

Commonwealth Grants Commission State Visit to New South Wales

Monday 31 March – Friday 4 April, 2008

Introductory Brief



New South Wales

T R E A S U R Y

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INTRODUCTORY BRIEF
for the
COMMONWEALTH GRANTS COMMISSION'S
STATE VISIT TO NEW SOUTH WALES
31 March 2008 – 4 April 2008

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PART 1: OVERVIEW

This introductory brief provides background to the Commonwealth Grants Commission's State Visit to New South Wales from Monday 31 March 2008 to Friday 4 April 2008 in connection with its 2010 Review of State Revenue Sharing Relativities.

It outlines the major themes New South Wales will emphasise in the State Visit, and provides some background information on the departments and agencies that will be involved in the discussions with Commissioners during the Visit.

This introductory brief is not designed to be a stand-alone document. The State Visit should be viewed within the totality of the submissions already provided by New South Wales, and to be provided in future as part of the 2010 Review.

Key themes

The State Visit is designed to provide the Commission with an insight into State-specific aspects of service delivery in New South Wales that add to the costs of providing services.

Many of the underlying drivers of the cost of providing services are similar across all States. At a very basic level education costs, for example, are primarily driven by the number of school aged children a State has to educate; health costs are primarily driven by the number of people in a State who suffer illness; the cost of providing roads is influenced by the road transport needs of a State's population; a State's need for public safety services is influenced by the size of its population.

However, at another level the costs of providing these services are heavily influenced by the 'type' of demand coming from these underlying drivers. For example, the educational needs of all school aged children are not uniform; people who are ill are not uniform; the road transport needs of a given population will not be uniform; and a State's need for public safety services may be influenced by factors extraneous to the State's population.

The factor that sets New South Wales most apart from the other States is having a city of the size, diversity and international profile of Sydney.

These elements of size, diversity and international profile create unique challenges in the provision of services in New South Wales, stemming from urban density and congestion; cultural and linguistic diversity; and 'global city' influences. Additionally, New South Wales has Australia's largest (in number) Indigenous population, though one that is more Sydney and regional centre located than in most other States.

These are the main themes that will be explored in the discussions and visits organised for the Commission's State Visit to New South Wales. Additionally, the impact of drugs and issues surrounding the provision of infrastructure are sub-themes which are common to some of the main themes to be explored in discussions.

At the same time, it should not be overlooked that New South Wales has a rural population of around 2½ million people, almost equal to the combined populations of South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Fast-growing and rapidly changing regional areas provide additional challenges in adapting service provision to developing and changing demands.

Urban density and congestion

In population terms, Sydney and Melbourne stand apart in comparison to other Australian cities, and Sydney is 15 per cent larger than Melbourne. Sydney is more than twice the size of Australia's third largest city, Brisbane, and 40 times larger than Darwin. Sydney contains one fifth of Australia's population in less than one six-hundredth of Australia's land area.

Sydney contains Australia's most densely populated suburbs. Maximum population densities for Sydney suburbs reach 9,000-11,000 persons per square kilometre, compared to 4,000-6,000 in Melbourne, 3,000-6,000 in Brisbane, and less in the other State capitals.

Sydney is also unique with its multiple CBDs. While Sydney's CBD is the main financial centre, major CBDs are also located in North Sydney, Parramatta, Chatswood, and Bondi Junction. Newcastle and Wollongong also form part of a greater metropolitan area.

Each day over 230,000 people in Sydney travel to and from work on trains; over 1.3 million take to the Sydney road network in buses, cars and other motor vehicles. Around 24 per cent of Sydney commuter journeys utilise public transport compared to around 14 per cent in the other State capitals.

The Commission currently assesses urban influences in some spending categories and in different ways: as locational influences (e.g., hospital inpatients, urban transit, housing and schools), urban influences (e.g., roads) or urban complexity influences (e.g., police services and public safety).

However, Commission staff have noted that the conceptual justification for recognising urban influences will need to be re-established for the 2010 Review.

In discussions with agencies we will explore the impacts urban density and congestion has on the costs of providing services, from the impact on public transport, road funding and traffic management costs, to methods of detecting perpetrators of crime, to the impact on infrastructure costs as more intense levels of demand create a need for more complex and expensive infrastructure.

Cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD)

According to the 2006 Census, more than 32 per cent of Sydney's residents were born overseas, compared with a weighted average for the rest of Australia's capital cities of 26 per cent; 4.8 per cent of Sydney's population was born overseas and arrived in the past five years compared to 4.1 per cent in the rest of Australia's State capitals.

Nearly 30 per cent of Sydney's population speak a language other than English at home, compared to 18.4 per cent in the other State capitals. Of those in Sydney born overseas, 13.9 per cent speak English either not well or not at all, compared to 10.1 per cent in the other State capitals. (If Melbourne, the other major ethnically diverse State capital in Australia, also is excluded the State capital comparators fall to 12.7 per cent and 6.8 per cent respectively).

This diversity is an asset. However, it also requires planning and innovation by the NSW Government and its agencies, particularly when delivering programs and services.

In the past the Commission has recognised cultural and linguistic background as one of the population characteristics having a significant impact on the use and unit costs of providing services. However, in simplifying assessments for the 2010 Review, there is a danger that what might be regarded as the 'least important' of the population characteristics impinging on the cost of services might be overlooked.

