



INFORMATION STATEMENT 2017

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INTRODUCTION

This Information Statement is provided in accordance with the requirements of sections 96 and 97 of the Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA).

The purpose of the Information Statement is to ensure that information concerning the structure and functions of The Department for Child Protection and Family Support and types of documents held by the Department is available to the public. Comprehensive information regarding the operations of the Department may be found on the Department's website address - www.childprotection.wa.gov.au.

THE ORGANISATION

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support (the Department) is the key Western Australian government agency responsible for child protection and family support services.

Our Vision

A Western Australian child protection and family support system that works together so that:

- Vulnerable children and young people are safe, thriving and valued by society.
- Children and young people who have experienced abuse and neglect receive quality responses to address their safety needs and prevent abuse from recurring
- Individuals and families who are in crisis are supported to overcome their circumstances and live safe and fulfilled lives.

Our Purpose

To enable children and young people in the CEO's care to live in safe, stable and nurturing environments, support them to achieve good life outcomes; to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect and to support families and individuals who are at risk or in crisis.

Our Outcomes

- Families and individuals are assisted to overcome their risks and crises, are kept safe and are diverted from the child protection system.
- Children and young people needing protection are safe from abuse and harm.
- Children and young people in the CEO's care receive a high quality of care and have much improved life outcomes.

Legislation

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support is the agency that principally assists the Minister for Child Protection in the administration of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*.

The Department also administers the following Acts and Regulations on behalf of the Minister;

- *Adoption Act 1994*
- *Adoption Regulations 1995*
- *Children and Community Services Act 2004*
- *Children and Community Services Regulations 2006*
- *Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004*
- *Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Regulations 2005*

The Department also has varying responsibilities under acts administered by other authorities.

Structure and functions

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support focuses on meeting the needs of vulnerable children, their families and Communities in Western Australia. The structure and functions of the organisation incorporate;

Office of the Director General

The Director General is responsible for the management and performance of the Department and the overall achievement of approved strategies and outcomes. The Office of the Director General oversees critical strategic and operational functions including internal audit and state-wide emergency responses.

Internal Audit and Performance Review

Internal Audit and Performance Review examines appropriate operations as a service to management. It measures and evaluates the effectiveness of accountability measures, policies and procedures, compliance with legislation and procedures, reliability of information systems, and adequacy of internal control systems. This area also coordinates the management of strategic risk.

Emergency Services

Under Western Australian Emergency Management arrangements, the Department is responsible for coordinating the provision of welfare support services to individuals and families affected by an emergency or disaster. Emergency Services coordinates the State Welfare Emergency Committee which has members from other government, non-government and not-for-profit organisations.

The Aboriginal Engagement and Coordination

Aboriginal Engagement and Coordination provides strategic leadership and consultancy advice on issues affecting services for Aboriginal people. The directorate partners with Aboriginal stakeholders, government agencies and the community to ensure child protection services integrate Aboriginal needs.

Corporate and Business Services

Corporate and Business Services supports the delivery of the Department's services by providing advice and services in the areas of finance, purchasing, asset management, human resources, information management, information technology, business support and coordination, staff development and Working with Children criminal records screening.

Policy and Learning

Policy and Learning Directorate develops strategic and operational policy, frameworks, legislation and key performance indicators for the protection and care of vulnerable children and individuals and families at risk or in crisis. Other services provided include demand planning, research and evaluation, external reporting, advisory committee support, corporate communications and learning and development.

Service Standards and Contracting

Service Standards and Contracting is responsible for contracting non-government services and monitoring service quality both within the Department and across the non-government sector. The directorate also manages complaints and duty of care and civil litigation matters.

The Advocate for Children in Care

The Advocate for Children in Care protects and promotes the interests of all children and young people in care to make sure they have a say in decisions and actions that affect them and in the services that are provided to them.

Country Services

Country Services ensures the effective and efficient delivery of child protection and family support services to country areas of Western Australia by providing case support, advice and best practice

in nine country districts: East Kimberley, Goldfields, Great Southern, Murchison, Peel, Pilbara, South West, West Kimberley and the Wheatbelt. Country Services also has responsibility for Legal Practice Services.

