

This is an uncorrected proof of evidence taken before the committee and it is made available under the condition it is recognised as such.



COMMUNITIES, DISABILITY SERVICES AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Members present:

Ms LE Donaldson MP (Chair)
Miss N Boyd MP
Ms AM Leahy MP
Mr MF McArdle MP
Mr MJ McEachan MP
Mr RJ Pyne MP

Staff present:

Mr K Holden (Research Director)
Ms L Manderson (Principal Research Officer)

PUBLIC BRIEFING—AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT NO.17: 2014-15, MANAGING CHILD SAFETY INFORMATION

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 2015

Brisbane

WEDNESDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 2015

Committee met at 10.17 am

CHAIR: Good morning and welcome. I declare open the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's public briefing on the Queensland Audit Office's report No. 17 of 2014-15 titled *Managing child safety information*. I am Leanne Donaldson MP, the committee chair and member for Bundaberg. With me today are: Mr Mark McArdle MP, the deputy chair and member for Caloundra; Miss Nikki Boyd MP, the member for Pine Rivers; Ms Ann Leahy MP, the member for Warrego; Mr Matt McEachan MP, the member for Redlands; and Mr Rob Pyne MP, the member for Cairns.

We will today hear from the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services regarding its implementation of the six recommendations contained in QAO report No. 17 of 2014-15 titled *Managing child safety information*. The report was referred to the committee for consideration by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly on 2 June 2015.

This briefing is a formal proceeding of the parliament and is subject to the Legislative Assembly's standing orders and rules. The committee will not require evidence to be given under oath, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. You have previously been provided with a copy of instructions to witnesses so we will take those as read.

Hansard will record the proceedings and witnesses will be provided with a transcript. Today's proceedings are also being broadcast live on the parliament's website. The media might also be present so it is possible that you might be filmed or photographed.

I ask witnesses to please identify themselves when they first speak and to speak clearly and at a reasonable pace. I remind all of those attending the briefing today that these proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In this regard, I remind members of the public that, under the standing orders, the public may be admitted to or excluded from the briefing at the discretion of the committee.

I remind committee members that officers from the department are here to provide factual or technical information. Any questions about government or opposition policy should be directed to the responsible minister or shadow minister or left to debate on the floor of the House. I also ask that if departmental officers take a question on notice today they provide the information to the committee by Friday, 13 November. Before we commence, I ask that mobiles are switched off or turned to silent.

BOND, Mr Darrin, Chief Information Officer, Information Services, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

LUPI, Mr Matthew, Executive Director, Child, Family and Community Services Commissioning, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

CHAIR: I welcome you both. I invite you to make an opening statement to the committee.

Mr Lupi: Good morning, Madam Chair and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity. I am pleased to assist the committee in its consideration of the Auditor-General's performance audit report relating to the management of child safety information. Along with my colleague Darrin Bond, the chief information officer, we propose to provide the committee with a succinct update on the work we have undertaken to address the findings of the Auditor-General's report and to deliver on the recommendations contained within that report.

As you would be aware from the briefing you have already received from the Queensland Audit Office, they undertake a range of performance audits as part of the strategic audit plan for the Queensland government. In 2014 the audit they conducted in relation to security and management of child safety information is what is before the committee today.

The audit did not include information as it pertained to the sharing of information between the department and foster carers. It was specifically in relation to the provision of services to non-government agencies across the supply chain for which the department has responsibility for children. The audit included the functions of the department, its relationship with a couple of other

departments and, in particular, a sample of three non-government organisations. Significant work was undertaken by the department with the Queensland Audit Office in the process of the audit and in preparing and responding to the final report. I will note for the committee that the department supported all of the recommendations. I draw your attention to the letter our director-general supplied to the Auditor-General that was contained in his final report tabled in the parliament.

As you would be aware, the Auditor-General found that the department has yet to get the balance right between security of information and availability of information as it relates to child safety. This problem is made more complex because it involves entities inside and outside of government and more complex because of the very sensitive and highly sensitive nature of the information gathered and contained under the powers of the Child Protection Act.