In some discussion papers, for example in Community and Other Health Services, Commission staff have expressed a predisposition to not include an adjustment for CALD.

In discussions with agencies and visits to service facilities we will look at the particular service needs of migrant and ethnic population groups in areas like education, housing, health, and the justice system (courts and gaols).

'Global city' influences

Sydney is Australia's major international business, tourist and 'event' destination, and entry point for trade. It has internationally recognised attractions in the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Sydney Opera House.

More than 10 million international passengers passed through Sydney Airport in 2007, almost half the Australia total, and half of Australia's international air freight was handled in Sydney. More than 60 per cent of Australia's international air mail passed through Sydney airport.

In 2005-06, more than 30 per cent of Australian imports arriving by sea in capital city ports entered through Sydney/Port Botany.

Sydney is Australia's most internationally recognised city. According to the *Anholt City Brands Index 2007* Sydney is the world's favourite city brand for the second year in a row, and was in the top three in 2005 with London and Paris.

Sydney is home to:

- 81 per cent of Asia Pacific finance and insurance regional operations in Australia;
- 80 per cent of all banks including the majority of leading international banks; and
- 65 per cent of regional headquarters and regional operating centres of all international companies in Australia.

This international focus to Sydney provides opportunities for crime and drug importation and increases the risks of terrorism and related security concerns.

High levels of drug availability and usage increase costs across a wide range of service provision, from the justice system to community services and the health system. Heightened security concerns in view of the potential threat of terrorism produce increased costs in counter-terrorism protection and preparedness for potential events.

Indigenous issues

NSW has Australia's largest (in number) indigenous population, and a more urbanised indigenous population than other States.

In the 2004 Review, the Commission accepted the conceptual case that Indigenous people have different costs of service compared with non-Indigenous people. These differences were recognised in many expenses categories. The Commission also accepted the conceptual case that different groups of Indigenous people had different costs of service provision and in many categories it disaggregated the Indigenous population. For some categories, it concluded the additional costs associated with the traditional versus non-traditional lifestyles of Indigenous persons were best captured using the costs associated with remote and non-remote Indigenous persons.

For the 2010 Review, the Commission has accepted the conceptual case that Indigenous people have different costs of service compared with non-Indigenous people, but it has not accepted the case for disaggregating the Indigenous population.

Currently, Commission staff do not propose to disaggregate the Indigenous population unless a conceptual case is established for splitting the Indigenous population and that case can be supported by reliable and robust data.

In discussions with agencies, New South Wales will support the view that the needs of major city and regional-centre based Indigenous populations are no less than those of remote Indigenous populations.

PART 2: BACKGROUND ON PRESENTING AGENCIES

THE ROADS AND TRAFFIC AUTHORITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES (RTA)

The RTA is a NSW statutory authority and its primary responsibilities are to manage the road network, provide road capacity and maintenance solutions, test and license drivers and register and inspect vehicles, and improve road safety.

Road Network

The road network that the RTA manages includes: 17,912 kilometres of State roads; 2,946 kilometres of regional and local roads in the Unincorporated Area of NSW; 4,998 bridges, including major culverts and nine vehicular ferries; and 3,630 traffic signals and other traffic facilities, systems and corridor assets.

There are considerable challenges facing the RTA in managing the maintenance and renewal of the existing road and bridge network across NSW to provide and support safe, reliable access on State Roads.

Traffic Management

Traffic volumes on the seven major routes to and from the Sydney CBD have increased by around 44.6 per cent during the past 16 years, while the trend in average peak hour speeds has remained consistent.

The Transport Management Centre (TMC) is a state-of-the-art facility responsible for managing special events, responding to planned and unplanned incidents, and disseminating information to road users.

The TMC uses advanced monitoring, communication and traffic flow systems. These systems aim to make journey times more consistent, respond to and clear traffic incidents as fast as possible and with quality, up-to-date information, help road users choose the best routes, travel times, and modes of travel. The TMC's network of 700 closed-circuit television cameras monitors traffic throughout key locations in Sydney and along 800 kilometres of the Pacific Highway as well as other parts of NSW.

The RTA uses an innovative system called the Sydney Coordinated Adaptive Traffic System (SCATS) to manage traffic signals across New South Wales. The RTA designed SCATS responds to traffic demand in real time and coordinates traffic signals to ensure the smooth flow of traffic.

Licensing and vehicle registration

As at 30 June 2007, there were 4.58 million NSW licensed drivers and 5.08 million NSW registered vehicles. In 2006–07 the RTA managed approximately 19 million registration and licensing transactions (an increase of 12 per cent from the previous year).

The RTA has a network of 129 motor registries and a contact centre in Newcastle. Five Government Access Centres and 33 agencies also provide RTA services. Services are also provided at 40 itinerant sites in remote areas.

THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

The Ministry of Transport was established in 2003 as a lead agency of the transport portfolio group.

In 2006-07, the Ministry of Transport was responsible for a State budget allocation of more than \$3.4 billion. The majority of expenses comprise grants and subsidies, which were \$3,387.3 million in 2006-07. Transport service providers, such as the Rail Corporation of NSW (RailCorp) and the State Transit Authority (STA), are predominantly funded from the Budget by these grants and subsidies from the Ministry.

