



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2021-2022

Supplementary Questions

Portfolio Committee No. 5 – Regional NSW and Stronger Communities

MULTICULTURALISM, SENIORS

Hearing: Monday 14 March 2022

Answers due by: 8 April 2022

Budget Estimates secretariat
Phone 9230 2112
BudgetEstimates@parliament.nsw.gov.au

MULTICULTURALISM, SENIORS

Questions from the Hon Mark Buttigieg (on behalf of the Opposition)

DISASTER PLANNING

Question

1. How is the NSW Government consulting with stakeholders and senior residents of communities affected by the recent floods in Northern NSW and Sydney?
 - (a) What priorities have been identified by stakeholders representing the interests of seniors in planning for flood recovery?

Answer

I have visited the flood affected areas in Northern NSW and have heard directly from residents. In addition, more than 240 Department of Justice and Communities staff have been sent to assist the communities during this time as part of the NSW Government's response.

Further queries on this matter should be directed to the Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience, and Minister for Flood Recovery.

Question

2. What are the NSW Government's plans to address the rental shortage in Northern NSW communities in the wake of the flooding, which was already extreme before the disaster?

Answer

This is a matter for the Minister for Planning and Minister for Homes.

Question

3. What is the Minister doing to ensure housing access and affordability for seniors is not negatively impacted in the short, medium and long term by this natural disaster?

Answer

I communicate regularly with the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing and seniors peak organisations and regularly discuss these issues with my ministerial colleagues.

Further queries regarding the flood response should be directed to the Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience, and Minister for Flood Recovery.

Question

4. What planning is the NSW Government undertaking to ensure older residents of the State are not negatively impacted by the effects of climate change, including extreme heat stress and an increased number of natural disasters?
 - (a) How is the NSW Government liaising with relevant seniors' stakeholders to ensure they have an active voice in the planning for a climate-change affected future?

Answer

I communicate regularly with the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing and seniors peak organisations and regularly discuss these issues with my ministerial colleagues.

Further queries regarding the flood response should be directed to the Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience, and Minister for Flood Recovery.

ELDER ABUSE

Question

5. A commitment was made in 2019 to increase the number of Aged Crime Prevention Officers across the State to 56. As there are only 12 currently, what is the NSW Government's plan to increase this number to reach the target?
 - (a) What is the timeframe to reach this commitment?
 - (b) Will the NSW Government consider increasing the promised number, in light of the growing concerns about elder abuse, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic?

Answer

Information on the rollout of Aged Crime Prevention Officers is available on the NSW Police website.

Question

6. How does the Department of Communities and Justice support the operations of the Ageing and Disability Commission?
 - (a) Does the Commissioner have access to Department of Communities and Justice resources to support investigations into abuse, neglect and exploitation of older people?
 - i. If so, what resources are they?

Answer

The Ageing and Disability Commission has its own budget and resources and operates within these parameters.

Question

7. What is the role of the NSW Steering Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse in creating strategies for the prevention of elder abuse?

Answer

I refer you to the NSW Elder Abuse Inquiry Final Report June 2020.

Question

8. How many calls did the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission's Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline receive between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2021?
 - (a) Did this represent an increase on the previous year?
 - (b) Were there particular abuse categories that calls referred to more than others?
 - i. If so, what were they?

Answer

I refer you to the Ageing and Disability Commission's Annual Report.

The most commonly reported types of alleged abuse in relation to older people in 2020-21 were psychological abuse and financial abuse.

Question

9. How will the NSW Government evaluate if the Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline requires greater resources?
 - (a) Is there a measure in place in regards to its ability to take calls and refer cases for investigation?

Answer

I refer you to the Ageing and Disability Commission's Annual Report.

Question

10. The Ageing and Disability Commission reported an increase in calls, reports and enquiries during the COVID-19 pandemic. Did the Department of Communities and Justice increase its staffing allocation to investigate the increased number of reported incidents?
 - (a) If so, how was the staffing allocation changed?
 - (b) If the staffing allocation was increased, will this be maintained?

Answer

As the Ageing and Disability Commissioner is a statutory independent appointment, questions relating to staffing, demand and performance should be directed to the Ageing and Disability Commissioner.

Question

11. In 2020-21, the Ageing and Disability Commission received 3566 reports specifically about the abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults with disability and older people, up from 2000 calls in 2016-2017. How much is the helpline being funded annually?
- (a) Has funding increased in 2020-2021 to cover the increase in the call load?
 - (b) Have the hours of operation of the helpline increased due to increased demand?

Answer

I refer you to the Ageing and Disability Commission's Annual Report.

Question

12. Did the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission record an increased number of allegations of financial abuse during the pandemic?

Answer

I refer you to the Ageing and Disability Commission's Annual Report.

Question

13. Did the NSW Government plan for the possibility of an increased risk of financial abuse associated with bank closures during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown?
- (a) If so, what measures were taken?
 - (b) How is the NSW Government planning for the risk of financial abuse in relation to the increasing numbers of bank branch closures around NSW, particularly in rural and regional areas?

Answer

I am aware of this matter and have written to the Australian Banking Association and the four major banks about the issues and will work with the ADC to monitor the risk for financial abuse.

Question

14. How did the NSW Government deliver help to seniors without access to online or telephone banking, who had no access to funds when banks shut their doors during lockdown?

Answer

I have written to the Australian Banking Association and the four major banks, and I am in regular contact with the seniors peak organisations and MACA, the Ageing and Disability Commission, as well as members of the community.

