

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 2 – HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Tuesday, 5 September 2017

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

MENTAL HEALTH, WOMEN, AND AGEING

UNCORRECTED PROOF

The Committee met at 2.00 p.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. G. Donnelly (Chair)
The Hon. P. Green (Deputy Chair)
The Hon. W. Fang
Dr M. Faruqi
The Hon. C. Houssos
The Hon. Dr P. Phelps
The Hon. P. Sharpe
The Hon. B. Taylor
Ms D. Walker

PRESENT

The Hon. T. Davies, *Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing*

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:

**Budget Estimates secretariat
Room 812
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

The CHAIR: Welcome to the public hearing for the inquiry into the Budget Estimates 2017-2018. Before I commence, I acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I also pay respect to elders, past and present, of the Eora nation, and extend our respect to other Aborigines present. I welcome Minister Davies and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Mental Health, Women, and Ageing.

Today's hearing is open to the public and is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, while members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I also remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

There may be some questions that a witness could answer if only they had more time or with certain documents to hand. In these circumstances, witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. Any messages from advisers or members of staff seated in the public gallery should be delivered through the Committee secretariat. Minister, I remind you and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and to refer directly to your advisers seated at the table behind you.

Transcripts of this hearing will be available on the web from tomorrow morning. Finally, would everyone please turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing? All witnesses from departments, statutory bodies or corporations will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Minister, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to office as a member of Parliament.

MELINDA NORTON, Director, Women NSW, Department of Family and Community Services, affirmed and examined

HELEN ROGERS, Executive Director, Participation and Inclusion, Commissioning Division, Department of Family and Community Services, affirmed and examined

DEIDRE MULKERIN, Deputy Secretary, Commissioning Division, Department of Family and Community Services, on former affirmation

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER, Secretary, Strategy and Resources, Ministry of Health, on former oath

SUSAN PEARCE, Acting Secretary, Ministry of Health, sworn and examined

MURRAY WRIGHT, Chief Psychiatrist, Ministry of Health, sworn and examined

NIGEL LYONS, Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Resources, Ministry of Health, sworn and examined

JOHN ROACH, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy Secretary, Financial Services and Asset Management, Ministry of Health, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: I declare the hearing of the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Mental Health, Women, and Ageing open for examination.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Organisations such as QLife, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex [LGBTI] national telephone counselling service, have reported a 20 per cent increase in calls since the Federal Liberal Government announced the postal vote earlier this year. Are you aware of that statistic?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I am aware that there are a number of vulnerable community groups in the State of New South Wales, not only the LGBTI community but also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] community groups. The New South Wales Government is acutely aware of this and is responding with support services and funding for those groups. We do know that members of the LGBTI community group have significantly poorer mental health and higher suicide rates than other Australians. Many LGBTI people who attempt suicide have not disclosed their sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status to others or to only very few people. Under the New South Wales Government's \$8 million Suicide Prevention Fund, the AIDS Council of New South Wales (ACON) was awarded \$500,000 over four years to deliver a first-of-its-kind suicide prevention initiative for LGBTI individuals.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When was that provided?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: A couple of months ago. I actually went there myself and met with a lot of the hardworking staff in Sydney. I also met with some of the support people who work at the coalface with the individuals who access those services. We had a very informative meeting and it was my great joy to announce the New South Wales Government's support of that community.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Did they raise their concerns about the impact of a public vote in relation to marriage equality with you?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: No, that was not one of the issues discussed.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Has it been raised with you at all?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: That is a matter being discussed at length in our community. As Minister for Mental Health, I am obviously aware of the media reporting and the various individual groups that are speaking about this matter. It is important to understand that the New South Wales Government has already flagged the Suicide Prevention Fund. It is an \$8 million fund over the next four years—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is great. Are you aware that the Andrews Government in Victoria has committed an additional \$500,000 to the mental health sector both in the lead-up to and during this potential postal survey?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I am not aware of that particular activity of the Victorian Government but I do know what we are doing. As I said, a couple of months ago we announced specific funding to ACON of \$500,000 for suicide prevention in that community.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Then you are probably not aware either that the Western Australian Government has also allocated around \$600,000 to mental health providers in the lead-up to the potential postal survey?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I think the really positive thing is that the New South Wales Government responded months ago in identifying the LGBTI community.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, I do not think you are quite understanding what I am putting to you. I am very pleased with the money that the Government has provided to ACON; it is well overdue. My question concerns both the ongoing impact and the information provided from a range of different organisations about the increased load of calls as a result of the postal plebiscite. Will the New South Wales Government, like the Western Australian and Victorian governments, look at increasing resources in this area?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: It is important to reiterate that not only are we funding \$8 million over the next four years to specifically target suicide prevention activities in localised community groups, these local community groups have got together to identify what is specific, important and needed within their particular communities and we are responding as a government to support those activities. We also funding Lifeline and the Mental Health Line.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is terrific. I am very happy about that. Do you accept that the same-sex marriage postal vote is causing damage in the LGBTI community and are you satisfied that there are enough resources to support people through this process?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The New South Wales Government has not abandoned our mental health services. We are directly involved in supporting people with a mental health illness in our community—for example, this year alone in our budget we are allocating \$95 million towards our community.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Let us be clear. You have chosen to give up your time to provide this kind of information to the Committee and I appreciate that money is being spent. These are very specific questions about the response to a very specific activity that is causing increased levels of mental health concern within our community, and I am asking what you are doing about it. With respect, I do not want a long list of what the Government is already spending.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: It is important that you understand that the money we are spending in our Suicide Prevention Fund is because we have already identified vulnerable community groups within New South Wales: the LGBTI community, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You said that in your opening answer.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: That is right.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I think your answer to my question is no. But let us be clear, there will not be additional resources coming from the New South Wales Government in response to the mental health concerns raised as a result of the marriage equality postal survey which is possibly going to be conducted in the next two months?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The New South Wales Government is already responding. We are already delivering money into those vulnerable community groups.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many mentally ill or disordered patients are there at the Cumberland Hospital mental health unit?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The number of outpatients in relation to that particular facility I will need to refer to my colleagues. Of course, it does change as people step down into the community through our Living Well reforms and our supporting people to move out of institutionalised care and into the community.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I will stop you there because we have limited time. I am just interested in the number of patients at the Cumberland Hospital mental health unit.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you able to provide me with how many beds are available in the mental health unit, or do you need to take that on notice as well?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I have been advised 261.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you visited the Cumberland Hospital inpatient unit since you have been the mental health Minister?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Yes, I have.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And when was that?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The exact date I would have to check my diary to let you know, but it was a number of months ago.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you take that on notice?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: This is the largest mental health unit in Western Sydney?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The public was shocked when they saw the footage of Miriam Merten who died on 3 June 2014 in Lismore Base Hospital from a brain injury after she fell over more than 25 times inside the mental health unit. She had been locked in a secluded room and left unattended for more than five hours. The Council of Australian Governments' [COAG's] expert reference group on mental health reform and the National Mental Health Commission recommended that mental health units must reduce their reliance on the use of seclusion and restraints. In addition to adequately resourcing these health units, would you agree that it is critical that de-escalating techniques are utilised to minimise the reliance on the use of seclusion and restraints?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: In last year's accounts the seclusion rate in New South Wales was 8.7 episodes of seclusion per 100 day acute beds, which was down from 10.2 episodes in 2010-11. So we are on a downward trajectory in general. Certainly seclusion and restraint are obviously the last step. In terms of the activity and the work that the staff are trained to administer in dealing with these acutely unwell patients, I would refer the question to Dr Murray Wright to explain how that is—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is okay, I am happy with your answer there, Minister. I am interested to see whether you agree that clinical psychologists play an important role in de-escalating situations in mental health units.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The staff who are employed at the time in dealing with a particular patient who is experiencing an acute episode are the ones that are selected by the local health district [LHD], recruited in relation to the particular needs of that LHD community and the people that they are there to serve. The skills mix and the expertise mix are determined by the LHD.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That was not my question. My question was do you think that clinical psychologists are an important role in that skills mix?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I refer to Dr Wright to answer that question.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry, Minister—

Ms TANYA DAVIES: You have asked a question. I am not a clinician; I am the Minister for Mental Health that oversees government policy. You have asked a very specific question about clinical care. I would like to give the opportunity to answer that question—it is a really important question—to Dr Murray Wright.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: With respect, Minister, I am asking the questions and I am interested in your perspective as the Minister. If that is all you have to say on it—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Point of order: You are asking a question about a clinical issue that clearly the Minister is referring to a clinical expert, yet you do not want to hear the answer. The Minister is clearly stating she is not a clinician and you are asking her a clinical question. The member should allow the question to be answered by the person the Minister is referring it to.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: To the point of order: That is not a point of order.