Transport in Sydney

The transport task for NSW is complex and costly. Sydney is Australia's largest city and its urban form is characterised by areas with very high urban density, urban sprawl and topographic challenges. Sydney faces particular transport costs that are not replicated in the smaller capital cities.

Very large urban centres:

- incur higher capital costs due to the need to use more expensive modes of transport, such as heavy rail and underground rail, in order to carry large numbers of people;
- utilise a greater mix of transport options to reflect the diversity of transport needs and operating situations (e.g., rail, bus, ferry, light rail, dedicated busways, taxi, monorail in Sydney); and
- operate a more complex transport network in gross scale and in terms of interconnections between modes.

Sydney has one of the most complex rail systems in the world, spread over a very large geographic region. Particular challenges arise because of the longevity of Sydney's heavy rail system, which has been built over many decades, going back to the nineteenth century. The metropolitan passenger network in NSW is also used to transport freight to key destinations.

Buses are a very important mode of public transport in both the urban and non-urban areas of NSW. The Ministry of Transport is responsible for the contracting and regulation of passenger bus services in NSW. In Sydney alone on an average working day Sydney Buses carry over 600,000 people on a network of over 300 routes.

Sydney operates the largest ferry operation of its type in the world. This is a reflection of the use of Sydney Harbour and its tributaries as a means of connecting different parts of Sydney which would otherwise be separated by geographic barriers. Water based transport is almost as expensive as heavy rail on a passenger per kilometre basis.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The Department of Health is responsible for State-wide policy and planning, performance management and monitoring, and strategic financial and asset management for the NSW public health system.

In New South Wales, eight Area Health Services (AHSs) provide health services in a wide range of settings, from primary care posts in the remote outback to metropolitan tertiary health centres. Between them, AHS manage over 200 public hospitals and other health facilities.

Indigenous issues

NSW Health aims to enhance and strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal people and other key groups to achieve measurable health improvements for Aboriginal people.

The current focus is on Otitis Media screening, oral health, family violence and mental health. The Otitis Media Screening Program aims to reduce the impact of Otitis Media and associated hearing loss through a statewide screening and referral service, as well as education for parents and communities. The program screened 19,403 Aboriginal children in 2006-07 and trained a further 60 Aboriginal health workers in audiometry.

The Centre for Aboriginal Health develops, coordinates and influences policy, strategic planning, services and program design to ensure that they are culturally inclusive and accessible to Aboriginal people living in NSW.

The NSW Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy is a primary health care strategy implemented in seven sites in 2001 to improve perinatal mortality and morbidity. In 2006 the evaluation of the program demonstrated marked improvement in access to antenatal care by Aboriginal mothers in the program areas. NSW Health in association with the NSW Department of Community Services plans to expand the Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy as a statewide service increasing to over 30 programs.

Cultural and linguistic diversity

NSW Health aims to provide health services coordinated to meet each individual's needs, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Department and AHS activities to achieve this include:

- providing refugees with a comprehensive health assessment on arrival, full immunisation within 12 months of settlement and ongoing coordinated healthcare;
- establishing Multicultural Health Units in some facilities;
- implementing a pilot program which aims to provide health services across Sydney West Area Health Service with videoconferencing mobiles/portable units. The new units are expected to enhance the effective provision of healthcare interpreter services to clients from culturally and linguistically diverse communities;

- improving access to interpreter services in hospital emergency departments, which has increased the percentage of patients born overseas presenting to emergency departments who requested an interpreter and received one from 54 per cent to 79.3 per cent in the Hunter and New England AHS; and
- producing written resource materials and DVDs on health issues in a variety of languages for distribution amongst CALD communities.

Emergency preparedness

An integrated clinical and corporate risk management process throughout NSW Health seeks to improve the capacity of the NSW health system to:

- prepare for new and emerging health issues and risks including pandemic influenza;
- strengthen national and international health surveillance networks to ensure rapid mobilisation in the face of emerging health issues and threats;
- enhance local and statewide systems to monitor health, health risks in the population and community concerns;
- expand ‘real time’ surveillance in emergency departments to monitor for acute health conditions including influenza, injuries and drug and alcohol related conditions;
- ensure the health system can maintain operations in the event of external emergencies; and
- build the capacity of the NSW health system to prepare for the arrival of new and emerging communities arriving under the Australian humanitarian program.

NSW Health regularly revises public health plans for large public gatherings. In 2006-07, regular contingency planning meetings were held for events such as APEC 2007 and World Youth Day 2008.

DEPARTMENT OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS (DAA)

Among other functions, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs:

- advocates for the voice of Aboriginal people in New South Wales to be heard in the development of New South Wales Government policies and services;
- monitors, supports and reports on the effectiveness of New South Wales government agencies in their development and delivery of policies and services affecting Aboriginal people;
- supports and monitors non-government and business initiatives aimed at helping Aboriginal people to establish and maintain their rights and overcome ongoing social and economic disadvantage; and
- provides expert specialist knowledge of Aboriginal affairs within the New South Wales Government.

Indigenous issues in NSW

NSW has Australia's largest (in number) indigenous population, at 138,506 (2006 Census, without making any adjustments for respondents who did not state Indigenous background). Indigenous people make up 2.1 per cent of the population.

