

# MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES, AND MINISTER FOR YOUTH

## OVERVIEW

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Budget 2005-06 \$m</i>	<i>Budget 2006-07 \$m</i>	<i>Variation %</i>
<b>Department of Community Services</b>			
Total Expenses .....	1,014.0	1,129.1	11.4
Capital Expenditure .....	20.6	26.2	27.2
<b>Office for Children</b>			
Total Expenses .....	12.0	12.1	0.9
Capital Expenditure .....	0.2	0.3	61.2
<b>NSWbusinesslink</b>			
Total Expenses .....	109.3	114.1	4.4
Capital Expenditure .....	12.0	6.9	-42.7
<b>Total, Minister for Community Services, and Minister for Youth <sup>(a)</sup></b>			
Total Expenses .....	<b>1,110.7</b>	<b>1,227.0</b>	<b>10.5</b>
Capital Expenditure .....	<b>32.8</b>	<b>33.4</b>	<b>1.8</b>

(a) *The Ministerial totals have been reduced to exclude recurrent payments of the Department of Community Services to NSWbusinesslink.*

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Department's primary role is to promote and enhance the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families and to provide services that support and strengthen the community.

In fulfilling its role, the Department operates in close collaboration with other government and non-government agencies and within the legal framework set by the *Children and Young Persons (Care & Protection) Act 1998*, the *Community Welfare Act 1987* and the *Adoptions Act 2000*.

## RESULTS AND SERVICES

The Department is only one contributor among many to the wellbeing, resilience and ongoing development of its client families and children. In most cases, therefore, the results it seeks to achieve are affected by the actions of other agencies and the wider social environment.

Within these constraints, the Department seeks to achieve the following results:

- ◆ Children, young people and their families are supported so children reach development milestones without ongoing involvement in the child protection system.
- ◆ Where a child or young person is at risk and the Department determines that it must intervene, the child or young person and any relevant siblings are safe following that intervention.
- ◆ Children or young people who are removed from their family are cared for in a safe, well-functioning and stable placement and are successfully restored to their families where appropriate.
- ◆ Strong communities have the ability and support to identify and resolve problems as they arise; and provide an environment for everyone, including families and children, to reach their full potential.
- ◆ Persons who experience natural or other disasters are supported to recover and to resume self-sufficient living.

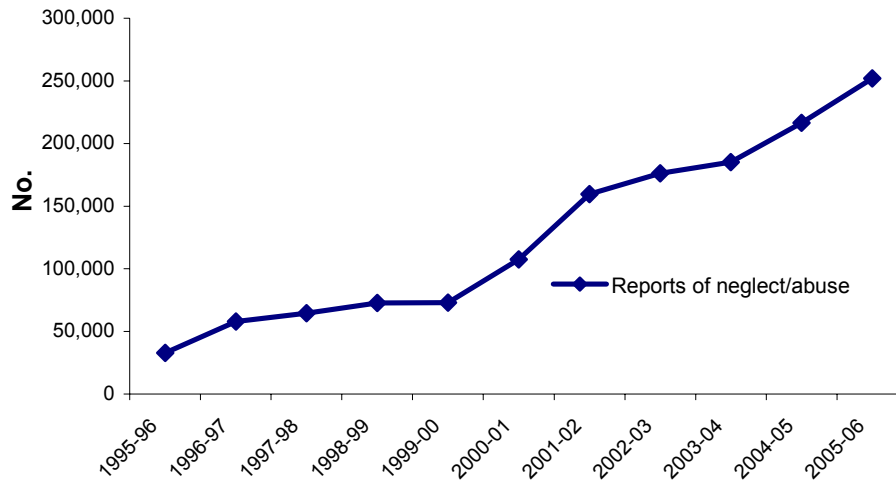
Key services provided by the Department that contribute to these results include:

- ◆ community services including community development and capacity building, crisis support and disaster recovery services;
- ◆ prevention and early intervention services providing early support to vulnerable families, with particular focus on those with very young children;
- ◆ statutory child protection services in accordance with the requirements of the child protection legislation; and
- ◆ out-of-home care services for children and young people whose ongoing protection has required that they be removed from their homes.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Reports of children at risk of harm or neglect have increased significantly over recent years as shown in the Chart below.

**Chart 6.1: Reports of Neglect and Abuse to DoCS**



In response to this increase, in December 2002 the Government announced additional recurrent funding of \$1.2 billion over the following five full years (the funding package). By the end of 2005-06 the Department will have received \$538.2 million from this package including:

- ◆ \$239 million to improve the out-of-home care system, including additional caseworkers and service reform;
- ◆ \$151.1 million to improve the child protection system (including extra caseworkers and support services) and to introduce the early intervention program to assist vulnerable families and begin to manage demand for more intensive services;
- ◆ \$103.9 million to cover increased costs for crisis support and for existing staff to manage baseline demand; and
- ◆ \$44.2 million to improve accommodation, training, Occupational Health and Safety, research and legal support and information systems for new and existing staff.

