

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

### WRITTEN QUESTION

Mrs Lambley to Minister for Children and Families.

#### **Ombudsman Report – A Lifelong Shadow**

1. What was the cost of the legal opinion obtained by the Department referred to on page 22 of the Ombudsman Report – A Lifelong Shadow.

The cost of the legal opinion obtained by the Department referred to on page 22 of the Ombudsman's Report was \$5,500 inclusive of GST.

2. Who was the Barrister engaged to accompany staff being interviewed as witnesses by the Ombudsman as reported in the Ombudsman Report – A Lifelong Shadow.

There was more than one barrister engaged to accompany staff to interviews with the Ombudsman. A Barrister from the William Foster Chambers accompanied one witness and a Barrister from the Edmond Barton Chambers accompanied two witnesses.

3. Was he/she from the Territory or from interstate and if so, which state.

Both barristers who accompanied staff being interviewed as witnesses by the Ombudsman are based in the Northern Territory.

4. Which firm did the Barrister come from.

The William Forster Chambers and the Edmond Barton Chambers both located in Darwin.

5. Why was a legal opinion sought from a senior counsel at the Victorian Bar.

Legal opinion was sought from the William Forster Chambers in Darwin to advise the Department as to the scope of the Ombudsman's investigative powers and compliance with the same. Legal advice was not provided from counsel in Victoria.

6. Were the staff directed to be accompanied by the Barrister.

Departmental staff were not directed to be accompanied by a barrister.

7. Did the staff or the Department pay for the Barrister's services.

The Department paid for the legal support of staff as it would to support any Departmental staff due to their employment requiring them to be called to appear before a hearing or in court such as a Coroner's court.

8. What was the hourly rate for the Barrister to accompany staff members.

The hourly rate for legal services provided by the William Forster Chambers was \$280 and the hourly rate for legal services provided by the Edmond Barton Chambers was \$320.

9. How many staff were accompanied to interviews by the Barrister.

Three Departmental staff were accompanied to interviews by the barristers.

10. What was the total cost for engaging the Barrister. – Break down by flights, accommodation and legal services.

The total cost for engaging both barristers' legal services was \$14,828. There were no costs in relation to flights or accommodation.

11. Referring to Item 31: Reviews of Services contained in the 2011 Estimates obtained through Freedom of Information:-

a) When was the Evaluation of Youth Camps completed and if not completed, when will it be completed and further, who undertook the review and what was the cost;

The Evaluation of the Youth Camp Program was commissioned in June 2010 and completed in January 2011.

It was conducted by *ConnectedSelf*, a consulting group with expertise in programming relating to youth justice, child protection and clinical psychology.

The consultancy cost \$97,000.

b) Has the Review of the Interim organization structure of the Department of Children and Families by Mercer been completed;

Yes

- c) When was the Evaluation of mandatory reporting legislation completed and if not completed, when will it be completed;

Evaluation of the impact of domestic/family violence mandatory reporting is underway. It is anticipated that this will be completed by mid January 2012.

- d) When was the Evaluation of the Family Support Package completed, and if not completed, when will it be completed and further, who undertook the review and what was the cost;

The evaluation will be finalised by 30 Sept 2011 at a cost of \$198,440. The evaluation was undertaken by Batchelor Institute.

- e) When was the Review of Out of Home services completed, and if not completed, when will it be completed; and

This review is underway. It is anticipated that the review will be complete by 30 June 2012.

- f) When was the Review of the Child Protection Intake Service, completed, and if not completed, when will it be completed and further, who undertook the review and what was the cost.

In January 2011, Maureen Armstrong from the Department of Children and Families produced a review of the Intake Services. The cost to the Department for this work was approximately \$14,000.

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