The CHAIR: Order! To assist in moving things along, I ask the Hon. Courtney Houssos to restate the question directly to the Minister. If the Minister needs to delegate she will; if not, we will move on.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am quite comfortable with what she has said already. How many full-time equivalent clinical psychologists are based at Cumberland Hospital?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I will get that information for you. We will take that on notice and get back to you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am told that there is one full-time equivalent.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We will take that on notice and get back to you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That means that there is one clinical psychologist for a 261-bed facility. Do you think that that is appropriate?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As I said, we will take that on notice and we will get back to you with the actual number to ensure that you have the correct number. It is important that you understand that clinical psychologists are part of a mix of professional experts and clinical staff that are there to assist patients—very acutely unwell patients—in mental health inpatient units, and it is important that the expertise of each of those clinicians is at the table when we are discussing the ongoing care and rehabilitation of seriously unwell individuals.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, you visited the Lismore Base Hospital mental health unit?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you aware of how many full-time equivalent clinical psychologists are based at that hospital?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Not specifically in relation to the LHD. As I said before, the LHD recruits the staff as determined by the mix of professional clinical expertise that they need in determining the service level and the particular requirements of their local community there.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is there anyone else at the table who can answer how many full-time equivalent clinical psychologists are at Lismore Base Hospital mental health unit?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, did you make a request to the Public Accounts Committee to receive further submissions to its inquiry into the management of health care delivery relating to mental health?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Yes, I am absolutely together with Minister Hazzard, the Minister for Health.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Given you made that request, did you make a submission to the committee?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The Ministry of Health made a submission, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you aware of how many submissions were made to the committee?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: At this stage, no. I think we would need to take that on notice. Certainly it is a parliamentary committee and they would be collating all of those submissions.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am asking whether you as the Minister for Mental Health are paying close attention and are aware of the number of submissions.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: To me, it is the content of the submissions that is most important. It is the content of the submissions about the people's individual experience with the mental health system, or their family or friend's experience with the mental health system that I am more particularly interested in because I want to ensure that as a government we are taking every possible step that we can to ensure that we are delivering the very best mental health care system for everyone across New South Wales.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You said your main experience is in the lived experience of mental health patients and their families.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: No.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is what you just said.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: You asked about how many submissions were submitted and I said to you I am not interested in the number of submissions, I am interested in the content of those submissions. In terms of the overall delivery of the best mental health care system in this State, it is a component of ensuring that we deliver the very best mental health care system, and that is the experience of people who have been patients, or their friends and carers. It is also the clinicians, the staff; it is looking at best practice, et cetera.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is exactly what I just said to you. You are concerned about the experience of mental health patients—

Ms TANYA DAVIES: No, you asked me am I most concerned. I said I am concerned from every perspective.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I am asking the questions. If you want to listen, then I can tell you what I am asking.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: If you do not talk over the Minister, she can respond.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you taking a point of order or are you just speaking over the top?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: No, but I will.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you aware that the Public Accounts Committee cannot examine individual cases relating to the lived experience of mental health patients?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: That is a really good point that you raise because that is why I also announced a concurrent review chaired by the New South Wales Chief Psychiatrist into the use of seclusion, restraint and observation practices across New South Wales. The Chief Psychiatrist, Dr Murray Wright, is here. He has compiled an expert panel, one of whom is a person with a lived experience from the National Mental Health Commission. They are in the process now of conducting public consultations throughout the State. They are also examining hospital records. They are looking at the incidence of seclusion, restraint and observation practices, and their report to me and to Minister Hazzard will be coming towards the end of this year.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Will you be making that report public?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The Government will certainly be reviewing the findings of that review into seclusion, restraint and observation and it is our intention to make it public, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is your intention to make that report public?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you have a rough date of when we should expect to see that report?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: It is estimated to be by the end of this year.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Did you request any mental health advocacy groups or community-based support providers to make a submission to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We certainly advertised and encouraged as many people as possible to contribute to both the parliamentary inquiry and to the review that Dr Murray Wright is proceeding with. The chair of the Public Accounts Committee, Mr Bruce Notley-Smith, certainly did approach—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am interested in you as the mental health Minister, whether you were talking to groups directly and encouraging them or whether you just relied on the committee's advertising. Were you out there within the sector saying, "You should participate in this inquiry", or are you saying you are just leaving it to the Parliament to run?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: It is not my inquiry to run; it is the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee inquiry to run, and wherever I was at the time that that committee was opening for submissions I was certainly encouraging groups that I was engaging with to contribute if they had something to contribute.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I appreciate it is not your inquiry, but you are the one who made the request to the Public Accounts Committee to receive further submissions.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: To extend the deadline.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So were you then actively encouraging people to participate in the inquiry? That is my question.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As I said, when I was engaging with a number of groups, a number of representative groups, it is also important that there are a number of pieces of correspondence that we highlighted this inquiry was open for and also received a lot of publicity in the media as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I welcome your statements today in relation to the identification of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] community as a significantly vulnerable community when it comes to mental health. As the Minister for Mental Health, do you support the right of same-sex couples, the ability of same-sex couples, to marry if they desire to?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: My opinion on that matter is not relevant in relation to this Committee's hearing. I am here as a representative of the Government, to speak about Government policy, Government priorities and the Government budget in relation to mental health, women and ageing.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am asking you, given these issues have been raised by you and they have even been raised with you, whether this is something that you support, given the level of discussion that is occurring at the moment?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As I said, I am here representing the Government of New South Wales, speaking about Government policy, our agenda and our budget.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Minister, given the many challenges that working women face, with rising childcare costs, as the Minister for Women would you consider discussing with the Premier the idea of salary sacrificing for women and their families to assist with the payment of childcare services, given that I understand this may be a matter for the Federal Government? Can you indicate a commitment from the New South Wales Government to investigate this proposal? It would provide a massive opportunity to support women and their families in making childcare more affordable.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Thank you for the question. The issue of child care is certainly a big issue, particularly for working mums. I am a working mum with a 10-year-old and an 11-month-old.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Are you declaring an interest?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I do not know about that, but I live every day the experience of juggling the care and the nurturing requirements of a family as well as employment and a career. As Minister for Women, I am always looking for ways that the Government—not only the Government, but also encouraging other players in this space such as industry bodies, employers, peak organisations—every way we possibly can, to enable more women to participate in the workforce, if it is their wish to do so. As part of that strategy I am leading the NSW Women's Strategy development this year.

The New South Wales Government has begun a process of consultation right across New South Wales. We have conducted eight consultations not only in Sydney and Newcastle but across New South Wales in order to engage with members right across our community. We have consulted not just with women but with men as well to see what challenges are affecting women's equality, not only in their professional lives but also in their personal lives. Eight consultations have been held. We also opened up a "Have your say" website. I encourage very strongly as many people, including men, business leaders and industry groups, to participate in that process because in the documenting of a women's strategy aimed at establishing a framework for government to continue to lead in this area of gender equality, we want to hear from as many people as possible.

I know that the NSW Women's Strategy team also conducted some targeted strategy sessions that involved not only the Women's Strategy reference group, that had representatives from a whole range of government departments and agencies, but also the NSW Council for Women's Economic Opportunity—

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I am about to ask you some other questions on that so you can possibly frame them in the further questions I may have. We commend the Government for its acknowledgment of the gender gap by pledging \$3.6 million to improving opportunities for women. We note that the money is marked to fund Women in NSW reports, the Council for Women's Economic Opportunity and to monitor gender equity. As much as we support the steps in this budget towards supporting women, in what tangible ways will these frameworks make a difference to closing the gender pay gap?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I will touch on the strategy again because that really is going to set up a framework that will guide not only government policy but potentially government investment. We are already providing a grant opportunity, called "Investing in Women". As a government, we are also setting the standard and leading by example in ruling out this gender inequality within the Government. Under the Premier's priority of driving public sector diversity, we have committed a target of increasing the proportion of women in senior leadership to 50 per cent by the year 2025. Currently we are at 36 per cent.