Metropolitan Services

Metropolitan Services ensures the effective and efficient delivery of child protection and family support services in the metropolitan area by providing case support, advice and best practice in eight metropolitan districts: Armadale, Cannington, Fremantle, Joondalup, Midland, Mirrabooka, Perth and Rockingham. Metropolitan Services also has responsibility for the ChildFIRST Assessment and Interview Team, Crisis Care Unit and client systems.

Accommodation and Care Services

Accommodation and Care Services supports children and young people in the CEO's care by providing quality support, placement and therapeutic services. It consists of Residential Care and Support, Secure Care Service, High Level Needs Placements, Fostering Services, Family Information and Adoption Services and Psychology Services.

Working With Children Screening Unit

The Working with Children Screening Unit was established to implement the criminal record checking process of those working with children. The WWC Check aims to increase the safety of children in our community by helping to prevent people who have a criminal history that indicates they may harm children from working with children.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE FORMULATION OF POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

Through continuing processes of review and restructure, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support has in place an infrastructure which permits services to be “tailored” to meet the needs of individuals or groups – appreciating that the needs of one may differ markedly from another. This infrastructure is capable of developing and growing in parallel with the growth of the state, economically, socially and environmentally. The Department encourages individuals or groups to write to their local office on matters of agency policy and performance.

The following committees/advisory groups provide advice and information to the Minister for Child Protection or the Director General on key areas such as adoption, child protection and homelessness.

- Adoption Applications Committee
- Case Review Panel
- Child Safety Directors’ Group
- Community Sector Roundtable
- Ministerial Advisory Council on Child Protection
- West Australian Council on Homelessness

DOCUMENTS HELD BY THE DEPARTMENT

Types of documents

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support maintains official hard copy and virtual (electronic) files containing information on clients and administrative matters, as well as computerised recording systems. Some archived file material is stored on microfilm or compact disc. Previously Administrative Instructions were distributed to convey policy information (Government and Departmental). These have been withdrawn and their policies implemented as Administration Manual entries or as Casework Practice Manual entries. An extensive range of official manuals, handbooks and guidelines have been developed to ensure consistency of practice and procedures. Brochures are used to inform clients of particular services and activities.

Client Files

Client files are created for all records of client contact where a client service is resolved in the initial duty contact, regardless whether there is ongoing support or service provided to the individual family.

Administrative Files

Each Department work unit manages the administrative files associated with its work responsibilities. The files are registered according to work unit location and function with the title and classification.

Administrative files include foster carer files, Freedom of Information and Legal Services files relating to individuals.

Adoption Files

The Adoption Service maintains records on adoption services provided to families and individuals. There are specific legal requirements in relation to the release of information from adoption files and other records held by the Department when an adoption has taken place. Enquiries relating to adoptions matters should be referred to that service in the first instance.

Personnel Files

Files are kept on individual staff members of the Department. These files contain information relating to the officer's appointment and progress, details of leave and salary increments, training and certificates (if these have been made available). The Department has a policy of allowing staff a right of access to their own individual file. Personnel files are kept for a period of seventy-five

years after the employee's date of birth or 7 years after cessation of employment, whichever is later, then scheduled for destruction.

In some circumstances, separate files may be created for matters concerning workers compensation and industrial relations issues.

Computer systems

A number of corporate computer systems and applications are maintained by the Department, including:

