

2015 – 16 Budget Estimates

Report No. 3, 55th Parliament
Communities, Disability Services and Domestic
and Family Violence Prevention Committee
September 2015

Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee

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Chair's Foreword

This report presents a summary of the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's examination of the Budget Estimates for the 2015-16 financial year.

Consideration of the Budget Estimates allows for the public examination of the responsible Ministers within the Committee's portfolio area. The public examination was undertaken through questions on notice and a public hearing.

The Committee has made one recommendation – that the the proposed expenditure detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2015 for the Committee's areas of responsibility be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish to thank each Minister and their departmental officers for their cooperation in providing information to the Committee throughout this process.

I would also like to thank the Members of the Committee for their hard work and valuable contribution and the Committee's secretariat for their assistance and support throughout the process.



Leanne Donaldson MP

Chair

September 2015

1. Introduction

1.1 Role of the Committee

The Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee (the Committee) is a portfolio committee of the Queensland Parliament required under section 88 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and established under the Standing Rules and Orders.

The Committee's areas of responsibility are:

- Communities, Women, Youth, Child Safety and Multicultural Affairs
- Domestic and Family Violence Prevention, and
- Disability Services and Seniors.¹

On 4 June 2015, the Appropriation Bill 2015 and the estimates for the Committee's areas of responsibility were referred to the Committee for investigation and report.²

On 27 August 2015, the Committee conducted a public hearing and took evidence about the proposed expenditure from the:

- Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs
- Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland, and
- other departmental witnesses.

A copy of the transcript of the Committee's hearing can be accessed at: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-committees/committees/CDSDFVPC/inquiries/current-inquiries/Estimates2015-16>

1.2 Aim of this report

The Committee considered the estimates referred to it by using information contained in budget papers, answers to pre-hearing questions on notice and evidence taken at the hearing.

This report summarises the estimates referred to the Committee and highlights some of the issues the Committee examined.

Prior to the public hearing, the Committee provided the:

- Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, and
- Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland,

with questions on notice in relation to the estimates. Responses to all the questions were received.

Answers to the Committee's pre-hearing questions on notice, correspondence about the estimates process, documents tabled during the hearing and minutes of the Committee's meetings are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

¹ Standing Rules and Orders, Schedule 6. The schedule provides that departments, statutory authorities, government owned corporations or other administrative units related to the relevant Minister's responsibilities regarding these areas are included.

² Standing Order 177 provides for the automatic referral of the Annual Appropriation Bills to portfolio committees once the Bills have been read a second time.

1.3 Other Members' participation

The Committee gave leave for other Members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in the hearing. The following Members participated in the hearing:

- Ms Tracy Davis MP, Member for Aspley
- Mrs Tarnya Smith MP, Member for Mount Ommaney, and
- Mr Andrew Cripps MP, Member for Hinchinbrook.

2. Recommendation

Pursuant to Standing Order 187(1), the Committee must state whether the proposed expenditures referred to it are agreed to.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2015 for the Committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

3. Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (the Department) falls under the shared responsibility of the:

- Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, and
- Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland.

The Department provides or funds services through three service areas:

- Child and Family Services
- Disability Services, and
- Community Services.

The following table taken from the Appropriation Bill 2015 compares the appropriations for the Department for 2014-15 and 2015-16.

Appropriations	2014-15 \$'000	2015-16 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
departmental services	2,574,827	2,670,584
equity adjustment	(5,694)	(13,264)
<i>Administered Items</i>	236,838	242,826
Vote	2,805,971	2,900,146

Source: Appropriation Bill 2015, Schedule 2, p. 7.

The Department has an estimated operating budget of \$2.684 billion for 2015-16, an increase of \$162.8 million on its 2014-15 Adjusted Budget.³

3.1 Budget highlights

The Department's estimated operating budget of \$2.684 billion for 2015-16 comprises:

- \$2.305 billion in Queensland Government funding
- \$362.084 million in Australian Government funding
- \$14.635 million in user charges and fees, and
- \$1.824 million in other revenue.⁴

The capital works program for the Department is \$29.4 million in 2015-16. Total capital grants for the Department will be \$17.5 million. These funds will focus on integrated community services and on strengthening and protecting the well-being of Queenslanders, particularly the vulnerable and those most in need.⁵

³ Service Delivery Statements, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 2.

