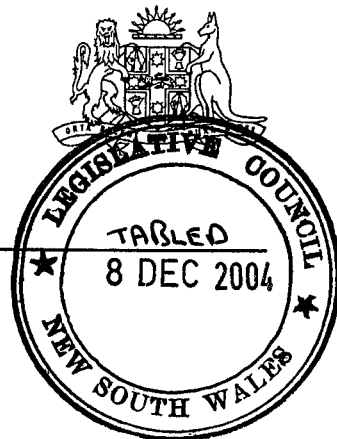


The Hon Carmel Tebbutt MLC

Minister for Community Services
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Youth



The Hon Michael Egan
Treasurer
Leader of the Government in the
NSW Legislative Council
NSW Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2004

8 DEC 2004

Michael
Dear Treasurer,

I refer to correspondence from the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Issues of 13 May 2004 regarding the Government's response to the Committee's Final Report into Child Protection Services.

The Chairperson's letter noted that while the Government's obligation to respond to the Report ceased with the prorogation of the 52nd Parliament, a response to the Report's recommendations was desirable.

I replied to the Chairperson's letter on 31 May 2004, and advised that the Report's recommendations had had a significant influence on the direction of the Department of Community Services' reform program and that a response would be prepared in accordance with her request.

I believe this message is reinforced by the enclosed response to the Report's recommendations, which I now formally submit to you for all necessary action.

Yours sincerely

Carmel Tebbutt

Carmel Tebbutt
Minister for Community Services
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Ageing and Minister for Youth

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES
FINAL REPORT ON CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES, DECEMBER 2002**

COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO RESPONSE

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
1.	The Department of Community Services should clarify its role in relation to prevention and early intervention so that it is not involved in the direct provision of secondary or tertiary prevention services. The Department's role should include assessment and referral as well as funding, planning and monitoring.	A Prevention and Early Intervention business stream has been established within the Department of Community Services. A policy framework is being developed which will support a robust prevention and early intervention strategy.	The strategy will be implemented progressively, over the next five years. Departmental service provision will be re-aligned over the next five years, consistent with the new directions in prevention and early intervention. Investment in the non-government sector will be consistent with the prevention and early intervention framework.
2.	The Department of Community Services should increase funding to the Prevention and Early Intervention Directorate to allow for the establishment of dedicated and quarantined caseworker positions in Community Services Centres to manage the prevention and early intervention role of the Department. The responsibilities of these caseworkers should include assessment and referral to government and non-government services.	The Department's Early Intervention Program has been allocated \$150 million for planning and purchasing. The funding spans 5 years from 2003/04 to 2007/08. It will purchase frontline services to prevent families and children becoming entrenched in the child protection system by providing support before problems become serious. In addition to the planning and purchasing allocations, a further \$87.6 million has been allocated over five years for an additional 350 early intervention caseworkers to provide services to support families. It is noted that Directors Partnerships and Planning, Community Program Officers and Children's Services Advisers are dedicated staff positions whose roles already focus on early intervention and prevention.	This strategy is being implemented progressively over five years, commencing in July 2003. The non-government sector is receiving additional funding and the capacity of existing regional Partnerships and Planning Teams is being enhanced.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
3.	The Department of Community Services should establish and coordinate formal local interagency forums. These forums should: • Occur at the local level on a regular basis • Involve other government agencies including police, health, education and disability services • Involve non-government agencies, including family support services, children's services, youth services, adolescent family counsellors and supported accommodation services.	The Department participates actively in a variety of interagency forums. At the local level, the most common is the interagency involvement in case planning, known as protection planning under the interagency guidelines for child protection. Most of the Department's early intervention work involves non-government agencies (for instance, Families First regional planning and local implementation groups). In many localities there are child protection interest groups and committees.	N/A
4.	The Government should provide additional funding for secondary and tertiary prevention services, including intensive family support programs. Funding should be allocated according to regional need and be sufficient to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of services across the State.	In 2003/04 approximately \$6.5m Early Intervention Program funds were approved to purchase a range of intervention and prevention services across NSW. Services purchased include Home Visiting, Support for Families, Parenting Programs, Centre-based Child Care and Family Resource Centres. Funding for each of the Stage 1 Enhanced Service Delivery sites has been based on a regional purchasing plan developed by regional purchasing teams. Additional Aboriginal Intensive Family Based Services at Wollongong and Bourke are being developed.	The roll out of Early Intervention Program funding continues into 2004/05 and beyond with a number of sites to be developed. Regional purchasing teams across NSW are engaged in planning for additional services, including mapping existing services and identifying gaps in early intervention service provision.
5.	In developing a framework for secondary prevention, the Department of Community Services should establish a system for ensuring coordination through formal agreements between relevant agencies including NSW Health, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, the Department of Corrective Services, the Department of Education and Training, and the Department of Housing.	The Director-General of the Department of Community Services is the chair of the Human Services CEO's Forum. The Forum is well-positioned to coordinate between human service agencies. There has been a series of formal and informal meetings and seminars with the key stakeholders on the development of the policy frameworks for the roll out of projects reported at Recommendations 2 and 67. Memoranda of	The Department has established a working group to provide advice on the roll-out of new funds outlined at Recommendations 2 and 67.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
6.	The Government should convene a Summit on Children in the second half of 2003 to consider how to improve coordination, funding and structures for services that maximise the wellbeing and development of children, young people and families in NSW. The Summit should involve all the key departments and agencies involved in health, education, childcare, preschool, disability and other service provision and planning for children, along with peak bodies, relevant academics and non-government providers.	Understanding are being negotiated with key agencies such as the Department of Juvenile Justice to formalise effective coordination. The Government's strategy for improving child and family services was announced in December 2002. No single forum is appropriate to improve coordination and service delivery. Consultation needs to be ongoing. A number of forums are operated to provide stakeholders with the opportunity provide input on the delivery of community services. These range from peak forums through to regional consultative forums and specific working parties. DoCS Dialogue – comprises 8 peak bodies including the Council of Social Service NSW, the Association of Child Welfare Agencies and NSW Family Services, and meets bi-monthly. DoCS Stakeholder Forum – attended by Minister and Director-General and representatives from more than 20 peak bodies and agencies. Early Intervention Partners Reference Group – held every few months with representatives from peak bodies and government agencies. Out-of-Home-Care Partners Reference Group – attended by key non-government agencies. Supported Accommodation Advisory Council –has representatives from 11 agencies and non-government organisations.	N/A
7.	The Department of Community Services should be open, transparent and accountable in dealing with the child welfare sector, staff and public. To achieve this the Department should: • Collect and make public on a regular basis, clear and definitive data on departmental performance and outcomes • Provide timely and accurate responses to	Quarterly data for September 2002 to September 2003 have been issued on the Department's web site. Select child protection data covering the 2003-04 financial year has also been issued. Releases of full quarterly data have been delayed due to issues associated with the development of a reporting framework from the new client information system. A Ministerial Statement concerning these matters was made to Parliament	Data releases will be enhanced. The revised website went live in May 2004.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
	media and public inquiries.	in November 2004.	
		DoCS' website has been revised to include more public information.	