We also have a target of ensuring that every government job in New South Wales will be deemed flexible by 2019. That is not just to support women in managing their caring responsibilities, but also to support men who may choose to have a flexible working arrangement to enable them to assist in their caring responsibilities or other interests they may have. The Government is not only setting the standard and setting targets; it is leading and influencing in that way but also developing a strategy aimed at further advancing the cause of gender equality. In terms of the pay gap, in relation to the New South Wales Government's standing, I know we are leading the way as an employer. We are the largest employer in New South Wales. I refer to the Secretary of Family and Community Services to provide what it is in terms of the current pay gap.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I do not want to mansplain on this at all but I note that the Public Service Commission publishes a measure of gender pay equity in the public sector. It was 1.9 per cent in 2015 and it is down to 0.7 per cent in 2016. That compares with a private sector gender pay gap of 15.6 per cent in the same period.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Given the general consensus that women tend to live longer than men and taking time off to have a baby or to care for someone or working part-time impacts a woman's super, what is your department doing to solve the gender gap in terms of its impact on women's superannuation?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We know that the gender pay gap significantly impacts the ability of a woman to remain independent and financially secure later in life. When less money is deposited into a superannuation account, it does not have the same cumulative impact as a larger deposit each week will have. The Government is leading by example and tackling the gender pay gap. As the Secretary said, we have done exceptionally well in this area and we are leading by example. It is not just up to the Government but up to every player in this space to really target this as an issue and to work specifically on this as an issue.

We know that, as a government, we are encouraging the Women portfolio in terms of encouraging women to move into what are traditionally male-dominated areas of employment. We are also targeting women's opportunities by taking on board the advice of the Council for Women's Economic Opportunity that the Government has set up. That council is there to inform the Government what else it should be doing. I will pass to the Director of Women NSW, Melinda Norton, to explain exactly how our investing in women's grant programs is helping women to get into non-traditional trades.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Just a really quick answer, if you could.

Ms NORTON: There is a funding program. We have \$200,000 available each year, as the Minister says, to support a range of initiatives in the women's space that include such things as women in trades, women in rural and regional areas and metropolitan areas as well. We do that grant program every year.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I will follow on from the Hon. Penny Sharpe's comments regarding the plebiscite. There is anxiety on both sides. Do you have feedback from the churches and whether there has been an increase to a helpline on those issues?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I do not receive specific statistics on the content or reason people ring Lifeline or the mental health line. They are marked as being confidential. I am not able to provide statistics on the content of those phone calls.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: How do you ascertain from the QLife that it is about the plebiscite as opposed to some other hotline that deals with that? Is QLife directly attributable to plebiscite anxiety? How do you have statistics on that.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I would have to refer to my colleagues to explain that further. I will take it on notice.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Minister, last month the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association in Lismore confirmed that they would be forced to close mental health beds due to threats of staffing cuts. Are there any specific funds available in the budget to relieve the pressure on nursing staff at Lismore Base Hospital?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: In terms of the staffing workforce, we have 9,500 full-time equivalent staff working in mental health services across New South Wales. The Northern NSW Local Health District [LHD] mental health service, of which Lismore is a part, are redeveloping the 40-bed acute adult inpatient unit to create a 24-bed adult acute unit and a 16-bed older persons mental health unit. The proposed roster for the 24-bed adult acute unit is based on an allocation of six nursing hours per patient day. The proposed roster is consistent with the staffing levels required by the Public Health System Nurses' and Midwives' (State) Award.

The Northern NSW LHD is currently in conciliation with the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association in regard to the nursing staff numbers. Temporary staffing arrangements have been put in place while the district and association hold further talks and a further report back before Commissioner Murphy of the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales is scheduled for 4 September, which was yesterday.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Does that represent a cut in staffing to that unit in Lismore?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: In terms of where it has been in previous years, the comparison year-on-year, I would need to take that on notice.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Further to that, do you envisage further staffing cuts to the Lismore Base Hospital?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: You are asserting that it is a staffing cut. I said we will take that on notice and confirm that with you.

Ms DAWN WALKER: In terms of that particular mental health branch, the nurses have highlighted their concern for patient safety. Has the Government considered the effects of cuts on patient safety, or are we all predicating on whether this is a cut or not?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I toured that facility a couple of months ago and was pleased to look at the infrastructure capital works that they are putting into that inpatient unit. They are doing a remarkable transformation of that inpatient unit in terms of the physical environment and the physical set-up. I think it is important to understand that as part of providing a capital infrastructure environment that mental health staff work in, staffing numbers is a key component, as too is the staffing expertise. This Government is investing in upskilling staff in mental health services. We are providing them with the Productive Mental Health Ward program. That assists them to improve efficiencies. We had some fantastic feedback.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Minister, can I stop you there? Focus on the staffing. There have been reports that the nursing unit manager [NUM] position will be abolished, is that correct?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As I said earlier in relation to particular staffing at LHD level, it is a matter for the LHD to determine the staffing cohort to serve the needs of its local community.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Are you aware that position is being abolished?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: In terms of the specific LHD situation referred to, I will ask Ms Pearce to respond.

Ms PEARCE: We are advised, and the Minister has said, the matter is before the industrial commission, with the hearing held yesterday. We will need to wait for the outcome of that hearing. The advice we have is that the proposed roster is consistent with award requirements, as we would expect it to be. We can follow up on specific positions such as the nursing unit manager. However, we will need to look carefully at the outcome of the deliberations before the Industrial Relations Commission.

Ms DAWN WALKER: On Sunday 3 September the *Daily Telegraph* reported on the mental health crisis in Lithgow, with eight suicides in as many months. The Mayor of Lithgow has pointed to a lack of mental health services in the area, high unemployment and the absence of mental health education in schools. Can you provide details on how school-age children, in particular, will be educated and what preventive programs will be rolled out in schools?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Every suicide is an absolute tragedy that impacts family and friends of that particular individual. The New South Wales Government is responding urgently and acutely to suicides within the community. In 2015 New South Wales had the lowest age standardised rate of death by suicide in Australia, at 10.6 per 100,000, as compared with the national average of 12.6 per 100,000. The New South Wales Government is investing in the suicide prevention fund, of which I spoke earlier, and investing in the Project Air Strategy for Personality Disorders for borderline personality disorders and training for clinicians and Lifeline's crisis telephone line. The Nepean Blue Mountains LHD provides people in Lithgow and surrounding communities with the full spectrum of mental health care, from prevention and early intervention to recovery and support.

There is a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week inpatient 15-bed acute mental health facility at Blue Mountains District ANZAC Memorial Hospital in Katoomba, which is 40 minutes drive from Lithgow Hospital. A mental health clinical nurse specialist is based in Lithgow Hospital's emergency department seven days a week. In relation to support in schools, we have School-Link Coordinators and we are boosting the number of School-Link Coordinators. We are supporting additional child and adolescent mental health service professionals to deliver the Getting on Track in Time—Got It! program. The Getting on Track in Time program targets kindergarten to year 2 students who are displaying unusual behaviours—behaviours that are not in line with what a normal kindergarten, year 1, year 2 child would display. Those child and adolescent mental health service staff work with the child in school and with the families and parents of the children.

Ms DAWN WALKER: The Mayor of Lithgow noted that there was no Headspace facility available in the community. Has the Government liaised with its Federal counterparts to bring Headspace into communities in New South Wales such as Lithgow?

Dr WRIGHT: I think that the issue of the role of Headspace is an important one, but we should not bypass the existing child and adolescent mental health services that work with Headspace services and that are available across the State. Particularly relevant to regional and rural areas, we have also the telephone access

line services so that anyone anywhere in the State can make contact with a clinician and have an initial triage assessment and then be referred appropriately.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Are there plans to have Headspace in Lithgow? The Mayor of Lithgow raised this issue specifically.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As you would know, the Commonwealth funds Headspace and it has confirmed its election commitment to establish 10 more centres in 2019.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Are they in New South Wales?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We would have to get back to you on a specific location. I would say that being a Commonwealth Government election commitment, it would be a national selection.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Is your Government working with your Federal counterparts to ensure that New South Wales gets as many of those Headspace organisations as possible, particularly in areas such as Lithgow?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Certainly we work with our Federal counterparts very closely. We are working with them in relation to the recent Federal announcement of a \$1 million allocation. We also acknowledge that our Federal colleagues did announce that they would be inviting a Headspace into the Grafton community in northern New South Wales. That was very welcomed in that community. I have been advised that it takes about 12 months to basically establish a Headspace. In the interim period, the New South Wales Government has funded that community over \$100,000 to ensure that there are pop-up centres to enable the community to drop in and talk with members of the Healthy Clarence Communities, which have been established to provide the support that the community need until such time that the Headspace is actually up and functioning.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Given that yesterday was Equal Pay Day, what have you done in your capacity as New South Wales's Minister for Women to advocate for the hundreds of thousands of New South Wales women who had their wages cut from 1 July as a result of the Fair Work Commission's decision to cut penalty rates?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We know the pay gap in average weekly earnings released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics from November last year. The difference between what women and men earn in New South Wales is at about 15.6 per cent. The New South Wales public sector gender pay gap is far better than that. It is currently at 0.7 per cent. As a government, we have also announced that in order to support reducing gender pay gap disparity 100 per cent of all New South Wales government sector roles will be flexible by 2019. That is as well as the Premier's priority to see 50 per cent of senior leadership roles being held by women.

