

Child Care Shame

Report finds system failing kids at risk

"Victorian Government Departments are Bomb Proof"

Melbourne's MX, Thursday 26 November 2009

Victoria's Community Services Minister Lisa Neville is under pressure to resign after an Ombudsman's report children had been placed in the care of sex offenders and even died while in care.

The watchdog's damning report found almost a quarter of abused children were not given case workers, and staff manipulated figures to meet State Government performance goals [<http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/www/html/88-media-releases.asprevealed>].

Ombudsman George Brouwer's report into the Department of Human Services Child Protection Program exposed cases in which children had died or been seriously injured by carers.

Yet these cases had attracted little or no external scrutiny, Brouwer said.

In Gippsland, almost three in five children who had been reported at risk had not been allocated a case worker.

The report showed a system in crisis, the Opposition said.

A spokesman for Opposition Leader Ted Baillieu said Neville should have resigned long ago, and this should seal her fate.

Neville admitted there were significant failures in the system and said each of the Ombudsman's 42 recommendations would be implemented.

Neville said she was "disturbed" that figures had been manipulated.

"If this is happening, it's unacceptable and will stop," she told reporters.

The department had asked for an investigation of these allegations and would report back within three months, Neville said.

She said case workers spent 50 per cent of their time in the Children's Court and this was a significant factor in staff attrition.

Attorney-General Rob Hulls said the Children's Court would be overhauled to address flaws in the system.

LISA Comment: Here we see the Minister taking a lashing, whilst her department protects itself from scrutiny better than the Baghdad green zone.

The Department of Human Services has unlimited power over people. Anyone who is effective in exposing their questionable activities, is quashed by the department's despotic jack boot. We suffered their wrath in the form of a six page ministerial approved directive very assertively against us, but with no right of appeal. The department is so powerful, they can use Robert Mugabe style justice in Australia.

We are not surprised many children had no case worker. Case workers are as scarce as hen's teeth within the whole of the Department of Human Services. Even so, they have a conflict of interest.

This is especially so in Disability Services. Case workers and key workers intended to represent the interests of the client, the person with a disability, with the department as the service provider, are employees of, and paid by the department.

This is conflict of interest similar to that where the service and the inspection are under the same Minister. Community visitors and department's group homes which they inspect, are under the same Minister.

There is no end to the covert questionable activities of this Victorian Government Department. The Department of Human Services is accountable to no one. It even thumbs it's nose at the findings of the Auditor General of Victoria in his 2008 report on accommodation for people with a disability.

http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/reports_publications/reports_by_year/2008/20080312_disability_accom.aspx.

Victorians with a disability and their families wonder if they will ever get a real and even playing field complaints process. A complaints board consisting of just people from outside industry, with real power to direct the department to provide services within the direction, intention and spirit of their extensive and very comprehensive care policies standards and values.

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