- Objective - Electronic Document and Records Management System. This system manages client and administrative files and documents through their continuum. The system enables this Department to create, capture, register, and maintain records and documents to their ultimate disposal.
- ASSIST – An integrated client system, consolidating information previously recorded on now archived systems. Details of client files are also recorded on the system with a direct link to Objective.
- Working with Children Card (WWCC) – This system supports the submission and checking process of applications for a WWCC, the issue of cards to successful applicants and the recording of relevant applicant information.
- FMIS - Financial Management Information System. An integrated financial management system with accounts payable, general ledger, budgets, purchasing, accounts receivable and assets management modules.
- SPMS - Service Provider Management System. This system records details of the objectives, outcomes and funding levels of services and programs of non government organisations. It also provides a financial management system.
- FIRS – Family Information Research System. This system is able to access a significant number of Aboriginal records held by the Department, identify Aboriginal records held in external agencies and details of former clients of the Department seeking Post Adoption Information. FIRS is managed by Fostering and Adoption Services and is only accessible by select authorised staff. FIRS integrated the Adoption Information System (AIS) database in October 2002.
- PAS - Pre Adoption System. This de-commissioned system records details of applications to adopt a child, together with details of children in pre adoptive care.
- HRMS - This system is an integrated personnel and payroll system and human resource management system.
- Amicus Attorney Civil Litigation Unit client data base
- Crisis Care Contacts System
- CIMS - Contract Info Management System – Manages payments to service providers and grant recipients under Service Agreements and Grant Funding arrangements.

Manuals, handbooks, guidelines and instructions

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support produces a range of [publications](#), some of which are only available online, and utilises a number of internal manuals in the performance of its functions. These include:

- Procedural manuals (see below). The principal policy document outlining policy and procedures for the protection of and care for children and young people, and to support at-risk individuals and families in resolving crises, is the Casework Practice Manual. This manual is available online at www.childprotection.wa.gov.au.
- Handbooks and guidelines.
- Annual reports
- Brochures, fact sheets and pamphlets on special services or activities (details of publications are found in the Department's Annual Report and from the Department's website generally).

Internal manuals of the Department include:

- Administration Manual
- Assessment and Review of Carers
- Aboriginal Attraction and Retention Toolkit
- Aboriginal Traineeship Program Guide for Managers
- Archive of staff circulars
- Casework Practice Manual
- Financial Management Manual
- Freedom of Information Manual
- Guidelines Law of Negligence
- Workload Measurement and Management Guidelines
- Residential Care Practice Manual

The Department is usually able to supply, free of charge, sections from most manuals, handbooks and guidelines. The Department reserves the right to charge for large documents or manuals.

Other documents

Website <http://www.childprotection.wa.gov.au>

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support internet site contains a great deal of information about the Department, its publications and links to other resources available to the community. Child Protection resources are organised on the site by topic:

- Organisation
- Child Protection
- Fostering and Adoption
- Children and Young People in Care
- Services in the Community
- Crisis and Emergency
- Supporting Individuals and Families
- Resources
- Compliments and Complaints

Retention and Disposal of records

Records are retained and disposed of in accordance with the Department's Retention and Disposal schedules approved by the State Records Office. The Department has determined that client file records will not be disposed of.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI)

The Western Australian *Freedom of Information Act, 1992 (the Act)* gives every person the right to apply for access to documents held by State Public Sector agencies. The Act also provides an individual the right to apply for amendment of personal information about the person if the information is inaccurate, incomplete, out of date or misleading.

The Office of the Minister for Mental Health; Child Protection is a separate agency to the Department for FOI purposes.

The aim of the Department is to make information available promptly and generally at the least possible cost. Documents may be provided outside a formal FOI process, in accordance with procedures outlined in the Casework Practice Manual. Where information is not routinely available, the Act provides the right to apply for access to documents held by the Department.

Whilst applications for access to documents, or amendment of information, may be lodged at any branch of the Department, formal applications are processed by a central Freedom of Information unit. Consequently it is preferable for applications to be sent direct to the FOI unit via:

Post: Coordinator, Freedom of Information
Department for Child Protection and Family Support
P.O. Box 6334
EAST PERTH WA 6892

Email: foi@cpfs.wa.gov.au

Telephone enquires may be made to the Coordinator, Freedom of Information on (08) 9222 2555

Applications for access to documents

Access applications have to:

- be in writing
- give enough information so that the documents requested can be identified
- give an Australian address to which notices can be sent and
- be lodged at the agency (any office) with any application fee payable.