We are also investing in women's grants to encourage women to move into what are traditionally male-dominated areas of industry or work and to encourage them to move into science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM] areas of study and work. The Council for Women's Economic Opportunity was convened to provide me, as Minister, expert advice. The people on that council are very highly accomplished women who are experts in their own particular fields of business or academia. The council also includes Mr Brian Seidler, who advises me as the Minister for Women.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I am going to stop you there, because my question was quite specific. What have you done to advocate for the female retail and hospitality workers who had their wages cut from 1 July as a result of the Fair Work Commission's decision to cut penalty rates?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As I said before, the New South Wales Government is a leader in this field. The New South Wales Government is the biggest employer within New South Wales and we are leading by example.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I am not asking you about public sector employees. I am asking you about the private sector employers in the hospitality and retail industries, the women who had their wages cut. What have you done to advocate on their behalf?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The role that the New South Wales Government plays is a leadership role. We are leading by example and are encouraging industries and employers if they have not yet began the wonderful process of achieving gender equality in the workplace to actually begin that journey. I know there are a lot of fantastic organisations that are leading by example as well and are influencing change within our community to ensure that women are paid equally for the same work as are men.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Surely you can see that the gender pay gap for women will be further exacerbated by this decision. Almost 57 per cent of the Sunday retail workforce is women and almost

52 per cent of the Sunday accommodation and food services workforce is women. These are women that have had their wages cut. You are the Minister for Women in New South Wales. What have you done to advocate on their behalf?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: You would understand that penalty rates are a matter for the Commonwealth Government and that it is a matter that the Commonwealth needs to be held accountable for. In the New South Wales Government, we are doing everything within our power not only to lead by example within our own delivery of employment but also to set up the New South Wales Women's Strategy, which is a framework that will guide further advances in gender equality and gender equity. It will also inform future investment by the Government.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I raise with you an issue that is happening right now in the National Parks and Wildlife Service where 150 positions are being downgraded. These are positions in places such as visitor information centres in national parks. The majority of those positions are held by women and your Government is currently asking them to either take a pay cut through a lower classification of their work or lose their job. Do you think that is acceptable?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: In terms of the role that the New South Wales Government is playing in my portfolio, we are, as I said, leading by example.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You just said you were leading by example. When you say that, who are you speaking about? I would have thought that as the Minister of Women you would be speaking about all women, including the public sector. You have made comments earlier today about being one of the largest employers. There are 150 positions that are mostly staffed by women. Your Government is currently pursuing to downgrade the classification of those positions and give the women a large pay cut. Do you think that is reasonable?

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Point of order: It is entirely unreasonable to ask a Minister about the internal administrative arrangements within another portfolio, which she could not possibly have access to unless it had come before Cabinet. I am sure that the grading of positions within the Department of Planning and Environment is unlikely to come before Cabinet, so it is an unreasonable question to ask a Minister.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is not a point of order.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: You have to ask questions that are relevant to the budget estimates of the portfolio of this Minister.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: To the point of order: The Minister for Women is an umbrella ministry that is designed not only to cover the specific portfolio but also to go across other government portfolios. Therefore, the question is well within order.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: To the point of order: Are you suggesting then that the Minister should have specific details on the number of women currently competing in competitive netball in New South Wales?

The CHAIR: Order! If the member puts a specific question to the Minister about whether she is prepared to make a comment in regard to the specific case, the Minister can answer it as she sees fit. I will wait to hear the answer. I direct the member to ask the specific question and the Minister will have a chance to answer.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you aware of this? If not, that is fine. Would you be concerned to know that there is an attempt across Government to downgrade the classification of staff, particularly in areas where there is a high concentration of women, which will effectively give them a pay cut?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I have been reminded that I did make representations to the Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage, Gabrielle Upton, in relation to that matter.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Could you tell us what your representations were and would you be willing to provide a copy of them to the Committee?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As I said, I made representations on that matter. That should be sufficient.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you willing to provide us with a copy of those representations?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: No.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, have you read the Fair Work Commission's decision that cut penalty rates for hundreds of thousands of women in New South Wales?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: No, I have not read that specific finding.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you read any summaries of the decision?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: No, not at this point, unless—

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: We are happy to take that on notice. We will check to see what work has been done on the issue.

The CHAIR: The question was directed to the Minister about what she has done.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You might want take the next question on notice. Has the department provided you with any briefings on the Fair Work decision and its impact on women in New South Wales?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We will take those questions on notice and provide a response.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you had discussions with your ministerial staff about the Fair Work decision to cut penalty rates?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The discussions I have with my staff are about a whole range of matters. As I said, the main focus of the portfolio for Women is about the development of the strategy for Women and also about overseeing the investment in Women grants and developing programs.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That was not my question. My question was: Have you had any discussions with your ministerial staff about the Fair Work decision to cut penalty rates?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Not as yet.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You have had no discussions with your ministerial staff about that?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: It is important that you understand the work I do concerning the portfolio for Women is across New South Wales Government. It is about leading and influencing a whole-of-government approach, looking at the levers that are at the hands of this Government to adjust and change to project gender equality and gender equity when it comes to women's leadership.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I asked you a specific question: Have you had any discussions with your ministerial staff about the Fair Work decision to cut penalty rates? You said, "No." Is that correct? You have had no discussions with them?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We have a lot of discussions about a lot of matters affecting women and young girls in this State and those matters are being fed into our strategy.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Has your department conducted any modelling or research on the impact of the wage cuts concerning the gender wage gap?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We will take that on notice and provide a response in due course.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you read any other information about the Fair Work decision?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Not at this point, but I will be receiving some briefing documents in due course.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you met with any peak organisations or individuals to discuss the effects of the cuts?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I meet with a lot of people and with whom I meet is disclosed in my diary disclosures.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You have not read the report, you have not asked for any briefings, you have not had any discussions with your ministerial staff, and yet you are saying that this will not impact on the gender wage gap in New South Wales.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I never said that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are saying that this is not an issue for which you should be advocating on behalf of women in New South Wales.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I never said that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are. You are saying that you have not advocated on this issue. I am trying to find out why you do not consider this to be an important issue. Hundreds of thousands of women who are some of the lowest-paid workers in New South Wales are facing increasing electricity prices and increasing rent.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Point of order—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: They are now having their penalty rates cut.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Again, this is a very long preamble that borders on badgering the Minister. There is a time and a place for speeches but this is a time and a place for questions.

The CHAIR: The Hon. Courtney Houssos is getting to the point of asking a question.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you going to advocate on behalf of these women?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As you are aware, it is a Commonwealth responsibility for which it needs to be held accountable. I spend my time working with the levers that we can adjust in order to advance gender equality and gender equity for women in this State. I am glad you mentioned electricity prices because this week we—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We can talk about electricity prices later on.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: No, you raised it.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am asking the questions today.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Excuse me—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you had any discussions—

The CHAIR: Order!

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I would like you to give me the opportunity to address something you have raised.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I have limited time this afternoon.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: You mentioned this.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I have another eight minutes and I have a series of questions.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I will take 20 seconds. You raised electricity prices. This week we announced an increase to the low income household electricity rebate of \$50. That is one aspect that we have announced to support people who are on low incomes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you had any discussions with your ministerial colleagues about the Fair Work decision and its implications for New South Wales?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I have many discussions with my colleagues about a range of matters.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you guarantee that the New South Wales Government will not use the Fair Work decision as a basis for cutting penalty rates and State awards for women, including nurses, corrections officers and national parks workers?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: You need to direct that question to the Minister responsible.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am asking you as the Minister for Women. You have talked about public sector workers. You have talked about how fantastic it is that we are closing the gender pay gap. Will you guarantee that the Government will not use the Fair Work decision as a basis for cutting their penalty rates?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As Minister for Women, I have the great privilege of engaging with 3.8 million women across this State and advocating for their specific needs and concerns. That is what I will continue to do in my role as Minister for Women.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Within which department does the Office for Women currently reside?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Family and Community Services.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How long has it been there?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: April.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Was this your decision to move it?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: No, it was not.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Whose decision was it?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Did you have any input into the decision?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: No. Why would I?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Did she consult with you?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: She is the Premier. She places the departments and staff at her will in order to ensure that the best representation and the best cooperation and connection and strategy is in place to serve the people of New South Wales to the best of our ability.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: With a flick of the Premier's pen, the Office for Women was moved from the Department of Health back to the Department of—

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Family and Community Services.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: —Family and Community Services. You have no insight why this decision was made?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: You spoke with Minister Goward this morning. As you are aware, she is the Minister for Family and Community Services. Part of her portfolio is also the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. My work as Minister for Women also engages with the Office for Women and that is why it is relevant that the Office for Women is within the portfolio remit of Family and Community Services.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Was she consulted before the decision was made?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Where are you going with these questions?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am asking the questions and you have to answer them.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I do not know what is the point of asking all these questions.