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
8.	The Department of Community Services should ensure that the new departmental structure is supported by: • Significant and quarantined resources to support the three Directorates of Prevention and Early Intervention, Child Protection and Out-of-Home Care • Clear lines of accountability and decision-making structures • Effective linkages to support coordination between the three Directorates.	The Government's integrated funding package contained <i>additional</i> quarantined funds (recurrent and capital) for 2003-04 as follows: • Prevention & Early Intervention - \$17.28m; • Child Protection - \$14.37m; • Out-of-Home Care - \$50.93m. A new structure has been developed with clear lines of accountability. Two Deputy Directors-General are responsible for Operations and for Communities & Policy, respectively. Effective linkages between prevention and early intervention, child protection and out-of-home care, community development and family support is advanced by these streams being under the direction of the Deputy Director-General, Communities & Policy.	The integrated funding package contains <i>additional</i> quarantined funds (recurrent and capital) for 2004-05 to 2007-08 as follows: • Prevention & Early Intervention - \$258.95m; • Child Protection - \$165.7m; • Out-of-Home Care - \$544.55m. The 2004/05 budget for the functions transferred to DoCS as part of the Communities Division is \$32.4 million.
9.	The Department of Community Services should develop processes to ensure that the knowledge, skills and experience of operational staff are valued and incorporated into policy development and planning. Specifically, processes should be developed to ensure that departmental staff are consulted on issues relating to policy and work practices.	The Department involves operational staff in policy development and planning in a variety of ways. A new Operational Support area has been established and it provides an important conduit between operational experience, policy and planning.	All policy proposals submitted to the Department's Executive must now contain an Operational Impact Statement.
10.	The Department of Community Services should routinely publish clear and accurate data on staffing issues including workload and staff turnover.	The Department participates in the whole-of-sector annual Workforce Profile collection conducted by the Premier's Department, which comprises a range of workforce data.	The NSW Premier's Department commenced publishing annual agency-level data on a range of workforce characteristics, including commencement, separation and stability rates. Department of Community Services data is

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
		The Department has introduced a new Human Resource management system, which will improve the accuracy and range of available workforce data. The core modules of the new HR system (payroll and leave) are operational.	included in these figures.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
11.	The Department of Community Services should ensure adequate time is given to orientation and professional development, clinical supervision and training. Specifically, the Department should ensure that the half-day Thursday closure each week is used for professional development, clinical supervision, training and sessions on policy and procedures.	The Government's integrated funding package included additional resources for improved 'learning and development' and for the implementation of a new performance management system. A new Management Development course has been developed and is in pilot stage. An estimated 9,000 working days were available for staff training between July and December 2003. A "Research to Practice" Program has been developed to provide an opportunity for caseworkers and other staff to participate in forums and research networks. A new Performance Management system has been implemented. It includes a specific component for professional supervision of caseworkers, including guidelines on the minimum time to be allocated to it. The union was involved in the development of the system.	The scope of 'learning and development' within the Department is being expanded to emphasise ongoing professional development; the new performance system is clearly linked to ongoing development for all staff. It forms the basis for planning the 'calendar' of development options for staff.
12.	The Department of Community Services should review, in consultation with staff and relevant experts, the curricula for pre-service education, orientation training and ongoing professional development and training. Consideration should be given to: - A multidisciplinary approach to training and professional support, particularly in relation to parenting capacity, early childhood development and assessing needs - Ways to ensure departmental staff at all levels have access to up-to-date	A Child Protection Learning and Development Coordination Unit, jointly funded by the Child Protection Chief Executive Officers for a period of three years, has been established. The Department of Community Services is the host agency and positions have been established and filled. The objectives of the Unit are to: - Develop a skilled frontline workforce able to comply with NSW legislative requirements; - Develop accreditation systems for NSW child protection curricula;	The first task of the Child Protection Learning and Development Unit was to establish common areas of interest and needs amongst the participant agencies. The Unit is now ready to approach universities to engage in discussions about curricula and potential for pre-service placements which will contribute to expertise development.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
	knowledge and research on issues relating to families, children and young people.	• Liaise with vocational education and training institutions and the tertiary sector to ensure child protection skills and competencies are part of pre-service training, and not just the responsibility of employing departments and organisations; • Coordinate an inter-agency approach to the delivery of child protection training, ensuring equity requirements are met for specific groups; • Enhance the consistency and quality of child protection training for government and non-government organisations. The scope of the Department's own Learning and Development Unit is being expanded to include ongoing development for all professional staff, using a variety of approaches ranging from access to recent literature through to formal further education.	education and development. The performance management system supports the aim of ongoing development and currency of knowledge. The Department has also reviewed its study assistance conditions to ensure they provide sufficient incentive and support to staff in furthering their education.
13.	The Department of Community Services should introduce a policy to manage the information on <i>Business Help</i> and monitor the changes that occur in that system. The policy should include: • The introduction of a standard procedure for use in all offices detailing how the information on <i>Business Help</i> is to be monitored and implemented • Training for all staff in the use of <i>Business Help</i>.	The Department has revised <i>Business Help</i> to post new information on the intranet associated with the new client system, (KIDS) and out-of-home-care proclamation. A program of associated staff briefings has been developed. In addition, the Department is currently investigating the implementation of a content management system which will provide a structured process for the maintenance, updating and management of all intranet content, including <i>Business Help</i>.	In 2003/04 the Department completed a useability study of <i>Business Help</i> to identify improvements to the site. The recommendations of this are expected to be implemented in 2005, and should include an assessment of whether it is feasible to integrate <i>Business Help</i> with KIDS. In the interim the structure of topics has been amended to improve useability. An 18 month project plan to identify priority areas of <i>Business Help</i> was also developed and a comprehensive review of content was undertaken to remove out-of-date and incorrect information. New topics are being progressively added to <i>Business Help</i>.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
14.	The Department of Community Services should develop effective systems for clinical supervision of operational staff. In particular, the Department should consider: • Strategies to ensure regular and quality supervision for caseworkers, including the need for time relief • Appropriate and specific training and support for managers and supervisors • Ways to ensure that caseworkers have sufficient access to specialist expertise in psychology and other relevant disciplines • Ways to ensure adequate supervision arrangements in rural and regional areas • Ways to ensure constructive feedback is provided to staff on work practices, case reviews, decisions and process.	See responses to Recommendations 11 and 12.	See responses to Recommendations 11 and 12. Up to 30 additional psychologists will be appointed over five years to provide professional support for casework staff.
15.	To enhance systems for internal review and handling of grievances, the Department of Community Services should implement each of the suggestions of the Reid inquiry in relation to: • Section 6 – Practices dealing with grievances • Section 7 – Processes for dealing with disciplinary actions.	In regard to dealing with grievances: • Longstanding matters have been identified in concert with the PSA and progressed; • A Management Development program for managers and supervisors, which will include skills to equip them to deal with grievances, has been developed. • The policy on resolving grievances has been modified so that staff who are dissatisfied with the process or outcome can request an internal review by Corporate Human Resources; • Grievance-handling is now included in the Department's internal audit program, and senior managers are held responsible for their audit results. In regard to disciplinary actions: • No investigators are to interview staff without adequate notice;	A performance management system has been finalised with the union and implemented. This helps to provide mechanisms for the early identification of potential grievances and for their resolution.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
		• The Director-General has revised the relevant delegations; • The Premier's Department has issued guidelines to support the changes in the management of poor performance and conduct issues which were legislated in the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002 – all new DoCS matters are managed according to these guidelines and their timeframes.	
16.	To ensure that an effective system of external oversight is established, the Department of Community Services should: • Work in partnership with oversight bodies in the identification of problems and in finding appropriate solutions • Ensure a timely and comprehensive formal response is provided to all recommendations made by oversight agencies • Address suggestions outlined in the Reid inquiry in relation to Section 5 - Process for dealing with oversight agencies.	A Memorandum of Understanding with the Ombudsman was finalised in June 2003. A Department of Community Services / Oversighting Agencies Policy and Legal Issues Working Party was established in January 2003 and meets monthly. Regular officer-level meetings take place with oversight agencies to identify and address issues. The process for managing recommendations made by external agencies on systems improvement issues has been revised and clarified.	N / A
17.	The Department of Community Services should rebuild an open and transparent relationship with the non-government sector and undertake to meet regularly with peak organisations and consult on policy directions and planning.	The Department consults the community sector through a range of mechanisms including: • Stakeholder Forums, held twice yearly and hosted by the Minister for Community Services and the Director-General – peak bodies and other key stakeholders nominate agenda items; • DoCS Dialogue Group - this meets bi-monthly, chaired alternately by the Director-General and NCOS; • Consultative groups at the regional or local level. In addition, the Minister for Community Services	Strategies are being implemented to involve the community sector in the development and implementation of the individual projects which have been funded under the Government's integrated funding package.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
		has established a Ministerial Advisory Committee to advise on specific issues – the Director-General is a member of the Committee, as are representatives of a range of community service organisations. See also response to Recommendation 6.	
18.	The Minister should ensure that the Ministerial Advisory Council consider how the Department can establish a service delivery system that reflects the Act and emphasises support for vulnerable families, children and young people. To assist in this debate, the advisory body should consult with relevant experts, particularly in the early childhood development, intensive family support, drug and alcohol and mental health fields.	The Minister for Community Services established a Ministerial Advisory Committee in 2002 to provide advice on specific issues in community services. The Committee comprises representatives of a range of community service sectors. The Committee can also co-opt others with specific expertise, as required. The Committee has to date focussed on issues connected with the reform of the out-of-home care system operating in NSW and the commencement of the out-of-home care provisions of the <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i>.	The Committee's examination of issues with respect to the reform of the out-of-home care system is mostly complete. Consideration is being given to the on-going role of the Committee and to how its operation will evolve. It has been the Committee's practice to consult with relevant experts regarding issues that are referred to it for consideration and it is expected that this practice will be maintained.
19.	In relation to the Kibble Joint Working Party: • The Department of Community Services should fully implement the recommendations of the Joint Working Party's report of June 2002 • The Government should, as necessary, extend the life of the Joint Working Party to oversee the implementation of strategies to address demand management and data collection • The Government should publish all Joint Working Party reports and recommendations.	The Department of Community Services is implementing the recommendations of the Joint Working Party's report – additional staff are being appointed; organisational structure, business processes and workforce management are being addressed; and the integrated demand management strategy is being developed. The Minister for Community Services also requested that the Joint Working Party report further on its Recommendations 4 - 7 (demand management and data collection) – the Working Party's second report was completed in December 2002. Both reports have been released.	N / A

