



The Honourable Margaret Keech MP
Member for Albert



**Queensland
Government**

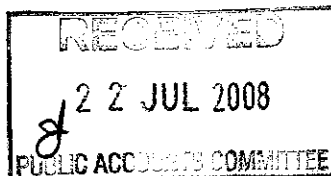
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Our Reference: CSM06500; ML/08/1366

**Minister for Child Safety
and Minister for Women**

16 JUL 2008

The Honourable Ken Hayward MP
Chair
Public Accounts Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4121



Dear Mr Hayward *Ken*

On 3 June 2008 you wrote to my Department's Director-General, Norelle Deeth, inviting her to make a submission to the inquiry into an evaluation of the effectiveness of the performance management systems (PMS) audit mandate in terms of the Parliament's previously expressed position.

The Department of Child Safety has not experienced an audit of its PMS at this point. However, it has made significant progress developing PMS since its establishment in 2004 and the attached submission provides details of the Department's views on the value and effectiveness of PMS audits.

Your invitation to provide input to this evaluation is appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Keech MP
Minister for Child Safety
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Member for Albert

Enc.

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DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY

Submission to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry into an evaluation of the effectiveness of the performance management systems audit mandate in terms of the Parliament's previously expressed position

The Department of Child Safety appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the performance management systems (PMS) audit mandate.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Child Safety was established as a direct result of recommendations contained in the 2004 Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) report *Protecting Children: an Inquiry into Abuse in Foster Care*.

The CMC's 110 recommendations placed a strong focus on improving outcomes for children and young people who are harmed or are at risk of harm and over the past four years the Department has reformed virtually every aspect of child protection services in Queensland. One particular aspect of the reforms has been implementation of a range of performance management strategies aimed at monitoring the performance of the child protection system and aligning its performance systems with portfolio reporting requirements.

Since the CMC inquiry the Department of Child Safety has been the subject of intense interest by Government and is arguably the most monitored and accountable government agency in Queensland.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AUDITS

The Department of Child Safety has not been the subject of a Queensland Audit Office (QAO) performance management systems (PMS) audit and cannot provide comments relating to direct experience of this type of audit.

Having constructed its PMS largely from scratch and in consultation with Queensland Treasury and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet over the last four years the Department is, however, familiar with the components of a PMS and the importance of alignment between these components. The Department has had the benefit of QAO publications which have been placed on the QAO website since 2005 in designing its PMS, and in particular the 2006 QAO publication *Better Practice Guide – Output Performance Measurement and Reporting*.

The Department is therefore familiar with the concept of PMS audits and significant progress has been made in developing systems that support monitoring and reporting in an environment of unusually high external scrutiny and guidance.

ISSUES

As stated above, the Department has no direct experience of a QAO PMS audit. Performance management is a challenging and complex issue in a human services department and child protection agencies around the nation have been working on this process for a number of years. The Department is supportive of external review of its PMS and would welcome constructive and practical advice that would assist in improving existing processes and frameworks.

The Department would like to take this opportunity to highlight one particular issue that might impact on the effectiveness of QAO's PMS. At present, there are a number of central agencies which have an active role in reviewing PMS and the way in which these roles intersect is confusing. For example, the following activities have been progressing over the last few years:

- QAO Performance Management System audits
- Service Delivery and Performance Commission reviews (performance reviews will presumably be incorporated into the role of the new Public Service Commission that will subsume the role of SDPC)
- Queensland Treasury's review of the Financial Management Framework
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet reviews of government reporting requirements.

The Department is of the view that there may be benefit in reviewing the alignment of these process in order to ensure that the rationale for such activity is clearly articulated and prevent duplication.

SUBMISSION

The Department submits that:

- within the limits of its experience, it is supportive of the concept of PMS audits, provided they take into account the complexities of individual agencies and contains practical recommendations for improvement;
- the mandates of audits and reviews by various government agencies must be aligned and clearly mapped if improvement of PMS is to be maximised; and
- the effectiveness of individual reviews could potentially be thwarted as a result of multiple and conflicting requests and audit recommendations from various entities.