The Indigenous population of NSW is also more urbanised than in the other large States. Based on the remoteness classification used by the ABS (2006 Census), 76 per cent of Indigenous people in NSW live in major cities or inner regional areas, compared to 58 per cent in SA, 49 per cent in Queensland and 43 per cent in WA. Under the ABS definition, NT does not have any major cities or inner regional areas and 80 per cent of Indigenous people are classified as living in remote or very remote areas (with the remaining 20 per cent in outer regional areas).

The needs of major city and regional-centre based Indigenous populations should not be overlooked. Notwithstanding a presumed better access to services on the part of NSW' mostly urban and regional-centre based Indigenous population, the 2005 *Two Ways Together Report on Indicators* detailed the social disadvantage of NSW Indigenous people. For example:

- the life expectancy of Indigenous people in NSW was estimated to be about 20 years less than for the general population in 1998-2001;
- in the period 1999-2001 in NSW the infant mortality rate for Indigenous infants was more than twice as high as for non-Indigenous infants;
- in 2001-2002 the rate of hospital separation for cardiovascular diseases among Indigenous people was double that of non-Indigenous people; and
- Aboriginal households are significantly over-represented in mainstream social housing, accounting for 7.1 per cent of households in public housing and 6.6 per cent of households in mainstream community housing in 2003.

DEPARTMENT OF AGEING, DISABILITY AND HOME CARE (DADHC)

DADHC is responsible for delivering programs and policies that assist older people, people with a disability and their carers to participate in community life. The Department is both a purchaser and provider of services and shares responsibility for clients with a number of other Government agencies that deliver services in areas such as health care, transport, family and children's services, and housing.

Key services provided by the Department include:

- community support programs including respite, skills development and day activity programs, therapy, case management, personal assistance and community care services for frail older people, people with a disability and their families and carers;
- intensive personal care (attendant care programs) in home settings for people with a disability; and
- specialist accommodation such as community housing or large residential centres to provide care for people with a disability who cannot remain in their own home.

Community Support

The vast majority of people, young and old, are cared for in their own home with the support of family and friends. DADHC provides a number of services that are designed to complement the assistance already provided, strengthening rather than replacing it.

In 2006-07, community support services were provided directly to: 2,580 clients in 78 DADHC operated and funded respite centres; 3,570 clients in DADHC funded, non-centre based respite; 9,950 clients in Day Programs and community engagement programs; 4,840 clients in post-school programs; and 20,900 clients served by therapy, prevention and early intervention services funded or operated by DADHC.

Specialist Services

The majority of people with a disability live independently or with family. However, a small number of people with moderate to high support needs require a great deal more support in their everyday lives. This is especially the case where needs are complex and/or medical in nature.

At the end of 2006-07, DADHC provided services to 1,380 clients in 303 DADHC-operated group homes and 1,165 clients in 10 DADHC-operated Large Residential Centres; DADHC-funded services covered 2,010 clients in group homes and a further 1,585 in other Community Living accommodation models, and 475 clients in Large Residential Centres.

Home Care Service of NSW

The Home Care Service of NSW provides home-based assistance to frail older people and younger people with a disability and their carers. It aims to assist people who are having difficulty managing in their own homes to remain at home by providing basic support services. Key services provided include: domestic assistance with cleaning, washing, shopping and bill paying; personal care assistance with bathing, dressing and other personal care tasks; and respite care for a primary caregiver through providing a substitute carer.

In 2006-07, 54,000 clients received 3.8 million hours of service from Home Care staff. This included 1.85 million visits to deliver 1.43 million personal care hours, 1.4 million visits to deliver 1.89 million domestic assistance hours and 180,000 visits to deliver 460,000 respite hours.

Eight Aboriginal branches provide a wide variety of services specifically for indigenous clients. Aboriginal Home Care branches employ approximately 300 Aboriginal people. Aboriginal managers, service coordinators and frontline care workers deliver culturally responsive services to more than 2,000 Aboriginal clients across the state, which constitutes over 4 per cent of the overall Home Care client population.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING (HOUSING NSW)

The Department of Housing's core objectives are to maintain a strong and fair public housing system for people most in need; support a robust and diverse community housing system;

drive innovative solutions to meet a range of housing needs; and work in partnership to strengthen the capacity of individuals, families and communities.

The Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) is a statutory authority which plans and administers the policies, programs and asset base for the delivery of Aboriginal housing in New South Wales. This includes resource allocation, sector-wide policy, strategic planning and monitoring outcomes and performance in the Aboriginal housing sector.

Public housing is provided to people on low incomes who need support services to help them live independently, such as the frail elderly, vulnerable young people, homeless people and people with a disability, as well as people who have problems accessing affordable and suitable housing in the private rental market.

Provision of housing

Housing NSW provides property and tenancy management for households living in over 126,300 public housing homes. It funds and regulates not-for-profit organisations to provide property and tenancy management for more than 15,600 properties (including crisis accommodation). In addition, it provides property and tenancy management for more than 4,300 properties owned by the Aboriginal Housing Office.

In 2006-07, around 339,000 people were housed, of which 262,000 live in public housing and 77,000 in community housing (including crisis accommodation). Around 57,000 assistances were provided to over 33,000 households in the private rental market through Rentstart, Tenancy Guarantees and Special Assistance Subsidies.