The CHAIR: Minister, the question comes from the member and then you respond accordingly. Pose the question again, please.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How much did the relocation from Health to FACS cost?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Minimal. It is within the machinery of government.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you able to provide a figure to the Committee as to how much this relocation cost?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I am happy to take it on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is fine. Thank you very much.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Can I add, the cost associated with the machinery-of-government changes are covered by the existing departmental budgets and it is impossible to separate the total costs.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are saying you cannot give me a specific figure for the relocation cost?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I have provided you with my answer to that question.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many full-time equivalent [FTE] staff were employed when the office was in the Department of Health?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The current funding for staff is at 36 FTE.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You might want to throw to one of your bureaucrats to answer this question. How many were employed when it was previously at the Department of Health?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: We would need to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is fine.

Ms NORTON: It is worth noting that early last year the Government improved an increase in funding for women in New South Wales. We moved from approximately 24 staff to 36 staff.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is fantastic. Thank you. It moved from the Department of Health to the Department of Family and Community Services in April. When did it move to the health department? Obviously this question predates your time as Minister so someone else may want to answer the question.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We would have to take that on notice and confirm the date.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Norton, do you know?

Ms NORTON: It was 2015.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Where did it move from when it went to the Department of Health?

Ms NORTON: From Family and Community Services [FACS].

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It has moved from Family and Community Services to Health and back to Family and Community Services in the space of two years?

Ms NORTON: Correct.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, do you have an opinion on the department bouncing around between FACS to Health and back to FACS?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: My role as Minister for Women is to champion the cause of women in their future challenges and opportunities. That is what I am focused on and that is what I will be spending my time on.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Who is the current director of the Office of Women?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: You are looking right at her: Melinda Norton.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How long have you been in the role, Ms Norton?

Ms NORTON: I started in June this year.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And your predecessor?

Ms NORTON: As Natasha da Silva was my predecessor, someone else might be better at answering how long she was in that role.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: We will take it on notice and confirm the dates.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can tell me how long her predecessor was in the role as well that would be great.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Sure.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, can you explain why the Women in NSW annual report was split into four parts last year and can you tell me—given that we only have a minute to go—when you intend on releasing the fourth part?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I will answer the second part first. We have reviewed the draft of the report on health and wellbeing. It is expected to be released towards the end of this year. The rationale for separating the annual report into four reports was a decision by the former Minister for Women. There was no commitment from the Government to publish all four reports within the 2016-17 financial year. What was agreed to was a rolling schedule that was determined in the main by data availability.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: It has been great to see additional funding allocated to the continued implementation of Living Well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW. I note that in 2017-18 the recurrent spending will be \$1.9 billion. How will this funding be allocated, particularly to groups with a higher risk of mental health conditions such as Aboriginals, Torres Strait Islanders, our youth and young people, and the homeless?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As you stated, the budget for mental health in New South Wales has been extended this financial year to \$1.9 billion. That is an increase of \$87 million on last year alone and \$600 million extra on 2011-12. As we speak, we are delivering a number of activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups. We recognise that they need timely access to culturally appropriate and responsive mental health services. Under the New South Wales Government's 10-year reform program, Aboriginal mental health is a key focus area. In 2017-18 more than \$87 million will be spent on mental health services for Aboriginal people. The existing Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program and funding of Aboriginal community-based mental health projects will be maintained. The Aboriginal Mental Health and Well Being Policy will also be renewed this year.

As I said, we recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are a vulnerable group. We are working with the Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program and other projects to improve services to Aboriginal people. This will be funded through a Mental Health Reform tranche two funding allocation of \$812,000. This tranche two funding will provide Aboriginal-specific enhancement for Aboriginal mental health clinical leadership in four local health districts, which are Central Coast, Illawarra-Shoalhaven, Nepean-Blue Mountains and North Sydney. There will be statewide enhanced coordination. We will be targeting Aboriginal project funding. There will be Aboriginal traineeships and clinical funding in the Northern NSW Local Health District. We will be piloting the Aboriginal Getting on Track in Time program, or Got It!, and also delivering Aboriginal mental health first aid instructor training.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Down our way an Aboriginal elder is starting a kid's shed to allow Aboriginal kids to work in the same sort of atmosphere as in a men's shed. The cost is only \$36,000. It is a good investment.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Noted.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: How much of your funding goes towards increasing support services for women with postnatal depression?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: That is a really great question. Being a recent new mum, I have had a little bit of a taste of what being a new mum with sleep deprivation is like. It is a matter that we are very acutely aware of. We are responding with providing specific programs and specific funding to what we deem to be potentially at-risk mums. We are supporting the Specialist Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Service across the State. It has grown under the New South Wales Government's mental health reform with 19 new Specialist Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Service positions funded in New South Wales in 2016-17. In 2017-18 the funding is provided for 900 women to access the perinatal and infant mental health service. Mental health reform funding of \$9.3 million in 2016-17 over three years is provided for Mums and Kids Matter, which is a program for mothers with mental health issues and their children.

Treatment and support for women with perinatal mental health problems in New South Wales is provided by a mix of universal primary care and specialist services with a comprehensive system of care. Through the NSW Health SAFE START initiative, all women are screened for mental health problems and domestic violence during pregnancy and following birth. I am pleased to inform you that under this Government the perinatal and infant mental health service has significantly expanded its reach. The Mums and Kids Matter program will also include a statewide outreach perinatal service for mental health. The Specialist Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Service delivers essential evidence-informed interventions for the treatment of complex mental health problems in perinatal patients. This includes pregnant women and mothers, their infants, partners and families. It is a comprehensive approach. Provision of this specialist mental health service assists women's mental health recovery and adaptive function to support their early parenting capacity, responsive parent-infant relationships and healthy family functioning.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Recently the Legislative Council dealt with some abortion law reform. One presentation put to some parliamentarians was by a lady who was extremely impacted by post-termination trauma. Do you provide any funding to assist women who are dealing with post-termination trauma, and what are the current statistics on the resources invested in women post-termination for things such as counselling and grief support?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I believe the specific details you are after would be under the portfolio remit of the Minister for Health. I am not aware if you have had that estimates hearing.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: We are talking to him tomorrow afternoon. I am happy to defer that question. Given the relatively high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder found amongst war veterans, how much mental health funding has been allocated in this year's budget to deal with this specific issue?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I think in general we would assume that war veterans are older people in our community, but we know with the recent wars happening in the Middle East and further afield a lot of younger war veterans are returning to our shores. In June of this year the New South Wales Government announced that \$341 million will be invested in stage one of the Concord Repatriation General Hospital redevelopment. This will include funding for the purpose-built Rusty Priest Centre for Rehabilitation and Aged Care and the development of the Defence Force Centre of Excellence. That centre will provide physical and mental health services for Australia's returned veterans and New South Wales emergency services personnel and their families.

The Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs [DVA] funds New South Wales public hospital and community health services to eligible veterans and their family members. The mental health of our veterans is of great importance to this Government. It is also of great importance to me in my role as a local member of Parliament. I am very proud to be the patron of its St Marys sub-branch in the western suburbs of Sydney. I work very closely with them to support not only the work they do but also the infrastructure which allows them to continue their great work—I wanted to get a plug in for them.

The Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs provides funding for hospital admissions, emergency department care, community health services, outpatient and other ambulatory care, and treatment for all DVA Health Gold Card holders is fully funded by the Commonwealth. In October 2015 the "Expert Guidelines: Diagnosis and Treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Emergency Service Workers" was launched. The guidelines are designed to assist emergency staff; however, the principles can be applied to all people who experience post-traumatic stress disorder. The New South Wales Government contributed \$1.08 million over three years to fund the development of the guidelines. As I said, we are very pleased to announce the funding of the Concord Repatriation General Hospital redevelopment.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I endorse that funding. I worked at Concord hospital; it was a step back in time really.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You worked at Concord?