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
20.	The Department of Community Services should, in implementing new data collection mechanisms, ensure that they enable effective policy, planning, resource allocation and accountability. The data must: • Provide an accurate picture of demand by measuring the time required to process reports, undertake investigations and carry out the range of casework tasks • Allow an assessment of the unit costs of prevention, intake, child protection and out-of-home care services • Enable an accurate determination of the number of caseworkers required for each Community Services Centre in a way that takes into account local demand characteristics • Enable analysis of both the quantity and quality of the Department's work • Provide a greater understanding of the consumers of DoCS services. • The Department should ensure that all such data is released to the public on a regular basis.	The Department has conducted a demand survey. To inform assessment of unit costs for child welfare services, work on costing practices in other jurisdictions including the United Kingdom's experience in developing unit costs for children's social care has been conducted. A team of statisticians has been established to enhance analysis of departmental data. See also response to Recommendation 7.	A project brief is being prepared to develop a costing manual for estimating unit costs. The manual will help explain basic unit cost concepts and methodologies, to assist internal and external stakeholders. Further work is being undertaken on improving resource allocation methodologies including: • the incorporation of two years of data to reduce random fluctuations; • developing a rurality factor to account for longer travel times; and • designing a process for regular monitoring and review of allocations. Development of the Corporate Information Warehouse is being undertaken in three stages and is scheduled for implementation in 2005. With respect to the quantity and quality of the Department's work, within the scope of the Corporate Information Warehouse project is the production of a corporate Scorecard. This will build upon the current work on performance indicators. The integration of client, human resources and financial data in the Corporate Information Warehouse will allow further performance indicators to be produced, and the relationship between resource use (inputs) and outcomes to be more clearly seen. Regarding knowledge of the Department's clients, increased historical analysis and advanced data techniques are being assessed. This will be assisted by the move to relational databases resulting from the Corporate Information Warehouse project.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
21.	The Department of Community Services should ensure that the new Client Information System to operate from mid 2003 supports the following Departmental objectives: • Informed risk assessment, decision-making and case management • Transparency of decisions about individual children and families • Consistency of process • Efficiency in work practices • Flexibility to adapt to evolving needs over time • Clarity of data • Effectiveness in monitoring and planning.	KIDS (the new client information system) has the capability to support the recording of data and, along with business rules, will help achieve consistent processes. It is designed to provide better data collection and reporting and assist in improved management of child protection reports and information about children and young people in out-of-home care.	Planned enhancements to the system are being progressively implemented. The release of these enhancements will add to KIDS' capability to support continuing improvement to practice and recording of data. Operations Division will monitor the consistency of implementation of KIDS and associated work practices and support the scheduled enhancements.
22.	The Department of Community Services should develop a comprehensive strategy for implementing the new CIS, which explicitly addresses: • Staff consultation and training • Measures to ensure compliance with its use	A comprehensive project management plan underpinned the implementation of the new client information system known as KIDS (Key Information and Directory System). This included extensive consultation, change management and training. DoCS staff throughout NSW undertook more than 6000 days of training for the KIDS system. More than 120 highly trained "key users" supported more than 80 DoCS sites and the Helpline for the first three months after its introduction. Following implementation, "roving trainers" were available to target specific issues as they arose. DoCS also recruited additional clerical staff to relieve caseworkers from some of the data entry tasks that they had been performing.	Operations Division monitors compliance with systems that are implemented to support practice.
23.	The Department of Community Services should implement each of the suggestions of the Field Inquiry in relation to file keeping practices, records management and the	The Government has now funded the implementation of a new, comprehensive records management system for the Department and other agencies to be implemented through the	A scoping study is currently underway, including consultation with business areas to ensure that the system will meet business and governance needs effectively.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
	reduction of paperwork. In particular, the Department should: - Centrally determine the minimum requisite content of each file and implement this consistently across the State; - Train all Community Services Centre staff in these new practices; - Monitor compliance through random file audits in all Community Services Centres.	shared corporate services provider, NSW <i>businesslink</i>. In conjunction with this implementation, the Department will be reviewing and upgrading its overall records keeping practices in the context of the recommendations of the Reid inquiry.	
24.	The Department of Community Services should ensure that its financial management systems support: - The development of unit costings for the Department's work across intake, child protection and out-of-home care; - Effective quarantining of resources between the three Directorates of the Department; - A systemic focus on outcomes for children and families.	The Department's SAP finance system has been upgraded to improve financial transparency and management control. This includes improved management of resources within all organisational units and a systemic focus across units. The new system commenced operation on 1 July 2003.	Future developments in the finance system, the client information system (KIDS) and a new corporate data warehouse will continue to improve integration of financial and other data to allow improved costing and financial analysis.
25.	The Department of Community Services should undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the Helpline, commencing prior to and continuing after the establishment of the new Client Information System. The evaluation should include a trial of a localised intake model in all Community Services Centres within an identified region. It should include consideration of: - Timeliness, quality of response and feedback - Consistency and reliability of assessments - The extent to which matters are	The performance of the Helpline is being continuously reviewed. The Helpline's quality improvement strategy in has seen: 1) significant improvement in times callers wait to be answered, 2) significantly decreased the rate at which people decide to end a call to the Helpline before speaking with a caseworker and 3) an improvement in the number of reports processed on a daily basis. Callers' wait times have been reduced to an average of 5 minutes 20.9 seconds in September 2004, from 20 minutes in November 2001 and 12 minutes 52 seconds in July 2002. In September 2004 9.88% of callers abandoned	The Auditor General is currently undertaking a review of Helpline. Recommendations from this review will help inform future planning and development.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
	reclassified once assessed by local Community Services Centre staff • Efficiency in using staff resources, including the extent to which field staff time is freed • Impact of the new Client Information System; • Adequacy of staff training; • Effectiveness in direct referrals to other services • Relationships between the Helpline and Community Service Centres and between Community Services Centres and local agencies • The effectiveness of various reporting mechanisms including phone, fax and email • Cost-effectiveness	and the average time they waited before hanging up was 4 minutes. This compares with an abandonment rate of 28.95% and the average time to abandon being 9 minutes 23 seconds, in July 2002. The Department has completed the first stage of a review of its initial assessment process. This examined the current process and various assessment models used in other jurisdictions. Stage 2 has commenced.	
26.	The Department of Community Services should liaise with relevant NSW Government agencies to ensure that all government mandatory reporters have a clear understanding of their reporting requirements under the <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection Act) 1998</i>. In particular, the Department should liaise with the NSW Police Service concerning their reporting requirements in relation to incidents of domestic violence where a child is present.	The Department is liaising with NSW Health, the Department of Education and Training and the Police Service to ensure that mandatory reporters are aware of their responsibilities.	Liaison with other relevant agencies is ongoing.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
27.	The Department of Community Services should ensure that the aim of the Secondary Risk of Harm Assessment framework is fully realised, so as to shift practices from incident-based assessment of immediate risk to analysis of risk within the broader context of the support needs and strengths of families. To achieve this, the Department should ensure: • Policies and procedures are consistently adhered to across all Community Services Centres • All staff receive comprehensive training and clinical supervision • Monitoring of assessment practices occurs and changes reflecting best practice are implemented • Assessment practices explicitly address neglect • Research and evaluation is undertaken, particularly on the need for multidisciplinary teams or a broader multidisciplinary approach to assessments by departmental caseworkers.	Secondary risk of harm assessment occurs after initial assessment and builds on the information and analysis of that assessment, supported by DoCS' Risk of Harm Assessment Framework. The Framework provides clear guidance and support to caseworkers. It incorporates practice wisdom and important research findings gained from more than a decade of intensive international research. All caseworkers were trained in the new secondary risk assessment framework in late 2002. Training is offered every 2-3 months across all regions. Every new caseworker must undertake training in this area. Further support for staff in promoting effective risk assessment is provided through caseworker supervision and detailed information and research is available through <i>Business Help</i>. In relation to consistent adherence to policy and procedures, the Operational Consistency project underway will help Community Services Centres achieve consistent implementation and practice across regions. The Personal Planning and Review performance management system has been implemented for all staff in the Department. This will help to ensure that any performance issues or training needs are identified and addressed in a structured way. Research on, and the development of policy specifically relating to, working with children, young people and their families to minimise the impact of neglect has been identified as a priority.	Training on the secondary risk of harm framework is ongoing. An Operations Practice Unit has been established and works to promote quality improvement and consistency across all operational units. In relation to child protection, the preparations for court and the assessments needed for out-of-home care placements, the additional legal and psychologist positions will provide resources needed for a multi-disciplinary approach. In the intensive support needs area of out-of-home care, work is continuing on the improvement of a broader multi-disciplinary approach across government.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
28.	The Department of Community Services should ensure that all Level 1 and Level 2 reports are allocated and receive a Secondary Risk of Harm Assessment.	Some initial research has begun in collaboration with DoCS' Centre for Parenting and Research. The Government has provided funding for the appointment of 375 additional caseworkers over the next five years to work on Level 1 and Level 2 cases (ie. high priority cases). Locations for new caseworkers for 2003-04 and 2004-05 have been settled.	Around 100 more caseworkers will be recruited in 2004-05 as part of this project.
29.	The Department of Community Services should establish a formal strategy to reduce the number of unallocated cases, both those which are requests for assistance and those which are reports of children at risk of harm, and should also establish data collection systems to monitor levels of unallocated cases. This data should be made public.	See Response to Recommendation 28 Policies to close cases that cannot be allocated because of competing priorities exist in all Australian jurisdictions. The new client information system can collect relevant data. Reports including this information will be developed when the Department can ensure that the information collected is accurate and consistent. Due to refinements to the previous Client Information System and the implementation of KIDS, there have been several different methods of recording unallocated cases over the past two years. The Department is evaluating the statistical integrity of the data to ensure that the current measures are accurate. If not, it will be necessary to develop a statistical counting rule to ensure the veracity of the data.	See response to Recommendation 28. The Department is piloting a new case closure policy which includes those cases which are closed because of current competing priorities.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
30.	The Department of Community Services should ensure the establishment of designated Prevention caseworker positions, referred to in Recommendation 2, are sufficient to ensure that all Level 3 cases are addressed. These positions should be in addition to current allocations for child protection and out-of-home care.	An additional 350 caseworkers will be recruited over the life of the funding package to focus on cases assessed as less urgent that would benefit from DoCS' intervention before families reach crisis point.	This strategy will be implemented progressively over five years.
31.	The Department of Community Services should re-establish administrative positions within Community Services Centres with a view to reducing time spent by caseworkers on paperwork and general administrative duties.	New funds have been allocated for the appointment of additional clerical support positions at Community Services Centres over five years.	Recruitment for the first 26 of these positions has occurred.
32.	The Government should proclaim the outstanding sections of the <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i> by June 2003 at the latest and should publish a timetable for proclamation as soon as possible. The Government should also publish a statement of the resource impact of proclamation.	The Department of Community Services developed a comprehensive plan for the staged proclamation of key out-of-home care provisions of the Act. It has been necessary to account for a range of major interpretational, policy and operational considerations in the development of the proclamation plan. The timetable for staged commencement was considered and supported by the Ministerial Advisory Committee. The Office of the Children's Guardian was also involved in these processes.	N / A
33.	The Government should: Adequately resource both government and non-government agencies to fulfil the out-of-home care role set out for them in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998; Ensure that the Office of the Children's Guardian is adequately resourced to effect its legislated roles.	Relevant sections have now been proclaimed. The Government has allocated additional funds totalling \$460m over five years to the Department of Community Services to improve the out-of-home care system. The Office of the Children's Guardian is operational.	The Department of Community Services is developing new out-of-home care service models and new funding arrangements to ensure that relevant agencies are able to perform their statutory roles to the standard required. New arrangements have been implemented since July 2003. Implementation of a new out-of-home care purchasing framework is occurring from 2004.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
			Expressions of Interest for the provision of out-of-home care services for children and young people with high and complex needs were called and are currently being considered. Funds have been allocated to the recruitment of an additional 150 caseworkers over the period from 2003/04 to 2006/07 to focus on out-of-home care casework. Additional staff training programs are being developed. Preparations have been made by the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) for the operation of the new legislative framework, including the accreditation of designated agencies. The Government has proclaimed key out-of-home care provisions of the legislation. DoCS will continue to work with the Office of the Children's Guardian in the development of policies to support the new regime.
34.	The Government should, in developing a way forward for out-of-home care in NSW, formally consider and respond to the findings of the Community Services Commission's Substitute Care Inquiry.	Measures have been, or are being, taken to address the concerns of the Commission. In particular, the allocation by the Government of \$61.3m in additional funds will allow for substantial improvements to be made to resource arrangements, including an extensive caseworker recruitment program that commenced in the second half of 2003. Additionally, the development of improved service delivery models, now well underway, will be a major advance in improving the out-of-home care system in NSW. The establishment of the Children's Guardian provides independent supervision and regulation of the reformed system.	
35.	The Department of Community Services should ensure that all children and young people in out-of-home care have an identified and designated caseworker.	Under existing arrangements, if resources do not permit the allocation of a caseworker to a particular case, the case is assigned to the relevant casework manager for attention.	The Department is planning recruitment of 150 additional caseworkers in Out-of-Home care over the period from 2003/04 to 2006/07. The focus of additional caseworkers in 2003-04 is working with high needs kids. In 2004-05 additional caseworkers will focus on recruitment, training etc of foster carers.
36.	The Department of Community Services, the Office of the Children's Guardian and the	The Department of Community Services (Metro North Region), the Office of the Children's	The development of the tools is progressing.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
	Commission for Children and Young People should develop tools and resources for the participation of children and young people in case planning. These should be used by the Department of Community Services and other out-of-home care providers to ensure such participation occurs.	Young People have participated in a pilot project to develop tools to provide appropriate advice and guidance to children and young people in care and to equip them to become involved in relevant decision-making and case planning processes.	
37.	The Department of Community Services should: - Implement procedures to ensure that all children and young people are informed of what they can expect will happen to them within 24 hours of entering care - Ensure that all children who are the subject of an assessment of risk of harm and/or who enter care are given the option of a support person who they know and trust.	The Department is developing an 'Entry into Care' kit which is designed to inform children and young people being placed in out-of-home care about the implications of the placement, the arrangements being made for them and what they can expect while being cared for. While the Department is not in a position to guarantee the identification of a known and trusted support person at entry – such a person may not be available – the Department does seek to encourage the maintenance of stable relationships which exist for the child or young person at the time.	Development of the 'Entry into Care' kit is progressing.
38.	The Department of Community Services and other out-of-home care providers should ensure casework practice supports contact between children and young people and their siblings and families.	Support for contact between children and young people and their siblings and families is part of normal case planning. Sibling and family contact is taken into account by the Children's Court in the making of care orders. The Court may set contact expectations.	Established case-planning and casework practices will be maintained.
39.	In order to improve provision for restoration: - The Department of Community Services and other out-of-home care providers should, in cases where there is a reasonable possibility of restoration of a child or young person to their family, make a concerted effort to facilitate that restoration - The Department of Community Services should establish clearly defined systems and procedures to ensure adequate	It is Government policy that the provision of support to maintain a stable, natural family environment is to be preferred above intervention or more intrusive measures when it is in the best interests of the child. It has been the Department's practice to facilitate restoration wherever it can be reasonably achieved in the particular circumstances. The legislation provides for permanency planning to be undertaken in any intervention and for the	The Department will maintain its approach to achieving restoration wherever possible if this option appears to be in the best interests of the child or young person.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
	support for families where a child has been restored. These systems should provide links to secondary and tertiary prevention services and ensure effective coordination and continuity of casework between the out-of-home care and early intervention streams.	prospect of restoration to be assessed as early as possible. The staged commencement of key out-of-home care provisions of the legislation included those provisions that require placements to be reviewed. Interfaces with child protection and out-of-home care are being addressed in the planning of the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy (see response to Recommendation 2).	
40.	The Department of Community Services and other out-of-home care agencies should provide adequate casework and coordinate other necessary support services to families of children who have been placed in out-of-home care.	The Department of Community Services advocates a coordinated, integrated multi-agency approach to the provision of support services to children and young people in need of out-of-home care, to their carers and to their families.	The Department has established links with other service and support agencies and proposes to maintain and reinforce these. The newly commenced legislative provisions include a provision for placements to be reviewed.
41.	The Department of Community Services, in consultation with other out-of-home care providers and the Children's Guardian, should develop standardised case management tools for all children and young people in out-of-home care. These tools should be used consistently by all out-of-home care providers.	The Department consults with participants in the NSW out-of-home care system, including the Office of the Children's Guardian, and other stakeholders, concerning various elements of the system and measures for improving its operation. It is possible that a particular case management tool will become preferred and eventually become the standard. However, it is likely that a number of tools developed by different agencies or service-providers will be considered acceptable in the meantime.	The Department will monitor the operation of the recently proclaimed out-of-home care provisions and will work with the Office of the Children's Guardian on standardisation initiatives as appropriate.
42.	The Department of Community Services should ensure that all children and young people under its responsibility have a case plan by December 2003.	With the introduction of KIDS, all Reports received by the Department automatically generate a Case Plan that is further developed over time to fit the risks and needs of families. In KIDS, the Case Plan is the critical component from which other functions, objectives and goals stem.	KIDS has been implemented. Staff have training and guidance in the operation of the system. Business rules and procedures which operate in support of KIDS have been developed.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
43.	The Department of Community Services should use a caseload formula to set limits for each caseworker in out-of-home care and to determine the number of out-of-home care caseworkers in each Community Services Centre.	The Department is the agency of last resort and so is therefore bound to respond to children's needs identified by the Children's Court. To this extent, the Department cannot regulate case intake.	DoCS will respond to changing demands confronting Community Services Centres. The recruitment of 150 new out-of-home care caseworkers over five years will assist DoCS to establish more reasonable caseloads and get closer to equity between caseworkers.
44.	In order to improve the foster care system of NSW, the Department of Community Services should: • Develop and implement a standard assessment process for all prospective and current foster carers and ensure that no placement is made with a foster carer who has not passed this assessment • Implement the 'Shared Stories, Shared Lives' training package uniformly across the State • Develop a compulsory ongoing training program for all foster carers • Systematically monitor and provide casework support to all its foster carers.	Recruitment and retention of foster carers is a priority for the Department. Those interested in becoming foster carers must undergo assessment and training. The intake process for carers involves: • Initial inquiry and application by the prospective carers; • Formal assessment, training and screening, including Police record and Working With Children checks; • Authorisation; and • Ongoing support and review. A standard foster carer assessment tool called 'Step by Step' has been developed in consultation with a wide range of out-of-home care stakeholders. This tool has been developed as part of stage three of the <i>Shared Stories Shared Lives</i> training package. It was launched on 25 June 2003. The Department is committed to providing all reasonable practical support to foster carers. As well as the assessment tool, six extension modules have been developed to provide experienced foster carers with on-going training and development.	The <i>Step by Step</i> standard foster carer assessment tool was launched in June 2003. Staff have been trained in the use of the tool and seven of the eight regions are participating in a pilot program. Recruitment has begun for an additional 150 out-of-home care caseworkers over the period from 2003/04 to 2006/07. Up to 50 caseworkers being recruited in 2004/05 will focus on recruiting, training and supporting foster carers.
45.	The Department of Community Services should:	The relevant provisions of the <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act, 1998</i> were proclaimed on 15 July 2003. Consultation	These initiatives are ongoing.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
	• Undertake an extensive consultation process, particularly with Aboriginal communities, on whether the proclamation of Schedule 1 [17] of the <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 2001</i>, to include kinship care in the definition of out-of-home care, should occur. This should be finalised by December 2003. • In partnership with the Association of Child Welfare Agencies, the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat and other relevant bodies, develop a framework for supporting kinship care that includes systematic screening, monitoring, training and support • Provide additional funding to indigenous out-of-home care services to support Aboriginal children and young people in kinship care and their carers • Assign a caseworker to, and ensure a case plan is in place for all children and young people in kinship care under a care order.	occurred through the Ministerial Advisory Committee. The Department is working with the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (the Secretariat) to identify strategies for the enhancement of services to Aboriginal children in Out-of-Home care. \$1m additional funding was provided in 2003-04 to support improvements in Aboriginal foster care services. The Department is also providing funding support for the operation of the Secretariat. Two planning sessions were held in June and July 2003 with the Secretariat, Aboriginal out-of-home care service providers and the Children's Guardian to identify funding priorities. The meetings considered the following issues and developed a 12 month workplan for their implementation: • Funding enhancements for existing service providers; • Priorities for new funded services – e.g. location, service provider, models; • Infrastructure priorities – e.g. support to foster carers, training; • Steps to progress the development of an Aboriginal Out-of-Home-Care Plan.	