Nearly 9,000 new tenancies were established in public housing and over 400 through the Aboriginal Housing Office. The proportion of tenants who are newly housed in public housing each year that have special needs remains steady at just over 52 percent. Special needs tenants are the young, the elderly, Aboriginal people and people with a disability. In community housing, where special needs also includes tenants with support needs, from non-English speaking backgrounds and newly arrived migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, the proportion is over 80 per cent.

It is estimated that approximately 9,800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households are housed within public housing, and a further 1,000 in housing managed by mainstream community housing providers. In addition, the Aboriginal housing sector in NSW provides approximately 9,000 dwellings specifically for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people.

Asset management

Improvements to dwellings range from minor repairs and painting, through modification of homes for special needs to major upgrade works.

Housing NSW is reforming maintenance service delivery to address long-term maintenance backlogs and fire safety work. The Maintenance Reform Program (MRP) is a planned and systematic service delivery model rather than the current responsive model. The benefits will be greater efficiencies as well as improvements in time taken for individual work and cost savings. In 2006-07, a trial began in Sutherland, followed by 16 other pilots throughout NSW, with work completed on 28,000 properties. Initial results confirm that time and cost

savings were made by bundling and programming the work in a systematic and planned approach.

During the year, Housing NSW spent \$64.5 million on other planned maintenance and special projects, including painting, fencing, upgrading kitchens and bathrooms, new floor coverings, and improving security and design on estates. In addition, 15,370 properties were upgraded to meet fire-safety standards at a cost of \$65 million. Improvements were made to multi-unit buildings and building common areas, including stair halls, and installation of some sprinkler systems.

Housing NSW spent \$187 million on responsive maintenance and service contracts in 2006/07.

In 2006-07, the Department spent \$8 million modifying 3,500 homes to house people with mobility related disabilities.

The Department currently is implementing a number of major redevelopments and initiatives, including: the staged re-development of the West Dubbo estate over the next three years; a public private partnership with community, government and private sector participation in a staged redevelopment of the existing 833 social housing dwellings at Bonnyrigg; the staged redevelopment of approximately 1,000 properties on the Minto public housing estate; and 228 new homes under the Inner West Redevelopment Strategy.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES (DoCS)

The Department of Community Services (DoCS) is the largest child protection agency in Australia. It delivers a wide range of services – community support, prevention and early intervention, child protection and out-of-home care – through its head office in Ashfield (Sydney), 17 regional offices and 80 community services centres.

Key services provided by the DoCS include: community services such as community development and capacity building, crisis support and disaster recovery services; prevention and early intervention services providing early support to vulnerable families; statutory child protection services; and out-of-home care services for children and young people whose ongoing protection means that they are unable to live at home.

DoCS employs almost 4,000 full-time and part-time staff, including people from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to help it identify and meet community needs.

Community Support

Community support services are provided mainly through:

- the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), which provides funding to more than 380 non-government organisations in NSW to deliver support, outreach,

advocacy, living skills development and supported accommodation services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless; and

- coordinating immediate and longer-term welfare and recovery services during natural and other disasters under the State Disaster Plan. During 2006-07, DoCS responded to 31 natural and other disasters across NSW. DoCS also participated in a number of emergency management exercises, including a series of exercises conducted by the State Emergency Management Committee to practice activating the Sydney Safety Sites as part of the Sydney CBD Emergency Sub Plan.

Prevention and early intervention

Prevention and early intervention strategies provide targeted support to vulnerable children and families to prevent them from entering or escalating in the child protection system. Services like home visiting, supported playgroups and access to childcare can all help families who have young children and who face specific problems such as domestic violence, drug or alcohol misuse, mental health issues, lack of support, parental learning difficulties or intellectual disability, or child behaviour management problems.

The Brighter Futures early intervention program offers intensive support to vulnerable families, focusing on families' needs to address the wide range of factors that can contribute to poor outcomes for children and young people. At June 2007 there were 26 DoCS community services centres (CSCs) with operational Brighter Futures teams. It is anticipated that teams will operate in every CSC by June 2008.

Statutory child protection

DoCS responds to reports of child abuse and neglect and requests for assistance in NSW. Reports to DoCS 24-hour Helpline can be made by members of the community or mandatory reporters such as teachers, health workers or police. In 2005-06, the Department received 241,000 reports concerning 109,500 children; 286,033 reports were received in 2006-07.

Out of Home Care

Children who cannot live at home are placed with relatives, foster carers, in residential care or independent living arrangements. DoCS aims to keep children with their families wherever possible.

There were 12,712 children and young people in out-of-home care as at 30 June 2007. There has been an increase since 2006 in the rate per thousand of children and young people in out-of-home care, from 6.7 to 8.1.

Most children and young people in care require either relative and kinship care or general foster care. Those with high and complex support needs may require a higher level of care through an intensive foster care service or placement with a residential service.

DoCS aims to place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with related or non-related Indigenous caregivers. More than 3,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were placed in accordance with this principle as at 30 June 2007, or 85 per cent of all indigenous children in out-of-home care in NSW. The use of kinship care for Indigenous children is the highest of all states and territories.

The recruitment and retention of foster carers, including recruitment of Aboriginal and multicultural foster carers, remains a priority for DoCS and non-government organisations delivering out-of-home care services.

The Metropolitan Muslim Foster Care Project has been developed to address difficulties in recruiting and retaining Muslim foster carers for Muslim children and young people requiring out-of-home care.

NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE FORCE

The NSW Police Force is now one of the largest police organisations in the English speaking world, with an authorised police strength level of 15,206; 2,876 field and specialist support staff; and 1,039 staff in corporate services.

Eighty local area commands (LACs) – in six regional commands – operate from more than 452 police locations delivering policing services to communities. A number of specialist commands complement NSW Police’s operational capability, leading investigations or providing support and intelligence to other police teams.

Regional commands

A look at four of the regional commands demonstrates the diversity of the policing task in NSW.

Central Metropolitan Region stretches from North Sydney to Waterfall in the south, and includes the Sydney CBD. A high concentration of licensed premises in the CBD makes alcohol related crime a major priority. The region also contains major transport interchanges, including 16 major bus interchanges, the Circular Quay ferry terminal and one of the busiest rail networks in Australia. These transport hubs are often identified as hot spots for antisocial behaviour, robberies and assaults. Central Metropolitan Region also contains many of the designated critical infrastructure – Sydney Harbour Bridge and Tunnel, Mascot airport complex, Kurnell oil refineries, Port Botany, Opera House, NSW Parliament – and therefore is a focus for counter terrorism operations.

South West Metropolitan Region includes 14 LACs from Marrickville in the inner west to Bundanoon in the south. With more than 130 different cultural and language groups the region is one of the most diverse in the greater Sydney area. This cultural and linguistic diversity poses a number of unique challenges in both policing and in developing community partnerships in policing.

Southern Region covers a diverse geographical setting from the Snowy Mountains to rural and southern coastal areas. The influx of more than two million visitors to the snowfields each year produces a corresponding rise in traffic offences, alcohol related crime, stealing and malicious damage. In the region’s agricultural areas the economic impact of drought has contributed to an increase in mortgage closure, domestic violence and mental health issues, including suicide.

Western Region encompasses approximately 65 per cent of the state. Twenty four of the NSW Police’s 56 Aboriginal community liaison officers (ACLOs) work in the Western

Region with police and Aboriginal communities to help develop and monitor programs that improve partnerships between police and Aboriginal people. Rural crime including stock theft is a priority throughout the region. Cross border jurisdiction issues – cross border policing, attending courts across the border, and transporting prisoners interstate – are also important in a region which borders three other jurisdictions.

Specialist Commands

Policing in NSW is supported by many specialist commands, some focused on high volume crime and others often involved in long, complex investigations that require a considerable investment of resources.

The *Counter Terrorism & Special Tactics* (CT&ST) is the central body responsible for prevention, preparedness and response to high risk situations, and all acts of terrorism in NSW. CT&ST involvement in Operation Pendennis, a joint operation between the NSW Police Force and other law enforcement agencies, led in November 2005 to the arrest and charging of nine people in NSW with conspiracy to commit acts in preparation/planning for a terrorist act. Their trial commenced in the Supreme Court of NSW in February 2008 and is anticipated to continue for 8 to 10 months.

In May 2006, the *Middle Eastern Organised Crime Squad* (MEOCS) assumed the responsibilities of Task Force Gain investigations, which commenced in October 2003 following an increase of violence in the South West of Sydney. In 2006-07 MEOCS arrested 736 people on 1,846 charges.

The *Asian Crime Squad* investigations include large scale drug importation and distribution, money laundering, counterfeit credit card fraud, murder, extortion, prostitution, kidnapping and illegal immigrants. These investigations are conducted within a local, national and international context. The Asian Crime Squad aims to disrupt or dismantle entire crime syndicates, from the major importers and manufacturers, to mid level facilitators and street level suppliers.

Other specialist units include the Gangs Squad, Public Order and Riot Squad, Commuter Crime Unit, NSW Special Crime Unit, State Protection Group, Robbery and Serious Crime Squad, Property Crime Squad, Firearms and Regulated Industries Crime Squad, the Drug Squad, Traffic Services Branch, the Aviation Support Branch and Marine Area Command.

Forensic Laboratory

In a densely populated urban environment where, paradoxically, much criminal behaviour can occur unnoticed or where witnesses may be reluctant to get involved, forensics assumes increased importance in solving crime.

At a cost of \$12 million, the NSW Police Force opened a purpose built, 2,358 square metre forensic laboratory in December 2006. Funding of \$7.3 million has been allocated for additional personnel and operating expenses, including 22 scientists to introduce new services. In addition, six crime scene officers have been allocated to establish the Specialist Location Recovery Unit and enhance the Document Examination Section.

New services include forensic biology and forensic chemistry, and an Explosives Identification Unit with an environment that can accommodate dangerous items in a safe

manner. The new lab also provides better facilities for traditional forensic specialties, including the Clandestine Laboratory Unit, Documents Examination and Fingerprint Laboratory.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Among other things, key services delivered by the Department include: providing courts and tribunals to resolve civil disputes and criminal matters; providing Aboriginal justice programs; and promoting social harmony through programs to protect rights and community standards.

Courts

The Department provides court and tribunal services through 166 regional courthouses and multi-court complexes in NSW.

Court security underpins the safe and efficient functioning of the court and justice system. Recent improvements in court security include:

- installation of perimeter security (airport style): there are now 26 courts where visitors may be subjected to personal scanning, scanning of possessions and bag searches;
- use of bail video-conferencing links in use in more than 40 courtrooms in NSW courts allowing defendants on remand to apply for bail from prison. This enhances the safety and efficiency of the courts, alleviates overcrowding in court holding cells and provides significant savings in the cost of managing and transporting prisoners; and
- use of video-conference facilities to assist victims. Victims of sexual assault and children can give their evidence by way of closed circuit television (CCTV) from a remote witness room away from the courtroom. Video conferencing can be used so victims avoid facing their accused.

