

Question on Notice
No. 1586
Asked on 29 October 2008

MS CAROLYN MALE MP asked the Minister for Child Safety (MRS KEECH)-

QUESTION:

- (1) Will she provide details of the Bligh Government's investment in services for Queensland's abused and neglected children through the Referral for Active Intervention Service?
- (2) What outcomes are families and children receiving from this service?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for her question and for her continuing interest in and support for the work of my Department of Child Safety.

The Queensland Government is committed to providing a world class child protection system so where the government needs to intervene to protect children, those children can be provided with safe homes and the necessary support they need.

It is also vital there are sufficient supports available in the community to help struggling families before their issues escalate to a crisis point and the safety of their children is at risk. These services are known as prevention and early intervention programs.

State and Australian Government agencies fund such programs across a wide cross-section of areas to support families. The role of the Department of Child Safety is the provision of tertiary services required when children have been abused or are at serious risk of abuse.

The Queensland Government committed \$8.5M to Referral for Active Intervention (RAI) services to provide targeted and intensive family support in the area of prevention and early intervention. These services commenced in late 2006 in 10 locations across the state and have received 1,297 referrals since commencement.

My colleague, the Honourable Lindy Nelson-Carr, Minister for Communities, manages the RAI program.

These services are targeted to children 0-10 years and their families who have come to the attention of the Department of Child Safety as a result of poor parenting, substance misuse, domestic and family violence and mental health issues, however, it is determined the child/ren are not in need of protection. Rather, these families need intensive family support to avoid progressing into the child protection system.

Families are provided pro-active intensive family support from a non-government organisation for up to six months. Some families are seen for longer if required.

RAI services provide case assessment and planning, case-management and intensive family support services for families and children, including outreach and home visiting. The services use formal agreements with other agencies and brokerage funds to procure local specialist services such as domestic and family violence counselling, specialist counselling, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, mental health services, parenting programs, home and budget management and early childhood education and care services.

There have been two evaluations of the RAI program, with the most recent being concluded in October 2008.

The second evaluation of RAI services included a review of cases which showed that risks for children had been reduced and families were better able to protect their children. Families with less complex problems made the biggest gains in reducing risks and protecting their children.