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
46.	The Department of Community Services should: - Pilot and evaluate alternative models of out-of-home care - Develop a policy framework for alternative models of out-of-home care, and use this framework to guide significant service investment. The framework should consider the appropriate role for private for-profit agencies in this area.	The development and evaluation of alternative service models is a major project for the Department in its service planning operations. An Expression of Interest was advertised in 2004 encouraging potential providers of services to high needs children and young people to present proposals to better meet the needs of this target group. Proposals received are currently being considered. A policy framework for alternative out-of-home care service models is also being developed. The services provided by private for-profit organisations are being examined as part of this process. Recommendations made by the nsw ombudsman following a review of the operations of such service-providers are being taken into account in the development of the framework.	This work is ongoing.
47.	In order to improve after-care service provision: - The Department of Community Services and other out-of-home care providers should ensure that after-care planning is integrated into case management for all young people, including those in kinship care, well in advance of leaving care - The Department of Community Services should ensure that after-care services are available to young people in regional, rural and remote areas and that young people can access adequate emotional support.	The provisions of the legislation require adequate preparations, including planning, to be undertaken to assist young people in care to make the transition to independent living when their leaving care is approaching. In November 2002, the Minister for Community Services approved the allocation of more than \$0.5m to facilitate the establishment of three new after-care services. Leaving and after-care services have been extended such that all regions, rural and metropolitan, have access to services of this kind. The provision of emotional support for young people about to make the transition to independent living is one element of case planning.	A caseworker training program has been developed about the leaving-care provisions.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
48.	The Department of Community Services should finalise the charter of rights for children in out-of-home care and implement a comprehensive and ongoing dissemination strategy for the charter.	A draft Charter of Rights has been developed. It was released in July 2003 as a working draft for a period of 12 months.	The draft Charter of Rights will be amended in the light of feedback from children and young people in care, and carers, on the design, content and workability of the draft.
49.	The Department of Community Services and other out-of-home care agencies should ensure that they have effective complaint handling mechanisms in place.	A review of the Department's complaint-handling was completed in June 2003 – major recommendations include: • The establishment of a complaints branch; • Development of best practice policies, procedures and tools in consultation with internal and external stakeholders; • Staff training. A Complaints, Assessment and Review Branch has been established and key positions filled in 2004. Complaint-handling processes within other out-of-home care agencies is governed by the <i>NSW Standards for Substitute Care Services</i> (Standard 4.3).	The recommendations of the complaint-handling review are being progressively implemented. Revised policies, procedures and tools for the Complaint, Assessment and Review Branch are being developed. It will be necessary for out-of-home care service providers to demonstrate their compliance with the complaints-handling requirements of the <i>Standards for Substitute Care Services</i> when seeking accreditation from the Children's Guardian.
50.	The Office of the NSW Ombudsman should ensure that its complaint services are appropriate for and accessible to children and young people.	A Department of Community Services / Oversighting Agencies Policy and Legal Issues Working Party was established in January 2003 and meets on a regular basis. Regular officer-level meetings take place with oversight agencies to identify and address issues.	N/A

