

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 2 - HEALTH

Wednesday 1 November 2023

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

WATER, HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS, MENTAL HEALTH, YOUTH, THE NORTH COAST

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The Committee met at 9:15.

MEMBERS

Dr Amanda Cohn (Chair)

The Hon. Susan Carter

The Hon. Greg Donnelly

Ms Cate Faehrmann

The Hon. Scott Farlow

Ms Sue Higginson

The Hon. Stephen Lawrence

The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. Emily Suvaal

PRESENT

The Hon. Rose Jackson, *Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast*

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**

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The CHAIR: Welcome to the second hearing of the Committee's inquiry into budget estimates 2023-2024. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. My name is Dr Amanda Cohn and I am Chair of the Committee. I welcome Minister Jackson and accompanying officials to the hearing today. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Water, Housing, Homelessness, Mental Health, Youth, and the North Coast.

I ask everyone in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent. Parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses in relation to the evidence they give today; however, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside of the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about making comments to the media or to others after completing their evidence. In addition, the Legislative Council has adopted rules to provide procedural fairness for inquiry participants. I encourage Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of those procedures. Welcome to our witnesses today. Thank you for making the time to give evidence. All witnesses will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Minister Jackson, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament. I also remind Ms Willcox that you do not need to be sworn as you've been sworn at an earlier budget estimates hearing before this Committee.

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Ms AMANDA JONES, Deputy Secretary, DPE Water, affirmed and examined

Mr ANDREW GEORGE, Chief Executive Officer, WaterNSW, affirmed and examined

Mr ROCH CHEROUX, Managing Director, Sydney Water, affirmed and examined

Mr JONATHON WHEATON, Acting Deputy Secretary, Regional NSW, affirmed and examined

Dr BRENDAN FLYNN, Executive Director Mental Health Branch, NSW Ministry of Health, affirmed and examined

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

Ms DEB WILLCOX, AM, Deputy Secretary Health System Strategy and Patient Experience, NSW Ministry of Health, on former affirmation

Mr MICHAEL WHEATLEY, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Land and Housing Corporation, sworn and examined

Mr MICHAEL TIDBALL, Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice, on former oath

Ms ANNE CAMPBELL, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy and Commissioning, Department of Communities and Justice, affirmed and examined

Mr JAMES TOOMEY, Deputy Secretary Housing, Disability, District Services and Disaster Welfare, Department of Communities and Justice, affirmed and examined

Ms FAMEY WILLIAMS, Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Housing Office, affirmed and examined

Mr GRANT BARNES, Chief Regulatory Officer, Natural Resources Access Regulator, affirmed and examined

Mr BRENDAN THOMAS, Deputy Secretary, Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes, Department of Communities and Justice, sworn and examined

Mr BRYCE WILDE, Executive Director, Natural Resources Commission, affirmed and examined

Mr DARREN CLEARY, Managing Director, Hunter Water, sworn and examined

Ms ZOE ROBINSON, Advocate for Children and Young People, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: We will move to questioning, starting with 20 minutes for the Opposition.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Good morning, Minister, and your many officials. Good to see you all today. Minister, I want to start with some questions to you firstly in relation to your parliamentary disclosures. Do you believe that you've always put on those records what you've needed to declare?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I want to raise a few examples with you. My understanding is that you for a period of time were a director at the Chifley Research Centre. Is that correct?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Many years ago, yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The records that I have show that you were actually a director from 6 May 2011 to 12 September 2019. Is that correct?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'd have to take the exact dates on notice but that sounds about right.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You did a parliamentary disclosure from 1 July 2019 to the end of December 2019 but you didn't reference that position at all. Why did you leave that off your—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I suspect it's because I had resigned prior to then but that the Chifley Research Centre had not updated their records, but I can take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay, because, as I said, they say that you ceased on 12 September so there's a gap there.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: My recollection is that I had ceased to be a director of that organisation some time, I think, prior to then. But they may not have updated their records. But I can take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did you ever get paid for that position?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No. It was an unpaid role.

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The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. If you could, just check the date because, as I said, we have some official records here that would suggest otherwise. If you could provide updates to the Committee, that would be useful.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I just also want to take you now to your directorship with the Whitlam Institute at Western Sydney University. Do you know when you began that position?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I don't recall off the top of my head. It was prior to the recent anniversary of the fiftieth year of Gough Whitlam being elected Prime Minister—prior to 2022. Maybe 2021.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, we didn't see that appear on your disclosures until 2022. Again, there's another six-month gap there in that position?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It may have been in 2022. I was not a director of the Whitlam Institute for very long. I came on around 2022 and then, unfortunately, had to resign when I was elected as a Minister. I did that almost immediately.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. I have an ASIC document here that indicates you were appointed on 27 July 2021 to that particular role, again, which would indicate there's about a six-month gap where that wasn't disclosed. Can you respond to that?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can take that on notice. Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did you ever get paid for that position?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No. It was unpaid.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could, just clarify it because, obviously, that's a couple of areas where the records don't match your disclosure.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It would be good to get that rectified for the Committee in terms, I guess, of the transparency and probity that is expected as members of Parliament and as Ministers. I want to take you now to some of your travel. Minister, obviously, you visit the North Coast a little bit, given that you are the Minister for North Coast. One particular trip, I just wanted to ask you about. I understand you visited the North Coast, you went up on Friday 21 July, to Ballina, and you came back to Sydney on Sunday 23 July and that was with a staff member. Do you recall that trip?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, I do.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can you tell us what you did on that trip?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I met with a range of organisations. Off the top of my head—I met with the Byron Writers Festival. I met with the Northern Rivers or North Coast performing arts academy. I think that's their title. Apologies if I've got the name of that organisation slightly wrong. They're a fantastic organisation that had their facility in Lismore impacted by flooding, so they've been unable to do their work properly since then. They're looking for a new home. I was trying to use—I see the role as Minister for the North Coast as like a navigator within government. It doesn't really have a strict portfolio sort of responsibility in terms of an agency, but there are a range of different cross-cutting, whether it is Arts or Transport or Health, Education. I try and help organisations navigate through government. That organisation was having some difficulty just navigating through flood response and finding a new home. So I met with them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Was that on the Friday or the Saturday?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I recall that was on the Friday.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did you organise those meetings and the timing of that weekend visit?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Me personally?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Your office? Did you initiate that you'd meet on those dates?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think they requested to have a meeting with me and I was going up there, those dates. That's why I met with them. I then went to Fletcher Street Cottage, which is a sort of drop-in centre in Byron. That has been experiencing really massive, increased demand because, as people may well know,

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Byron shire is, in fact, now the number one area in New South Wales that experiences homelessness. That's not per capita; that's just overall, which is shocking in a way, that it's higher than Sydney.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, would it be fair to say that you spent a fair bit of time in Byron Bay? By the sound of it, you just mentioned Byron Writers Festival and that particular place.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The meetings with the Byron Writers Festival and the Northern Rivers or North Coast performing arts academy, whatever that's called—they were just outside of Byron. Then I went into Byron to meet Fletcher Street Cottage. Then I met with Byron Shire Council, who also wanted to talk to me about homelessness and their view that it was a significant issue in the area, which, of course, I agree with. They were encouraging me to look at assertive outreach in the Byron shire, because it had previously existed in the Tweed but Byron has an even more significant homelessness challenge than Tweed but yet was not—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thanks, Minister. We'll get to some more homeless questions later. Did you stay the Friday and the Saturday night up there?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, I did.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did you go to Splendour in the Grass?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I did, yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: On the Saturday.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes. On the Saturday afternoon.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Why did you not claim any accommodation for that trip?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Because I stayed with a friend.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You just said before that your office set up those meetings. It's just a coincidence that it was on the weekend of Splendour in the Grass?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No. I was invited to attend Splendour in the Grass.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: With a staff member, on taxpayer money?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I was invited to attend Splendour in the Grass, which I have fully disclosed, as both the Minister for the North Coast and the Minister for Youth. I do try and get up to the North Coast at least every month if I can. I thought, "What a great opportunity to do a couple of really important things: (1) check out an incredible sort of tourist, arts, music, culture mecca on the North Coast, such an important part of the North Coast"—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: With respect, Minister, you've used taxpayer money to go to a music festival, haven't you.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No. I've used taxpayer money to visit the area for which I'm the Minister responsible.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, but you've also just said that your office set up those visits over a weekend that purely, out of coincidence, has Splendour in the Grass, which you're also going to. You haven't claimed the accommodation, but you have claimed flights and car hire to go to a music festival on taxpayer money. Do you think that that's an appropriate use of taxpayer funding?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I absolutely think that my regular visits to the North Coast—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: To go to music festivals.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I absolutely think that my regular visits—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So you're going to go to Bluesfest. You're going to be up there for Falls Festival? Is this a regular occurrence—that you and your staff are going to go up to music festivals on the North Coast?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'll be visiting the North Coast as regularly as I can.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did your staff member get gifted a ticket, as well?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I understand that they did.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Was that disclosed through the appropriate processes?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I understand it was, yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can you update or provide further clarification to the Committee that that was the case?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I will do that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: My understanding is that there are a few of your other parliamentary colleagues who were also at that festival, some of whom didn't claim their travel. Did you give anyone a lift? Did anyone else travel with you, who is in Cabinet with you?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No. Did any of my colleagues travel with me? No.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Point of order: I'm not sure how other Ministers, obviously, involved in other portfolios, who might've travelled with the Minister is relevant to the estimates for this portfolio.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: To the point of order, Chair: What I'm trying to clarify—we know that the Minister visited. We know that taxpayer money was used for that trip. We know that other Ministers did not put in travel claims. I'm trying to work out a broader issue around government in terms of who actually funded at least three Ministers going to a music festival.