⁴ SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 13.

⁵ State Budget 2015-16, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No.3, page 28.

Capital works program highlights for the Department include:

- \$4 million for two 72-hour crisis shelters in Brisbane and Townsville for women and children escaping violence at a total cost of \$8 million over two years
- \$9 million to continue infrastructure upgrades and construct purpose built accommodation for people with an intellectual and/or cognitive disability who display severely challenging behaviour
- \$2 million for a maintenance and upgrade program for multipurpose and neighbourhood centres at a total cost of \$12.2 million over four years, and
- \$1 million to continue construction activities and establish facilities to support the Safe Havens Program for children, young people and families experiencing or witnessing domestic and family violence at Mornington Island, Coen, Cherbourg and Palm Island.⁶

Capital grants program highlights include:

- \$6.6 million to continue the Elderly Parent Carer Innovation Trial
- \$6 million to build or purchase supported accommodation for people with a disability living in inappropriate settings
- \$3.1 million to build or purchase suitable supported accommodation options for people with high and complex needs in Cairns, Townsville, Wynnum and Banyo, and
- \$1.4 million for remote Indigenous communities in Coen and Bamaga to add to and upgrade safe haven services and facilities.⁷

Estimated concessions for the Department in 2015-16 include:

- Electricity Rebate Scheme - \$154.3 million
- Pensioner Rate Subsidy Scheme - \$53.6 million
- South East Queensland Pensioner Water Subsidy Scheme - \$19.3 million, and
- Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme - \$10 million.⁸

3.2 Child and Family Services

Child and Family Services leads and facilitates the delivery of family support, child protection and adoption services. It provides services to protect children and young people who have been harmed or are at risk of harm to secure their future safety and well-being. Child and Family Services also provides, and invests in, out-of-home care and adoption services for children and young people.⁹

Child and Family Services is responsible for implementing the majority of initiatives arising from the Queensland *Child Protection Commission of Inquiry* recommendations and will support the implementation of the Queensland Government's response to the *Domestic and Family Violence Taskforce* report.¹⁰

⁶ State Budget 2015-16, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No.3, page 28.

⁷ State Budget 2015-16, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No.3, pages 28-29.

⁸ State Budget 2015-16, Budget Strategy and Outlook - Budget Paper No.2, page 167.

⁹ SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 3.

¹⁰ SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 3.

3.2.1 Funding overview

The operating budget for Child and Family Services in 2015-16 is \$934.7 million, an increase of 8.26% on the 2014-15 Adjusted Budget.¹¹

3.2.2 New measures and key funding initiatives

Key new measures and funding initiatives for Child and Family Services in 2015-16 include:

- \$6.6 million over two years (\$3 million in 2015-16 and \$3.6 million in 2016-17) for the Parenting Support for Queensland Families trial
- \$54.5 million to deliver services for vulnerable families and their children, in line with the 10 year roadmap for the implementation of the Queensland *Child Protection Commission of Inquiry* recommendations. Specific initiatives include:
 - \$4.5 million for six new Family and Child Connect services
 - \$3.8 million for new Intensive Family Support services
 - \$595,000 to design and implement comprehensive health assessments for all children and young people entering statutory care, and
 - \$400,000 for the Trauma Informed Therapeutic Framework for residential care
- initiatives aimed at addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system, including:
 - \$2.4 million to support the expansion and integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family support and child protection services
 - \$1.5 million to trial early intervention services for Indigenous families in seven discrete Aboriginal communities, and
 - improved culturally appropriate practice through Indigenous Practice Leaders, and
- \$125.7 million to support foster and kinship carers as part of the Department's commitment to carer allowances.¹²

3.3 Disability Services

Disability Services leads and facilitates the delivery of disability services, and community care services for people under 65 years. Disability Services provides and funds services including personal care, accommodation and carer support, respite, community access, therapy, aids and equipment, and learning and skill development.¹³

Disability Services is responsible for managing Queensland's transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).¹⁴

3.3.1 Funding overview

The operating budget for Disability Services in 2015-16 is \$1.547 billion, an increase of 5.58% on the 2014-15 Adjusted Budget.¹⁵

¹¹ SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 3.