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
51.	The Department of Community Services should, as a priority and in consultation with non-government organisations, develop a strategic policy framework for reform of the out-of-home care system in NSW. This framework should be based on the principles and provisions of the <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i> and should articulate the goals, outcomes, parameters and priorities for the out-of-home care system.	The Department is pursuing durable reform of the system in a number of ways and it seeks to engage stakeholders in this endeavour. The Department is putting in place mechanisms for ensuring that the out-of-home care model is comprehensively reviewed.	The Department is committed to engaging stakeholders, including non-government participants, in the review and reform process.
52.	The Department of Community Services should develop and implement a new out-of-home care funding framework that accurately reflects the true costs of running services, and which builds on the funding formula developed through the Care 2000/2001 process.	The Department is developing a new out-of-home care funding framework which will reflect true operating costs experienced in the operation of the system.	Development of the new funding framework is expected to be completed by 2005 with implementation commencing from 2005/06.
53.	The Department of Community Services should develop a strategy to optimise the management of Children's Court matters within Community Services Centres. In particular, the Department should: • Ensure that caseworkers receive adequate specialist legal support to prepare for Children's Court matters, preferably through the employment of legally qualified staff to work in Community Service Centres • Develop a specialist senior casework role and responsibility for the preparation and management of Children's Court matters within Community Services Centres • Ensure that caseworkers receive sufficient and appropriate training on the requirements of the Children's Court.	A revised protocol with the Children's Court has been prepared to assist in the management of Children's Court matters. A new caseworker training module has been developed and launched related to the requirements of the Children's Court. The training includes report writing for affidavits presented to the Court and practice in putting together a report, including assessment of risk of harm The <i>Business Help</i> information on the Children's Court has been revised. The first tranche of recruitment of legal officers to be located within Community Services Centres has been completed. They will undergo a period of intensive training for 2 months before commencing duties. They should be on duty before the end of 2004.	The Government's integrated funding package includes funds for the appointment of additional legal officers in Community Services Centres to provide specialist support for court matters. The new training module on requirements of the Children's Court has become a standard component of the Caseworker Development Course delivered to all new caseworkers. It will also be delivered as a stand-alone module to improve the skills of existing staff in this area.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
54.	The Department of Community Services should ensure that the new records management system and Client Information System store and provide information that is relevant and in a form that is useable by the Children's Court.	Court related documents (Court reports, assessment reports and affidavits) are located on KIDS, the Department's new client information system.	N / A
55.	The Department of Community Services, the Attorney General's Department and the Children's Court should jointly review Children's Court procedures to determine whether documentary requirements and Court processes can be streamlined to assist all parties to Children's Court proceedings. This review should be finalised by December 2003.	The Children's Court Advisory Committee advises both the Attorney-General and the Minister for Community Services. The Committee considers matters such as Court procedures. A limited trial of the electronic lodgement of applications has occurred.	The Children's Court Advisory Committee's Procedures and Documentary Requirements Sub Committee has an ongoing role in reviewing Children's Court procedures to determine whether documentary requirements and Court processes can be streamlined to assist all parties to Children's Court processes.
56.	The Attorney General's Department and the Children's Court should review legal aid guidelines and the procedures of the Court to ensure that non-departmental parties have a genuine opportunity to present their case. In particular they should ensure that Children's Court processes are accessible to parents with disability(sic).	The Children's Court Advisory Committee is also ensuring that Children's Court processes are made more accessible to parents with a disability through the establishment of the Children's Court website, and development and publication of pamphlets and leaflets explaining Court practice and procedure.	N / A
57.	The <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i> should be amended so that: - The Children's Court has the power to grant Apprehended Violence Orders in favour of a child or young person who is at risk of harm, - The Department of Community Services has the power to apply to the Court for an Apprehended Violence Order in lieu of a care order.	The Children's Court Advisory Committee established a sub-committee to consider this recommendation. The sub-committee prepared a detailed paper examining the use of Apprehended Violence Orders in care proceedings. The Minister for Community Services commented on the paper and it is being considered by the Attorney-General.	N / A

