

## **STATUS REPORT ON WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTATION OF ST ANDREW'S HOSTEL SPECIAL INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report is the final update on the Government's implementation of the St Andrew's Hostel Special Inquiry recommendations, all of which were accepted by Government, in conjunction with two additional initiatives. A copy of the Inquiry report was tabled by the Premier in Parliament in September 2012 and is available online at [www.publicsector.wa.gov.au](http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au)

### **Recommendation 1**

*That the Country High School Hostels Authority develops a comprehensive, child focussed complaint system which provides a multiple avenue complaints model including support for the child or young person. A critical element of the model which will ensure a robust and approachable system is that it should facilitate complaints being made externally.*

- The Department of Education in close consultation with the Country High School Hostels Authority has implemented all elements of this recommendation, with the comprehensive complaints system outlined in the previous status report now in effect.

### **Recommendation 2**

*That the State Government develop a function and role within or across central and independent agencies to fulfil a robust child focussed central complaints system that is a "one stop shop" for any complaint concerning child abuse regardless of the public sector agency that the matter relates to.*

*A central agency taskforce should be established to consider and recommend the most appropriate agency or agencies to be responsible for fulfilling this function, and to recommend the steps necessary for ensuring that complainants/informants utilising such a system do not fear legal liability as a result of contacting the agency.*

- The Attorney General continues to consider the recommendations of the Public Sector Commission's statutory review of the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006* which addresses the Government's preference for the Commissioner for Children and Young People to encompass the one-stop shop complaints role.

### **Recommendation 3**

*That, as part of the statutory review of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (CCS Act) and of any further consideration by Government of the provisions of the CCS Act, consideration be given to including staff of the Country High School Hostels Authority as mandatory reporters for the purposes of the CCS Act.*

- Drafting of a Bill to amend the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (CCS Act) to include Country High School Hostel Authority staff as mandatory reporters of suspected child sexual abuse has commenced as part of the implementation of other recommendations for legislative change made in the 2012 *Report of the Review of the Children and Community Services Act 2004*.

#### **Recommendation 4**

*That the Department of Education undertake a review of how their schools deliver the preventative curriculum to ensure that it meets the need as identified in the Gordon Inquiry and that it assess whether there is any need for a more prescriptive requirement (in line with the Protective Behaviours program that the Department has already developed).*

- The Department of Education has developed curriculum resources, a train-the-trainer course, and is amending the protective behaviours online professional learning program in readiness for 2014. Evaluation of the effectiveness of a more prescriptive approach to preventative curriculum will occur after an appropriate period time.

#### **Recommendation 5**

*That, as part of the Authority's review of the roles and responsibilities of College Boards of Management and their relevant Constitutions, the Authority consider developing a comprehensive training program for Board members covering a range of areas, particularly Accountability and Ethical Decision Making, complaint handling, duty of care and protective behaviours, to be possibly delivered in the form of an annual conference for hostel board members.*

- Comprehensive training has been provided to Authority board members on all key areas identified, in addition to accountable and ethical decision making training presented by the Public Sector Commission to all residential colleges and staff.
- The Authority also engaged child care and protection specialists who delivered protective behaviours education to all students boarding at its residential colleges during May and June 2013.

#### **Further Initiatives endorsed by Government**

##### *Ex Gratia Scheme for Country High School Hostels students*

- The Country High School Hostels Ex Gratia Scheme (the Scheme) was established to provide recompense to former students who were subject to abuse while boarding at a hostel administered under the *Country High School Hostels Authority Act 1960* between 1960 and 2006.
- The scheme covered 28 hostels in 12 regional towns: Albany, Bunbury, Carnarvon, Esperance, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Katanning, Merredin, Moora, Narrogin, Northam and Port Hedland.
- The scheme provided payments of up to \$45,000 to eligible applicants.

- Applications opened for six months from 30 November 2012 and closed at 5.00pm (WST) Friday 31 May 2013.
- The Department of Local Government and Communities received 105 applications. Of these 90 were assessed as eligible for ex gratia payments, totalling just over \$3.2 million.
- The assessment process for applications is now complete. Assessors telephoned all eligible applicants to allow them the opportunity to provide further information in support of their application.
- It is anticipated that all ex gratia payments to eligible applicants will be made by 31 December 2013.
- The Crisis Care counselling hotline, set up during the Inquiry, will continue to operate until 31 December 2013.

*In principle support for the incorporation of the Country High School Hostels Authority into the Department of Education*

- The Department of Education, in consultation with the Public Sector Commission and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, continues to consider the future governance of the Authority. It is anticipated a detailed submission will be made to Government early in 2014 on the most appropriate legislative and operating framework.

#### **Department of the Premier and Cabinet**

30 December 2013

Previous status reports provided on:

- 30 December 2012 and
- 30 June 2013

are available online at [www.publicsector.wa.gov.au](http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au)