

Questions taken on notice

NSW Government's management of the COVID-19 pandemic

FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND DISABILITY SERVICES
--

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Latest figures for social housing waiting list

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 4

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I want to ask about housing. Minister, the housing waiting list online, as I understand it, has not been updated since June 2019. Are you able to give the Committee the latest figures in relation to the housing waiting list?

Mr GARETH WARD: The latest information I have is that the crisis waiting list is around 4,600. Mr Vevers?

Mr VEVERS: The last published figure, Minister, yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And the general applications?

Mr GARETH WARD: I would have to ask Mr Vevers that question.

The CHAIR: Sorry, did you say 4,600?

Mr GARETH WARD: Yes, for the crisis waiting list.

Mr VEVERS: Can I say that the waiting list is typically updated in November each year for the previous June.

Mr GARETH WARD: As part of the annual report.

Mr VEVERS: As part of the annual report, so it is not unusual.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, that is why I am asking; because I know that we have not had any figures since June 2019 and, obviously, things have changed a lot.

ANSWER:

I am advised that the latest published figures for the number of applicants on the NSW Housing Register show that as at 30 June 2019 there were 51,014 applicants. Of these, 4,484 were priority applicants and 46,530 were general applicants.

I am advised that according to internal, finalised figures as at 30 June 2020 there were 51,395 applicants on the NSW Housing Register. Of these, 5,308 were priority applicants and 46,087 were general applicants.

I am advised that the Expected Waiting Times Dashboard will be updated with figures for the number of applicants on the NSW Housing Register as at 30 June 2020 in late November 2020.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Current figures for social housing waiting list

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 5

The CHAIR: Can you provide the most up-to-date set of figures—if not now, then on notice?

Mr GARETH WARD: I have just provided you the most up-to-date figures that I have.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, they are not the up-to-date figures; they are the published figures.

The CHAIR: Can you provide us with the current figures on notice?

ANSWER:

Refer to the response on page 2.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Current figures for social housing waiting list

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 5

My question is: Are there any further updated figures that you can provide to the Committee on what has happened to the priority list and to the general applications list for housing within New South Wales. The latest figures, which I have, and which were the most published figures are the 4,484 priority and the 46,530 general applications. I want to understand, and perhaps Mr Vevers can do it, even if you cannot give me the exact figure, what the movement in that has been over the COVID period.

Mr GARETH WARD: I am not trying to be tricky; I just gave you the latest figures that I had. I made that clear when I answered the question. I am happy to take the question on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am not asking you. I am asking Mr Vevers.

Mr GARETH WARD: I am sorry. Mr Vevers?

Mr VEVERS: I have no further figures here. The figures are published every November.

The CHAIR: But, Minister, I understood that you would take it on notice to see if you have a more current set of figures?

Mr GARETH WARD: Yes, Mr Chair. I just said that I would.

ANSWER:

Refer to the response on page 2.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Assertive Outreach breakdown - number of people

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 6-7

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You can, but could you provide us with a breakdown, particularly for the regional areas, in terms of where assertive outreach has actually reached people? I am very interested. It is a much-needed thing.

Mr GARETH WARD: There were 36 areas so I am happy to take that question on notice and provide you the data.

ANSWER:

I am advised that DCJ and partners are currently conducting Assertive Outreach activities in the following Local Government Areas:

- Ballina Shire Council
- Byron Shire
- Clarence Valley Council
- Kyogle Council
- City of Lismore
- Richmond Valley council
- Tweed Shire
- Kempsey Shire Council
- Port Macquarie-Hastings Council
- Coffs Harbour City Council
- Tamworth Regional Council
- Moree Plains Shire Council
- City of Campbelltown
- City of Canterbury-Bankstown
- City of Liverpool
- City of Fairfield
- City of Wollongong
- City of Shellharbour
- Kiama Municipal Council
- Eurobodalla Shire
- Bega Valley Shire
- Goulburn Mulwaree Council

- Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council
- Bathurst Regional Council
- City of Orange
- Dubbo Regional Council
- City of Albury
- City of Wagga Wagga
- City of Sydney
- Inner West Council
- Waverley Council
- Woollahra Municipal Council
- Randwick City Council
- Sutherland Shire Council
- Georges River Council
- Burwood Council
- Bayside Council
- Strathfield
- North Sydney Council
- Willoughby City Council
- Lane Cove
- Hunters Hill
- City of Ryde
- The Council of the Shire of Hornsby
- Ku-ring-gai
- Northern Beaches
- Central Coast Council
- City of Lake Macquarie
- City of Parramatta
- Blacktown City Council
- City of Penrith
- Newcastle City Council

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Together Home figures

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 7

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, that is terrific. Can I just clarify, when they are in the Together Home program, that is actually put into a tenancy as opposed to temporary accommodation arrangements?

