminary information including historical contact with the child and their family is considered
  - The Team Leader decides whether an assessment of a concern for a child (ACC) is required.
  - If the Department proceeds with an ACC then a Field Worker is assigned to the case.
  - The Field Worker completes the assessment and recommends to their Team Leader what services or other action such as a child protection investigation is required.
  - The Team Leader and Field Worker develop a case plan for ensuring the child's safety when the Department has an ongoing role to work with the family.
- (2) No classification called CMG has been used by the Department. It is assumed that a typographical error has occurred and the question refers to CMA (Child Maltreatment Allegation).

The classifications CMA and Child Concern Report (CCR) are no longer used by the Department. These classifications ceased to be used when the Children and Community Services Act 2004 was implemented in March 2006.
- (3) Under the Child Welfare Act 1947 the Department used the classifications Child Maltreatment Allegation (CMA) and Child Concern Report (CCR) to reflect the nature of its response to concerns about children. Since the implementation of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 in March 2006, the Department may make inquiries into reports of concerns for a child's wellbeing (CCW). These inquiries are recorded as "Assessments of a Concern for a Child" (ACC). The Department may also conduct Investigations when it believes a child may be in need of protection. These "Child Protection Investigations" are synonymous with the old CMAs.

Child Protection Investigations are assigned a commencement response of Priority 1 (within 24 hours) or Priority 2 (within 5 days) depending on the immediate safety of the child.
- (4) Yes. Children who are deemed to be at increased risk are responded to on an urgent basis and are assigned a Priority 1 response. Field workers use the Child Safety Assessment Framework and its attached Safety and Risk Profile Guide to inform their assessments.
- (5) No. The classification of child protection responses did not change when the Gallop Government was elected in 2001. The terms used to describe child protection practice changed with implementation of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 in March 2006 which was passed by Parliament.

- (6) No.
- (7) The CEO and Minister review the child protection performance indicators which are also published publicly in the Annual Report.
- (8) During 2005/06 up to the end of February 2006, when the Children and Community Services Act 2004 was implemented, 99.72% of 1064 Priority 1 investigations commenced within 24 hours and 95.07% of 1135 Priority 2 investigations commenced within 5 days.
- (9) Not applicable.
- (10) In the case of Wade Scale, when the Department received a child maltreatment allegation for neglect, it was given a Priority 1 and the investigation commenced within 24 hours. The outcome of the investigation was that the allegation was substantiated and the case remained open with the aim of ensuring Wade's protection. The Department contracted non-government agencies to assist in this aim.
- (11) Once the allegation referred to in Question 10 had been investigated and substantiated, the process was based on implementing the case plan. The case plan was not adequately adhered to and the Coroner in his findings was critical of the Department's action. The Department accepted the Coroner's findings in relation to this matter.