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: What was left of it. It really needs a facelift.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I also worked there as a graduate physiotherapist.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Mental health was ward 34 or ward 35. You knew you were going to have an interesting shift if you were rostered there.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Minister, you said earlier in answer to the Hon. Courtney Houssos that, as the Minister for Women, you are always championing the cause for women. In that context, are you comfortable with abortion being included in the Crimes Act?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We know that the decision to seek a termination is a deeply personal and often very difficult decision to evaluate. It is important for the community to understand that seeking to terminate a pregnancy in New South Wales is legal—and has been for almost 40 years. The laws governing termination of a pregnancy are in the New South Wales Crimes Act 1900 and in the interpretation of its provision by relevant case law. In summary, termination is lawful if the procedure is performed with consent of the women and by a registered medical practitioner if the medical practitioner procuring the termination has an honest belief, based on reasonable grounds, that the procedure is necessary.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Termination is lawful under certain conditions but—and all of us know this—there is stigma and shame because it is in the Crimes Act, and access is a problem because not many doctors perform the procedure. Minister, you may have heard of a recent case where a woman was convicted under division 12 of the New South Wales Crimes Act for having an abortion. Following that case, legal experts said this was a real wake-up call for those who have been complacent about abortion remaining in the Crimes Act. Given that, do you think abortion should remain in the Crimes Act?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Do you have the details of the case you have just mentioned?

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: I do have the details; I can send them to you. It has been all over the media in the past month or so.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I want to make sure that we are talking about the same case.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: The case is about the conviction of a woman under the Crimes Act.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Is that the one where the woman procured the abortion by consuming a pill?

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Yes. Irrespective of how it was done, the woman was convicted under division 12 of the Crimes Act. Given that conviction, do you and your Government want to rethink and possibly repeal division 12 of the Crimes Act?

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Point of order: The Crimes Act does not fall within the ministerial responsibilities of this Minister. If the honourable member is asking for a personal opinion that is also outside the leave of what this questioning should be about—namely, questions specifically related to the portfolio of the Minister. Amendments to the Crimes Act should be raised with the Attorney General.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: To the point of order: Division 12 of the Crimes Act relates specifically to women. My question relates to the aspect of how women are affected by that section of the Act.

The CHAIR: The Crimes Act does fall under the responsibility of the Attorney General. The member will restate her question.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Minister, your Government recently supported a motion by The Greens on respecting the rights of women to safe and legal abortions in New South Wales. Will you now also support removing abortions from the Crimes Act?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As I have said, the ability of a woman to procure an abortion in New South Wales is legal; that has been in place for almost 40 years.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Do you support removing abortion from the Crimes Act?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As I said, the ability of a woman to procure a legal termination is provided by—

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Minister, you are not answering the question so I will move to another topic.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: —the current laws.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: In March this year the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, the Hon. Melinda Pavey, said in an interview on Radio 2GB that the chief executive officer [CEO] of Wicked Campers had assured her that "he is committed to removing the offensive slogans over the next few months". As the Minister for Women, you would know that those slogans are highly offensive and abusive, even violent in some cases. Were you involved in the discussions with the CEO? Why was there not a push for a more binding legal change rather than a non-binding agreement with the CEO of this company?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Pretty much everyone knows those campervans. Obviously that is their marketing tactic, which is something that I personally find very offensive. However, the regulatory response falls with the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. Any action the department takes should be directed to that Minister.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: As the Minister for Women, have you had any conversations with Minister Pavey or advocated for change in this area?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I have been advocating for change for some time now.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Legal change?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Whatever it takes.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Are you aware whether these slogans have stopped being put on vans in New South Wales?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: This line of question should be directed to the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Minister, women are more likely to be the victims of racist abuse for a variety of reasons—for example, women who wear hijabs are visible targets. Can Women NSW do anything in this space—for example, working with Transport for NSW or the NSW Police Force to ensure the safety of these women? In New South Wales there have been many instances where women wearing hijabs have been abused. Have you, as the Minister for Women, taken any action about that or spoken to other authorities about how to address this issue?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Are you asking for the strengthening of prosecutions for people who have been harassed? What is your question?

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: What have you done as Minister for Women to make sure that we stop the abuse of women, particularly the racial abuse that is happening?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Any form of personal attack, intimidation or threats for whatever reason in our society should be abhorred and rejected in every case. There is certainly no reason to target or to bully or to intimidate any individual. I am always open to looking at what else is available for the Government to do in this space. But we are one part of the community; it is really a whole-of-community approach with zero tolerance of bullying and intimidation. It is the responsibility of other leaders, it is the responsibility of employers, it is the responsibility of schools and of individuals to adhere to what is the fantastic country we live in where there is freedom of choice, freedom of expression.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Sure, I do understand that. But we have a particular sector of society, and it is women, who might face that abuse. So what proactively has been done? Have you had any consultations with police or with Transport or with anyone to look at this issue?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: In relation to the actual targeting of what we are doing to further advance the quality of respect for women, I am developing the Women's Strategy, which you have probably heard about. Part of that strategy has involved having discussions with a range of members within the Government. The Office of Women have pulled together the NSW Women's Strategy Reference Group, and a part of that group has been engaging with—there is a list here—Justice, with Transport for NSW, with the Office of Sport, the Ministry of Health and a range of other government departments in relation to the forming of this particular strategy. We have sought feedback from them.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Minister, what is the current budget for the Investing in Women Funding Program?

Ms NORTON: It is \$200,000 per annum.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: For how many years, or is it recurrent?

Ms NORTON: It depends on the nature of the application, but we have \$200,000 available each year for successful applicants.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: And how many successful applicants have there been this year?

Ms NORTON: We have not announced the 2017 recipients as yet. I would have to come back to you on how many received grants in 2016. But 2017 is pending.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: For the ones who have received grants last year, how many of them were focused on Aboriginal women or culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] women?

Ms NORTON: On notice, we could provide you with a list of the successful applicants from last year that would cover off those different groups.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Do you remember if there were any CALD women or Aboriginal women specifically?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We will need to take that on notice to make sure we give you the exact findings.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, how many calls were made to the NSW Elder Abuse Helpline between January 2017 and June 2017?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As we all appreciate, elder abuse is a very serious matter affecting our communities; it is one that the Government takes very seriously in terms of our approach to targeting it. In relation to the period of time that you are asking for, I do have data here for the year 2015-16, which is 2,244; 2016-17 is 2,120; and, as at 30 June this year, a total of more than 7,400 calls had been received.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Given these figures, and given your comments saying that the Government takes elder abuse very seriously—which we very much welcome—will you now act to allow the NSW Elder Abuse Helpline to provide case management and coordination?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I also want to place on the record my thanks to this Committee for the report that you conducted in relation to elder abuse; I really appreciate that input. As you appreciate, the Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit is a source for information, a source of advice and of feedback. It is a call centre where not only people who suspect or witness elder abuse can phone in but also other practitioners and people engaged in providing care can call for information and services. They are also in the process of delivering—and

have done so—training sessions to train our frontline workers in how to identify elder abuse, what that looks like, and the actions to take.

The work they have been doing has been very successful, and last year the Minister for Ageing announced further funding to roll out another 18 training sessions to assist in that work. The Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit is a fantastic service for our community. The Government established it as part of our response to our ageing community in developing the State's first Ageing Strategy.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: This Committee has had a particular insight into exactly how effective that helpline is, and that is why it recommended that it be allowed to provide case management and coordination. In your Government's response to the inquiry you said that this particular point required further consideration. What further consideration have you provided to that recommendation?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Recommendation 6. A working group has been established by the Federal Attorneys General to assess the national approaches in relation to tackling elder abuse. We are waiting to see the outcome of that national approach before we make any decisions to expand or restructure the functions of the Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit. In relation to a case management pilot scoping study, funding of \$35,000 has been provided to the Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit. I might refer to Ms Rogers to expand a little bit further on that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is okay. You said that there is a working group at a national level. Obviously, that was extensively written about in the Government's response, but the New South Wales Government has the opportunity to be a leader in its response to elder abuse. This is something that we are seeing an increasing prevalence of. You have got a 280-page report; it was the first inquiry in the country into elder abuse—something that the New South Wales Parliament was leading the way on—but now it seems that the New South Wales Government is taking a back seat and saying instead, "We are waiting for Federal leadership".

Ms TANYA DAVIES: You provided 11 recommendations. That comment was in relation to just one of those recommendations. As I said, the Liberal-Nationals Government responded to the ageing population by developing the State's first Ageing Strategy. A part of that response was the establishment of the Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit. That is what this Government established. Last October we announced a further \$1.3 million over the next two years to continue the excellent work that they do, to extend the funding through to June 2019. When I was newly sworn in as Minister for Ageing, the very first visit that I undertook as a new Minister of the Government was to that helpline in North Sydney, to meet with the staff and to understand exactly the role they play in answering those phone calls.