Mr GARETH WARD: They are transitioned from temporary accommodation—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, that is what I am trying to get at.

Mr GARETH WARD: —to a tenancy which is headleased through community housing providers.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: And 377 people are either supported in temporary accommodation with wraparound supports or housed, so of that number 234 people are now in their own homes. The balance between that and 377 are in temporary accommodation but receiving wraparound supports and are soon to move into headleased accommodation.

Mr GARETH WARD: Some leases are yet to be finalised though, I think.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is fine. Do you have figures on how people have been able to maintain that? Do you actually have figures on numbers where the tenancy has broken down?

Mr GARETH WARD: Yes, that is a really good question. Look, it is still early days yet. I have some anecdotal stories of where people have moved back into homes and have gone back to sleep on the street. I do not have that but I am happy to take that on notice and get back to you.

ANSWER:

I am advised:

- Yes, the department is collecting information on exits from the program i.e. when a tenancy has broken down. As at 28 October 2020, there have been no tenancy breakdowns associated with the Together Home Program.
- Out of the 257 clients that have been supported into head-leased properties, three tenants have exited the program into long-term social housing (as at 20 October).

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Numbers and proportion of Aboriginal people - homelessness services

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 1

The CHAIR: Mr Coutts-Trotter, you have the data that shows there has been a 70 per cent increase, can you give us the data that shows the actual proportion of Aboriginal people?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I do not have it off the top of my head, but I am happy to take it on notice.

The CHAIR: And the numbers.

Mr GARETH WARD: I am happy to take that on notice. Mr Vevers may wish to comment on the additional funding.

ANSWER:

I am advised:

The number of Indigenous clients assisted by SHS in NSW increased from 11,925 in 2014-15 to 20,920 in 2018-19.

Source: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/9ccc0cf1-fd16-4ff1-80e1-b51f2871389c/aihw-hou-318-Specialist-homelessness-services-historical-data-2011-12-to-2018-19.xlsx.aspx>, Table 2: Clients and support periods, by sex, states and territories and Indigenous status, 2011–12 to 2018–19.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Homelessness services for Aboriginal people

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 12

The CHAIR: Minister, it is the constant refrain from your portfolio area when you ask about a statewide problem or systemic problem you get told about a pilot project or an individual service or an example that is doing well or a funding outcome on the Central Coast, whereas these are statewide problems. There never seems to be a statewide response where you say we are going to have 30 per cent of homelessness services being Aboriginal lead and Aboriginal directed because 30 per cent of people who are homeless are Aboriginal. We never seem to have that statewide response. That seems to be repeated with your Central Coast announcement.

Mr GARETH WARD: The only reason I use that example, Mr Shoebridge, is because I made that announcement last week following representations from the Parliamentary Secretary and local member, Adam Crouch, and one of your upper House colleagues as well. The argument is quite easily made out in an area where there is a fast-growing rate of Aboriginal people and it would not make sense that where there is a high proportion of Aboriginal people that you address those areas. I acknowledge your point. Obviously I want to see more of Aboriginal controlled organisations supporting Aboriginal people. I also want to make sure there is no wrong door so that when people walk through any door of any organisation they are supported regardless of ethnicity or race.

The CHAIR: We will get that data from Mr Coutts-Trotter on notice?

Mr GARETH WARD: Yes.

