

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - CASE WORKERS, COMPLAINTS RECEIVED,
WARDS OF THE STATE AND FOSTER CARE

2188. Mr M.J. Birney to the Minister representing the Minister for Child Protection
- (1) How many case workers (FTEs) were employed by the Department of Community Development (DCD) as at the last day of last month, and what is the recommended number when at full strength?
 - (2) How many FTEs were employed by the DCD as at the last day of last month, and what is the recommended number when the Department is not at full strength?
 - (3) With reference to the number of cases that a DCD officer has responsibility for -
 - (a) what is the maximum number of cases that an officer may be assigned at any one time;
 - (b) did any case workers exceed this maximum at any time last month, and if so how many cases were each of them dealing with;
 - (c) what was the average number of cases worked on by DCD officers last month; and
 - (d) what was the largest number of cases dealt with at any one time by any DCD employee last month, and at which branch did the officer work?
 - (4) How many complaints made to the DCD, relating to potential child abuse, still had not been actioned by the DCD as at the last day of last month?
 - (5) Of these, how many were -
 - (a) up to one month old;
 - (b) up to two months old; and
 - (c) older than two months?
 - (6) How many reviews were conducted on a Ward of the State or a child in a foster home last month?
 - (7) How many female Wards of the State, including those in foster care, became pregnant last month?
 - (8) How many children were awaiting foster care placement as at the last day of last month?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

- (1) 566.466 (FTE) caseworkers (staff authorised to undertake child protection investigations and support children in care) were employed by the Department for Community Development as at the 19 April 2007. The FTE allocation available for this staff classification for the same period was 732.95.
- (2) 1556.237 FTEs were employed in the Department for Community Development at the end of April 2007. The approved average staffing level for the same period was 1810.153. These figures include staff in policy offices.
- (3a) 15 and in certain circumstances 18
- (3b) May 2007
27 workers exceeded a "caseload equivalent" of 15, calculated on a pro-rata basis:
8 workers had a "caseload equivalent" of 16, calculated on a pro-rata basis
9 workers had a "caseload equivalent" of 17, calculated on a pro-rata basis
10 workers had a "caseload equivalent" of 18, calculated on a pro-rata basis
April 2007
38 workers exceeded a "caseload equivalent" of 15, calculated on a pro-rata basis:
8 workers had a "caseload equivalent" of 16, calculated on a pro-rata basis
9 workers had a "caseload equivalent" of 17, calculated on a pro-rata basis
15 workers had a "caseload equivalent" of 18, calculated on a pro-rata basis
2 workers had a "caseload equivalent" of 19, calculated on a pro-rata basis
2 workers had a "caseload equivalent" of 20, calculated on a pro-rata basis (10 and 16 actual cases)
1 worker had a "caseload equivalent" of 22, calculated on a pro-rata basis (11 actual cases)
1 worker had a "caseload equivalent" of 25, calculated on a pro-rata basis (5 actual cases)
- (3c) May 2007 - 14 cases
April 2007 - 14 cases

- (3d) May 2007 - Ten workers had a pro-rata caseload of 18 cases:
3 x Great Southern
3 x Pilbara
1 x South West
2 x Armadale
1 x Mirrabooka
- April 2007 - One worker from Pilbara had a pro-rata caseload of 25. The actual number of cases held by this full time worker was 5, but this is adjusted up as the worker performs other duties.
- (4)-(6) Data for questions 4 to 6 are drawn from the latest available monthly database snapshot. These figures may not be directly comparable to answers derived from other monthly snapshots due to differences such as the amount of time between the latest monthly reporting snapshot and the period under examination.
- (4) All complaints related to potential child abuse are acted upon by the Department through an immediate preliminary assessment. This assessment ascertains whether or not children are at risk of immediate harm. Allegations involving children at immediate risk are investigated as a priority. At the end of April 2007 there 524 allegations where children had been assessed as not being at immediate risk and were yet to be subject to a further and fuller investigation. Data in the 2005-06 Departmental Annual Report confirms that less than 50% of child abuse allegations are substantiated. Therefore the Department has a policy of initial assessment to make sure that there is a priority response to cases where children are at immediate risk.
- (5) Answers to parts 5 a) through c) are the numbers of child abuse allegations that have been subject to an initial assessment and where children not at immediate risk of harm and are awaiting a further and fuller investigation.
- (5a) 99 are from April
- (5b) 166 are from March or April 2007 - includes those in (a)
- (5c) 358 are from February 2007 or earlier
- (6) 284
- (7) The Department carefully monitors the health, safety and wellbeing of children in the care of the CEO. Information about significant events such as a young woman becoming pregnant is recorded on the case file. The Department does not record this information on its electronic client information system. Consequently it is not possible for the Department to provide accurate information about the number of young females in the care of the CEO who became pregnant last month.
- (8) As of 4 April 2007, there were approximately 220 children awaiting appropriate long-term placement. These children are in placements types including in emergency residential care facilities, being supported by family members or professional carers.