

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Higgins to the Minister for Territory Families:

Disposal of client records - Alice Springs

Please provide the following details about the disposal of client records of Territory Families to the waste disposal tip in Alice Springs:

1. What were the circumstances that led to client records being taken to the tip?
 2. How many records were taken to the tip?
 3. Did the records go to the tip at the same time Territory Families moved offices? If not, when were they disposed of?
 4. Has this matter been investigated?
 5. Who conducted the investigation?
 6. How long did the investigation take, and was it conducted in Alice Springs? If so, how long did the investigator spend in Alice Springs?
 7. How many people were interviewed, and who were they?
 8. Were all the files retrieved from the tip? If so, who was tasked with this retrieval, and did the person or persons involved go to the tip?
 9. What communication has occurred with the individuals or families involved?
 10. What recommendations were made in the report?
 11. Will you provide a copy of the report?
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1. During an office refurbishment in Alice Springs a Contractor accidentally took three filing cabinets along with other furniture for disposal, to the Alice Springs Waste Management Centre.

2. A small number of individual documents were accidentally sent to the Alice Springs Waste Management Centre. An overview of the documents can be found at Attachment A to the Internal Investigation report at <https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/about/publications-and-policies/other-reports>.
3. From 18 to 21 April 2017, Territory Families relocated its office accommodation in Alice Springs. During the move a small number of historical documents were incorrectly disposed of at landfill in lieu of being archived.
4. Yes. An internal and external investigation was completed. All recommendations were accepted and implemented.
5. Territory Families immediately launched an internal investigation into how the documents came to be disposed of. On the advice of the Northern Territory Information Commissioner, an external review of the internal investigation was then undertaken by a Lawyer from the Solicitor for the NT to assess the internal independence process and findings, and provide an independent review of the investigation.
6. The internal investigation was conducted over five days, from 26 April to 2 May 2017. The investigator travelled to Alice Springs on 26 April 2017 to conduct interviews with internal and external stakeholders.

The external review of the investigation was conducted over ten days, from 11 May 2017 to 24 May 2017. The external investigator also established contact with internal and external stakeholders in Alice Springs to validate the internal investigation, its findings and the recommendations made. The external reviewer did not travel to Alice Springs.
7. Thirteen people were interviewed in the internal investigation. This included Territory Families staff members from the Alice Springs office and from Corporate Services; the contractor; staff from the Alice Springs Waste Management Centre; an Alice Springs removals company and the person who identified the files at the Waste Management Centre and acted to secure them.

8. The documents were recovered from the Waste Management Facility by Territory Families staff from the Alice Springs Office. Although it is not possible to confirm, Territory Families is confident that all of the records disposed of by the Contractor were retrieved from the Waste Management Facility.
9. Individuals whose personal information was contained in the documents have been contacted to receive a written apology from the Chief Executive Officer of Territory Families. Individuals are also being provided with information regarding this incident, their right to complain to Territory Families Complaints and then to the NT Information Commissioner should they remain unsatisfied with Territory Families response.

Attempts to locate the current whereabouts of some persons affected by the information loss continues in order to establish contact with them.

10. The internal and external investigations resulted in nine recommendations. Eight of these are complete. The recommendations and their status is publically available via the following link.
https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/433017/su_mmary-of-recommendations-alice-springs-document-retrieval-investigations.pdf.
11. Both investigation reports were redacted to protect the privacy of individuals and were made available to the public on 20 June 2017. The link to these reports is as follows:
<https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/about/publications-and-policies/other-reports>