ANSWER:

I am advised:

- Currently a total of 9 services are delivered by Aboriginal led organisations.
- A further 3 services are either led by non-Aboriginal organisations that partner with Aboriginal organisations, or have a 100% Aboriginal client target focus.
- Across homelessness services it is expected that a significant number of clients assisted will be Aboriginal, and where service providers are not Aboriginal organisations they are expected to form close working partnerships with local Aboriginal service providers and organisations such as Aboriginal Land Councils, and ensure culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal clients.
- Future service redesign of homelessness services includes provision for increased involvement and influence of Aboriginal people in delivery of homelessness services.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Rough sleepers: year on year figures and effect of COVID-19 measures

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 12

The CHAIR: Minister, you said that over the course of the pandemic 1,000 rough sleepers have been helped into accommodation at one point or another. Is that 1,000 distinct individuals or is it some people washing in and washing out?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: No, distinct individuals. And the number my colleague Mr Vevers used was for the 2019-20 financial year. It is not quite the period of the pandemic.

The CHAIR: How does that compare to the previous financial year?

Mr VEVERS: I would have to take that on notice; I do not have that figure with me.

The CHAIR: Could you give a sense of whether it has been a substantial increase because of the pandemic homelessness work?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

ANSWER:

I am advised that since March 2017, the NSW Government has been working in partnership with the NGO sector to conduct Assertive Outreach street patrols in inner-Sydney. These teams have helped many people experiencing street homelessness find pathways to long-term housing. In 2019 DCJ and its partners expanded these services to the Tweed and Newcastle and this was followed by further expansion to all DCJ Districts beginning in April 2020.

In 2018-19, DCJ Assertive Outreach services assisted 454 people who were street sleeping into Temporary Accommodation and 216 people into long-term permanent housing.

In 2019-20, DCJ Assertive Outreach services assisted 1,444 people with temporary accommodation, and 480 people with long-term housing.

Between 27 March and 24 September 2020, DCJ Assertive Outreach services assisted 1,525 people with temporary accommodation, and 529 people with long-term housing.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Caseworker numbers

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 15

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: In a variety of meetings it became clear that really none of them had been in place until earlier this year. I have been seeking information not just on whether they were recruited but when they actually physically started work. No-one has been willing to prepare that information. I do not think it is an unreasonable question. I am happy for you to take it on notice if you are actually going to provide it to me. You crowed that in the budget 12 months ago you were recruiting 72 new caseworkers and I know that not one new person started until after March this year. I want to know when they started and where they were.

ANSWER:

I am advised that DCJ is focussed on maintaining a zero vacancy rate. Throughout the financial year there were targeted and specialised recruitment campaigns to fill vacancies across the state. A total of 442 vacancies were filled with external candidates in the 2019-20 financial year including the 72 new roles.

Further information regarding caseworker vacancies is available at:
<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/statistics/caseworker-statistics>

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Caseworker vacancies

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 16-17

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Why did it take over nine months for you to fill those positions?

Mr GARETH WARD: That is an operational question, but I have made it clear that I want a zero vacancy rate. I am sure, Ms Sharpe, it would not matter whether it was me in this role or you in this role or anyone else in this role. That is the expectation.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am not arguing about the vacancy rate. I am asking about 72 funded positions that were not filled for over nine months.

Mr GARETH WARD: That is what it relates to.

The CHAIR: Minister, you said it was an operational issue so maybe Mr Coutts-Trotter can give the operational answer.

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

ANSWER:

I am advised that the monthly offers accepted during the 2019-20 financial year can be broken down as follows.

July	15
August	38
September	22
October	31
November	31
December	45
January	31
February	26
March	47
April	64
May	48
June	44
Total	442

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Number of applications and devices issued - children/family services in OOHC or family/community services

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 17

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Ms Czech sort of talked a little bit about the issue of the digital divide, which really opened up during COVID, and the issue of kids in out-of-home care particularly or even kids within or getting out of the family and services not having access to devices. How many devices did the department end up actually giving out?

Mr GARETH WARD: We gave out 893.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My understanding is that you had over 6,000 applications.

Mr GARETH WARD: A lot of those were duplicate applications.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How many of those were duplicate applications?

Mr GARETH WARD: I don't know the answer to that question.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you take that on notice?

The CHAIR: Not 5,107.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I wouldn't think so.

Ms WALKER: I am happy to provide that at a later date because we do have the details. Not only did we have multiple agencies putting in for individual families but some agencies putting in multiple times for the same—

ANSWER:

I am advised that between June and September 2020, 893 technology devices have been provided to all eligible families in need based on the key selection criteria for this initiative (Stage one).

