
Appendix four – About the audit

Audit objective

This audit assessed the effectiveness of the Department of Communities and Justice's planning, design, and oversight of the statutory child protection system in NSW.

Audit scope and focus

The audit focused primarily on the Department of Communities and Justice. Five non-government organisations that DCJ contracts to provide family support and out of home care services across the State were also included in the audit.

Audit criteria

We assessed whether DCJ was effective in ensuring:

- there is quality information to understand and effectively plan for child protection services and responses
- there are effective processes to manage, support, resource, and coordinate child protection service models and staffing levels
- there is effective oversight of the quality and outputs of child protection services and drivers of continuous improvement.

The policies, practices, and management reporting of the five NGOs was assessed for effectiveness in relation to the following:

- the quality of data used to understand service requirements
- the arrangements for operational service delivery to meet identified needs
- the governance arrangements to deliver safe and quality out of home care services under contract arrangements with DCJ.

Audit exclusions

The audit did not:

- examine the merits of government policy objectives and legislative principles
- examine targeted earlier intervention initiatives
- assess staff work, health and safety and wellbeing.

Audit approach

Our procedures included:

1. Interviewing:
 - 32 meetings with Senior Executives, 12 with DCJ and 20 with NGOs
 - 50 meetings with caseworkers and their managers, 42 with DCJ staff and eight with NGOs
 - 45 meetings with policy officers and subject matter experts, 35 with DCJ staff and ten with NGOs
 - 8 meetings with community stakeholders.

2. Examining:
 - approximately 5,800 documents, of which over 4,300 were provided by DCJ
 - data provided by DCJ and NGOs.

The audit approach was complemented by quality assurance processes within the Audit Office to ensure compliance with professional standards.

Audit methodology

Our performance audit methodology is designed to satisfy Australian Auditing Standard ASAE 3500 Performance Engagements and other professional standards. The standards require the audit team to comply with relevant ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance and draw a conclusion on the audit objective. Our processes have also been designed to comply with requirements specified in the *Government Sector Audit Act 1983* and the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the cooperation, constructive support, and participation by the five non-government organisations (Barnardos Australia, Burrun Dalai Aboriginal Corporation, KARI Ltd, Life Without Barriers, and Wesley Community Services Limited) and the Department of Communities and Justice in this audit.

Audit cost

The estimated cost of the audit is approximately \$860,000.