The CHAIR: I think the questions should stick to this Minister and this ministry. That's the terms of reference.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No-one travelled with me. As I said, one of the major areas of economic activity in the North Coast is arts and culture. It's a huge part of their economic output and their contribution to the State. I make no apologies for being an advocate for that and drawing attention to that and being a promoter of that. I want more of these types of things on the North Coast. This is a region that's been smashed. This is a region that's been kicked from pillar to post. I want more of this kind of stuff. I think it's great for our State.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you, Minister. Just to be completely clear, the cost for you to take that trip and your staff member was \$1,726.28. You stand behind using that taxpayer money to go and visit a music festival. You think that that's completely above board and that there's no issues around that decision that you made.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Not only do I stand behind it; what a bargain.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I wouldn't joke about this, Minister. I don't think that's appropriate.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I funded Fletcher Street Cottage. I funded assertive outreach in Byron. I met with number of major economic contributors to the region. I'm promoting this great part of New South Wales.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Conveniently, on the same weekend that you wanted to go to Splendour. Call it what it is.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Point of order: I suggest that the witness is not being treated with courtesy in circumstances where the Minister's attempting to answer. There's been two or three interjections in circumstances where we've now had 10 minutes' questioning about an entirely unexceptional thing.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, it's not.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You're now wasting time to get to your point of order.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I note that I attend events regularly where colleagues of the Hon. Sarah Mitchell are there—sporting events, cultural events et cetera.

The CHAIR: I'm not sure that's relevant to the point of order. I would just remind members of the procedural fairness resolution.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you, Chair. Minister, how many tickets did you have to Splendour in the Grass? How many did you receive?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can't recall.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Was it more than two? There was you and a staff member. Did you get more than two?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes. My husband came as well.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So three? Or more than that?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'll have to check how many were given to the office.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you think you could check and come back to us—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, I can.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: —maybe after morning tea?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'll have a check, yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Can I clarify that your husband paid for his own flights up?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, he did.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You said that you were happy to have charged that. So we should expect to see you at more music festivals with staff and using taxpayer money to travel to those events?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I wouldn't actually expect that. To be perfectly honest, I'm not a huge fan of music festivals. For what it's worth, I didn't go to any of the performances.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What did you do?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I went to the function. I went to the function that was attended by the Mayor of Byron, by various—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You said you met the Mayor of Byron earlier that day.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Point of order—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You need a second catch-up?

The CHAIR: I'll hear the point of order.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: The Minister is attempting to explain what occurred at the function that she's been asked about. These sorts of functions regularly occur at these events. She's been interrupted. She should be allowed to answer.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As I recall, I disclosed all of the different representative organisations—the festival association and the other organisations that were there. It was a big gathering of the New South Wales music scene. I turned up at Splendour. I went to the function. I chatted with and connected with a range of the prominent arts and cultural leaders in New South Wales. As I said, these are fantastic contributions to our State. I didn't attend any of the performances; I didn't attend any of the shows. I left. I'm actually not a big live music fan. I don't really like festivals; it's not really my scene. But I like to be part of promoting these kinds of opportunities. I might go to something again or I might not, but it's not something that I would necessarily prioritise because of my interests. My interest is how can we draw attention to these awesome events and gatherings that are incredible tourist opportunities?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It's so awesome that you went briefly? Can I check, Minister, my understanding is you got seven tickets to that festival. Would that be right?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I will check. I don't have that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Other than your staff member and your husband, you don't remember who else you might've given those tickets to or who else was there with you in the group?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Apologies?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you remember who else was there with you in the group, if that seven figure is correct?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: My children came along. As I recall, I don't know if they needed tickets, but it may be that the tickets were for them. That's why I need to check. I'm just not sure.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could check and come back to us, preferably in the hearing, that would be useful. I will hand over to my colleague now.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Welcome to your first estimates. Minister, how many full-time staff are employed in your ministerial office?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Again, I could try and take that on notice. I think it's six, maybe—seven if you include the SRA. But that's not in the ministerial office.

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The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you have any part-time staff?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, I do.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How many part-time?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: One, I think.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Of those six, you've obviously got a chief of staff and an executive assistant. So there's four advisers?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: There's a chief of staff, deputy chief of staff, policy, executive assistant, another policy adviser and a part-time admin in the ministerial office.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you have any department staff seconded to your office?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Lots.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How many have actually been seconded? Currently, how many staff—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you mean DLOs?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: No. You have DLOs, and then have you got any staff that have been seconded to work in your office who have taken leave, who are working full time in your office—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: —or seconded in to work for you?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes. One of those staff that I just mentioned is seconded onto the ministerial office team. I recall one.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And then you have one DLO?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have heaps of DLOs.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How many DLOs?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I don't know if I have that figure in front of me.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: It has only been seven months. You should know who's in your office.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We have two from the Land and Housing Corporation, I think two from DCJ Housing, two from Water, Regional has someone in one day a week and Sydney Water has someone. I think that's it. There may be one or two more. There's Mental Health. I have a number of portfolios which are pretty big, and the departments provide teams to help me.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: At the moment, you can't remember if you've got 15 people in your office?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have 11.3 DLOs.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are all of these staff—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That's not even two per portfolio. I need more.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are all of these staff—ministerial and DLOs—the same staff that were employed when you started as a Minister or has your staff changed?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: My staff has changed.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How many people have either resigned or left your office?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Out of the DLOs, there has been various ons and offs. Again, I could not recall exactly who has come on and off out of the DLO list. People come in. There were people who came in when we first became Ministers to help us get set up. It was unbelievable—the, sort of, fire hose. So there were more people who were in when we first got set up. Some of them have gone. I had a temporary chief of staff. She was in for a few months but was never a permanent appointment, so she's gone. I think that's it.

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The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are you aware of any complaints that were made about you or your staff?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, I'm not.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are you aware of any complaints that have been made to your departments about you or your staff and their employment?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, I'm not.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Can I ask that same question of the officials? I'll start with Ms Willcox in relation to Health. Are you aware of any complaints that have been made about the Minister or her staff?

DEB WILLCOX: I'm not aware of any. I'd have to take it on notice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Ms Jones?

AMANDA JONES: I'm not aware of any.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Mr Tidball?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I'm not aware of any.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are you happy to take that question on notice to clarify?

DEB WILLCOX: Yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are there any other officials representing departments here?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: These guys are from DCJ, Land and Housing?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: I'm not aware of any.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Aboriginal Housing Office? There's the State-owned corporations. I don't know if you want to ask them.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's okay. I'm clarifying that the majority will be taking that on notice. If possible, if you could get back to me by the end of the hearing today to clarify if there is anything there? Thank you very much.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Good morning, Minister. How are you?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Good.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: How much does it cost to build a three-bedroom home for social or affordable housing?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think we normally use around \$550,000 as the ballpark. Obviously, as I'm sure you can understand, those costs vary depending on the cost of land and the kinds of decisions that you're making around the materials for building a home. That's the ballpark figure that we use when we're trying to assess our build going forward.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You can see that Landcom can't build a home for \$65,000.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm actually not responsible for Landcom.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You've made public statements before in terms of Landcom—that they can build a home for \$65,000. You can see that's not the case? They can't build a home for \$65,000.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I don't recall that statement. Nonetheless, I'm not responsible for Landcom. Paul's on Friday. You can ask him.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You said to James Willis on 2GB that it'd cost \$65,000 for Landcom to build a home because they don't need to pay for the land. You can see that isn't correct and they can't build a home for \$65,000?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ask Landcom how much it costs to build a home, if you're interested in Landcom.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to the cost for building homes, how many homes can the Land and Housing Corporation build with their budget allocation for new supply?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think that the pipeline at the moment is around—and I can get Michael up—750 this year, and that jumps to roughly 1,000 next year. Then we're looking to bring on—obviously, the HAF started today, which is incredibly exciting. So we have the Housing Australia Future Fund. That's the current pipeline.

The CHAIR: Earlier this week you tweeted, "How do I even need to say this in 2023 but everyone deserves to go to their school formal with someone they love," with a rainbow emoji. I agree with you. Will your Government act on this and protect kids from being discriminated against in private schools based on their sexuality?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You'll have to ask those kinds of questions about law reform to the Attorney General. He's obviously responsible for that. My view—and it's obviously not just my view; the Premier and the Deputy Premier echoed these views—is that in 2023 it's not acceptable to see schools saying you can't go to the formal with someone you love. In terms of the specifics of law reform, you'll have to put that to the Attorney General.

The CHAIR: I understand that it was Labor's position in 2013 to remove the ability of private schools to discriminate against children based on sexuality. Has that position changed?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm not across our law reform agenda; that's a matter for the Attorney General. My position is the same position as the Premier's and the Deputy Premier's, which is, it's 2023 and kids should be able to go to the year 12 formal with someone that they love. I just think that's common sense. I think everyone, or I would hope that most people, would understand that this is just basic.