¹² SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 4.

¹³ SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 6.

¹⁴ SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 6.

¹⁵ SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 6.

3.3.2 *New measures and key funding initiatives*

Key new measures and funding initiatives for Disability Services in 2015-16 include:

- \$1.9 million to contribute to the launch of the NDIS
- \$6.6 million for NDIS readiness initiatives and \$4.8 million for aids and equipment
- \$6 million to deliver housing solutions for people with a disability for whom other housing options are not sustainable
- \$6.6 million for a trial program to develop innovative strategies for sustainable living options for adults with disabilities when they can no longer be cared for by elderly parents
- \$5.5 million to assist up to 300 young people leaving school
- \$12.6 million to support up to 64 young adults with a disability exiting the care of the State
- \$3.2 million to support up to 27 people with spinal cord injuries to leave the Princess Alexandra Hospital and live in the community
- \$2 million to assist people who are discharged to live in the community with supports, with a priority for long-stay patients in acute hospital settings
- \$6 million to support families of children with a disability who have a critical need, and
- ongoing funding of \$126 million to enable people with a disability and high and complex needs to choose to continue to receive Accommodation Support and Respite Services (ASRS) directly from government.¹⁶

3.4 *Community Services*

Community Services facilitates the delivery, by non-government organisations, of services to vulnerable groups and individuals including seniors, carers, women, young people, people affected by domestic violence, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.¹⁷

Community Services is also responsible for implementing a significant part of the Government's response to the *Domestic and Family Violence Taskforce* report, initiatives to rebuild community services and community recovery from disasters.¹⁸

3.4.1 *Funding overview*

The operating budget for Community Services in 2015-16 is \$202 million, an increase of 5% on the 2014-15 Adjusted Budget.¹⁹

3.4.2 *New measures and key funding initiatives*

Key new measures and funding initiatives for Community Services in 2015-16 include:

- \$12.2 million of funding reprioritised to implement the Queensland Government's response to the recommendations in the *Domestic and Family Violence Taskforce* report
- \$1.5 million reprioritised and allocated to DVConnect, over two years, to assist women and children suffering as a result of domestic and family violence
- \$10.8 million, over three years, to expand the number of rest and recovery services in Drink Safe Precincts
- \$4 million to extend existing community support measures in drought declared areas
- \$770,000 per annum to implement multicultural recognition legislation, including the promotion of a Multicultural Queensland Charter and support for a Queensland Multicultural Advisory Council

¹⁶ SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 6.

¹⁷ SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 8.

¹⁸ SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 8.

¹⁹ SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, page 8.

- recurrent funding of \$1 million to support multicultural celebrations, projects and cultural events through an annual grants fund
- additional funding of \$2 million, over four years, to rebuild the Office for Seniors and establish a One-Stop Shop for Seniors and an Advisory Taskforce on Residential Transition for Ageing Queenslanders
- \$5.5 million per annum, for a three year period, commencing in 2016-17 for a Financial Resilience program to support Queenslanders to respond to financial stresses and personal issues and cost of living pressures, and
- \$1.1 million to rebuild the Office for Women.²⁰

3.5 Key issues raised at the public hearing

Key issues raised by the Committee at the public hearing with the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs include:

- expected departmental budget savings and funding reprioritisation
- ministerial responsibilities and information about departmental staff and resources
- the implementation of the *Domestic and Family Violence Taskforce* report recommendations
- measures to engage with Muslim communities and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who experience domestic and family violence
- details of DVConnect services to assist women fleeing violence and plans for women's health and sexual assault services
- \$50 million in funding for the implementation of the Queensland *Child Protection Commission of Inquiry* recommendations and access to contingency funds
- the investigation of notifications of child abuse and neglect received by the Department and details of the level of risk of those children subject to such notifications
- measures to establish support networks for children in care, actions to address the root causes of children needing protection and measures to build partnerships for carers and young people in child protection
- support provided by the Next Stop After Care program to children leaving care and the benefits of the Family and Child Connect Services
- the benefits of, and expected participation in, the parenting support program
- the establishment of the Multicultural Advisory Council, the introduction of multicultural recognition legislation, the reinstatement of funding for the Community Action for a Multicultural Society program and the \$1 million funding allocated for multicultural events
- the Department's action plan and policy for multiculturalism and cultural diversity
- measures to actively support Indigenous cadetship programs and programs to equip Indigenous youth for careers in agriculture and the beef industry
- the disaster recovery assistance, special services and long-term services provided to Ravenshoe following the tragic event at the Serves You Right Café
- eligibility for the \$4 million in funding for community support measures in drought declared areas, and
- \$12.2 million funding, over four years, for upgrades to and maintenance of neighbourhood centres.