The funding package has allowed the Department to deal with continued increases in demand: 185,198 reports were received in 2003-04, 216,386 in 2004-05, and it is estimated that 252,000 reports (representing 110,000 children) will be received in 2005-06, an increase of 16.5 per cent over the previous year. The reasons for this continued increase will be the subject of a research project in 2006-07.

The package provides \$256 million over five full years for early intervention. This program supports vulnerable families and children to prevent their entry to, or escalation within, the child protection system. Over time it is anticipated that this program will reduce child abuse and neglect.

As at 30 June 2005, 10,041 children and young people were receiving out-of-home care services. It is estimated that by 30 June 2006 that number will be closer to 10,540, an increase of 5 per cent.

Key results in 2005-06 were:

- ◆ By 30 June 2006, the Department will have created 450 additional caseworker positions from the funding package. As at February 2006, the Department had 349 more child protection, early intervention and out-of-home care caseworkers than were employed in June 2003 (prior to the funding package). A further recruitment round is under way.
- ◆ Over 12,500 training days have been delivered in 2005-06 to ensure quality and consistency of staff performance. The Caseworker Development Course is attended by all new caseworkers and is essential in integrating new staff into the Department. To date, 187 caseworkers have attended the course in 2005-06. Training in new programs and techniques has also been provided to existing caseworkers. In addition, 150 caseworkers have completed the Introduction to Early Intervention course in 2005-06.
- ◆ By the end of 2005-06 over 40 per cent of the Department's Community Service Centre outlets will have been fully resourced to the level envisaged under the funding package. These Enhanced Service Delivery sites use the funding package to do things better and more consistently as well as on an expanded scale. They typically include additional teams of caseworkers, extra professional and casework support positions, new services, and new or renovated office space to accommodate new and existing staff.

- ◆ Over 60 per cent of the Department's budget, or approximately \$626 million in 2005-06, is used to purchase contracted early intervention, child protection and out-of-home care services from external suppliers. Reforms to improve the efficiency and diversity of this system can, therefore, make a critical difference to client services. In 2005-06 the Department developed and released a new Funding Policy designed to improve the processes involved in purchasing services and ensuring value-for-money outcomes. Work also commenced on developing an out-of-home care funding model and a performance monitoring framework for funded services.
- ◆ The Department co-ordinated the recovery response to 36 disaster events across New South Wales, receiving requests for formal assistance from 650 families and helping hundreds more.
- ◆ The Department continued its work supporting Indigenous families through Intensive Family Based Services at Casino, Bourke and Dapto. Staff are being recruited for another service at Campbelltown and preparatory work was completed for a service at Blacktown.

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

### **Strategic Objectives**

The Department continues to pursue its stated five year objectives:

- ◆ major expansion and upgrade of child protection and out-of-home care services, appropriate to the needs of diverse groups;
- ◆ greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention;
- ◆ delivery of a strategic community-building agenda;
- ◆ better processes and systems to support frontline service delivery;
- ◆ stronger partnerships with other agencies, service providers and peak bodies; and
- ◆ policy making and service delivery based on sound research and analysis, including economic analysis and feedback from evaluations.

The Department's key priorities for 2006-07 are to:

- ◆ recruit a further 225 caseworkers under the funding package target of 875 over five full years;
- ◆ commence hiring 150 out-of-home care caseworkers additional to this target, using out-of-home care resources from the funding package. This will take the total of new caseworkers to be recruited by June 2008 to 1,025. Up to 75 of these caseworkers will be recruited during 2006-07;
- ◆ these additional caseworkers will ensure children and young people in out-of-home care and their carers receive appropriate levels of support and bring the Department's caseloads into line with international benchmarks;
- ◆ roll out 20 new Enhanced Service Delivery sites across New South Wales: Albury, Auburn, Bathurst, Bourke, Brewarrina, Cardiff, Clarence Valley, Goulburn, Ingleburn, Lismore, Lithgow, Liverpool, Nowra, Parramatta, Port Macquarie, Raymond Terrace, St Marys, Sutherland, Orange and Taree;
- ◆ continue rollout of the early intervention program within the Department and across the service sector and commence its four year evaluation;
- ◆ continue reform of the out-of-home care system including significant improvements in caseworker support for carers. The Department will also commission a large scale evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of out-of-home care in delivering results for clients;
- ◆ develop and implement an interagency Youth Action Plan 2006-2010 to inform young people, their families and communities about the results the NSW Government seeks for young people and the key actions it will implement over the next four years to achieve these results;
- ◆ review community development and capacity-building initiatives and construct an integrated cross-agency program based on the best available evidence, including strategies to enrich the evidence base over time;
- ◆ with interagency partners, continue the development of improved integrated service responses to family and domestic violence;
- ◆ finalise the review of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection Act) 1998*; and
- ◆ continue work with our service provider partners to improve the range, quality, efficiency and consistency of services available for clients across New South Wales.