The CHAIR: I want to clarify, because you're the Minister for Youth, that your personal view is that you'd support changes to the Anti-Discrimination Act to make that happen.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Well, I'm not going to pre-empt any legislative proposals that are before the Parliament or haven't been through Cabinet. My view is that people should be able to go to year 12 formals with the person that they love. In terms of the legislative reform agenda, there's a separate process for that led by the Attorney General. Those kind of discussions, in the Cabinet and in the Parliament, I'm not going to pre-empt them.

The CHAIR: Yesterday the Premier announced that police trainees would be paid for their four months of training. When will we see paid placement for teaching, nursing, allied health, early childhood education, paramedic and dental students?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Wow, well that was a long list of different trainees for which, I have to say, I'm not across dental students. In terms of the mental health workforce, perhaps that was part of that long list—I can't recall every single occupation you just name-checked. We really recognise that there are significant workforce challenges in mental health. It's a big topic of conversation between myself and the officials and we are looking at opportunities to support trainees in mental health to come through the system and be part of our great public health team. On that one, we're actively working. On the rest of them, I have to say I don't know what our plan is for dental assistants.

The CHAIR: Within my long list I think nursing, social workers and psychology would be critical to the mental health workforce and probably medical students as well. Student placement poverty is a significant issue in this cost-of-living crisis. I've heard from students in all of those professional training programs—and more—who are having to work second jobs while they study on extremely difficult and arduous placements. You're the Minister for Mental Health. Why weren't those mental health professional trainees given priority for paid placement?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We're working through a really comprehensive workforce plan for health and, as part of that, for mental health. I absolutely accept those kinds of stories about how hard it is for a lot of our students to get the time that they need to obtain the qualifications. The time it takes to obtain some of those qualifications, for example in psychology, is not insignificant. You're absolutely right. We're trying to do a whole workforce plan for health. That's from beginning to end. It's getting people to want to be the students in the first place and, when they are the students, supporting them through the cycle of their qualifications at university and at placements. Then when they are in the workforce, it is retaining them. That whole system—workforce reform in health—is significant. It's a big piece of work and it's a huge focus for the health Minister and myself. We will have more to say about what we can do in health workforce.

I recall at the recent NSW Health Awards, the health Minister said, in no uncertain terms, "The biggest issue in health is workforce." Deb, you were there. You can attest to the fact that that was what his primary concern was. I agree with that. We are looking at every single point in that constellation and what we can do to support

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people. That does include conversations that we have had with representative organisations for psychologists and psychiatrists about placement support, training and the role that our public hospitals can play in supporting students on placements. We have had some of those conversations but that bigger workforce piece is something that we're working on right now and we will have more to say on.

The CHAIR: I understand that you've committed to completing a gap analysis as recommended by the New South Wales mental health alliance. How has it been conducted? Who's conducting it? When will its findings be known and made public?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I might ask Dr Flynn to come up and augment anything I have to say. It's being conducted jointly between the alliance of mental health organisations that you've mentioned: The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, the Mental Health Branch and the Mental Health Commission of New South Wales. They are actively working on that now. We are looking to do two pieces of work as part of that. One is a shorter term priorities piece. I think we need to get moving. We need to start the reform journey so I've asked, in the shorter term, for just a key look at the priority areas of reform. There is a longer term piece as well, which is what it is going to take to ensure that the system delivers the levels of care that I expect it to deliver. That's not something that can turn around quickly. I want both these pieces of work to be done comprehensively and properly. We've asked for the reform priorities. Brendan, when do you think we will expect that first piece of work?

BRENDAN FLYNN: That's due by the end of November, Minister.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So it's the end of November for the first piece of work of reform priorities, and then the longer pieces of work, which will involve really digging into the gaps and planning how we can ensure that those gaps are minimised or reduced. Do we have a rough time frame for the longer term piece of work?

BRENDAN FLYNN: We do. The advice that I have is that it's a large quantitative piece of work using service planning tools, particularly including the National Mental Health Services Planning Framework. We expect that that could take somewhere around six months. It's a very technical task. We want to do it properly and our view is that it's core work for the ministry to be looking at planning for future services. As the Minister says, that's a different task to the immediate prioritisation of issues.

The CHAIR: This Committee, as you would know, is conducting an inquiry into community and outpatient mental health services and the department was, disappointingly, unable to answer some of the questions about, for example, the number of vacancies in community mental health services across the State. Is it concerning that the New South Wales Mental Health Branch doesn't have that kind of data analysis already?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think that there are data gaps. As part of the gaps analysis, that's what we're trying to identify. Obviously I want to make sure that we have every single piece of evidence that we can have—and need—to make decisions about how to prioritise precious resources, where to spend money and to find out where people are falling through the cracks. To the extent that there is data that we could and should have but don't have, we'll be identifying that gap as part of the gaps analysis so that when we do make decisions, going forward, they are based on the best available evidence and information.

The CHAIR: How many people are currently on the waitlist for community-supported housing through the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative and the Pathways to Community Living Initiative?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Deb or Brendan, do you have that? I could see if I've got that.

BRENDAN FLYNN: I would have to take that on notice. I know that it's a dynamic waitlist and that, at times, positions can become available quite quickly. Also, if a position is available for an individual in one part of New South Wales, that's not going to necessarily work for people outside of that area. I can take on notice, though, an absolute numerical—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We can try and get back to you by this afternoon's session or see if it's in the various folders.

The CHAIR: I've got a few more that might go into that batch.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We will do our best. We are here to provide information, so go ahead.

The CHAIR: How many young people are currently waiting for admission into a youth mental health inpatient unit and how many are currently being—inappropriately—treated in an adult facility?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Okay. Well, again, we'll probably just take that one and see if we can get that information to you.

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The CHAIR: Thank you. This is my last one before I go to Ms Higginson. Which local health districts have the highest need for suicide aftercare and postvention services?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you know that one, Brendan?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I don't because I don't know that it's directly related to the suicide rate because our aftercare services are already working where there is significant need. I can take that on notice in terms of if we have identified particular districts or networks that should be first in line for further aftercare investment.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Look, we've turned up to provide information so we've noted that and we'll get back to you with what information you have.

The CHAIR: I look forward to those answers on notice.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I've got a bunch of questions across your various portfolios. But, first, thank you for attending Splendour in the Grass. It's a very important event to our community in the Northern Rivers. I can't support it because of the environmental constraints of the site but I know how important it is when high-profile people do attend.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Maybe Sue got one of the seven tickets.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I didn't. The New South Wales Government has committed \$610.1 million over four years to 1,500 new social housing dwellings under the Social Housing Accelerator agreement. Given the over-representation of First Nations people in New South Wales social housing, what percentage of the 1,500 new social dwellings will be dedicated Aboriginal houses?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'll take the exact percentage on notice, but it is around, what, 20? It's around 20 or 25 per cent. What we did was guarantee funding for the Aboriginal Housing Office and, through it, Aboriginal community housing associations. Your point is a valid one. There is a desperate need for Aboriginal housing, and we did ring-fence, guarantee funding for Aboriginal housing—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Within that tranche?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Within the accelerator, yes, we did.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: And that's different from the \$38.4 million to the Aboriginal Housing Office, or is that—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, that's separate, so under the accelerator, the \$610 million, we carved out a specific percentage of that and said, "This is for Aboriginal housing and must be spent by the Aboriginal Housing Office or Aboriginal community housing associations", because of that particular need that you have rightly identified.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What about transfers of government housing stock to Aboriginal community housing providers? Is there a commitment to that as well?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely. Not only is there a commitment to that, we want to grow the Aboriginal community housing sector and we will continue to look at transfers to them. We are also looking to ensure that housing that is currently within the Land and Housing Corporation portfolio is transferred to the Aboriginal Housing Office as part of that. We recognise the important principles of self-determination for Aboriginal housing and we want to ensure that Aboriginal people who are housed within our portfolio are connected to those principles through an association with the Aboriginal Housing Office.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you working with your counterpart Minister from LandCorp to make sure that that's happening and a priority?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am the counterpart Minister, so yes, I'm working with myself on that. I'm responsible both for the Land and Housing Corporation and the Aboriginal Housing Office, and they absolutely have a program of identifying tenants who are living in Land and Housing Corporation houses that are First Nations that should be with the Aboriginal Housing Office because, as I said, the Aboriginal Housing Office has a First Nations board, established on the principles of self-determination. It is deeply committed to housing outcomes for Aboriginal people and we want to support them to do that work. So, where we can identify people who should be housed with them, we are actively undertaking a process to ensure that they are appropriately housed and then have access to all of the support services that the Aboriginal Housing Office provides and are obviously specialist for Aboriginal people.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: With respect to the \$38.4 million to the Aboriginal Housing Office, how many houses and upgrades do you anticipate? Has that kind of modelling been done on what it will deliver?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Famey Williams, the CEO, is saying 220, but we can take those exact figures on notice. But, yes, in answer to your question, Ms Higginson, that modelling has been done. We do have a clear line of sight on how many houses both the Aboriginal Housing Office and our Aboriginal community housing partners will be delivering as part of that commitment.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: On 16 September 2021 the former Government released a NSW Water Strategy and it included a priority to recognise First Nations people's rights and values and to increase access to and ownership of water. Is that something that you're still working on?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can you tell me just briefly how that's rolling out and what you're doing?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Sure. Part of the practical implementation of that recognition within the NSW Water Strategy was the creation of a dedicated Aboriginal Water Strategy.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think that was due in September.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The Aboriginal Water Strategy?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes. Has that been released?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, it hasn't, and I'll tell you the reason why it hasn't. Prior to the election, the consultation and engagement on that piece of work had not met my expectations about genuine co-design and First Nations ownership of that piece of work. I am absolutely dedicated to the Aboriginal Water Strategy. I am absolutely dedicated to 3 per cent First Nations ownership of water by 2031 under the Closing the Gap targets. Unfortunately, an Aboriginal water strategy is not a worthwhile document if Aboriginal people don't feel ownership of it.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I hear exactly what you're saying. Do you have a time line in sight? Can you indicate what that might be?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, we are looking to have it finalised next year. We are about to commence a new process of listening, essentially, re-engaging with organisations. Unfortunately, Ms Higginson, there's a little bit of a sort of trust deficit. A lot of Aboriginal First Nation groups don't have a particularly positive view of the New South Wales Government, to be honest, and I can understand that. I need to go out there and show them that we are listening, that it is worthwhile engaging and that's about to kick off now.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Great. On that then, where's the money? Has that money been allocated?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is it in this budget?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Is it \$14 million, Amanda?