As a result of that meeting and talking with the staff, I requested that the department find finances to ensure that the staff would have access to a counsellor, to somebody that they could offload to in case of, I guess, growing emotional distress in relation to the calls that they were taking, and I am pleased to say that the department has provided that support. We know that the Government is also reviewing the NSW Interagency Policy on Preventing and Responding to Abuse of Older People. We have also funded \$100,000 to the Seniors Rights Service to assist them in delivering the National Elder Abuse Conference, which will be held in Sydney early next year. We have also contributed close to \$200,000 towards the first stage of the Commonwealth Government's \$990,000 national elder abuse research agenda. So we are very much engaged and working very hard in this space.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What happens if abuse has been reported in a nursing home? What happens if someone phones the Elder Abuse Helpline and says this is occurring in a nursing home?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As you would be aware, nursing homes are regulated by the Federal Government. Certainly we will always encourage anyone who is experiencing or who is witnessing the abuse of someone to call the police. As I said, the Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit is a source of information, it is a source of advice. They take a lot of calls and redirect them to the particular agency or service that can provide the information or response that they need. So always in the first instance people are encouraged to ring 000 in those situations.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is there any follow-up done by the Help Line if they are phoned?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Could you please repeat that?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is there follow-up done if there is a phone call saying that this particular thing is occurring within a nursing home? Is there any follow-up done by the Help Line or by any other part of the New South Wales Government?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The role of the Help Line, as I mentioned before, is often as a referral Help Line. So that they ring the Elder Abuse Help Line to advise of an issue and they are there to provide, often times, advice or referrals after a call. I might ask Ms Rogers to explain that particular process.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am particularly concerned if there is a very serious circumstance of elder abuse reported through the Help Line that is occurring in a nursing home if there is an escalation process, or are they simply told to, say, just call the police?

Ms ROGERS: In the first instance, yes, it would be to the police.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is there any follow-up? If that person has taken the step of phoning the Help Line, is there any follow-up done by the Help Line or by any other part of the New South Wales Government? Is there any automatic reporting perhaps to the Federal Government?

Ms ROGERS: There is no automatic reporting, no. The Help Line is an information service. I understand the Help Line, as you would be aware, I think, is managed by CatholicCare on behalf of the Government. The Government funds it. As an information line it provides information, it provides advice. But I do understand that in the instances where it may be clear that it is a matter for the police, the police would be notified. We would have to take on notice the exact protocols the Help Line follows.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I would be interested to see what the notification process is, if there is any follow-up to that process, and is there any automatic reporting then to the Federal agencies? As the Minister has pointed out, they have regulatory control of this. The Help Line is often a first port of call for people, but how are we minimising the trauma of picking up the phone and reporting a problem? Are we just making these people jump through bureaucratic hoops?

Ms ROGERS: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, the tragic case of an elderly resident at a Raymond Terrace nursing home shocked the public earlier this year. Can you explain in detail to the Committee what steps you have taken to address this issue in your capacity as the Minister for Ageing?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As explained before, the regulatory function of nursing homes is a matter for the Federal Government. My role as Minister for Ageing is to work across whole-of-government agencies, departments and Ministers to ensure that we can support people to live well and to live long, active and connected lives as they age. That is the focus of my role as the Minister for Ageing. We are doing that by supporting the Seniors Card, which has a huge uptake of more than 1.5 million people. That assists people who are often on fixed incomes to live well-connected, socially engaged lives. We are also funding other work in the ageing space.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I think you may have missed the point of my question. My question was in relation to this specific case, have you done anything in your capacity as the Minister for Ageing?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As I stated, the responsibility for the regulation of nursing homes is a Federal Government responsibility. The role that I am playing in relation to that particular theme is in relation to retirement villages and working with Minister Kean in relation to a four-point response to some of the concerning allegations around the retirement villages, as to how their contracts are very complicated, and assisting people who are trying to decide where they may choose to age in place. If they choose to look at a retirement village, they are provided with all the information.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is very valuable work and something that should be looked at by the New South Wales Government. But my question is: Did you write a letter to the Federal Minister saying you were concerned about this particular situation that occurred in New South Wales? Did you pick up the phone and mention it in a conversation with your Federal counterpart, or did you not engage with this case at all?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As the Minister for Ageing, my role is to assist our ageing population. We have an ageing population. It is estimated that by 2035 one in three people in New South Wales will be aged over 50.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We are aware of those statistics, Minister, but I am interested in the advocacy role you played. This is something that has received wide media attention and it is something that is deeply concerning to the community. New South Wales has the highest number of aged care facilities operating under sanctions in Australia. Is not this something that as the Minister for Ageing in New South Wales, advocating on their behalf, you are going to take up?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Of course, that matter and any matter of a vulnerable person in a setting where they should be receiving the optimal care, when that has failed them, is a matter of great concern, but the body that is held accountable for that is the Federal Government.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you familiar with the Garrawarra centre?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Could you give me a bit more information about them?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The Garrawarra centre. You are not familiar with the Garrawarra centre? It is an aged care facility that is owned and operated by the New South Wales Government.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I am not familiar with that particular centre.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You might want to take this on notice then because I am going to ask you whether you can guarantee that that will remain in New South Wales Government hands.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, one of the emerging areas of elder abuse is the question of financial abuse. Something that legal aid commissioners are increasingly having to deal with is elderly parents who become guarantors without having any knowledge about the legal ramifications should the borrowing child default. Do you have any plans to address this?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: There is a lot of work we are doing in relation to educating older people within our State in relation to a range of legal frameworks. We have delivered the Get it in Black and White Campaign, where more than 30,000 people are now more aware of a range of legal matters, such as the importance of and how to prepare a will, the making of a power of attorney, appointing an enduring guardian, and discussing advanced care planning. There are other extensive investigations currently underway around the legal framework protecting older people from abuse, specifically the review by the NSW Law Reform Commission of the Guardianship Act 1987 and the Australian Law Reform Commission's inquiry into protecting the rights of old people from abuse. Those reviews and inquiries are still underway and we eagerly look forward to those findings being presented to the Government.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Did you say the Australian Law Reform Commission?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Yes, an inquiry.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is still underway?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Into protecting the rights of older Australians from abuse, and also the Australian Attorney General has established a working group to discuss current activity.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I will stop you there. I think you will find that the inquiry handed down its report a couple of months ago.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: My apologies. The Government was represented by the New South Wales Department of Justice and FACS on this working group.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, are you aware of a Treasury guideline requirement that says that all special or sick leave must be exhausted before a New South Wales public servant can access domestic violence leave?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I will refer to Mr Coutts-Trotter.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: This is a circular from 2014 that explains the circumstances in which—we discussed it earlier.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am interested in whether you think that it is appropriate that New South Wales public servants should have to exhaust their special or sick leave before they access their domestic violence leave?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: It was raised with Minister Goward this morning and she made reference to the fact that the Fair Work Commission had made preliminary findings on it but not final findings.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As you probably heard this morning, the Fair Work Commission is yet to make its final determination.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The Fair Work Commission does not cover public servants in New South Wales. This is directly within your jurisdiction as to whether you think it is reasonable that all women, particularly those in the public sector, have to wait and exhaust all of their leave before they are entitled to

access domestic violence leave. We know Minister Goward spoke of the Fair Work Commission, but that is not the point.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I am aware that you did ask Minister Goward that question.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We know you are aware because we heard Mr Coutts-Trotter tell you about it. Are you aware of how Ms Miriam Merten's daughter, Corina Merten, found out that her mother had died?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I had the opportunity to speak with Corina Merten after the passing away of Ms Miriam Merten was broadcast to the public. I convey my sympathies to the family for how Ms Merten was treated. It is a case that disturbed me greatly when I watched the footage, as it would have disturbed anyone watching the footage. The Government has responded by extending the parliamentary inquiry.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I have limited time. I am asking a specific question: Do you know how Ms Merten found out about how her mother died?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I would have to go back to the records. We will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am informed that she was told by a nurse that her mother slipped in the shower but she found out from a journalist about how her mother died. Is that correct?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I will need to take that on notice, and look at the records.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If that is the case, will you undertake to review the way that families are told about how mental health patients pass away? If Ms Merten's daughter was informed by a journalist of how her mother passed away, will you undertake to ensure that this is not the way it occurs in the future?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: In this particular case, Ms Merten's father was the carer and Mr Merten was certainly informed imminently after the passing away of Ms Merten of the situation.

