

Question on Notice

No. 949

Asked on Tuesday, 6 June 2006

Mr MARK MCARDLE asked the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Mrs Lavarch)-

QUESTION:

With reference to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice Ministerial Portfolio Statement 2005-06 at Page 1-3 and to the \$2.9m to be provided over a four year period to support child victims and witnesses –

- (1) In the last financial year, what proportion of that money has actually been spent?
- (2) How have those monies been spent?
- (3) What reporting mechanisms have been put in place to capture the benefit of the use of those funds?
- (4) What specialised prosecution services have been put in place to support the child victims and witnesses?
- (5) How many new prosecutors have been directly employed as a result of the use of these funds and where are each of these prosecutors located?
- (6) How many support staff have been directly employed as a result of the use of these funds and where are each of these support staff located?
- (7) On how many occasions have these prosecutors travelled to regional Queensland to meet with children and on each occasion where?
- (8) How many children have each of the prosecutors met?

ANSWER:

- (1) The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) received funding of \$2.9m over four years and has spent \$0.73m in the last financial year.
- (2) Those monies have been spent employing additional crown prosecutors and support staff and on specialised training to ODPP staff in the needs of vulnerable witnesses, in particular affected child witnesses.
- (3) The additional administrative support (see Answer (6)) has allowed the ODPP to collate statistics regarding affected child witness matters before the courts in both Brisbane and its regional centres. The ODPP records statistics of the total number of affected child witness matters currently being prosecuted and the total number of affected child witness matters finalised. Completion statistics include a breakdown in matters finalised by court event such as sentence, acquittal and discontinuance. Such statistics allow the ODPP to closely monitor the progress of affected child witness matters through the criminal justice system.
- (4) The ODPP has established a dedicated affected child witness section in Griffith Chambers (Brisbane). This section is staffed by three crown prosecutors and an administrative officer. There are also two victim liaison officers working in Griffith Chambers to support the work of the affected child witness section.

The new chambers structure of the ODPP, in accordance with the ODPP review recommendations and the plan initiated by the Director of Public Prosecutions,

encourages teams of crown prosecutors and legal officers to work closely together from when a case first comes to the ODPP. This particular model of prosecution preparation is particularly well suited to prosecutions involving child witnesses as the same crown prosecutors and legal officers will usually be involved in the matter from beginning to end.

The new funding also ensures that children in far North Queensland will receive the same treatment as children in Brisbane. An additional crown prosecutor has been allocated to the northern region.

In addition, training has also been provided to ODPP staff in the needs of vulnerable witnesses. This training is delivered by experts working with victims of sexual assault, child sexual assault and victims of sexual assault with intellectual disability.

- (5) This funding has supported the ODPP employing four additional crown prosecutors. Three of the new crown prosecutors are located in Brisbane and the fourth new crown prosecutor has been allocated to Townsville.
- (6) This funding has supported the ODPP employing two additional support staff. This includes one administrative officer located in Brisbane and one administrative officer located in Townsville.
- (7) The ODPP does not keep this information outside of file notes recorded on each relevant file. However, as a guide to where crown prosecutors conference child witnesses, crown prosecutors from each of the ODPP's offices (Brisbane, Southport, Toowoomba, Beenleigh, Maroochydore, Rockhampton, Townsville, Cairns, Ipswich) regularly travel on circuit to centres in regional Queensland to meet, conference and prepare affected child witnesses and to prosecute these matters. Centres that are serviced by the ODPP include Thursday Island, Aurukun, Kowanyama, Weipa, Innisfail, Longreach, Gladstone, Emerald, Bundaberg, Gympie, Hervey Bay, Maryborough, Charleville, Cunnamulla, Dalby, Goondiwindi, Kingaroy, Roma, Stanthorpe and Warwick.
- (8) Each affected child witness matter has at least one affected child witness. In many cases there will be more than one affected child witness per matter. From 1 January 2005 to 31 May 2006, the ODPP has prosecuted a total of 1,656 affected child witness matters.

<u>ODPP Office</u>	<u>Current ACW Prosecutions</u>	<u>Finalised ACW Prosecutions</u>	<u>Total ACW Prosecutions</u>
Beenleigh	51	112	163
Brisbane	111	388	499
Cairns	98	52	150
Ipswich	55	93	148
Maroochydore	40	88	128
Rockhampton	50	52	102
Southport	50	92	142
Toowoomba	15	60	75
Townsville	113	136	249
Total	583	1,073	1,656

The ODPP does not keep statistics as to the total number of affected child witnesses that each prosecutor meets. However, for each matter, a crown

prosecutor is required to meet, conference and prepare every affected child witness prior to the child giving evidence.