The initiative aimed to support vulnerable children, young people and families to enable them to remain connected to loved ones and the support services they are already working with, as well as to access online education during COVID-19 and beyond. The eligibility criteria is set out below:

- Children aged 0-5 years
- Young people disengaged from school
- Families engaged with child and family services before COVID-19 but services ended due to limited access to technology
- Families who are isolated and need support to virtually communicate face-to-face with their loved ones

- Families that need technology support to virtually access local child and family or youth services
- Families that need telehealth, virtual home visits and interventions to ensure their wellbeing
- Families that need support with accessing education online and have not been provided with technology assets through their school
- Child or young person is not in OOHC

The reasons that a family may not be eligible included:

- Applications from Permanency Support Providers and children in OOHC as these providers were encouraged to expend funds for technology for children and young people to support ongoing case management and wellbeing: 489 applications
- Applications from DCJ or Family Preservation Services engaged with families, children and young people (receiving ongoing case management and brokerage funds to support technology needs): 164 applications.
- Applications for those enrolled in Public Education (initiative sat alongside the Education Technology Initiative), including applications from schools: 397 applications.
- Duplicate applications for multiple children/young people from service providers or unable to assess vulnerability due to incomplete applications: 35 applications.
- Another organisation (such as school) already providing technology assets and/or support to the child, young person, family or carer: 402 applications.
- Application received for school aged child/children: 1985 applications.

An application may be prioritised across a number of domains and as such the above is not an accumulative total.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Number of devices issued- children in OOHC

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 17

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, that's great, but there was no carve-out specifically for kids in out-of-home care.

ANSWER:

I am advised that the Technology Initiative was not aimed at children and young people in OOHC. These providers were encouraged to expend funds for technology for children and young people to support ongoing case management and wellbeing.

The initiative was aimed to support vulnerable children, young people and families to enable them to remain connected to loved ones and the support services they are already working with as well as to access online education during COVID-19 and beyond.

Refer to page 13-14 for details of the selection criteria.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Number of devices issued- children in OOHC

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 17

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am trying to understand how many kids in out-of-home care ended up with a device through this process.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: We will have to take it on notice.

ANSWER:

I am advised that the Department of Communities and Justice communicated to caseworkers across the sector that if schools could not provide technology to students in out-of-home care (OOHC) then support would be provided through children's support packages and via the OOHC Education Pathway. This allowed DCJ and NGO providers to purchase tablets, laptops and internet dongles for these children who could not get devices from schools.

Data on the number of children in OOHC who were provided with a device by DCJ, an NGO provider or the NSW Department of Education is not available.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Dates for rollout of devices

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 18

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My understanding is the devices were not rolled out until about July. Is that right?

Mr GARETH WARD: I would have to ask Ms Walker.

Ms WALKER: I can get the dates on that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The kids were off school in March but no devices actually went out until at least after June.

Mr GARETH WARD: I think you were part of the conversations with that as part of the sector, Ms Sharpe, so you would be aware of when we were talking about it.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am just asking you to confirm that.

Mr GARETH WARD: Well, we have taken that on notice.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

Closing date for applications: 1 May 2020

Establishment of evaluation panel and criteria: Early May 2020

Evaluation Panel met: 20 May 2020

Successful applicants (stage one) notified: 16 June 2020

Laptops delivered to 893 households: Delivery occurred between 19 June to 14 September 2020.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Payments to foster carers

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 20

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: The payments directly to carers did not change. But there was capacity both in DCJ-supported places and non-government-supported places to provide additional brokerage contingency for particular needs that people have. That is usually the case but within COVID we sent the message very clearly to our own staff and also to non-government organisations that there was greater scope to make more of those crisis payments as required. From memory I think there was about \$300,000 or \$400,000 in those payments that were made by non-government organisations. I do not have the figure for D. C. Joes' supported care.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you take that on notice in terms of how much that would normally be the case or whether there was additional—

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes, sure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am trying to ascertain whether there was a jump.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

ANSWER:

I am advised that between March and September \$27,000 was spent on COVID-19 related contingency payments for children in DCJ care and their carers. I am advised that the sorts of things that money went to were additional payments for education related expenses such as laptops, computers and iPads as well as recreational/fitness equipment.