Following receipt of the report, the department immediately commenced a number of activities to address the findings. Staff continue to work with the Audit Office to report back on the status of actions designed to improve and increase our performance and effectiveness in this regard. We are working closely with our partner non-government organisations and associated external entities to ensure that, where appropriate, we can improve the channels that address the recommendations of the report.

My colleague will address with me the six recommendations as they pertain to both information and IT related systems as well as performance and policy systems. I note that the department, in its action plan to the Queensland Audit Office, which was accepted by the Audit Office, proposed quite a lengthy time frame for a number of the recommendations given the complexity and the work involved. I note that the department also set out that many of those actions were dependent on available resources and available solutions that are fit for purpose, as you could appreciate given the complexity of the issues that were contained within the report. I will now hand over to my colleague.

Mr Bond: As Matthew has mentioned, we worked closely with QAO and considered and accepted their six recommendations. From that we developed a detailed action plan. That action plan is now being followed quite closely. We report against that action plan on a monthly basis. That report goes up to the director-general to ensure that there is senior executive visibility of everything we are doing to make sure we address those actions. Wherever possible for these specific actions, we incorporate them into existing or planned activities so as not to duplicate activity or duplicate the cost involved in rectifying the situation. I will go through the six recommendations quickly.

The first one is around developing and implementing a coordinated model. This is around developing a model that talks about how we share information, some of the principles we would use in sharing that information and exactly how we would do it and put it in place.

Already as part of the child and family reform ICT project that came out of the Carmody recommendations, we have started the implementation of a system to assist in the Family and Child Connect solution and the Intensive Family Support solution. This solution was selected from the market involving both NGOs and other government agencies, specifically the Queensland police. We have now implemented that solution which allows the sharing of information across those particular entities.

We are working very closely to monitor that solution as it goes through its implementation stage and making sure that it allows for the sharing of information with consent. It involves individuals consenting to the sharing of information and then NGOs being able to pass that information from one to another or if needed to the department.

We are also, I guess at a more macro level, running an initiative that is looking at the full information flows across the system. This involves officers from my area going out to regions and working with them on other areas of the business and how information is flowing. That work has commenced and will take some time. It will continue into 2016. It will be very detailed around which attributes of information are flowing from one entity to another.

Recommendation 2 is a very forward focused recommendation that talks about implementing contemporary information systems that address a number of recommendations that they have highlighted in their report. As I have already mentioned, the solution that we are looking at as part of the child and family reform ICT project is the first part of that.

A significant second component, though, involves as we move towards the replacement of our integrated client management system, ICMS—this is our statewide solution that we use within the agency to manage child safety processes; it is really an end-to-end solution. The solution allows us a statewide view of a child who is either in care or under investigation by the agency.

The ICMS system is coming up for replacement. It is almost to the end of its useful life. That useful life ends in 2019. We have already commenced the work associated with its replacement. We are taking these recommendations into strong consideration to ensure that we implement a solution that allows for the sharing of information. The solution we have at the moment was built at a time when probably there was a much closer holding of information and as such is a very secure and tight solution.

In terms of recommendation 3, I will pass to Matthew to explain this one.

Mr Lupi: The department has undertaken a significant piece of work with our colleagues in Education Queensland to address the immediate issue that was raised by the audit around a mismatch of information held around the children and young people who are eligible for an education support plan. By the end of October we had completed a significant process of data matching and data cleansing to ensure that the information we had about children who should be getting extra support through schools was also held by Education Queensland to facilitate the effective delivery of those additional services. We have now set up an additional process where we meet with Education Queensland on a monthly basis, at both a statewide level and a regional level, to ensure there is the appropriate matching of data and connecting, in order to facilitate the services we want for the children and young people who are eligible for those services.

The recommendation also included a number of aspects around using the information we get back from Education Queensland to improve the performance of the system when it comes to young people who may be struggling with their education through suspensions, exclusions and other things. We now have in place a process where we meet monthly with Education Queensland and can readily access information to look at how we are supporting children and young people to continue their education.

