

**Social Work Service**  
**Christmas and Cocos (Keeling)**  
**Islands**

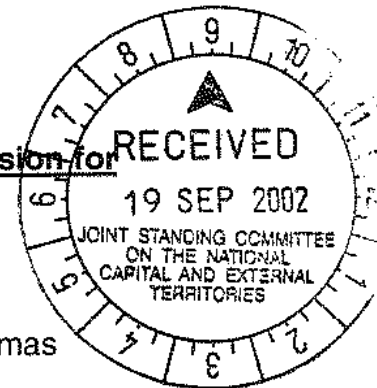
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INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES HEALTH SERVICE

SUBMISSION 19

**Inquiry into Australia's External Territories.**

**Health and Community Care, Social & Welfare Services submission for Christmas Island:**



I believe it is essential that the Senior Social Work service for Christmas Island remain as it has been since the beginning of 2002.

# It is important that the Social Worker has a vast array of skills in order to work independently, to work in a team and serve the community well. Because of the demand, a person who has experience in mental health is preferable. It is a very busy position for one person. There are no supports such as child protection or other relevant welfare agencies on island. A visiting psychologist or psychiatrist would be an excellent addition to services for people. Issues dealt with in partnership with other agencies range from marriage guidance, sexual assault, child abuse, eating disorders, anxiety disorders, depression, suicidal tendencies, child development guidance, advocacy, teenage difficulties, monitoring of people on community service orders, visiting hospital patients, liaison with legal services, post natal depression, mediation, pension queries, visa applications, job seeking, support for the disabled, letters of support for a myriad of reasons, providing lending material, and much, much more. Social work has a critical role in working cross-culturally through positive role modeling and ensuring cultural sensitivity when other professionals/agencies are involved. Supporting a Strong Families approach is a crucial facet of my work. The position has a very clear role in community work/activity. I run group sessions for parenting programs, conflict resolution in-service days for organizations and I am either organizing various groups such as the Women's Well-being Group or I am on committees that make linkages and support local people such as the Youth Group and the Parenting Group.

# Comprehensive monthly reports are provided to Administration, IOTHS and DCD.. The Social Worker keeps a Continuing Professional Education log book in order to maintain certification as a Social Worker. The standards are accredited by the Australian Association of Social Workers.

# The social work office is based at the Neighborhood Center. It will shortly be relocated within the Neighborhood Center if all goes well. It must not be

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moved elsewhere. It is a most appropriate site as many people use the area, particularly parents with young children and they make good use of the service and the library. The service is not a medical one but a community one. It would probably be accessed less if it was based at the hospital. It is acknowledged that it is important to have close connections with the hospital and for regular visits and clinical casework team meetings to take place. The Social Worker is part of a multi-disciplinary team for the health services and is a member of the Hospital Management Committee and the Health Advisory Committee. The hospital staff offer valuable support.

# Use of the service is free and therefore open to all people. It is very accessible. It should continue to be so. I don't believe privatization is an option. It is a preventative service in most instances and probably saves other organizations, such as the hospital and the police, a considerable amount of money and time.

# The Social Worker is on-call and a car (and fuel) is provided for use at all times. This part of the contract is essential.

# If the Social Worker is away from the job for 3 weeks or more it is important a locum or someone on secondment replace her/him. Because the service is on offer there could be repercussions if anything happens if the position is vacant.

# Housing is provided with the position and it is therefore an incentive for applicants to come to a remote corner of Australia. At present housing is scarce and rental has soared to \$700 a week for some places!!

# Remuneration should not be reduced and, in fact, could be raised when consideration is given to the worker being on-call all the time and the complexity of issues to be dealt with in this particular community. The community has been made up of 65% Chinese, 20% Malay and 15% Anglo people until now. We have people in detention here and there are plans to bring many other asylum seekers to the island. In the foreseeable future it appears that the workload will increase due to the increase in workers building the detention center, increases in detention center staff and the arrival of workers related to the space station. The influx of Anglo workers and all the complexities that entails is already evident.

# The Service Delivery Agreement with the Department for Community Development in W.A. is beneficial in that the lone social worker has frequent, professional supervision from another social worker, in this case it is Roley Bayman. A social worker understands the nature of what social work is all about and can tie all the ends together, listen and advise. Other than

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supervision from DCD it is useful to have the DON or other medical person to be a mentor on island. Originally it was the DON and then the Medical

Director assumed the role. This has been successful for caseteam meetings but the Medical Director may feel it is time for someone else to be part of the team. The mentor would also continue to approve leave, travel, TA, etc. from the IOTHS perspective whilst DCD took care of professional development. The social worker would continue to liaise with the school psychologist, the police, doctors, nurses teachers, legal aid personnel, administrative staff, Centrelink, and others, and with a wide range of professionals off island to ensure the highest standard of service delivery. The level and type of outside support and advice depends on each individual case and the expertise needed. Confidentiality to clients remains a very high priority.

# DCD provides important 2 X one week professional development off island programs annually. They pay for travel and T.A., registration fees and assist in arranging the appropriate training. The supervisor meets with the Social Worker where possible when training occurs.

DCD provides relevant books, videos and other materials for people to borrow and for the Social Worker to use in training programs.

DCD pays for training programs to be run for the community on Cocos as well as on Christmas Island. These programs have been extremely well-received.

# The Social Worker spends 10 days on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands every 9 weeks or so. The Community Services Officer is based over there and regular contact is made between the two workers and clients all year round. It would be beneficial if a .5 Social Work position could be created on Cocos as there is a considerable amount of work there. 500 people are Cocos Malay. The Senior Social Worker on Christmas Island could provide the supervision.

I believe the Social Worker provides valuable support to the community and to other professionals on the Cocos and Christmas Islands and that it is important that it remain as is as a base and any additions would be appreciated.

Dianne Wood, Senior Social Worker  
16/09/02