In addition I am advised that DCJ provided \$318,336.46 in Emergency Action Payments to nine Permanency Support Program service providers as at 20 October 2020. The Emergency Action Payment has only been available during COVID-19. I am advised that the payment was used for a range of measures including laptops, internet connection and PPE equipment.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Youth Justice- ATSI children in detention

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 20

The CHAIR: Ms Czech, you have obviously come with hard bunch of data on this. If there are 187 children in detention how many of those children are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders?

Ms CZECH: It is about 50 per cent. I have not got the actual number with me on that measure.

Mr GARETH WARD: We will take that on notice.

The CHAIR: What proportion of those children are on remand?

Mr GARETH WARD: Remand generally hovers at about half.

Ms CZECH: Yes, it is about 52 per cent. I do have that with me. We can take it on notice.

The CHAIR: If you have got it there with you—

Ms CZECH: If you just bear with me for one minute, I will get it.

ANSWER:

I am advised that Youth Justice census information is recorded daily at midnight. For accuracy, Youth Justice NSW has provided custody census figures and disaggregated data as requested for both the 6 and 7 of October 2020.

As at midnight 6 October 2020, there were 186 young people in custody. 73 of these young people were Aboriginal (39%) and 113 Non-Aboriginal (61%).

Of the above, 114 young people (61%) in custody were on remand. 40 of these young people were Aboriginal (35%) and 74 Non-Aboriginal (65%).

As at midnight 7 October 2020, there were 182 young people in custody. 74 of these young people were Aboriginal (41%) and 108 Non-Aboriginal (59%).

Of the above, 111 young people (61%) in custody were on remand. 42 of these young people were Aboriginal (38%) and were 69 Non-Aboriginal (62%).

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Youth Justice - various - remand data

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 20

Ms CZECH: I do not have that Mr Shoebridge so I will take that on notice. I will provide that.

The CHAIR: Could you give the proportion on remand for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal?

Mr GARETH WARD: Absolutely.

Ms CZECH: Of course.

ANSWER:

Refer to the response on page 19.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Youth Justice - decision making around visits to YJ Centres

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 21

The CHAIR: In Melbourne clear markers are being set out for when lockdowns will be ended and when restrictions will be lifted. What are the markers, what can we look to, to say, okay, that is the point at which kids in detention will be able to have visits?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Our agencies will need to provide advice to relevant Ministers and then I would think it would go through Cabinet or a sub-committee of Cabinet that manages the stance, the arrangements for public health orders and related protocols. So Ministers have to sign off on it and then a sub-committee of the Cabinet would need to endorse it.

The CHAIR: It has got to get to the Minister?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

The CHAIR: What process do you have in place to get that to the Minister?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Advice through myself and Simone Czech to Minister Ward in respect to Youth Justice, and advice through me and Peter Severin to Minister Roberts. The time frame I can take on notice and provide to the Committee.

ANSWER:

I am advised that our highest priority is always the physical and mental health of the young people in our care. DCJ takes advice with regards to in person visits from NSW Health.

Youth Justice NSW is currently formalising COVID safe guidelines in preparation for visits to re-commence so that DCJ is ready to move forward as soon as the re-introduction of visits is supported by NSW Health. This is being done in consultation with Corrective Services and Justice Forensic and Mental Health Network..

Youth Justice NSW will continue to use tablets for family visits for all young people in custody both while in person visits are suspended and into the future.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Support and demand for food and respite care services

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 24

The CHAIR: Addison Road in particular said that many of their ongoing donors—the restaurants and the supermarkets—have had to restrict what they are able to give, or cease giving, to Addison Road because of the business impacts of the pandemic. In fact, that pool of available support has actually shrunk during the pandemic. Are you aware of that, Minister?

Mr GARETH WARD: What I will do is I will undertake to review the evidence that you cited then. Full credit to the local members Jo Haylen, Ms Sharpe and Jenny Leong, who I know have also raised these issues with me, as have you. So I will review the evidence.

ANSWER:

I have reviewed the evidence of Ms. Rosanna Barbero. I am aware that panic buying, import challenges, and hospitality industry closures reduced food donations during COVID-19. Before COVID, funding under the DCJ NSW Food Program had contributed towards the costs of transporting food relief across NSW. The NSW Charities Fund established by the NSW Government, supported OzHarvest and Foodbank NSW & ACT (Foodbank) to increase their operations to meet demand, as well as cover the additional costs of providing food relief during the COVID period. Funding larger state-wide organisations ensured the most efficient purchase of food direct from suppliers and distribution to agencies.