## 2006-07 BUDGET

### Total Expenses

Total expenses for the Department in 2006-07 are estimated at \$1,129 million, an increase of \$115 million or 11.4 per cent on the 2005-06 Budget.

Funding in 2006-07 from the Government's 2002 commitment is \$308.4 million, an increase of \$89.8 million on the \$218.6 million provided in 2005-06. Major initiatives include:

- ◆ an extra \$24.4 million for child protection and early intervention caseworkers and associated professional support staff. This will allow 200 new caseworkers to be employed and will further improve the quality and timeliness of response to reports of children and young people at risk of harm;
- ◆ an extra \$17 million for services to assist vulnerable and at-risk families under the early intervention program including quality childcare, sustained home visiting and parental education; and
- ◆ an extra \$52.2 million for out-of-home care including funding for an additional 25 caseworkers and improved placement options and services available to children and young people who cannot live at home.

The Government recognises the critical importance of children's services in improving life chances for children, and will be expanding its commitment with the following initiatives:

- ◆ an extra \$8.8 million per year from 2006-07 to improve the viability of community-based preschools, boost sector sustainability and increase access to affordable, high quality services for families; and
- ◆ from 2008-09 an extra \$21 million per year to expand community-based services to provide subsidised pre-school places for another 10,500 children. This will bring levels of attendance at pre-school programs in New South Wales to 95 per cent, in line with other Australian jurisdictions.

The program areas and their forecast expenditure in 2006-07 are:

- ◆ Community Services - \$263.6 million towards community development and capacity building projects (including Area Assistance Scheme; Families First; Better Futures; Community Solutions; Community Services Grants Program; Violence Against Women Program; and the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy), crisis support services, and disaster response services;

- ◆ Prevention and Early Intervention - \$203.2 million towards children's services programs and early intervention services to safely divert children and young people away from statutory child protection and support their development while improving their families' capacity to care for them;
- ◆ Statutory Child Protection - \$279.2 million to ensure children and young people who need statutory intervention are safe, either at home or in out-of-home care; and
- ◆ Out-of-Home Care - \$383.1 million to provide support, care and stability for children and young people who are unable to live at home.

## **Capital Expenditure**

The Department's \$26.2 million capital program will provide:

- ◆ \$23.3 million for the continued relocation and/or expansion of Community Services Centres to accommodate additional caseworkers and associated staff; and
- ◆ \$2.9 million for refurbishment, essential maintenance and minor works.

## **OFFICE FOR CHILDREN**

The Office for Children provides administrative and financial support to the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Children's Guardian. The Commissioner for Children and Young People promotes the well-being and interests of children, including contributing to their safety and welfare. The Children's Guardian regulates the provision of out-of-home care (OOHC), provision of adoption services and the employment of children under 15 in entertainment, exhibitions, still photography and door-to-door sales.

## **RESULTS AND SERVICES**

The Commissioner for Children and Young People aims to make New South Wales a better place for children and young people by working towards the following results:

- ◆ Child-related employers and the community generally adopting practices to keep children and young people safe.
- ◆ The community, opinion leaders and organisations taking action to support children and young people's development and well-being.
- ◆ Organisations and decision-makers engaging children and young people in decision-making.

Key services provided by the Commissioner which contribute to these results include:

- ◆ Working With Children program including accreditation of child-safe and child-friendly organisations, background checking and prohibited employment reviews;
- ◆ reviewing of child deaths;
- ◆ providing policy advice on children's issues;
- ◆ research and promotion of children's issues; and
- ◆ providing participation in programs for children and young people.

The Children's Guardian aims to promote the best interests and rights of children who are:

- ◆ In out-of-home care subject to orders of the Children's Court.
- ◆ Placed for adoption.
- ◆ Under 15 years of age and working in entertainment, exhibitions, still photography or door-to-door sales.

Key services provided by the Children's Guardian to contribute to these results include:

- ◆ accreditation of out-of-home care and adoption service providers that demonstrate achievement of approved standards;
- ◆ monitoring the continuing provision of out-of-home care and adoption services against accreditation standards and conditions; and
- ◆ authorisation of prescribed employers of children and monitoring of compliance with conditions of their authorities and the mandatory Code of Practice.