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
58.	In relation to Recommendation 57 the Department of Community Services should ensure that Community Services Centre staff receive appropriate training regarding their role and responsibilities in relation to the use of Apprehended Violence Orders as a child protection intervention.	There is a <i>Business Help</i> topic entitled 'Apprehended Violence Orders' which outlines how these orders may be used as a protective strategy for children, young people and victims of domestic violence. Training in roles and responsibilities related to Apprehended Violence Orders as a child protection intervention is included in the Caseworker Development Course delivered to all new caseworkers The Department has been involved in the development of the NSW Domestic Violence Interagency Guidelines. These Guidelines were recently adopted by the Department. They provide extensive information about Apprehended Violence Orders, including their use to protect children and young people DoCS Director-General has written to the Family Court advising that DoCS is now in a position to participate in a pilot.	All new caseworkers undertake the Caseworker Development Course, including the specific training in AVOs.
59.	The Government should establish a pilot project based on <i>Project Magellan</i> to enhance coordination between the Family Court and the Department of Community Services.		This matter is the subject of ongoing negotiation.
60.	The Attorney General should as a matter of urgency approach the Commonwealth Attorney General to ensure that adequate legal aid funding is available to support the pilot project referred to in Recommendation 59.	The NSW Legal Aid Commission has an ongoing role in the Family Court's Project Magellan. Discussions have been held with the Commonwealth Attorney General in respect of the provisions of adequate legal aid funding for the trial.	N/A