Mr Bond: The additional components that we are doing under that recommendation are a little more technical in their nature. We are working with two external organisations. The first is National ICT Australia—or NICTA—which are now part of CSIRO. They are working with us on complex data-matching algorithms. Not only will this assist us in identifying duplicates within ICMS—obviously, some of our clients at times try to hide their identity and that can be a great challenge for us; it also allows us to do matching from one system to another. We are already working with the department of education on its OneSchool application and how we can match data from our system to theirs.

Additionally, with an organisation called Glentworth we are again working with the department of education on, if you like, a slightly more strategic approach to that information sharing. This approach is looking at legislative mapping. It is looking at any restrictions or challenges that we might have from a legislative perspective. It is looking at the memorandum of understanding and how we are sharing that information and the timing under which we are sharing that information and then doing more detailed work around the mapping of data fields in both the ICMS system on our side and the OneSchool system on the department of education side.

I move on to recommendation No. 4. This one again talks about the efficient and secure exchange of information as a key business requirement when selecting new systems. I have spoken about the system that we are putting in as part of the new Carmody recommendations but also the work that we are doing in the ICMS replacement. That will be a key component to make sure that we can share data across those entities that are involved in the end-to-end process of the child protection system. We are also taking into account—and this is a little bit outside of the recommendations here—the recommendations coming out of the Deloitte report from the OneSchool review.

Recommendation No. 5 has a number of dot points under it, many of which are quite technical in nature, so I will try to be brief in addressing them. The first one talks about a secure email service. This service was in place but had not been fully rolled out across the agency. I can now report that it has rolled out to over 1,348 people. There are a number of emails that are used on a daily basis that are sent through this secure mechanism. This ensures that the email is sent securely from its source to its destination and then from the destination back to the source in a response. It gives you that full end-to-end security. It involves the use of an encryption password and is rated extremely highly from a security perspective.

The second one is around information stored in our file system. There are a number of components here. The first is that we are doing regular checks on the data that is held in our file system and that people load into our file system. We have a solution around what we call data-loss prevention. It identifies the movement of information throughout our network. It will identify things like people copying information on to USB sticks and things like that. We will, while not preventing, provide

warnings to them. The report would go to the security area that is located in my area. It may be a phone call to those individuals about why they need to transfer that information.

Additionally, we are doing some work around implementation of a documents and records management system. This system, again, will provide increased security and increased secure access to information both within our network and outside of our network.

I have a couple of more dot points under recommendation No. 5. This one is reviewing and updating user-access levels to Child Safety systems. We have always had these reviews in place. Queensland Audit felt that they were not being conducted regularly enough. We now have put in a regular schedule to ensure that these reviews take place. This would involve identifying who has access to certain systems and providing that to a business area and that business area confirming that those users are still appropriate to have access to that solution.

The last dot point, I believe, is about preventing transfer of sensitive Child Safety data from the departmental network. I have already spoken about the way that we are monitoring information being sent to USBs. We now have a solution where, whenever someone inserts a USB in a computer, a pop-up will occur reminding them of their responsibilities in using that USB. Additionally, we recently purchased over 1,000 devices that are secure USBs. Those secure USBs, again, require a password and encrypt the data on those devices, so if they were left somewhere in the public and someone picked them up, they would not be able to access the data on them.

Mr PYNE: Excuse me, Madam Chair. I need to be excused.

CHAIR: Yes. Thank you.

Mr Bond: For the final recommendation, No. 6, I will hand back to Matthew.