AMANDA JONES: Over two years, so we do have funding.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes. There's a dedicated funding pool of \$14 million over two years to produce the strategy.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Great. Finally, on that point for now—and I might put some questions on notice because I know how important it is and I can hear there's work happening, which is really good to hear—what about in the interim? I know there's, I think, \$222.4 million to critical improvements. How are we going? I was in Walgett, and I know you've visited there. I couldn't believe the position of First Nations access to clean water when I was there in 2020 or 2019. What are we doing for Wilcannia, Walgett and Cobar while we are working on a deeper strategy?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: In Wilcannia, the department is about to go out next week, I think, to engage with the community on the updated work on the Wilcannia weir. Again, unfortunately, this is a project that has been delayed for far too long. There is work happening on the stormwater system and other pieces of work in Wilcannia but, again, we know that we have to re-engage with that community to show them that we're serious about delivering for them because there have been commitments made years ago and very little progress. In Walgett, we continue to engage with the Walgett Shire Council about trying to ensure that the water treatment plant and reverse osmosis facilities there are well operated. I understand that they do have a new water technician who has come on, who is redoubling efforts to ensure that that is done correctly. There is absolutely a skill—

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Sorry to interrupt—I'm looking at the clock—but are you confident, Minister, that if we are to go into a quick drought, which is highly possible, there would be access to clean water, drinkable water, not high-in-sodium water for the community of Walgett?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am, because we will do everything to ensure that that is the case, although I should say, in Walgett, as you know, the primary source of water is river water.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Those rivers are sick, and the time it is going to take to bring them back to health is not going to be able to be achieved if we move into a short, sharp drought next year. But we're absolutely committed to that piece of work and, in the short term, we will ensure that that community has access to clean, safe, drinkable water.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you, I have 20 seconds. Can I just ask you about the Dunoon Dam? This is a dam, as you know, that has been on the books and off the books, on the books and off the books, and the division within our community has been pretty deep. We need leadership. What's your view on the Dunoon Dam?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As you probably noted in the Far North Coast Regional Water Strategy when I released it, I'm very unconvinced of the merits of the dam. But, Ms Higginson, we try and be respectful of the role and partnership with local water utilities. Rouse County Council is an important partner in delivering the future water security of that region and, whilst they are still working through their position, I am not going to come in and stomp all over the top of them. I don't think that's respectful of our local water utilities. But in that regional water strategy you can see the New South Wales Government indicating that, for a range of reasons, that project is very problematic.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am just going to take you back to the visit to Byron Bay on 21 July. You mentioned that your husband was travelling with you, and he paid for himself, and that your children were as well. Who paid for their travel?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can't recall. I may have. It may be the case that Oscar, my son, travelled with me as a dependant, but I can't recall.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. Could you provide advice?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Because obviously, if you're travelling for a legitimate function, there is entitlement for family to travel with you. I'm curious as to why your husband didn't take that option if it was a legitimate work trip.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: He was also working so he went up, I think, a few days prior to me, or maybe a day prior to me, and was working on the ground as well.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Right.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Look, the reality is these jobs are really hard on families and I try and get up to the North Coast as regularly as I can. Sometimes I have to combine that with, "Hey, hang out with mum at work"—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: —because that's the only way I can see my kids and so—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Trust me, I'm well aware of that—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: —as a regional member who was also a Minister for six years. But I guess my question to you is around the legitimacy of the travel—whether or not you claimed your children going with you.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I just continue to—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could just provide that advice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, I will provide that advice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And just in terms of your staff member, did they not claim accommodation either because they stayed privately as well?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think they stayed at Splendour, as I said, because they had a ticket. My understanding is that that was fully disclosed—but I am checking that—and that they stayed onsite.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Right. Okay. So you only went to the official function.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That's correct.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: There were others who were in your party. You can't remember who the seven were, but you're hopefully going to get us that at some point today. Did your staff stay beyond the official function? It sounds like they did, if they stayed the night out there.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'll have to check what they did. But, yes, my understanding is that that's the case.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Right. So they stayed there, but travelling for taxpayer money, but they stayed for additional time without you, presumably, if you only went to the function and then left. They spent the rest of the weekend at the music festival.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: They came with me. They went to the meetings that I went to and then they stayed onsite.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Right. But then flew back with you the next day on a taxpayer flight.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is my recollection—that they travelled with me.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But they weren't with you the entire time by the sound of it because you left the festival, you said.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No. They weren't with me the entire time.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Right. As I said, if you could provide that, particularly who those other tickets went to?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I will confirm that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be good, thank you.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Minister, just going back to your answers with respect to the Land and Housing Corporation and new social homes. Just with respect to those 750 for, I think, the 2023-24 financial year and a thousand for the 2024-25 financial year, does that include or exclude the Social Housing Accelerator program with Federal Government funding?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think it includes it, although most of the delivery of new homes under that program is outside those two time frames. What we're doing with the accelerator is we're trying to get as many homes back online as quickly as we can through vacant restorations—not building new homes—taking the homes that your Government boarded up for years and left vacant, and we're pulling the boards off and we're restoring them and families are moving in. That's happening right now.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Like the 11 you announced recently.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Well, no. That project is replacing three empty cottages with 11 new ones. In other areas, such as Daceyville, we have identified I think it's 11 or 12 properties that had been boarded up, vacant, empty for years. We've pulled the boards off. We're restoring them. Families are moving in. That is happening quite quickly, but under the accelerator there's multiple streams of work. There's that stream of work. There's the Aboriginal housing stream of work that I discussed with Ms Higginson. There's just straight-up new build, building new social housing. That's obviously not coming online in the next two years, really. I mean, it takes about two to three years to build a home, unfortunately. I wish it was faster than that, but—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The 750 and 1,000 are effectively the legacy funding that will be delivering those homes, not the new funding.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Some of those properties will be the accelerator funds. Some of the accelerator funds will deliver homes outside of that time period you've described.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Okay. Thank you, Minister. Given that the social housing new supply funding, if you were to exclude the funding in the last financial year and the allocation for the 2023-24 financial year, we're looking at a remainder of \$928 million and that's out to 2033. Is that correct?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Under which?

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The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Under your social housing new supply in the infrastructure budget. In terms of those figures, would you agree that that's funding of around \$103 million a year out to 2033?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Sure.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Okay. In terms of that, and given your \$550,000 per home, are we looking at the delivery of around 1,689 homes to 2033?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes. We have absolutely not finalised our long-term planning in that way. We've come in, done one budget, which was essentially the delivery of election commitments and really kind of profound, extreme risks. One of the key tasks that Homes NSW is going to have when it gets off the ground in February 2024 is doing exactly what you have described—the long-term pipeline—but that work hasn't been done. For starters, when the budget was done we didn't even know if the HAF would be in existence or not. There was a big question mark about that stream of funding. Now, thankfully, it is. So that's a bonus for New South Wales. We know we need to do more than just rely on the HAF but that work that you have described, which I accept is important, is not baked in, is not finalised. We have not done our long-term plan of social housing delivery and I'm keen to use that process that Homes NSW will undertake next year to lead into the next budget, and potentially even the one after that, to build on the foundations that we have set.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Minister, are you disappointed in terms of the allocation you received for new housing supply under LAC, in particular?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, I'm not disappointed because I think that there was a really strong recognition by the Treasurer in his speech that what we have done is lay the foundations and that we know that there's more to do. Sure, if the Treasurer had stood up in the Budget Speech and said, "Great. Job done. Tick. Housing solved", I would have been extremely disappointed, but he literally said the exact opposite of that. He said we've made a contribution, emergency funding, \$242 million for the next year, and we know we have to do more. He acknowledged that and so, far from being disappointed, I was very uplifted by the acknowledgement from the Treasurer that there's more to do and that I had a partner in him with making those contributions in the long term. I didn't take to this budget process: Here's the list of everything that I want to do over the next 10 years. I didn't take that to him in this budget because the budget cycle did not allow for the time to do that work straight after the election. Now we have that time and we're doing that work and I will be taking those long-term plans into future budgets.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: But Minister your new supply budget is a third of what was allocated last year under the Coalition Government.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The budget for this year was an emergency stopgap to do long-term planning. You know, the budget cycle—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: An emergency stopgap to deliver less homes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We're actually delivering more. As I just described, it's 750 this year and then a thousand. That sounds like more to me.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Dependent on the legacy funding from the Coalition's last budget.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Your point was that we're delivering less. My point is the facts say we're delivering more, and I'm also being clear that I know there's more to do and so does the Treasurer.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: But you don't have the money to deliver more homes. You've got less. You've got 1,689 homes to be delivered after you've delivered the 1,750, based on your figures in the budget.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The only reason that the Land and Housing Corporation had any money to deliver any homes, the budgetary figures to which you were referring, is from the sale of other homes. That wasn't direct money into the budget, Mr Farlow. That wasn't the previous Treasurer's—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It's a funding model.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: A funding model based on privatisation that I fundamentally disagree with.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So how are you going to deliver more homes?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: There were less—that funding model delivered less homes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You don't have the money in the budget to deliver more homes.