²⁰ SDS, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2015-16, pages 8-9.

Key issues raised by the Committee at the public hearing with the Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland include:

- the publication by agencies of disability service plan reports
- \$2.2 million reduction in funding for the Disability Services Infrastructure Plan
- the number of places available for children with autism at AEIOU Foundation services
- funding and measures to ensure readiness for the commencement of the NDIS, including the launch site in Queensland in 2015-16
- the budget and arrangements for government-provided ASRS under the NDIS
- measures to provide certainty to disability service staff during the transition to the NDIS
- funding to assist people with disabilities who live in hospital and health facilities
- measures to ensure disability service workers use best practice when dealing with people with a disability who have complex behavioural issues
- provision of respite to assist carers and families of people with a disability
- services provided to Queensland Seniors Card holders and measures to assist seniors to meet cost-of-living-pressures
- clarification about the Minister's responsibilities in relation to North Queensland
- details of Ministerial meetings with North Queensland businesses and non-government organisations and measures to balance economic development and job creation in North Queensland with environmental protection
- details of engagement with the Australian Government on employment and development opportunities arising from the Northern Australia White Paper and participation in the North Australia Infrastructure Fund, and
- the total budget of the Office of the Premier in North Queensland this financial year.

4. Statement of Reservation

Statement of Reservation on behalf of the LNP Members Communities, Disabilities Services, Domestic and Family Violence prevention committee

COMMUNITIES, CHILD SAFETY AND DISABILITY SERVICES

The current budget papers (BP 5 Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services) states:

Child and Family Services is responsible for implementing the majority of initiatives arising from the recommendations of the 2013 Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry and will support implementation of the Queensland Government's response to the Domestic and Family Violence Taskforce Report.

In the Minister's opening speech she stated:

We made an election commitment to continue the implementation of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry recommendations. Child safety deserves to be bipartisan. It requires a sustained effort that must outlive any political term and rise above any political wrangle. That is our commitment to the children and families of Queensland. We are building on our commitment to early intervention and helping families get the help they need to thrive with the introduction of a universal system of parenting support. We are investing \$6.6 million over two years to make the world renowned PPP parenting program available to all Queensland parents.

In accordance with the Queensland Government's commitment to implement the Child and Family Reforms the Queensland Government has taken stewardship of the \$406 million funding allocation by the former LNP Government to the reforms (a 10 year roadmap of reform).

A contingency fund of \$20.302 million (5 percent of total net funding) was approved and was to be maintained by the Queensland Treasury and Trade. Contingency funding was designed to address unforeseen, emergency circumstances that may arise during the implementation of the reform program.

It is funding that is set aside for extraordinary and exceptional situations that may not be able to be resolved within the original approved funding enveloped developed for each work package.

Queensland Treasury and Trade prepared guidelines setting out a governance structure and process for accessing contingency funding, to provide clarity to agencies as to how it would be used and when it was appropriate to do so. These guidelines were agreed to by the Reform Leaders Group.

The Opposition sought to question the Minister on the contingency fund to establish whether or not it had been accessed for the purpose of the reform. The Minister provided the following response:

Ms DAVIS:

"Minister, I refer to the performance statement, specifically the service area description, which appears on page 4 of the SDS where it talks about implementing the majority of the initiatives arising from the recommendations of the 2013 Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. I am genuinely pleased that the minister has indicated that the reforms will proceed, as outlined under the LNP government. Minister, in addition to the \$406 million that was allocated for the reforms— and you have outlined today some of those areas that are being rolled out at present that were

funded by the LNP in that \$406 million—there was a contingency fund of around \$20 million that was sitting in Treasury for the express purpose of addressing emerging issues in delivering reform, because child protection is such a risk averse area or a risk laden area. Can the minister advise if this contingency fund has been accessed?