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
61.	The Attorney General and the Minister for Community Services should approach their counterparts in the Commonwealth and other States and Territories to support the recommendations of the Family Law Council Report, <i>Family Law and Child Protection: Final Report</i>, and to ensure that these recommendations are placed on the agenda of the Council of Community Services Ministers and the Standing Committee of Attorneys General as soon as possible.	This matter is currently the subject of communication between relevant Ministers. Strategies have been employed to address these issues such as the recently signed MOU between the Family Court and the Department of Community Services and the approach by the Department to the Family Court to progress the establishment of a pilot consistent with the objectives of Project Magellan. The Family Law Council Report, <i>Family Law and Child Protection, Final Report</i>, has been placed on the Standing Committee of Attorneys General (SCAG) agenda for consideration, and a working party has been established.	N/A
62.	In order to enhance the capacity of indigenous communities to care for their children and young people, the Department of Community Services should, when implementing Recommendation 45: • Fund a state-wide, systematic and culturally sensitive prevention and early intervention strategy, including family support, which is controlled by Aboriginal communities • Adequately fund indigenous organisations for their role in supporting children and families • Work in partnership with indigenous organisations to recruit more Aboriginal foster carers • Develop an effective system of support for Aboriginal Departmental staff.	\$14m has been allocated over four years up to 2006 to the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy. The allocation of funds to regions is based on the number of indigenous children and young people. Regions commenced implementation of the strategy in late 2002. Funds have been used to employ 9 Aboriginal planners and project officers to assist with the development of regional indigenous plans. One-off funds have been used for service development grants for Aboriginal organisations, school holiday programs for indigenous young people, various communication strategies such as community newsletters, and training programs. The Government's integrated funding package included funds for the establishment of the Aboriginal Services Branch within the Department of Community Services. The expanded Branch reflects the broad business components of	Approximately \$3m will be available in 2003-2004 to advance the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family strategy. As Regions complete their consultation processes, and construct indigenous plans, the need for strategies such as ACYF services may be identified and new services may be purchased and existing services may be enhanced. The Aboriginal Services Branch is progressing initiatives around Aboriginal employment, career development and support in consultation with Regions, Directorates and Aboriginal staff. These will provide more structured support opportunities for Aboriginal staff.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
		prevention and early intervention, child protection and out-of-home care. Its role is to improve the Department's capacity to provide culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal children, families and communities, and to provide strong linkages between the Branch and Aboriginal staff throughout the Department. With respect to out-of-home care, the Department is continuing to work with the Aboriginal community to improve its capacity to provide out-of-home care. \$1 million of additional funds were provided in 2003-04 to achieve improvements in Aboriginal out-of-home care services. As well, funding support has been provided to assist the operation of the State Secretariat. Assistance will continue to be provided in efforts to increase the number of Aboriginal foster carers and work will continue on the development of an acceptable model of kinship care.	
63.	In order to enhance the cultural competency of the child protection system, the Department of Community Services should: • Provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information, including material that is translated into community languages, on all its services and programs • Provide systematic and ongoing cross-cultural training to Helpline and Community Services Centre staff, including training in the use of interpreter services • In consultation with ethnic community organisations, develop and implement an approach to out-of-home care that actively seeks to keep children and young people connected to their culture	The Department provides information on its services, programs and community education campaigns in a range of appropriate community languages. The Caseworker Development Course, which is compulsory for all new caseworkers, including Helpline staff, now includes a full day on cross-cultural issues which includes the attendance of interpreters to demonstrate the practical applications of interpreting. Funds were allocated under the Government's integrated funding package for the establishment of a Multicultural Services Unit in 2003-04. The Multicultural Services Unit is now operational and implementation of its workplan, developed in consultation with other Directorates, has	The recommendations of the Caseworker (Multicultural) review will be considered.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
	and community • Establish a pool of bilingual or bicultural support workers who have been trained to work with children and families who are at risk • In consultation with ethnic communities, develop a comprehensive, community based prevention strategy • Develop and implement a strategy to support Departmental staff from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.	commenced. The Department has a number of ongoing cross-cultural initiatives in out-of-home care, including: • The Muslim foster care strategy in Metro West and Metro South West Regions which assists in meeting the religious and cultural needs of Muslim children and young people; • Specialist services provided to assist former child migrants; • Assistance provided to unaccompanied minors referred by the Federal Department of Immigration. The Department currently has 51 designated Caseworker (Multicultural) positions who work with children and young people who are at risk and their families. The Caseworker (Multicultural) Program is currently under review. With respect to prevention, consultation with ethnic communities was included in the planning of the Prevention and Early Intervention strategy. Initiatives which address the support needs of staff from culturally and linguistically diverse communities include the Department's Workforce Management Plan, the Multicultural Staff Reference Group and the Department's Ethnic Affairs Priority Statement (EAPS). The Department's EAPS has been integrated into Regional/Directorate business plans, enhancing accountability for strategies to improve service-provision for clients and support for staff.	