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Your funding model that you were promoting delivered less homes because you had to sell homes to deliver homes—a snake eating itself, Mr Farlow. That is not a sustainable model for the long term. The source of funding which you are describing is the privatisation of properties.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So how are you going to deliver more homes if you don't have the money in the budget to do it?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: But we are delivering more homes—750 and then a thousand—and, as I've said—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And then 1,689 until 2033.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As I've said, I look forward to the budget next year and the delivery of our long-term plan. I didn't even take a long-term plan to this budget cycle. There wasn't time to deliver it. You can't rush these things, our partnerships with community housing providers. It is true that we are fundamentally changing the funding model for the delivery of social housing. That's true because we've stopped the sale of the properties and so the money that was coming in from the privatisation is no longer there. We need to provide a new sustainable, comprehensive, long-term funding model, and that is exactly what Homes NSW is going to be delivering.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Is this leading you to stop housing developments like the Argyll Estate at Coffs Harbour?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is absolutely not what led me to stop development at the Argyll Estate in Coffs Harbour. I stopped that development because, for all of the time, energy and effort that was going into that proposal, it was, in fact, delivering less social housing bedrooms.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: But it was delivering more homes overall.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Once again, I appreciate the position of your Government was to deliver less social housing.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Deliver more homes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I don't see that as my job.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What new funding streams have you investigated to accelerate the build of social housing in New South Wales?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We are exploring every single opportunity that we can. We have the Social Housing Accelerator—\$610 million.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is Federal Government money.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We have the HAF coming online today, as well. That's another fantastic opportunity. We've got the audit of government land. Obviously, that critically sits alongside our commitment to deliver 30 per cent social and affordable housing on government land. That is a major contribution to our long-term plans. And, as I said, we are in the process of developing our longer-term sustainable budget program for the Land and Housing Corporation and what will be Homes NSW as part of the next budget cycle.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Minister, you raised the land audit. What's your role in the land audit?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Champion of social and affordable housing.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Is that an official title?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I don't know.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Self-appointed.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You will have to ask Minister Kamper. Minister Kamper is leading the land audit, as the Minister for Lands and Property.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Leon Walker, the Deputy Secretary for Homes, Property and Development for New South Wales, told PC No. 4 last week that, with the creation of Homes NSW, there is also a new entity called the land asset working group that is considering residential opportunities for allocation between LAHC, Landcom and AHO. Does that sit under you?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes. It's the LAWG.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The LAWG. Thank you very much. Who is on the LAWG?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The LAWG actually doesn't exist yet. It is part of the process of creating Homes NSW which, as I said, comes into existence in February next year. From my recollection, the membership of the LAWG is a representative of the Land and Housing Corporation within Homes NSW, someone from Property and Development NSW, someone from Landcom and someone from Treasury. There may be others on it. I can take that on notice. It does not exist yet, because Homes NSW does not exist yet.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Do we expect not to see any movement in terms of the land audit until February next year?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, we are going to try and do a first tranche this year.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: How can you do that without the LAWG being in existence?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We will have to use other processes—myself, Minister Kamper, the ERC, the Cabinet—to make decisions while the other structural parts of the operationalising of the land audit and the 30 per cent social and affordable housing are put into place.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Considering that is the case, have any recommendations been submitted to you, as of yet, out of the land audit?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, not yet.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to the land audit, Minister Kamper the other day told estimates that there were thousands and thousands of properties that had been reviewed as part of the audit and, specifically, he said that the land audit is comprehensive, it sits across all government land across New South Wales and it's identifying opportunities right across the board. Have you advocated for any golf courses to be turned into housing?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, I haven't.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Great. How many golf courses with expiring leases have been reviewed and deemed suitable for housing?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You will have to ask Minister Kamper.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And what about bowling clubs? Are you aware of any of those?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Tennis courts, at all?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Minister, can I ask about something that sits across both your portfolio as the Minister for Mental Health and in regard to Homes NSW? Through your department, have you put forward for housing to be put on the Macquarie Hospital site?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We are just not at that point yet. Every single piece of surplus land is going into the land audit.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Has that gone into the land audit?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can check with Health Infrastructure NSW. Just to be clear, the mental health branch is not doing the land audit for NSW Health.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That's NSW Health.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Health Infrastructure NSW is doing that. If it is surplus land, then I expect that it has gone into the land audit. That would be my expectation. Obviously, there is going to be a substantial amount of land that goes into the land audit that's not suitable for residential housing. Of course, we accept that. But the whole point of doing the comprehensive audit is to actually get all of that information in one place so that we can comprehensively go through it and identify which sites are suitable and which sites aren't suitable. But the first step is, everyone has got to come and be part of this process and identify sites that are surplus to their needs.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So you wouldn't rule out housing development on the Macquarie Hospital site.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am not ruling anything in or out at the moment.

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The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Turning back to the Waterloo south project and development on that site, with the increase to 50 per cent of social and affordable housing in the Waterloo south renewal, what additional financial contribution is the State Government going to pay to this project?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We are still working through the procurement process with our delivery partners and finalising how we are going to deliver that. So the answer to your question is TBC.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Has any work been done on the viability of the project with the change to 50 per cent social and affordable housing and the cost to the State Government?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And what was the development projected to cost the taxpayer before the changes were made?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'll have to take that on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What is the development now projected to cost the taxpayer?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is just not clear. The reason it's not clear is because we don't have a delivery partner yet. We don't know who is delivering that project for us and, until we do know who that partner is, obviously, we are unable to finalise exactly the scope of that project.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Have any of the development consortiums pulled out now, with the changes?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: My understanding is that they have not.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We've narrowed it down to the two preferred.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We have done that, but did any pull out of the process?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We've preferred it down to two.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The Land and Housing Corporation has preferred it down to two.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And in terms of those two finalists, when will the contract be awarded?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do we have a time frame on that, Mr Wheatley? They're targeting the middle of next year.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Is development still slated to begin by the middle of 2024?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And is it still estimated that the project will deliver around 3,000 new homes?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is the estimate, yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Fantastic. When did you request an updated feasibility study on Waterloo south about the change in cost to the development when considering the changes that you announced on 21 August?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I will have to take that on notice. I have to say, on my very first incoming government brief with the Land and Housing Corporation, I said, "I am not delivering Waterloo south with 30 per cent social and affordable housing. Forget that. This is a major project and a prime piece of government land. We have 57,000 people on our social housing waiting list. If we are going to do this, we are going to do it with 50 per cent social and affordable housing, and I need you guys to work with me in order to make that happen." I suspect that the process of discussing how we could deliver on my priority of actually uplifting social and affordable housing through these projects kicked off from my first meeting with the Land and Housing Corporation.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Will you provide that feasibility study to this Committee?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I will have to see whether that is a document that I can publicly release.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: There is a minimum of 15 per cent of all new social and affordable homes dedicated for Aboriginal people. Does that continue in terms of this proposal?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes.

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The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Is that included with the 50 per cent target of social and affordable housing, or is that in addition to that?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is included within the 50 per cent.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So effectively, that's 7.5 per cent of the total development. It's 15 per cent of 50 per cent, which is 7.5 per cent.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What is the current number and percentage of Aboriginal people in the Waterloo estate?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: How detailed are the changes which need to be made to the plans for the redevelopment, with these changes, in the ratio of affordable housing? Can you elaborate on the exact changes that need to be made?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I don't think any changes are being made to the planning framework. Obviously, as you say, there are changes to the delivery specifications, because I'm indicating that, if we are going to do this major piece of work, that lift from government has to deliver a lift in social and affordable housing. But that is not a change to the planning framework for the site. I don't want to open that can of worms again.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Minister, with respect, are you still committed to a salt-and-pepper proposal, or are they going to be distinct blocks of social, affordable and private housing?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Again, I need to work with our delivery partners on that.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I want to start with some questions around mining and water because some of it is relevant to the Water portfolio. Firstly, are you aware that the CSIRO has undertaken some new research into the watertables, groundwater connectivity, in the Narrabri region in relation to the Narrabri CSG project? The CSIRO has recently published that new research.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm not aware of that new research.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The research has shown that there is an increased likelihood of connectivity between the coal seams that are targeted by the Narrabri coal seam gas project and the Great Artesian Basin. Has DPE Water, your agency, engaged in that research at all?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am not aware of that. Amanda, are you aware if your department has engaged in that?