Mr Lupi: Recommendation No. 6 was in relation to transferring an information standard to non-government organisations to ensure the security of information. I can report that, in fact, we have a number of existing safeguards and protections in the contracts the government uses as a standard suite of contracts with non-government organisations that require them to comply with the provisions of the Child Protection Act as well as the information security act. We have an information guide that we are updating in partnership with the NGOs. It is a really important aspect of us making sure that we transfer an appropriate standard on to them without overregulating their activities and their requirements. Many of the NGOs already operate under a range of quality standards and safeguards that are both national and international because many of the organisations operate outside of Queensland as well. We want to make sure that we get the balance right so we are working with them. We believe that the existing safeguards in the contracts and in the act are sufficient at the moment, but we are committed to working with them to roll out what might be an appropriate international standard such as I140, or information standard 27000.

Mr Bond: In conclusion, there has been funding allocated to these specific activities. As I mentioned, wherever possible these activities are incorporated into other already funded projects, but the department has set aside \$400,000 for the 2015-16 financial year to specifically address some of these additional items.

CHAIR: Thank you for the update. I invite members to ask questions, just keeping in mind that we will adjourn at 11.45 am to observe Remembrance Day.

Mr McARDLE: Thank you for your contribution today, gentlemen. You made a comment that there were monthly reports provided to the director-general, I think it was. Could you table those reports?

Mr Bond: Yes. We would be happy to table those, yes.

Mr McARDLE: Secondly, there must be an end date as to when you would consider that this work is completed. I note that the document we have looks at June 2016 as a review date. What is the time line for the report to be put into effect? What is the final total cost estimated to put it into effect?

Mr Lupi: As I indicated earlier, many of the recommendations made by the Audit Office were in themselves quite long-term recommendations. We had a very lengthy discussion with the Audit Office about how to appropriately schedule a time frame for implementation of something that is over a three- to four-year cycle that involves decisions outside of the department's scope around availability of resources and the changing nature of IT solutions. The best advice from the Audit Office and the department was that we would develop a 12- to 18-month implementation plan with a very structured progress reporting process where the Audit Office would come back and engage with us around their satisfaction around the achievements and where we are going and provide us any further

advice. For many of the recommendations there is not an end date, as such; they are works in progress. That was acknowledged in the action plan that the Auditor-General accepted.

Mr McARDLE: One of the recommendations is to improve security. There are various comments made throughout the report about security. Are you saying that there is no time line that you can advise the committee as to when that would be tightened up?

Mr Bond: For some specific recommendations there are time frames that we are working to. We are working on those that involve specific security concerns—so specifically those technical ones in recommendation No. 5 that I spoke to—as a very high priority, and we see those as being completed as soon as possible, I would think, in this financial year. Those we can address very quickly we are. Some of them are quite ongoing. Recommendations around future systems that should meet these particular requirements we see as probably open-ended. While we can say that, yes, we have adopted that principle as a way that we would buy new systems or build new systems, that needs to be a principle that always remains within our organisation.

Mr Lupi: If I could add, the Audit Office was mindful that the government of the day had committed to the child and family reforms that came out of Carmody—a substantial review of the Child Protection Act. So, in fact, the future system and many aspects of the future system for which information security needed to apply are subject to major reform and are changing. These were open-ended in many of their recommendations in recognition of the changing landscape of that reform.

Mr McARDLE: The report was forwarded to the department—that is the report prepared by the Auditor-General—and comments were made by the department. I note that appendix A refers to some comments by the department. Are you able to table a copy of the comments in total forwarded by the department to the Auditor-General? I am taking it that appendix A is a snapshot.

Mr Lupi: I will take on notice what we can table—I am not clear on that—if that is okay.

CHAIR: Thank you. Do you have more questions?

Mr McARDLE: Given the tight time line, I would like to ask the department to come back again, because I have a series of questions that I want to ask in more detail.

CHAIR: Certainly. I think we have that time frame available to us for the department to come back in future.

Mr McARDLE: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you. With that in mind, you have taken a question on notice. The return is Friday, the 13th. I would like to thank you, Mr Lupi and Mr Bond, for your briefing of the committee today. The committee will now take a short break to observe a minute's silence for Remembrance Day. The committee will return at 11.15 am to be briefed by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services on the Multicultural Recognition Bill. Thank you.

Committee adjourned at 10.42 am