

Question on Notice
No. 221
Asked on 22 February 2007

MR CHRIS BOMBOLAS MP asked the Minister for Child Safety (MS BOYLE)-

QUESTION:

What initiatives has the Queensland Government undertaken to provide specialised training for those looking to enter the child protection sector and further educating those already involved in this vital sector?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question and for his interest in this important area of the Department of Child Safety's work. To improve the standard of child protection training provided by universities, the Department of Child Safety has provided a total of \$350,000 to seven universities to allow them to revise their curriculum to include studies directly relevant to the skill needs of child safety officers (CSOs). This initiative has led to the development of new subjects, and redevelopment of existing subjects, to include a focus on child protection and working with Indigenous children, families and communities.

The department also provides opportunities for university students enrolled in relevant courses to complete structured placements, including completion of parts of the training provided to newly appointed CSOs.

The department has established a permanent training branch, the Training and Specialist Support Branch with an establishment of 29 staff to develop and deliver training and professional development programs for CSOs. The branch delivers training through decentralised training hubs established in Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville and from May 2007, Cairns.

Training for new CSOs is mandatory. New staff are registered for training on appointment and must attend their initial training within one month of commencing work with the department. Training provided to CSOs is based on national competency standards.

Through a partnership arrangement with the Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE, the department has provided training places in the Certificate IV Community Services (Protective Care) for 150 child safety support officers and 50 staff from the non-government sector. More than half the workers enrolled in this program are Indigenous.

Mandatory training in leadership, management and professional supervision is also undertaken by all child safety service centre managers, team leaders and senior practitioners.

An Indigenous training team has been established within the Training and Specialist Support Branch to develop and deliver cultural competence training for departmental staff. It is compulsory for all departmental staff to attend a cultural competence training session.

On-line Advanced Professional Practice modules have been developed on a range of complex professional issues including, Suicide Prevention, Sexual Abuse, Domestic Violence, Parenting and Working with Children. These modules are available on the department's infonet and accessible to all staff.

A Graduate Bridging Program is currently being attended by 15 graduates from other professions, such as nursing or teaching. The students participate in external study to obtain a Graduate Certificate in Human Services (Child Protection) at the University of Queensland. All current scholarship holders, on completion of relevant requirements, will be deployed to work in rural and remote locations.