AMANDA JONES: I'm not aware. I'll have to take that on notice.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, is that something that you will commit to having a look at, given the fact that the research is suggesting that as a result of the coal seam gas project there is a greater chance of the Great Artesian Basin being impacted by that project? As water Minister, is that something that you think that you should get across?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can commit that we'll take this research and have a look at it. That is not a problem.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: And respond to it or advise at some later point?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It's difficult to know what I'm going to do about it if I haven't seen it. But you've brought it to my attention, Ms Faehrmann, and I've indicated that I'm more than happy to have a look at it and have the department have a look at it as well and see, to the extent that it's relevant to us in our decision-making and our work, that we will take that into account.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Again on the subject of mining and water, have you come across the project that is essentially constructing a goldmine, a massive tailings storage facility—it's McPhillamys goldmine by Regis Resources—literally smack bang on the headwaters of Belubula River?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am familiar with that project.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: As water Minister, what is your view on that project? Are you concerned about it? Have you looked at the risks to the Murray-Darling Basin?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I would say I think it is important to emphasise, Ms Faehrmann, that I'm not the Minister for Natural Resources and that I don't make decisions about mining proposals in New South

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Wales. However to the extent that proposals do require water licences or approval in relation to water use, obviously we do look at that. I may ask the department to supplement on the detail, but my understanding is that those proposals in relation to water use for that project have been looked at by the department and are under consideration at this very moment.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Just to be clear, this was kind of fast-tracked, if you like, by the previous Government. It was a decision that was made in the caretaker period, McPhillamys goldmine as was Bowdens silver mine near Lue—again massive impact on water. About two dozen natural springs will be concreted over to build a massive tailings facility. Again, that won't be rehabilitated. Again, on the headwaters of Belubula River. If you don't have a degree of a say in that, do you think that's good enough? This was all undertaken under the previous Coalition, but there are projects going on in New South Wales that will have serious implications for water quality and quantity downstream that it seems you can do nothing about. Is there something wrong with our—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It's not a fair characterisation that we don't have anything to do with it. In fact, we do. As I recall, you are correct in that special access licences outside of the normal framework of water licensing—special licences—were created specifically to facilitate that project by the previous Government. I am aware of those issues. My understanding is that there is further consideration of the impact of that project on waterways that is right now occurring within the department, and I don't want to—

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That your department—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That's right, that DPE Water is doing. Amanda is nodding so I'm taking that as I am broadly on the right track. I don't want to prejudice those considerations, but I just want to reassure you, yes, to the extent that there is potential impact on water sources, we do have a role in that and we take that role seriously. We don't do mining approvals over in DPE Water but we do look after water resources in New South Wales. Amanda, I know that it's under active consideration and I don't want you to cut across that, but is there any more information you can provide Ms Faehrmann?

AMANDA JONES: I can confirm that we have been asked for advice from the Department of Planning and Environment about licence consideration for that project and we have provided that advice to Planning.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: So that's just in relation to licence considerations around where the water is going to come from in terms of their operation?

AMANDA JONES: Whether it's feasible that licences can be met—given.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: How long ago was that, though?

AMANDA JONES: It's current. It's still under active consideration. I can confirm that we have provided advice to the Department of Planning and Environment.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I might come back to that later today. Again, mining and water—this is in relation to the mining that's taking place in Sydney's water catchment, possibly a little closer to home for you. There has been an independent analysis undertaken regarding the Metropolitan coalmine's environmental performance and extensive fractures opening up beneath the streams. This is all the Woronora special area.

There has been a kilometre of perennial stream called the Eastern Tributary going dry since early 2017. There is cracking, underground diversion of streams and the discharge of dissolved metals in a vital water storage. This essentially indicates that it is beyond what was originally submitted to planning in the EIS. We know that underground mining in water catchments always results in a certain degree of subsidence, which isn't ideal in itself, but this is far worse in terms of this research and what it has uncovered. I understand that this report has been sent to the Independent Advisory Panel on Underground Mining seven months ago. Has it come to your department, Ms Jones? Have you seen it?

AMANDA JONES: I'm not aware. I'll have to take that on notice.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, is this a concern in whether the right people are getting this information, whether they're acting on it—again, in terms of the degree of destruction within Sydney water catchment as a result of underground mining? What is happening from your end at least in terms of getting on top of the extent of the issue?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As Amanda said, it may well be that people in her team have seen it. There are 900-odd people who work in DPE Water. She has taken on notice the extent to which we have been included in those conversations. We take our role as custodians of the State's water resources really seriously. We don't do mining approvals. That's not our job. But to the extent that we engage with the people who do, that's a role we take seriously. The one thing I would add is, again, to the extent that people have approval to do certain

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works and they don't do them correctly, our agency NRAR has been proactive in engaging with those breaches, including in areas to which you have described. We do take those obligations seriously, including our regulatory obligations. I think it was the biggest enforceable undertaking NRAR has ever engaged in in relation to one of those projects. We take it seriously, Ms Faehrmann.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: In the time that is remaining I will ask a question about NRAR. In relation to the extent of water theft that has gone on by coal companies—Maules Creek coalmine, Boggabri coalmine, Dendrobium coalmine—it reveals systematic and long-term take of water. I do understand that NRAR is looking at some of that, but will you also commission an independent inquiry? Are there changes needed in the regulatory space to ensure that coal companies are reporting what they're taking in terms of water—all mining companies, for that matter—and to ensure that there is a stricter regime to make sure that they aren't taking more water than they should?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have full confidence in NRAR. I think that the enforceable undertaking that they achieved, the largest ever in their history, is indicative of the fact that they do take these things seriously, that they are robust in exercising their regulatory function in relation to these matters. If there are other concerns—absolutely. NRAR is an independent organisation. I support their independence and want them to have the powers that they need to do their job. But I think the evidence is that they are engaged on these matters. The bell went. Obviously, Mr Barnes will be here this afternoon, so may be able to—

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I won't be here the whole time. I'm literally supposed to be chairing another thing.

The CHAIR: I'm happy to allow the question to be answered before I go.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Grant, did you want to add anything?

GRANT BARNES: The mining and extractive industries are required, under the Act, to hold a water licence for the take of water, as I know you appreciate. You've mentioned a number of circumstances where allegations were made, against some of those companies, that they weren't either the holders of a licence or their actions had exceeded the entitlements within those licences. They were extensively investigated and had been resolved by way of those enforceable undertakings. The one the Minister announced, just mentioned, was with respect to Illawarra Coal Holdings, and \$2.8 million now must be spent in restitution. We are committed to enforcing the law and make no distinction from whether you're an irrigator, a local council or, in this instance, the mining industry. They will be held to account, and we will investigate them. Any new matters that you might have to hand—I would gladly receive them from you.

The CHAIR: Minister, the Albury project implements a community-of-schools-and-services approach, which is locally driven. It's a shift from a crisis-driven system to an early-intervention approach. This is low cost. It costs less than \$500,000 per year. It's demonstrated to be working. Will you extend its funding beyond December 2024?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Cohn, I enthusiastically welcome representations in relation to effective programs, particularly those that are low cost. I have to say I'm not as familiar with that project as, evidently, you are. But I will take on notice having a look at it. As an example, the universal service support project, the Albury project in relation to early intervention in youth homelessness, received a representation—great project delivering great results; credit to Justin Clancy, member for Albury, for bringing that to my attention. We continued its funding. I just point to that as evidence that we are willing to receive feedback about things that are working and try and find ways to continue them. I'll have to take those specific details on notice.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I look forward to your answer on notice and note that for, particularly, not-for-profit programs to have that requirement to constantly reapply for funding is actually taking resources away from service delivery.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I agree with that, which is why we've committed to moving to five-year funding contracts for a range of those organisations, because of exactly that proposition. It is a real challenge for them.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I'm glad that you'll consider applying that to this project as well. I understand that the Department of Communities and Justice currently outsources management of maintenance works and that residents often experience poor communication and inaccurate reporting of works completed but that that contract is due to expire on 30 June 2024.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That's done by the Land and Housing Corporation, not the Department of Communities and Justice. But, nonetheless, everything else you've said is accurate, including the poor maintenance outcomes.

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The CHAIR: Thanks for the correction. Who is running the tender process for a new asset maintenance services contract?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Who's running the tender, Michael? The Land and Housing Corporation.

The CHAIR: What's the expected time line for this process?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As you say, the current contracts expire in the middle of next year. So we'll have a new contract to announce then. I want to indicate, right off the bat, that the performance of the current contracts is completely unacceptable to me. Obviously, I hear a significant amount of feedback about poor performance. We are reasonably regularly exercising breach-of-contract provisions with our current contractors because they have not done the work that we require them to do. So, as part of that recontracting, we are looking at bringing as many elements of that back in house, including contact centres, which will be done centrally, through Homes New South Wales. I want the Government to be playing a more direct role, managing maintenance for people who live in our properties. We should not be the worst landlord in the State.