Court improvements must encompass heritage issues in many courthouses of historical significance. For instance, the renovation of Court One of the King Street Courts complex, including the installation of bail-video technology, occurred in a building erected in the 1820s, making it the oldest courthouse in Sydney and one of Australia's most significant buildings.

Aboriginal justice programs

Particular groups, such as Aboriginal people, need justice programs that are tailored to suit their cultural needs. These programs strengthen the Department's ability to address the unacceptable over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.

Aboriginal Client Service Specialists (ACSS) are located at 16 courthouses across the state. These specialists assist and inform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defendants, witnesses and victims of crime about court services.

Circle Sentencing is an alternative sentencing court for adult Aboriginal offenders. It directly involves local Aboriginal people in the process of sentencing offenders, to make the outcome more meaningful and improve confidence in the criminal justice system. More than 200

circle sentences have been held in rural and regional areas across NSW since the program began at Nowra in 2002. This is now being extended to metropolitan areas.

Aboriginal Community Justice Groups comprise local people who work on a range of local criminal justice issues in cooperation with police, courts, probation and parole, juvenile justice and other areas.

CALD initiatives

The Department also is involved in activities to educate and assist culturally and linguistically diverse communities in their interaction with the justice system.

The Department communicates with culturally and linguistically diverse communities through free interpreting services and publications in community languages.

A Departmental intranet resource called ACCESSlink-CALD was developed by Diversity Services for staff with information and tips to provide an accessible service for CALD clients.

The NSW Sentencing Council assessed the impact of fines and penalty notices on vulnerable communities, including CALD clients.

The Department has embarked on a series of consultations with the Arabic speaking community. The consultations sought feedback on the best way to provide information on the justice system and Departmental services to the Arabic speaking community. Consultations involved peak Arabic Organisations and the Arabic Workers Network.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES

The Department of Corrective Services is currently responsible for 30 publicly-operated correctional centres, one privately-operated correctional centre, one juvenile correctional centre, eight periodic detention centres, 2 transitional centres for female inmates, one residential centre for female offenders with a mental health disorder, 14 24-hour court cell centres and 60 probation and parole district offices.

At the end of 2006-07 there were around 9,400 inmates in custody in NSW correctional facilities. Around 20 per cent were Indigenous, and 20.3 per cent were non-English speakers. Additionally, the Department supervises about 18,000 offenders in the community.

Security

Heightened security demands have resulted in improved detection and visitor identification programs and accommodation for special interest detainees. During 2006-07, the Department completed new visitor processing facilities at Long Bay and Goulburn Correctional Centres.

The Department uses video conferencing to reduce the costs and security risks associated with inmates moving to and from court. In 2006-07 a \$571,000 video conferencing facility was installed at the High Risk Management Unit (HRMU) at Goulburn Correctional Centre. This removed the need for high risk inmates to be taken under escort from the HRMU to the video link facility in the mainstream correctional centre. Video conferencing also was expanded to Lithgow and Broken Hill Correctional centres. Video-conferencing facilitated over 19,000 court appearances in 2006-07.

Indigenous issues

To take into account the needs of Indigenous inmates and community offenders, the Department offers a range of dedicated programs, including:

- the 'Rekindling the Spirit' program at Lismore and Tabulam, which targets Aboriginal males and Aboriginal females and their families to address the underlying causes of offending behaviour thereby reducing family violence and re-offending; and
- the 'Walking Together' project in Newtown/Redfern, which seeks to address problems of loss and lack of cultural identity that seem to affect many urban Aboriginal offenders.

In 2006-07, the Department continued development of a correctional facility at Tabulam which will give Aboriginal offenders an opportunity to participate in innovative programs, learn new work skills and find out about their culture from local Aboriginal elders. Tabulam is modelled on an existing program at Brewarrina (Yetta Dhinnakkal) and conforms with Aboriginal cultural practices.

CALD issues

In 2006-07 formal evaluation of a community pilot program for parolees of Pacific Islander background found the program successful in addressing the cultural needs of offenders. Other culturally-appropriate community programs to reduce re-offending were piloted, including an Anger Transformation program for Arabic speaking offenders at Parramatta and an alcohol and other drugs program for offenders of Vietnamese background at Fairfield.

In 2006-07 the Departmental Calendar of Religious and Cultural Events included 39 events and the Department continued to offer a menu of culturally appropriate meals including Halal and Kosher.

To meet the needs of offenders from culturally diverse backgrounds, the Department employed during 2006-07:

- Arabic client service officers in Bankstown and Parramatta to provide specialised programs and services;
- a Vietnamese client service officer and a designated Vietnamese probation and parole officer in Fairfield; and
- a Pacific-Islander probation and parole officer in Mt Druitt.

The Department's primary training for all custodial officers and community staff includes multicultural awareness, and a voluntary one-day Cultural Awareness course is offered as well as training in Cultural Inclusiveness.