I am advised that since COVID started Foodbank has spent over \$1.5M and OzHarvest over \$2.3M on purchasing food products, which is a substantial increase in the amount of funding spent pre-COVID. This food is then provided to community organisations free or at a reduced price.

I am pleased to report that by the end of August 2020, the equivalent of over 15 million meals were provided by OzHarvest and Foodbank to hundreds of charities across NSW during the COVID period.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Assistance for Addison Rd and St Francis organisations

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 24

The CHAIR: But you will review the evidence not just of Addison Road but also St Francis to see what, if any, direct assistance can be provided to those two organisations?

Mr GARETH WARD: And I am happy to have a further conversation with you once I have done that.

ANSWER:

I am advised that Foodbank and OzHarvest received funding to ensure that community organisations across NSW have enough food to distribute to their vulnerable clients by sourcing, packing, and delivering food to hundreds of registered charities across the state. In August 2020 Foodbank provided food to 390 charities and 120 schools, and OzHarvest to 551 charities.

If we take Addison Road as an example of one of the larger charity partners, during COVID the support they received includes 9,361 free cooked meals from OzHarvest, and 207,981 kilos of food from Foodbank, of which 71,382 was provided free of charge. Going forward Addison Road will have access to free hampers for International Students and OzHarvest's food rescue service.

Beyond this, funding larger statewide providers has enabled an adaptive response to meet the greatest need. For instance, OzHarvest has delivered pre-cooked meals to individuals and families placed in temporary accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes people who were sleeping rough, people in self-isolation, youth, and people and families escaping violence. Foodbank has distributed free hampers to International Students and Aboriginal communities across NSW.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Helpline - congestion and outages

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 25

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I want to ask about the helpline and congestion and outages during the COVID period. There were some notes I saw on the website at various points around coronavirus. I am trying to get a sense of how many outages there were, how long they were for and what the issue was.

Mr GARETH WARD: All good questions.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am okay if you take them on notice. They were on your coronavirus page. It worried me that it was longer than—

Mr GARETH WARD: It was not a long period.

Ms CZECH: It was not long.

Mr GARETH WARD: I will take those on notice, Ms Sharpe, and get back to you.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Okay. Will you be able to tell me how many outages there were?

ANSWER:

I am advised that the Child Protection Helpline has experienced two significant telephone line outages during the COVID-19 period.

Between 25 March 2020 to 1 April 2020 National call network congestion caused intermittent outages to the Child Protection Helpline, for incoming telephone calls to 132 111.

Mandatory reporters were asked to make an online report through the website reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au and people with urgent safety concerns for children were asked to contact the NSW Police.

Further, on 20 July 2020, for approximately 1 hour 45 minutes there was an outage which Optus advised was caused by a failed Network Interface Card on the Mascot datacentre router. This issue has not occurred again since.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Young people - foster and kinship care

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 27

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is good. I have one last question. You may need to take it on notice. I want to know how many young people in foster and kinship care aged out during the COVID period.

Mr GARETH WARD: I would have to take that on notice.

ANSWER:

I am advised that in the June 2020 quarter (spanning from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020) 210 children turned 18. This is similar to the same quarter in 2019 when 209 children turned 18.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Young people - foster and kinship care

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 27

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: COVID period I am not sure. The 2019-20 financial year, 850 young people turned 18 and left care.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The period I am talking about is the very difficult lockdown.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I do not know whether we want to say March to June—whatever you like. If you could provide that, I would be very interested.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Sure.

ANSWER:

Please refer to the answer on page 25.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Social housing waiting list

TRANSCRIPT PAGE 28

Mr GARETH WARD: I would like to correct the record on the social housing wait list. My office has asked for the latest data, as I indicated, some of which has been received but which I have not been briefed on at this point. My office has asked if the latest dashboard can be published ahead of my response to the question on notice on this issue of my good friend the member for Keira, Mr Ryan Park, to provide Mr Park with the latest and most up-to-date figures. But, as I indicated, I will take the question on notice.

ANSWER:

I am advised an update of the Expected Waiting Times (EWT) dashboard, which will provide further breakdown of this data as at 30 June 2020 (such as by allocation zone and by data on waiting times for properties in each allocation zone), is scheduled to be released in late November 2020.