An access application form can be obtained from any district office, or direct from the Freedom of Information unit. Whilst use of the form is preferable, a letter or email setting out the particulars of the request, as outlined above, is acceptable. Please note that email submissions seeking non personal information will not be accepted unless payment for the application fee is also received.

Access applications will be acknowledged in writing and, if appropriate, applicants will be notified of the decision within 45 days.

Fees and charges for access applications

Application fee

There is no fee for applicants seeking their personal information. Personal information is defined in the Act as being information or opinion *about an individual*.

Applications involving non personal information require payment of an application fee of \$30. A fee payable for non personal information CANNOT be waived, irrespective whether the Department provides access to the requested documents, or not, and regardless whether the applicant is impecunious. Applications for non personal information are invalid unless accompanied by payment for the application fee.

The nature of documents held by the Department is such that many documents invariably contain a mix of information about the applicant and other individuals, and other non-personal information. Applicants should consider the need to pay the application fee if they choose not to limit the scope of the application to personal information about themselves.

Processing charges

A range of discretionary charges is set under the FOI Act Regulations. If a charge is levied, for financially disadvantaged applicants or those issued with prescribed pensioner concession cards, the charge payable is reduced by 25%.

The following charges may apply:

- Time dealing with non-personal information applications (per hour, or pro rata) \$30.00
- Photocopying – per page \$ 0 .20
- Transcribing from tape, film or computer (per hour, or pro rata) \$30.00
- Duplicating a tape, film or computer information Actual Cost
- Delivery, packaging and postage Actual Cost

Where the FOI processing fees are likely to exceed \$25.00, FOI Staff will provide applicants with an ‘Estimate of Costs’. This process provides an opportunity to reduce the charges by re-considering the number of documents required to satisfy the application.

Deposits

A deposit may be required for part of the estimated charges 25%
 Further deposit may be required to meet the charges for dealing with the application. 75%

Access Arrangements

Access to documents may be granted by way of inspection, a copy of a document (or part thereof), a copy of an audio or video tape, a computer disk, a transcript of a recorded, shorthand or encoded document from which words can be reproduced.

Notice of Decision

As soon as possible, but in any case within 45 days, applicants will be provided with a notice of decision, which will include details such as:

- the date on which the decision was made
- the name and the designation of the officer who made the decision
- if the document is an exempt document the reasons for classifying the matter exempt
- the fact that access is given to an edited document
- information on the right to review and the procedures to be followed to exercise those rights

Internal Review

Applicants who are dissatisfied with a Freedom of Information response are entitled to ask the Department for an internal review of the initial decision made by the Department. Applications for internal review must be made in writing within 30 days of receiving the notice of decision. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the review within 15 days.

If an applicant disagrees with the internal review decision they may then apply to the Information Commissioner for an external review. Details of the rights to review are provided in notices of decision.

Amendment of Personal Information

The Act also provides a right to amend personal information about the applicant in documents of the Department if the information is inaccurate, incomplete, out of date or misleading. The onus is on the applicant to satisfy the Department that information requires amendment.

Applications to amend personal information about the applicant must:

- be in writing,
- give enough details to enable the document that contains the information to be identified,
- give details of matters in relation to which the person believes the information is inaccurate, incomplete, out of date or misleading,
- give the person's reasons for holding that belief,
- give details of the amendment that the person wishes to have made*,
- give an address in Australia to which notices under this Act can be sent,
- give any other information or details required under the regulations, and
- be lodged at an office of the Department.

*The application must state whether the amendment is to be made by altering information; striking out or deleting information; inserting information; inserting a note in relation to the record, or in two or more of those ways.

As soon as possible, but in any case within 30 days, applicants will be provided with a notice of decision, which will inform:

- the reasons for the decision
- the right of appeal or review, and
- the right to request that a notation be added to the document, disputing the accuracy of the information.

The Department is not allowed to obliterate or remove information or destroy a document unless the Information Commissioner has certified in writing that it is impracticable to retain the information or that, in his or her opinion, the prejudice or disadvantage to the FOI applicant of the continued existence of the information outweighs the public interest in maintaining a complete record of information.