

Response to Question on Notice

Running 'Breakfast Club' programs at schools

As highlighted during the hearing, Mission Australia has developed internal policies and guidelines in line with government requirements to ensure safety of the people that we work with as well as our staff and volunteers. The NSW Government directives include parents/carers and other non-essential visitors are not allowed on school sites. There are guidelines in relation to external visitors being allowed into the schools.¹ Where possible and safe, Mission Australia continues to deliver services to support vulnerable children and young people while adhering to government guidelines.

Breakfast programs are crucial, particularly to ensure children and young people are able to access healthy meals, socialise and continue to be engaged in education. These programs are run differently in different parts of the State depending on demand. Mission Australia delivers a range of community services and although not a key component of the programs, we deliver breakfast programs on an *ad hoc* basis when our services identify a need in the community or deliver breakfast programs in partnership with other organisations.

For example, the majority of breakfast programs in Western NSW are run by local schools with the support of the community sector and volunteers. Mission Australia has in the past supported local schools and communities with these programs although there was no direct funding from government to provide these supports. With other community service providers being funded to support schools with these programs, Mission Australia has stepped back to focus on other supports for children, young people and families. However, we continue to support breakfast clubs or similar initiatives as highlighted in the example below.

Fit for Life

Fit For Life is an early intervention program delivered by PCYC designed to engage young people between 10 to 17 who might be at risk of or engaging in antisocial behaviour and who are likely to disengage from school. Through physical fitness, nutrition and social engagement, Fit For Life aims to improve overall wellbeing as well as prevent and divert young people from offending behaviours particularly through increased engagement in education.

Mission Australia's youth services, in particular Youth on Track in Dubbo, work closely with local police to support the running of the program. The local police, Mission Australia staff and other volunteers drive young people early in the morning to PCYC. They then participate in a range of fitness activities before having breakfast at the centre. Young people are then dropped off to schools.

When COVID-19 restrictions came into effect, this program was halted by PCYC. During that time, Mission Australia provided families with care packs and activity packs to ensure young people have access to various activities while they were at home. These included arts and craft packs, board games and sports packs.

¹ NSW Department of Education, COVID-19: A guide to NSW school students for Term 3, accessible at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/advice-for-families>

After the restrictions were lifted, the program resumed 2 days a week. The program now operates every day and Mission Australia staff, volunteers and the police have implemented protocols to ensure that the services adhere to government health directives and requirements.