Ms PEARCE: I can comment on NSW Health policy. It does cover open disclosure with families following a serious adverse event in any of our facilities and the expectation of NSW Health is that in all instances family members are met with by staff, including clinicians in some cases, and given an open disclosure as to the matter. The policy is in place.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Minister, I am concerned about the growth in the number of women in prison. The "Women in NSW Safety and Justice Report 2016" states that since 2012 women's imprisonment rates have increased by an average of 7.2 per cent per year. Are you concerned by this increasing rate of women being incarcerated?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Certainly it is a concern. More and more women are presenting to jails and detention centres. We know that a high percentage of men and women who find themselves in correction facilities have mental health conditions. This Government is responding strongly with a \$1.9 billion mental health budget to target early intervention and assist people to stay well in the community.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Do you know what the contributing factor is to this rapid rise in the past few years?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As to the specifics, I have not read any particular data or findings on that. The Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network support this highly vulnerable population whose needs are greater and more complex in the wider community. There is additional funding going to support engaging with young people who are on the cusp of exiting juvenile justice centres, to engage with them to specifically assist them to reintegrate into the community after they have been released from juvenile justice detention. So far the statistics are exceptional in relation to the recidivism rate that those individuals display after being part of this program.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: As the Women's Minister, what are you doing to prevent women from going to prison? What are your specific strategies?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: A large part of it comes down to the role I can play across government in the development of the Women's Strategy. It will be a whole-of-government Women's Strategy.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Will it look specifically at the women in prison issue?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: In the development of the strategy we are speaking with a wide range of stakeholders, including Justice NSW. The exact content of the strategy I am not at liberty to disclose; that will be shared once the strategy has been finalised.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: When will it be finalised?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We are aiming for the end of this year but it could be early next year.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: With the increase in the women's prison population, do you know whether they belong to specific culturally and linguistically diverse groups or are they Aboriginal women?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: In terms of the specific cohort of women presenting in prisons, those questions need to be directed to the Minister for Corrections. He would have more detail.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: As the Minister for Women, you should know the situation for women in prison?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: My concern is that the men and women in prison have a higher prevalence of mental health conditions. Women are over-represented in domestic and family violence statistics and the strategy we are developing is a whole-of-government approach to assist women to maintain and secure an independent and safe life.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Your foreword for "Women in NSW Work, Leadership and Financial Security Report 2017" states that the New South Wales Government has committed to making all New South Wales Government sector roles flexible by the year 2019. Media reporting on this seems to suggest that this only applied to senior staff. Could I ask you to confirm whether this policy is only for senior staff or for all staff working in government departments?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I am proud to confirm that the directive for flexible workplaces has been determined by the Premier. It is an all-of-government directive.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: All staff, no matter what role they play?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The basis is: If it is not applicable, then why not?

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Yesterday was Equal Pay Day, and we know that in Australia, sadly, women still earn \$251.20 per week less than men. As the Minister for Women, how are you advocating to change this?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: There are a number of specific programs that we are targeting. Clearly the reporting of where we are at is important because if you do not report and disclose it then how can we know where we are at and whether the programs we are implementing are effective? We have made a firm commitment to continue to report on the statistics. We are continuing the Investing in Women Funding Program, which is to encourage women's participation in non-traditional or male-dominated trades. We include projects that support a woman's financial security and independence, equitable workplaces for women and men, women in small business, and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Has that had an impact on the differences in pay? Have you evaluated the impact of the programs over the past six years you have been in government?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We are getting feedback from the particular projects that are funded. We would need to go back and analyse the grassroots level impact of those projects and then provide that to you on notice.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: That is great. I have one last question. I am sure you are aware of this but the Women in NSW 2017 report on "Work, Leadership and Financial Security", which I mentioned earlier notes on page 3 that only one in four seats in the New South Wales Parliament is held by a woman. How are you advocating for that to change?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Hands up who wants more women in Parliament? Parliament needs to represent the people and more than 50 per cent of New South Wales residents are women. Therefore, more than 50 per cent of people who are in Parliament should be women. I know that that is a huge target to undertake. I am proud that I am part of the percentage that is tilting towards that direction. I am also proud to confirm that it was the Liberal-Nationals Government that established the very first Parents' Room in the Parliament of New South Wales, which facilitates women who have children, including me, and who are in a parliamentary role to be able to balance their roles of their parliamentary requirements and the roles of caring and parenting.

I was proud to be there with the Speaker of the House, Shelley Hancock, and the President of the New South Wales Legislative Council to announce that facility. I know that the Speaker of the House has also said that she would welcome babies to come into the Chamber. Last year we had three new babies born to members of the lower House and this year it is expected that there will be two more. The representation situation is shifting. I think it is really important that those parliamentarians who are balancing parenting and motherhood with work and their career are seen as role models who will encourage other women to say, "That is something that I can do if I choose. I want to do that," because they see it happening.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: My staff say that I have the concentration span of a goldfish. Would you reiterate and clarify that you would consider discussing with the Premier the idea of salary sacrifice for women and their families to assist with payments of childcare services? Will you commit to discussing that with the Premier?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I will happily commit to having that discussion. I enjoy listening to all sorts of ideas. That is why I have participated in seven of the eight consultation sessions around the State in the development of the Women's Strategy. I want to hear from not only individuals but also business owners and industry leaders about what they are doing to assist women in the workforce and to tackle the pay gap and the gender inequality that still exists.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Minister, can you comment on what you are doing to monitor the fact that we have an ageing population and a need for them to have aged care beds available in certain aged care, low care, high care and respite care facilities. Do you have any comment on that?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Certainly part of my role as the Minister for Ageing is to understand what is happening out in our communities. To that end, the New South Wales Government has extended the funding of the four peak organisations that are there to engage directly with their memberships and the community around issues that are pertinent to the ageing population. We have extended that funding for a further three years to match with the timing of the New South Wales Ageing Strategy. COTA, the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association [CPSA], Seniors Rights Service, and the Older Women's Network have received that funding and they are very appreciative of that certainty of funding.

Those organisations work very well in feeding back to me, in my role as Minister for Ageing, what the pertinent issues are that are effecting the communities that they represent. Planning in the aged care system is a responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. In my role as Minister, I am very happy to receive feedback from people in the community and from our peak ageing organisations. I will continue to raise any pertinent issues that are the responsibility of the Commonwealth with the Commonwealth.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Minister, I do not know if you have seen the show *Utopia* but recently there was a great episode that dealt with people who are working past the retirement age of 65. Can you tell us how the Government promotes age-friendly workplaces and opportunities to make use of these valuable experiences and skills?

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I missed that episode but I would like to catch up with it. The New South Wales Government funds Liveable Communities grants, which was a 2015 election commitment. As part of that grant allocation we funded a career check-up expo for mature workers. It was hosted by the Illawarra Retirement Trust earlier this year in Wollongong and attracted over 230 people. The expo was a one-stop shop for people aged over 45—I should have been there really—who were looking for advice on career planning, education and training opportunities, financial planning, and job-seeking services.

Career advisers and a wide range of exhibitors were on hand to provide information and advice, including Peoplecare health insurance, RMB Lawyers, TAFE NSW, HESTA Super Fund, the Illawarra Credit Union, and the University of Wollongong, to name a few. More than 90 per cent of attendees reported feeling satisfied with the expo and its content. It was supported by the Age Discrimination Commissioner, the Hon. Dr Kay Patterson. The event was well received by the whole community, and we are currently looking at ways of duplicating this initiative in other areas.

When assisting people who are considering whether they will retire or not, the Global Access Partners Taskforce on Productive Ageing supports the work of the New South Wales Ageing Strategy by investigating innovative projects that focus on retaining workers aged 45 to 64 who may be at risk of early retirement due to health concerns. On 23 May this year, I attended the taskforce's recovery at a work strategic roundtable, which was supported by Family and Community Services [FACS] and icare. The roundtables are a series of discussions on the health benefits of early intervention to improve outcomes for mature employees suffering from back pain and soft tissue injuries.

Research shows that by improving recovery-at-work rates, organisations can significantly reduce absenteeism, improve health and work outcomes for injured workers, and cut government and employee costs. This is an important discussion and is one that the Government is following closely. Our Ageing Strategy priority 4.1 is to make New South Wales the best place to work for people aged 65 years and older. We will be exploring how to reduce the barriers for workers aged over 65 years. I might ask my colleagues to expand on that because it is a really important aspect.

Ms ROGERS: You mentioned the issue of age restrictions. An important project that is being led by the Department of Industry under the Ageing Strategy examines the interaction between public and private sector accident and injury insurance and the employment of older workers. The project is investigating the impacts of the age restrictions on the workers' compensation system specifically. It is being actively considered to look at how we can address that.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: When are we going to see Government Ministers employing people over the age of 65 as advisers? It is a trick question; do not answer it. Thank you, Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: Minister, thank you for attending this afternoon, as well as your staff, in particular, Mr Coutts-Trotter who backed up from this morning. You have taken some questions on notice. The secretariat will liaise with you and your officers in relation to answers to those questions on notice. There is a turnaround time of 21 days.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.