

PLANNING FOR CHILDREN IN CARE REPORT

The Western Australian Ombudsman has today tabled in Parliament an own motion investigation into planning for children in the care of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department for Child Protection.

Background

The Western Australian Ombudsman reviews investigable child deaths, identifies patterns and trends arising from these reviews and makes recommendations designed to prevent or reduce investigable child deaths.

“In undertaking my child death review function I identified a need to undertake an investigation of planning for children in the care of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department for Child Protection – a particularly vulnerable group of children in our community.”

At the commencement of the investigation there were 3356 children in care. The investigation examined the administration of care planning for those children in care who were of primary school age at the commencement of the investigation, had been taken into care after 1 July 2008, and were still in care when the investigation commenced. This cohort numbered 443 children in total.

What is care planning?

The Act requires the Chief Executive Officer of DCP to prepare provisional care plans and care plans for children in care. Provisional care plans and care plans are written plans that identify the needs of the child, outline steps and measures to address these needs and set out decisions about the care of the child. These requirements differ depending on the circumstances under which the child is taken into care.

Agencies involved

The investigation involved the Department for Child Protection, the Department of Health and the Department of Education and considered, among other things, the relevant provisions of the Act, the internal policies of each of these departments along with the recommendations arising from the Review of the Department for Community Development undertaken by Ms Prudence Ford.

Findings

Western Australian Ombudsman, Chris Field, said that the investigation found that since the introduction of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004 (the Act)* the Departments for Child Protection, Health and Education had working cooperatively to operationalise the requirements of the Act.

“In short, significant and pleasing progress on improved planning for children in care has been achieved, however, there is still work to be done, particularly in relation to the timeliness of preparing care plans and ensuring that care plans fully incorporate health and education needs, other wellbeing issues, the wishes and views of children in care and are regularly reviewed,” Mr Field said.

-FOLLOWS-

Media Information Sheet

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Recommendations

The investigation report makes 23 recommendations for improvement, focusing on the timeliness of preparing care plans, ensuring that care plans fully incorporate health and education needs and other wellbeing issues, the wishes and views of children in care, and that care plans are regularly reviewed. Mr Field said that all of the recommendations had been agreed to by the agencies.

“It is pleasing that the agencies have agreed to these recommendations and have, more generally, been very co-operative and positively engaged with our investigation.

“Each of these recommendations will be monitored by our office to ensure their implementation and effectiveness in relation to the observations made in the investigation,” Mr Field said.

The report titled *Planning for children in a care: An Ombudsman’s own motion investigation into the administration of the care planning provisions of the Children and Community Services Act 2004* is available from the Ombudsman’s website at www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/careplanningreport

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