The CHAIR: Thank you. In 2018 the previous Government introduced the controversial inner-city allocation policy, which excludes anyone with a conviction for a serious drug offence in the prior five years from being allocated a Land and Housing Corporation property in Surry Hills, Redfern, Waterloo or Glebe. How many people have been turned away from homes in the Sydney inner city as a result of the policy since it was introduced?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I will have to take that on notice. I'm not sure if anyone here has that at their fingertips. We'll get that information to you, Ms Cohn.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Does the Minns Labor Government plan to abolish this discriminatory policy?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am up for reviewing eligibility criteria as part of the creation of Homes New South Wales. Again, that's one of the agenda items that I'm keen to put on the workload of that new organisation. But, having said that, antisocial behaviour's a problem in social housing. I need the people who are tenants of the New South Wales Government to have safe and secure and stable places to live. To the extent that they're unable to achieve that goal because their neighbours are acting in a way that negatively impacts on them, that's a problem. It's a problem for me. It's a problem for those communities.

So I will take seriously how we can ensure that, particularly, some of the bigger estates in the inner city—Northcote Estate. I have visited and seen some of the amazing people who live there and some of their great stories but also some of the dysfunction. I want those places to be a success. I want them to be great places where people live and thrive. I need to make sure that, as we're doing tenant allocations, we're doing that in a thoughtful way. But I am happy to review eligibility criteria to make sure that it is meeting the goal that I've just articulated and isn't discriminatory.

The CHAIR: Thank you. What I would ask perhaps for you to clarify is whether people are being excluded on the basis of behaviour that's been challenging for neighbours or whether that's on the basis of prior criminal convictions.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes. I understand. Good point.

The CHAIR: How many upgrades are being planned for energy efficiency and thermal performance in social housing?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I might ask Michael if he's got that figure at his fingertips. He's saying "about 9,000", but he's confirming that.

The CHAIR: I did have a request through Hansard. If the answers are coming from the back row, we need you to speak into the microphone, please.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Apologies. We've got many people here. Michael was saying "about 9,000".

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We can come back to you to confirm that number.

The CHAIR: Thank you. While you're following it up, can you please confirm how much money's been allocated in that in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, we can do that. Also I should indicate to you, Ms Cohn, that we are actively in discussions about how we can take advantage in New South Wales of the Commonwealth's initiative in relation to co-funding of energy upgrades for social housing. That is something that we're actively working through. We want a piece of that pie. So we're just finalising our plans to get it.

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The CHAIR: Community advocates and architects have put forward a redevelopment plan for 82 Wentworth Park Road, which avoids the demolition and redevelopment previously proposed by the Government. How are discussions with community advocates, including the Glebe Society, progressing about plans for 82 Wentworth Park Road? Will the DA for demolition be withdrawn?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have met with those community advocates, including the Glebe Society, and arranged for them to have dialogue with the Land and Housing Corporation. Michael may be able to provide an update on where that's up to. But I would say this because I said to them we have 17 current dwellings at 82 Wentworth Park Road. We're able to turn that into 43. It's not just the uplift in dwellings. Those new dwellings will be energy efficient—as you know, important. They will also be disability accessible—as you know, also extremely important. I'm not prepared to compromise on those principles. So I have obviously encouraged the Land and Housing Corporation to engage with people who have alternative suggestions. But I'm not interested in alternative suggestions that don't deliver an uplift in social housing that is energy efficient and disability accessible. Michael, I don't know if you have anything more to add about where those conversations are up to.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We have met with the Hands Off Glebe society. We've provided feedback on both ours and their proposals. We explained that we are looking across all of the needs in Glebe to best meet the needs of the people that are in that area. They have provided us with some additional information, which we're reviewing. We've said we will come back to them. At the moment, we are not withdrawing the DA, because that will delay any outcomes for delivering homes for new people.

The CHAIR: You said there was a review of some of that information. What's the time frame for that?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We should be able to go back by the end of this year.

The CHAIR: Does the Government have any questions?

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: No.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: No.

The CHAIR: In that case, we'll have a break until quarter past 11.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: Welcome back, everyone. We'll be starting with 20 minutes from the Opposition.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Minister, are you familiar with the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Not in detail but, yes—its existence.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: It does report that there's currently a 32 per cent shortfall in mental health workers compared to 2019, and this figure is expected to grow. Do you have figures for New South Wales vacancies in relation to mental health, particularly psychiatrists, adult, adolescent—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can ask the officials if they've got figures at their fingertips, although I would indicate there is absolutely a shortfall. We acknowledge that. There was a discussion earlier about the workforce challenges. If there are figures, Deb, that you have at your fingertips, perhaps you might provide them.

DEB WILLCOX: I don't have any figures on me at the moment.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We'll take the exact figure on notice. But the premise of your question is accepted—that there are shortfalls and that we are facing real workforce challenges in mental health.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: When taking that question on notice, can you also provide a breakdown for psychiatry—as I said, adolescent and adult psychology, mental health nurses, as well as other allied health professionals? Minister, are you aware of a case from the northern beaches involving a 14-year-old male person who was reported as being violent and a danger to his family and himself when he was treated by paramedics? The young person was transported to Northern Beaches Hospital, only to be told that there were no child or young psychiatrists on duty to see him and that he would need to return home. This matter occurred in September. Are you aware of this case?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, I'm not. It concerns me because we have had a child and adolescent psychiatrist on at the Northern Beaches Hospital since earlier this year. I'm not aware of that incident. It does concern me.

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The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Ms Willcox, are you aware that there was no adolescent psychiatrist on duty?

DEB WILLCOX: I'm not aware of the case that you're referring to, but there is a child and youth psychiatrist on staff at Northern Beaches Hospital.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Is that person on duty at all times?

DEB WILLCOX: No, they wouldn't be on 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But there would be on-call arrangements, and there would be registrars and residents on shift who would then be able to access that advice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: So it is possible that this young person, this 14-year-old boy, who was identified as a danger to himself and his parents, was turned away and told to go home?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm not aware of the specifics, but there has been a range of challenges with the Northern Beaches Hospital. My efforts to resolve those challenges have been hampered by the fact that it's not run by the New South Wales Government; it's run by Healthscope. It's a public-private partnership. It's not the way that I think health should be delivered. Nonetheless, it's the situation I've inherited. I'm not aware of the specifics, but I'm concerned by it. And I am concerned by what I consider to be ongoing reports of issues at the Northern Beaches Hospital and have already raised other concerns that I have in relation to the delivery of projects and healthcare services with the CEO. I'm happy to take on this particular circumstance and raise it with him as well.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: So you have met with the CEO?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have, yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Have you talked about beds at the hospital?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Is there a shortage of beds or have all beds been delivered?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have talked to him about the delivery of the budgetary commitment in relation to the four beds there. There are currently four short-stay beds that are available. There are not currently four inpatient child and adolescent beds available. This is extremely frustrating to me. It is very disappointing to me that a commitment was made for delivery at a hospital that is run by a private operator and therefore not within my capacity to control or direct. Again, I reiterate that this is not the model to which I think health care should be delivered. Nonetheless, it's the one we've inherited. The CEO is well aware of my frustrations.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: When will the beds be delivered?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What we do about the delivery of that commitment is still under consideration. As I indicated, I'm not able to direct that hospital in relation to its operations. It's run by Healthscope. It's run by a private operator. It is not run by Northern Sydney Local Health District. That does provide a real limitation on my capacity to ensure delivery of State public health commitments.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are there any shortfalls of beds in other hospital across New South Wales for psychiatric patients or for young adolescents?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm sure that there are more beds that could be provided. To be clear, one of the big priorities that we have is the delivery of community mental health, because that is a far better treatment plan and model of care for almost all children and young people. Children and young people experiencing acute mental health crises in our hospitals often find that a very traumatising experience, and it isn't always conducive to their healing and their recovery. Community care is far preferable. Having said that, as I said, we acknowledge that there are shortfalls and gaps in the provision of mental health, including in the provision of child and adolescent mental health. We have got a series of programs in order to systematically identify, prioritise and respond to those gaps. You're not going to see me coming in here saying, "Yes, everything's perfect. Everything's great." That's not the case. We have not enough staff doing an incredible amount of work—the most professional, lovely, wonderful people in difficult circumstances. Are there gaps? Are there areas where we can do more? Absolutely.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You mentioned that more support needs to be provided, particularly around community health. This brings me to specialist homelessness services, particularly the support that's provided. We know that, quite often, people will present to specialist homelessness services with mental

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health challenges. You referred to programs and early intervention. What exactly is being provided to support SHS to address and deal with people who are presenting with mental health challenges?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We increased their funding in the budget to allow them to try—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Exactly how much did you increase the SHS funding to?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It was part of the Essential Housing Package. I can't recall the exact figure within that \$224 million package, but there was additional funding—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You don't know how much funding you're providing to SHS?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Overall, we fund them, what? Is it \$300 million?

ANNE CAMPBELL: It's \$328.2 million.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I was close.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And the additional funding that was provided?