Drug issues and mental health

In 2006-07, the Department opened the Compulsory Drug Treatment Correctional Centre (CDTCC). The CDTCC provides a comprehensive abstinence-based treatment and rehabilitation to 100 repeat drug-dependent offenders. Participants are accommodated separately from the mainstream inmate population to keep drugs from being introduced and to allow participants to focus on the 3-stage program.

In February 2007 the \$9 million Mental Health Screening Unit was opened at the Silverwater Women's Correctional Centre. The ten bed facility complements a similar facility at the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre. The two units ensure offenders are assessed, appropriate treatment regimes are established and that accurate information can be provided to the courts.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION FOR A MULTICULTURAL NSW (CRC)

The Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW (CRC) is a NSW Government agency that is responsible for promoting community harmony, encouraging participation and facilitating access to government and community services.

Refugee settlement

The settlement of people from Africa into NSW has been an important focus taken up by the Commission, where a number of initiatives have been introduced to explore and improve ways of supporting these communities. A special taskforce was established to provide recommendations on African needs in the areas of accommodation, employment, youth, law, health and education. In 2006-07, the Commission completed a major report on its *Investigation into African Humanitarian Settlement in NSW*.

Resolving issues of cultural diversity

The Commission has arranged programs, supported by government and non-government stakeholders, to promote social cohesion and to alleviate the tension that had existed in Cronulla and its surrounding areas since the events of 2005. These programs have proved to be invaluable to the state of harmony in the local community and between the different cultures.

The murder of a teenager in Griffith brought a high level of media scrutiny that portrayed the town as a violent disharmonious community. The Commission facilitated interaction between Griffith City Council, local community based organisations and ethnospecific workers to secure their involvement in consultations on a Community Action Plan which is being developed to maintain community harmony in the area.

Interpreter services

The Commission provides interpreting services to government departments and agencies, private and commercial organisations, community groups and individuals. The Commission also continued to provide translations of personal documents for individuals and major multilingual translation projects to the public and private sector, including community

organisations. The availability of a 24-hour translation service was expanded from three in-house languages to include most languages to meet the demand from customers.

Language Services performed 18,083 interpreting assignments and 25,773 translation assignments in around 70 languages in 2006-07. The most common languages requested for interpreting were Arabic, Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin and Vietnamese. The most common languages requested for translation were Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Spanish.

Casual panellists were recruited to meet the demands for language assistance in emerging languages such as Dinka, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Krio, Luganda, Sudanese Arabic and Swahili.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DET)

The NSW Department of Education (DET) provides schooling and vocational education services to around 1.3 million students each year through an extensive network of government primary and secondary schools, TAFE NSW Institutes, Adult and Community Education colleges, the Adult Migration English Service (AMES) and the National Art School (NAS). DET also provides regulatory and quality assurance services to the vocational education and training sector and funding support for non-government schools.

DET provides government school services in over 2,400 locations across NSW. TAFE NSW qualifications are delivered via a variety of training methods including face-to-face teaching at 134 locations.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

The cultural and linguistic diversity of NSW is reflected in the student population. Over a quarter of government school students in NSW are from a language background other than English. This imposes significant costs on education services in NSW through specific English education programs, staff training and preparation of culturally diverse and culturally sensitive syllabus.

In 2005-06 the budget for students and clients from Language Backgrounds Other Than English (LBOTE) included:

- \$95.4 million for English as a Second Language (ESL) and ESL New Arrivals Programs for school students from LBOTE. In 2006 ESL tuition was provided for 85,065 ESL students, including 7,299 newly arrived ESL students, at 750 schools, 14 Intensive English Centres and the Intensive English High School;
- \$26 million for AMES. AMES is the lead provider in the Department's Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) Consortium, which provided AMEP courses for more than 10,500 migrants at 72 venues and through distance learning, including delivery at 54 rural delivery sites. Eight new rural venues offered the AMEP in 2006;
- \$1.8 million for the Skillmax Program, helping migrants with overseas qualifications and work experience to secure employment. The Skillmax Program within Adult Migrant English Service was delivered to approximately 900 migrant jobseekers and

underemployed public service employees from culturally and linguistically diverse communities;

- \$2.1 million for the NSW Community Languages Schools Program; and
- \$4.7 million to support multicultural education strategies in schools including support for anti-racism education, culturally inclusive curriculum development and refugee education strategies to foster positive community relations and build links with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Under the NSW Government's Youth Partnership with Pacific Communities, education initiatives including Homework Support, Student Mentoring, Parent/School Partnerships, Student Leadership and Teaching and Learning, were implemented in 37 schools across Sydney, South Western and Sydney regions.

Indigenous Education

To focus the work of schools, colleges, TAFE NSW and State Office on achieving the goal that Aboriginal students will match or better the outcomes of the broader student population, the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2006-2008 was developed in 2006.

The Schools in Partnership is a major initiative that operated successfully in 10 schools with a significant Aboriginal population in 2006. It is leading change in working in partnership with local communities to improve learning outcomes particularly for Aboriginal students.

NSW Government School Visits

Auburn and Granville Public Schools have a very high proportion of students – 99 per cent and 82 per cent respectively – from a non-English speaking background. Both are in the Granville School Education Area, which has an overall NESB student population of 86 per cent. The major languages spoken at home are Arabic, Turkish, Farsi and Tongan. At James Meehan High School 10 per cent of the student population are Indigenous and 39 per cent are NESB.