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
64.	NSW Health should expand community-based mental health services, including child mental health services and non-government services, to ensure adequate supports for families with parents with mental illness.	This matter is the subject of communication between relevant Ministers. Related issues are being discussed by the Human Services Chief Executive Officers' Forum. See also the responses to recommendations 65 and 66.	N/A
65.	The Department of Community Services, NSW Health and the Department of Housing should jointly fund additional supported accommodation services for women with mental illness and their dependent children.	The Department of Community Services, NSW Health, Department of Housing, NSW Aboriginal Housing Office and the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW are participating in the Joint Guarantee of Service (JGOS) for People with Mental Health Problems and Disorders. The aim of this project is to improve support for people with a mental illness to allow them to sustain stable housing.	The Joint Guarantee of Service was agreed to by all partner agencies in April 2003. A resource and information kit will assist workers to effectively and sustainably implement the Joint Guarantee of Service.
66.	The Department of Community Services should initiate discussions with NSW Health and other relevant agencies about services for parents with a personality disorder, and develop a strategy to improve access to and coordination of prevention and early intervention services for these families.	Regular Interdepartmental Parenting Meetings have been established between the Department of Community Services and NSW Health to develop this recommendation as part of a project to provide intensive support to high-risk families. The project has been funded under the Government's integrated funding package.	The outcomes of these meetings will also be incorporated into the Prevention and Early Intervention strategy.
67.	As part of the system of coordination between agencies referred to in Recommendation 5, the Department of Community Services should ensure that adequate funding is in place to support families with complex needs.	The Prevention and Early Intervention strategy will provide a significant increase in funding for vulnerable families, including those with high or complex needs, with \$150m over five years. Expressions of Interest from providers of services to children and young people with high or complex needs have been called. (See Recommendation 46)	Implementation of the strategy to meet this recommendation commenced in July 2003.

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
68.	The Department of Community Services should recognise research and evaluation as one of its core functions, and in so doing, should: • Consolidate and expand its research unit into a research office to lead the Department's monitoring, evaluation and research activities, have a direct role in policy and planning and establish formal links with tertiary institutions • Establish a research advisory group • Develop a strategy for dissemination of research throughout the Department • Establish an evidence-based approach to policy and planning, service delivery and purchasing • Ensure that an evaluation component is built into the budget of all new models, programs and initiatives • Establish outcome measures for all programs • Routinely publish all evaluation and review findings • Establish and fund a research agenda for child welfare in NSW.	The Department has recently established the NSW Centre for Parenting and Research which: • undertakes and commissions research; • publishes discussion papers; • develops evidence-based resources; • provides an easy-to-use website and an electronic directory of parenting and children's services; • hosts seminars and conferences; • maintains close links with universities. The Government has recently increased the Centre's funding by \$750,000 to approx. \$2m p.a. in recognition that research is a core function of the Department. A Research Advisory Council has also been established to: • provide advice on parent, child or family issues related to DoCS' core business which could be addressed through research, training and/or the raising of public awareness; • act as an editorial board for the Centre's research and publication initiatives. The Centre uses a range of methods to disseminate research findings to staff, including: • seminars; • DoCS' intranet; • DoCS' website; • Parenting NSW website; • Discussion papers; • Fact sheets.	The work of the Centre is ongoing. The implementation of a strategic research agenda by the Centre will provide the evidence-

No	Recommendation	Implementation to Date	Future Steps
		base to inform policy, planning, practice and service delivery across the Department's core business areas. A comprehensive international literature search has now been undertaken to identify best practice in prevention and early intervention for vulnerable families. This is providing a strong evidence base for the development of the Department's prevention and early intervention strategies. To date it has informed the development of pilot strategies to identify vulnerable families antenatally or immediately following the birth of their first child and the development of appropriate support services for those families to prevent them entering the statutory child protection system. It is also informing the development of strategies to support families whose children have been notified to the Department and who have been assessed as a relatively low risk, so that these families are diverted from the child protection system. An evaluation component is built into the budget of new models, programs and initiatives. Outcome measures are being established for community programs.	
69.	The Department of Community Services should undertake an evaluation of the impact and effects of the <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i> .	The Department is putting in place mechanisms for ensuring that the out-of-home care model is reviewed.	Ongoing
70.	The Government must adequately resource the Department of Community Services to allow it to undertake the full range of its statutory responsibilities in the care and protection of children and young people.	The Government's integrated funding package has provided \$1.2 billion in additional funds over a full five years to substantially increase and improve departmental and community-based service provision.	The projects comprising the integrated funding package will be rolled out progressively until 2007-08.