

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, CHILD PROTECTION WORKERS

2061. Mr R.F. Johnson to the Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth

I refer to the Minister's announcement of 11 April 2003 regarding the employment of an additional 25 Child Protection Workers, pursuant to the recommendations of the Gordon Inquiry, and budgeted for in this year's State Budget to 'commence employment early in the new financial year and ask -

- (a) how many additional Child Protection Workers have been employed within the Department of Community Development since the announcement of the new workers on 11 April 2003;
- (b) will the Minister advise when all of the additional 25 Child Protection Workers will be deployed to assist the Department to respond to its growing concern about unaddressed child protection needs in the community; and
- (c) was it intended that these 25 Child Protection Workers would be available to the Department from the beginning of the 2003 financial year, and if so, why has this not been the case?

Ms S.M. McHALE replied:

- (a) Fifteen workers have commenced work either in an acting capacity or as a permanent appointment.
- (b) Four additional workers have been appointed and will commence mid to late December 2003. The process for filling one position is currently underway. The remaining five positions have been readvertised, due to lack of suitable candidates.
- (c) Funding was allocated in 2002/03 budget for 10 positions for 3 months and the 2003/04 budget for 25 positions for 12 months. Advertising of positions was delayed until negotiations with ATSIC regional councils regarding the location, skills and competencies of the officers were completed. Not all positions were filled during the first application round because of a lack of suitable applicants and the remoteness of some of the locations. Apart from one position in Geraldton, the positions yet to be filled are in remote locations, where it is difficult to attract qualified staff.