Ms FENTIMAN:

I believe that is a question for the Treasurer. It is not contained in the budget for this department.

It is noted that when asked whether the Director-General was aware of any requests to access the contingency fund, he reiterated the Minister's response which was that the contingency fund is controlled by Treasury and is a matter for the Treasurer.

It is very concerning that only seven months into the Queensland Government's term in office the specific questions relating to the contingency fund for the Child and Family reform were not answered. This reform is the largest undertaking of its kind to overhaul the Queensland child protection system. Given the risk laden area of work and the enormity of the reform taking place, the lack of definitive response from the Minister and Director-General who have responsibility for the vast majority of the reforms renders a lack of confidence in the process being taken. The Minister's equivocal reply creates uncertainty in respect of the veracity and integrity of the reforms required to overhaul the Queensland child protection system, particularly when considering previous Labor Governments have failed in reforming the system, leaving it unsustainable and overburdened.

Multicultural Affairs Minister, and the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland

The LNP Opposition was disappointed with the defensive way in which the Minister answered non-government questions. The LNP Opposition had legitimate questions about the implications of lack of job targets in this portfolio budget statement. We believe that a lack of detail in the SDS with regard to economic independence and participation for people of a CALD background deserved a greater level of openness and transparency from the Minister at the hearing. The Minister articulated that Jobs creation was a key policy objective, but upon deeper questioning was unable to provide any employment targets.

Ms FENTIMAN: Questions about the target in relation to this program should be directed to the Treasurer."

The LNP believes that in order to achieve greater level of employment opportunities for people from culturally and linguistically backgrounds a base target or measure should be set. The former LNP government had done so, and managed to create more than double the number of jobs than our target.

The Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland did not appear at the Estimates Committee hearings for the Premier and Minister for the Arts on Tuesday 18 August 2015, despite being listed as a responsible Minister on the Service Delivery Statement (SDS) for the relevant Department.

No explanation has been forthcoming to explain the Minister's absence. In failing to appear before the committee, the Minister has abrogated her responsibilities to the Queensland Parliament and has not met the high standards of accountability and transparency which the Premier insisted would be the hallmark of her government.

When the Minister did appear before the estimates committee for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services on Thursday 27 August 2015, she was not able to explain to the committee why her role as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland was not mentioned in the SDS, except as part of her ministerial title on page 1.

It is unacceptable that, unlike all other Cabinet Ministers in other portfolio areas, the 2015-16 state budget papers contain no service objectives, service descriptions, or service measures associated with the Ministers' responsibilities as the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland.

During the course of the estimates hearings, the Minister was able to confirm that as far as her responsibilities relating to North Queensland are concerned, she is responsible for no budget allocations, no public servants and no legislation under the machinery of government arrangements.

It is difficult therefore to reach any conclusion other than for the purposes of the budget estimates process, there has been a distinct lack of accountability and transparency demonstrated by the Palaszczuk Government as far as the Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland is concerned.

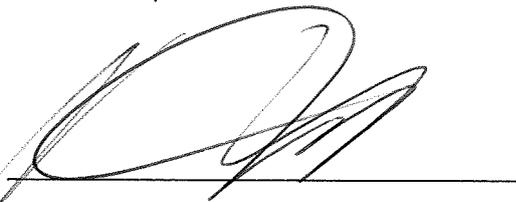
At the commencement of the estimates hearing for the portfolio of the minister for disability services, minister for senior and minister assisting the premier on North Queensland Mr McArdle asked the Director General and the Minister whether they were aware of any instructions in relation to what questions the Minister would or would not answer.

Both answered in the negative

I then moved that "the committee move into closed session to seek publication of certain documentation"

The Chairperson upon resumption of the hearing said the motion had been resolved in the negative. The vote of three ayes and three no's was recorded by the Chairperson

Dated 10 September 2015



Mark McArdle

State Member for Caloundra

Deputy Chair of the Committee