

Background:

These written questions have been asked by the Member for Araluen. On August 8 under the cover of parliamentary privilege Ms Lambley stated:

“That is the theme of this 30 page report of the External Monitoring and Reporting Committee for Child Protection. It is all very positive, it is all sanitised, and it is completely and utterly deceptive. What we have is a committee that is costing the taxpayers of Australia much money presumably. We have eight people being carted around the country, eight people being wined and dined...”

Ms Lambley has refused to repeat her claim that the Northern Territory Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee’s report was sanitised as a result of the committee being wined and dined outside parliament and has refused to apologise.

1. As of the 9th August 2011, who are the members of the Northern Territory Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee?

Professor Graham Vimpani (Chair)

Mr Terry Murphy

Ms Jacqui Reed

Mr Frank Hytten

Ms Teresa Neihus

Dr Sven Silburn

Ms Lorraine Liddle

2. What is the budget allocated for the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee in 2011 / 2012 and for each year in the forward estimates?

It is estimated that the cost of the Committee in 2011-12 will be approximately \$100,000.

3. Where and when will the third and fourth meetings of the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee to be held.

The third meeting of the Committee took place in Katherine on 29 and 30 August 2011.

The date and location of the fourth Committee meeting is yet to be finalised by the Committee, but is likely to be in early December 2011 in the Palmerston area.

4. Will you place the forward meeting schedule on your Department’s website.

The Committee will place the dates and location on the Department of Children and Families website as they are determined by the Committee.

5. Has the Committee requested to meet with any individual, body or organization external to Government. Who have they requested to meet with and when will those meetings take place.

Yes. The Committee requested to meet with non-government organisations in Alice Springs and met with:

- Foster Care NT including a number of current foster carers who requested to meet with the Committee to raise issues and concerns directly with members of the Committee ;
- Yarrenyty Altere Learning Centre, Tangentyere;
- Karnte Camp Community Centre, Tangentyere;
- Hidden Valley Community Centre
- Akeyulerre (Healing Centre);

The Coordinator, Central Australia of NTCOSS also had an opportunity to meet with Committee members at the May meeting in Alice Springs.

The Committee also met with members of the Northern Territory Families and Children Advisory Council to the Minister. This Advisory Council includes membership from a range of non government organisations.

The Committee held a forum with non-government organisations in Katherine as part of its August 2011 meeting and met with:

- Good Beginnings;
- Wurli Wurlinjang Aboriginal Health Service;
- Katherine Women's Information and Legal Service
- North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency;
- Foster Care NT;
- North Australian Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service;
- Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission
- Other members of the Community Health and Information Network.

In addition, visits were made to Life Without Barriers and Good Beginnings to meet with staff in those services and discuss progress on the reforms.

Also, CREATE Foundation organised for two young people to speak directly with the Committee regarding their experience of being in care and for one young person, their experience in transitioning out of care.

The Committee are also seeking to find a mutually convenient date to meet with the Member for Araluen.

6. What was the total cost of the May 2011 meeting of the Northern Territory Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee held in Alice Springs.

The total cost of the Alice Springs meeting was \$19,660.

7. The report of the second meeting of the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee – tabled in Parliament in Monday 8th August 2011 – states that

the report was written by the Committee. Exactly who was the primary author of this report.

The report was primarily authored by Professor Graham Vimpani, Chair of the Committee with contributions from all Committee members.

8. Given that reports of this nature usually include the name or names of the authors, why was the author(s) name not included in this report.

The report clearly indicates that it is the report of the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee. A cover letter was provided to the Minister by the Chair of the Committee when the report was submitted.

9. Why does the report of the second meeting of the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee not include the names of the members of the Committee that attended the second meeting of the Committee in May 2011?

The Report is a report on the Committee's work, not a report on a meeting held by the Committee.

10. Who authorised the release of the report and when did the Minister sign off on the report for release.

Professor Graham Vimpani authorised the release of the report. The Minister for Child Protection, Children and Families does not sign off on the release of the report.

11. When will the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee be meeting with the Ombudsman – given the public release of the Ombudsman Report – A Lifelong Shadow - on Child Protection on Monday 8th August 2011 and the serious matters contained within?