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

During 2005-06, the Commissioner released her report "Children at Work" which surveyed 11,000 children and young people's experience of work. The Commissioner has established a Taskforce to provide advice on the report's findings.

The independent review commissioned by the Minister in 2003-04 of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998* and the *Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998* led to the passage of the *Commission for Children and Young People Amendment Act 2005* in November 2005.

During 2005-06 the Commissioner made submissions to a number of inquiries, including the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People's inquiry into children and the built environment.

Overall, total 2005-06 expenditure on the Commissioner's functions is projected at \$8.5 million.

During 2005-06 the Children's Guardian measured compliance with legislative requirements of 63 designated agencies that provide out-of-home care for children and young persons who are subject to care orders of the Children's Court. The performance of all 63 designated agencies was monitored through audits of 748 case files.

The Children's Guardian continued to regulate employment of children under 15 years of age in the entertainment, exhibitions, still photography and door-to-door sales. Employer's authorities were granted to 105 prescribed employers, whose compliance was monitored over 430 productions.

The additional function of accreditation of adoption service providers was conferred on the Children's Guardian in 2005-06. The role relates to adoption of children born in Australia and overseas. The list of countries permitting adoption of their children by NSW families is increasing and will soon include China.

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

In 2006-07, the Commissioner for Children and Young People will support children by:

- ◆ implementing legislative amendments to improve background checking and prohibited employment programs;
- ◆ developing new models for children's participation;
- ◆ promoting the findings of research into children at work and the research into children's views of well-being; and
- ◆ advising decision-makers on children's issues.

In 2006-07, the Children's Guardian will support children by:

- ◆ conducting a review of its current accreditation process for out-of-home care providers;
- ◆ implementing procedures for accreditation of adoption service providers; and
- ◆ refining its systems for regulation of children's employment to cater for the increasing demand.

## **2006-07 BUDGET**

### **Total Expenses**

The estimated total expenditure for the Office for Children in 2006-07 is \$12.1 million which is consistent with total 2005-06 expenditure.

### **Capital Expenditure**

The Office for Children's capital allocation of \$345,000 in 2006-07 will allow for the upgrade of background checking systems and the purchase of minor plant and equipment.

## **NSWBUSINESSLINK**

NSWbusinesslink was established to provide shared corporate services for the Departments of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Community Services and Housing. These services cover the areas of finance, human resources, property, records management and information technology services.

NSWbusinesslink aims to support these agencies in their service delivery by providing more efficient and better services through economies of scale, productivity gains and process improvements.

From 1 July 2004, NSWbusinesslink separated from the Department of Housing. There are now two closely linked entities:

- ◆ NSW Businesslink Pty Ltd is a NSW Government-owned company established under the Commonwealth *Corporations Act 2001* whose shareholders are the Treasurer and the Ministers for the participating agencies. The Board comprises the Director-Generals of the three client agencies, an independent Chair and the Managing Director of the company.
- ◆ NSWbusinesslink Department employs all staff under the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002*.

The dual arrangement has arisen from the need to give effect to two paramount considerations:

- ◆ to honour the Government's undertaking to staff that they would continue to be employed as public servants; and
- ◆ to establish NSWbusinesslink as an entity jointly managed by the three participating agencies so that there could be a genuine ownership and sharing of both risks and benefits.

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENT**

During 2005-06, NSWbusinesslink has progressed its Future Directions Strategy which focuses on the long term efficiency and sustainability of NSWbusinesslink. A key component of this Strategy is the introduction by 1 July 2006 of a unitised pricing revenue model that is underpinned by a comprehensive product and service catalogue.

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

In 2006-07, the major focus of NSWbusinesslink will be:

- ◆ provision of product and services at market competitive levels;
- ◆ to manage client demand through unitised prices;
- ◆ sustained high level of customer satisfaction in the provision of shared services for Human Services Departments; and
- ◆ phasing in of the NSWbusinesslink Future Directions Strategy.

## **2006-07 BUDGET**

### **Total Expenses**

Total expenses for NSWbusinesslink in 2006-07 are estimated at \$114.1 million. This excludes discretionary expenditure on client billable projects which varies year-on-year depending on client demand.

## **Capital Expenditure**

NSWbusinesslink's 2006-07 capital program of \$6.9 million will fund the following minor works program initiatives:

- ◆ share services technology infrastructure including desktops, networks, printers, servers and databases (\$2.1 million);
- ◆ a client portal (\$1.5 million) to integrate NSWbusinesslink's systems with those of its clients;
- ◆ information security and compliance (\$700,000); and
- ◆ periodic replacement of plant, equipment, motor vehicles and administrative assets (\$2.6 million).

There is scope for NSWbusinesslink's capital program to vary in response to changing priorities and emerging demand of its client agencies.