Question

15. The Ageing and Disability Advisory Board met with the Australian Banking Association to discuss measures across the banking sector to prevent, identify and respond to financial abuse. What recommendations from this consultation have been put in place to decrease the incidence of financial abuse among seniors?

Answer

I refer you to the answer to question 13.

Question

16. How is the NSW Government working specifically to prevent elder abuse in culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous communities, as per Recommendation 2 of the 2016 Elder Abuse Enquiry?

Answer

I am advised:

The ADC Commissioner considers the significance of intersectionality in their responses to abuse, neglect and exploitation

HOUSING

Question

17. Is the NSW Government considering the implementation of Silver Level Liveable Housing Design Standards for NSW, for which NSW COTA has been advocating?

Answer

This is a matter for the Minister for Planning and Minister for Homes.

Question

18. Has the NSW Government given consideration to the way in which a specialised housing service for older people could divert people away from homelessness services?
- (a) If so, what model is being considered?

Answer

This is a matter for the Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Services.

Question

19. What specific measures are in place to support people over 50 to provide early intervention and prevention services and to help them navigate the housing system?

Answer

This is a matter for the Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Services.

Question

20. Noting that the Design and Place State Environmental Planning Policy is currently on exhibition, which includes guidelines on apartment design for future adaptability for seniors and sustainability, can the NSW Government outline whether the costs and benefits research associated with introducing, potentially, mandatory universal design requirements in NSW (Housing and Property) been completed?

- (a) What research has been undertaken as per the action item?

- (b) Will this research be made public?
- (c) What decisions have been driven by this research?
- (d) What findings from this research have driven any decisions taken?

Answer

This is a matter for the Minister for Planning and Minister for Homes.

Question

21. Has the NSW Government considered re-establishing and expanding the NSW Appliance Replacement Offer to provide subsidies for seniors in low-income households to upgrade their inefficient appliances such as washing machines or fridges?

Answer

This is a matter for the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government.

AGEING WELL

Question

22. What budget amount was allocated within the 2021/22 NSW Budget to implement the actions and strategies associated with the Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021–2031?
- (a) Can the NSW Government provide the actual budgetary spend for the financial years 2020/21 and 2019/20 under the previous iteration of the Ageing Strategy?

Answer

I refer you to NSW Treasury.

Question

23. Will the Department of Communities and Justice be releasing regular data on the strategy's impact on the senior members of the NSW community?

Answer

Yes.

Question

24. Given the Director Women NSW, Seniors and Carers, Department of Communities and Justice has met with lead agencies in regard to their progress on the Ageing Well in NSW: Action Plan 2021-2022, can the NSW Government please provide an update from the lead agencies as follows:
- (a) Department of Planning, Industry and Environment?
 - (b) Department of Communities and Justice?
 - (c) Aboriginal Housing Office and Communities?
 - (d) Office of Local Government?
 - (e) Transport for NSW?
 - (f) NSW Centre for Road Safety?
 - (g) NSW Centre for Maritime Safety?
 - (h) Department of Customer Service?
 - (i) NSW Fair Trading?
 - (j) Department of Premier and Cabinet?
 - (k) NSW Public Service Commission?
 - (l) NSW State Insurance Regulatory Authority?
 - (m) Women NSW?
 - (n) Multicultural NSW?
 - (o) Department of Education?

- (p) TAFE NSW?
- (q) NSW Treasury?
- (r) NSW Ministry of Health?
- (s) Ageing and Disability Commission?
- (t) Legal Aid?
 - i. How regularly is their progress monitored?

Answer

As part of the Ageing Well in NSW Strategy 2021-2031, an Aging in NSW: Action Plan is reviewed every two years with the latest update available on the NSW Government Communities and Justice website.

Question

25. Does the NSW Government allocate a set percentage of communications or marketing budgets for new programs or initiatives to be spent on non-digital promotion e.g. print media, hard copy fliers?
- (a) Does the NSW Government also distribute all digital communications to seniors in hardformat?
 - i. If so, what are the distribution channels for this communication?

Answer

Seniors Card dedicates a percentage of its budget to produce the annual Seniors Card directory which is distributed in hard copy to pick up locations across the state. New members also receive hard copy material when joining the program.

(a) No.

Question

26. Will responsibility for Ageing in NSW be moving to the Department of Treasury and Cabinet?

Answer

The “Department of Treasury and Cabinet” does not exist.

MENTAL HEALTH

Question

27. When will the 2022 mid-term evaluation into the NSW Older People's Mental Health Services Service Plan 2017-2027 be delivered?

Answer

This is a matter for the Minister for Mental Health.

REDUCING SOCIAL ISOLATION

Question

28. Other than the Reducing Social Isolation for Seniors grant program, did the Department of Communities and Justice fund any other programs aimed at reducing social isolation for seniors in the last year?

Answer

The four seniors peak organisations are funded to respond to a broad range of issues facing older people in NSW.

Question

29. Given the high rates of social isolation due to COVID in senior populations, what more is being planned by the Department to address this problem?

Answer

Social Isolation is a priority of the Seniors Strategy. This will be considered in terms of future grants for programs for NSW seniors.

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT

Question

30. How many employees who identify with having a disability are employed by:
- (a) Multicultural NSW
 - (b) Ageing and Disability Commission

Answer

This information can be found in the 2021 Workforce Profile Report.

Question

31. How many senior managers who identify with having a disability are employed by:
- (a) Multicultural NSW
 - (b) Ageing and Disability Commission

Answer

I refer to my answer provided to question 30.