The Northern Territory Ombudsman provided a copy of her report to the Chair of the Committee on 09/08/2011.

The Committee has not to date requested a meeting with Ombudsman, although the Chair of the Committee and the Ombudsman have spoken on two occasions.

12. Given the Ombudsman's knowledge and understanding of the problems within child protection in the Northern Territory, will you appoint the Ombudsman to the External Monitoring and Reporting Committee.

The role of the Ombudsman is to investigate the administrative actions of public authorities which include a body established for a public purpose.

It is therefore possible that involvement in the Committee might pose a conflict of interest for the Ombudsman, or for other statutory office holders, preventing them from carrying out their core responsibilities.

Neither my office nor the Monitoring Committee have received a request from the Ombudsman to join the Committee.

13. How will the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee be measuring and assessing the Government's implementation of the 147 recommendations of the Growing Them Strong, Together Report.

Page 7 of the document released in February 2011 *Safe Children, Bright Futures Strategic Framework 2011 – 2015* clearly outlines how the Committee will measure and assess the implementation of the *Growing them strong, together* report.

14. Who will be writing the future reports of the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee Meetings and Findings?

The Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee reports will continue to be written by the Chair of the Committee in collaboration with all Committee members.

15. Will the name(s) of the author of any future reports of the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee be published on the document?

Yes, as per this first report.

16. Will the format and agenda for meetings of the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee be managed by the Government?

No.

17. Who provides administrative support to the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee?

A Committee secretariat has been established as part of the funding allocated by Government to monitor and report on implementation of the Board of Inquiry recommendations.

18. The Ombudsman's Report - A Lifelong Shadow - contains 28 recommendations for implementation. For each recommendation accepted, what is the timeline for implementation.

All actions related to recommendations from the Ombudsman Report will be incorporated within the 147 Board of Inquiry Recommendations.

19. Again, with reference to the Ombudsman's Report – A Lifelong Shadow - for each recommendation that the Government has rejected please explain why the recommendation has been rejected.

All actions related to recommendations from the Ombudsman Report will be incorporated within the 147 Board of Inquiry Recommendations.

20. Why did it take the Minister for Child Protection one month (29th June to 27 July 2011) after accepting the final Ombudsman's Report – A lifelong Shadow – to inform the Ombudsman that the report had to be presented to the Chief Minister.

The report was tabled to the Legislative Assembly within the required timeframe.

21. Have any instructions been provided by you or the Department to the External Monitoring Committee that would prevent them, either collectively or individually responding to my letter of 17 May 2011.

No.

22. The Northern Territory Government website includes a section pertaining to the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee – why are there no contact details provided for the Committee.

At the Committee meeting in August 2011, Committee members agreed to place their contact details on the Department of Children and Families website and this will be actioned by the Department.

23. How can the public contact the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee if these details are not publicly provided.

The Committee can be contacted through the Department of Children and Families.

24. What are the contact details for the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee?

Professor Graham Vimpani (Chair) via the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee Secretariat Po Box 40596 Casuarina NT 0811 or CPEExternalMonitoringCommittee.DCF@nt.gov.au

25. Which members of the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee attended the second meeting of the Committee on 26th and 27th May 2011?

Professor Graham Vimpani (Chair)

Mr Terry Murphy

Ms Jacqui Reed

Mr Frank Hytten

Ms Teresa Neihus

Dr Sven Silburn

26. Who provided administrative support for the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee at the second meeting of the Committee on 26th and 27th May 2011?

The Committee secretariat provides support to the Committee.

27. Can the Minister for Child Protection state that the report of the second meeting of the Committee on 26th and 27th May 2011 was written completely independently by the Committee, with no assistance or input from Government.

The Committee's report was written by the Chair of the Committee with contributions from all committee members and is independent from the NT Government.

Northern Territory Government agencies, non-government agencies, foster carers and the then Commissioner for Public Employment provided information that was fed to the Committee's Report, via attendance at the meetings, presentations, data and feedback it had received since formation. The professional expertise and perspective of the Committee's members also informed the report.