ANNE CAMPBELL: About \$5.7 million.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Just for a year.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You don't remember \$5.7 million?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Just for a year, we've boosted their funding. I know that more needs to be done. We have recommissioning that we're actively engaged in. That is going to be a big piece of work to chart the future of our specialist homelessness services. In the meantime, whilst that is underway, we know that they are experiencing, as you say, more clients and more clients with complex needs. We have provided them with additional money in order to try to ensure that the services and support the people need are there when they walk through the door. Are there still gaps in relation to that service provision? Absolutely. All of the SHSs that I meet with talk about exactly what you're talking about and say, "We are seeing more clients. They're more complex. They're more difficult to house long term. There are intersecting—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: So you've provided—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: —drug and alcohol and mental health—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: —just over \$7 million to support them to address the increased capacity and workload. We know they're trying to meet demand. Do you know how many are working above capacity?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I imagine it would be almost all.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And all you've given them is \$5 million?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We've boosted their funding for 12 months as an emergency injection to address some of that demand. Do we know that more needs to be done long term? Absolutely.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Where is that \$5 million going? Is it across all of them? To some?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Anne might have detail about exactly where every single one of those dollars is being allocated. Obviously it's being prioritised to areas of highest need—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: We can get into that detail later on, but you're not aware of where that money is going.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We have hundreds of specialist homelessness services.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: The sector has said they need around \$50 million—some of them say more—each year to just meet demand and stop them turning people away. What are you saying to those providers?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: "I'm sorry that you've been underfunded so chronically for 12 years that you are now in a desperate situation. I'm sorry that the housing crisis is so severe that the most vulnerable people are turning up in greater numbers, with more complex needs, at your services. I'm sorry that 12 years of neglect and delay has caused this crisis, but I acknowledge it."

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The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: But, Minister, you are now the Minister. You are in a position to be able to seek funding. Are you aware that NCOSS had a breakfast last month at which the Treasurer addressed the sector?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am aware of that breakfast.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are you aware that he said that there is no money coming at next budget?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No. I mean, as I—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are you aware that he said there is no more money—

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Point of order: The Minister is attempting to answer and she was spoken over with, I think, a repeat of the same question.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I think she can answer the question.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: She can look after herself.

The CHAIR: The member is able to redirect the question. As per our previous hearing, if the Minister could at least start answering the question before the member redirects.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I wasn't at the breakfast. It's difficult for me to make early morning functions with my kid drop-off responsibilities so, no, I'm not aware of what the Treasurer said there. I am aware of what he said in the Budget Speech in the Parliament, which is that the \$224 million Essential Housing Package was a first step and he acknowledged there's more to be done. That's on the *Hansard*.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: He said at the breakfast—and that's also online and has probably been recorded—that there will be no funding for the sector in the next budget. What is your response to Specialist Homelessness Services and to the staff and the volunteers who've now been told there is no money coming?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As I said, I wasn't at the breakfast. I am not aware of those comments. I am aware of what the Treasurer said in the Parliament, which is that he acknowledges this is a first step after which many more will be required. If you have questions about the Treasurer's view, you should have put it to him yesterday.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: So, basically, you don't care. Have you seen the Ernst and Young evaluation?

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Point of order: That's just a disrespectful way to treat a witness.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Have you seen the Ernst and Young evaluation?

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I'm still being heard on the point of order.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'll move on to the next question. Have you seen the Ernst and Young evaluation of SHS services?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have seen the draft report and I have considered the fact that you, as Minister, spent \$800,000 commissioning Ernst and Young to produce a report on the functionality of SHSs, based on the draft report, which I see to be a complete waste of money.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Then you'll release that report?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No. When I have the final report, I am happy to release it.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Why won't you release the interim report?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am happy to release the interim report. I've got no problems with releasing reports and I think when people see it they will see "\$800,000 to the big four for this?" What an unbelievable waste of money.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Minister, have you read the 2023 New South Wales street count technical paper?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have seen the street count results but I don't recall reading the technical paper.

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The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: It's only about 10 pages, but that's all right. It's mostly a graph of a breakdown.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think that the suggestion that I'm not across the detail is—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Minister, are you aware of how many rough sleepers there are currently in the Clarence Valley?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Not off the top of my head.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's okay. Does anyone else have those figures?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Has someone got the street count figures per LGA? We can look that up.

ANNE CAMPBELL: I think I do, Minister. Actually, I don't have it but I can provide it this afternoon.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: There were 300 in Byron, I think, but I don't recall all of them.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes, you're right, Minister.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's okay, I've brought a copy. The figures for 2023 for the Clarence Valley are 69—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Point of order: I think it's moving too quickly. The information was being sought through the Minister to the officers. As far as I can tell, the information might be present now.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Well, no, Mr Tidball was just confirming that when I said it was 300 in Byron, I was correct on that. I was just indicating that I am aware of the ones at the top of the list—the most pressing—but I don't have in my mind the street count for every single LGA. We are looking that up.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: No, I understand you've a very big number of portfolios but I do have a copy of the spreadsheet and the count that was provided on your website. In relation to Clarence Valley, for 2023 it was 69 and in 2022 it was 11. As you said, Byron was 300 this year and 138 last year. Recently you announced additional community outreach support for the region. How much was that for?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Eleven million dollars.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How many LGAs does it cover?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think it covered five. I can't recall the exact number. I think it was five.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you know which ones?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We'll take it on notice. It was definitely Byron, Ballina, Lismore, and I think it was Clarence and Richmond. We will clarify. That is my recollection.

ANNE CAMPBELL: I think you're right, Minister.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We will clarify but that is my recollection.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Okay. How many rough sleepers are in Eurobodalla LGA? Do you have that? Are you aware of it?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm not aware, but I do know Eurobodalla has a particular challenge. Every time you fly into Moruya Airport you can see the homeless encampment there. It's clearly a challenge. I've spoken to the mayor about that on a number of occasions. One of the first things that we did when I was Minister—and I thank the department for collaborating with me—was snap up the opportunity to grab a few cabins that happened to be for sale in the area in order to provide temporary emergency accommodation. I'm not pretending that's a long-term solution but I'm saying I know there is a problem and we are trying to pull every lever we can, when they're presented to us, to respond to it.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Well, like Byron, it had 300 this year and 138 last year. What community outreach services are you providing to that LGA?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We're working closely with the Eurobodalla Shire Council in relation to that community.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Any additional funding?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We did extend a number of programs down there as I recall. Ms Campbell? I can't remember the names of those programs but there were programs we have extended into the Eurobodalla in order to try to deal with the increase.

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ANNE CAMPBELL: We are happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How many SHSs are funded in that LGA?

ANNE CAMPBELL: Again, I'd need to take that on notice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: There's been no additional funding of the SHSs or any new outreach services funded, since you've become Minister, in that LGA?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Not that I'm aware of—although, as I've said, we have extended funding for a range of programs. Every opportunity that we have, I've met with the mayor about it on more than one occasion. It's a real problem.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Shoalhaven LGA had 19 recorded this year and 11 last year. Shoalhaven saw an increase of eight people sleeping rough compared to Eurobodalla, which had 162 people sleeping rough. Can you explain why the South Coast electorate received half a million dollars for two SHSs and Eurobodalla received nothing?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: My recollection is that one of those services was located between the Eurobodalla shire and Nowra so it was servicing people from the Eurobodalla community. That is my recollection of where—I think it's the Safe Haven facilities.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: So they're not based in Nowra?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, one of them is based in Ulladulla—is my recollection—and services both the Shoalhaven and Eurobodalla communities. So my first proposition is that your question is incorrect—that, in fact, one of those services is servicing the Eurobodalla community. The second is that both of those services were about to close their doors. Both those SHSs were about to shut down because your Government hadn't funded them properly and I'm not going to let services shut their door—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Okay, but you have eight people sleeping rough versus 300 people in Eurobodalla. You have a tent city that you said you visited and yet you're providing no funding whatsoever to that area—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I just corrected you to say that we were providing funding.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: —and asking the entire State to divvy up \$5 million? Is that correct?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm sorry if half a million dollars to keep much-needed services in regional New South Wales open is offensive to you. I think that's my job.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You don't seem to be doing much.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Point of order: It's disrespectful for those sorts of asides to be made, I would suggest. It's not a question; it's just gratuitous commentary.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'll move along. Minister, on your department website, which has been updated in the last few months, it states, "The New South Wales Government has committed to reducing street homelessness in New South Wales by 50 per cent by 2025." How are you tracking with your target?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm pretty sure that was the Premier's priority from the previous Government.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: But it's your website, which was updated only a few months ago. Do you not know what you're putting on your website?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I don't know if you know this: I don't do the website. In my list of job descriptions—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: But you should be aware if it's referring to a—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I fundamentally disagree with the proposition that my job should be trawling the Department of Communities and Justice website for text content in there. I've got serious issues in the housing crisis. I've got serious issues with homelessness. Checking the website doesn't feature in my top 50.

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The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: So what is your target? Minister, we'll accept that the website that was updated is incorrect and out of date. Minister, do you have a target to reduce homelessness in New South Wales?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Our goal is to make homelessness rare, brief and non-reoccurring.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: So you have no target?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Well, rare, brief and non-reoccurring is the framework that I think best meets the needs. The problem with something like a 50 per cent reduction is that, as numbers go up, the percentage value of that reduction gets smaller and smaller. Fifty per cent of a number that is exponentially growing doesn't meet my vision for a State in which homelessness is rare, brief and non-reoccurring. That ambitious goal, I concede, is one that is baked into the work that we are doing on the new Homelessness Strategy and our planning. That is, to be honest, a much more ambitious goal than a 50 per cent reduction or 60 per cent reduction. That goal seeks to fundamentally change the way that homelessness is approached in this State. Look, it is ambitious. It's significant. It's going to require more resources but that is what I am committed to.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: But how are you going to measure whether or not you've actually achieved anything? By the sound of it, it's just motherhood statements. You may not like having targets because it means that you are accountable, that you are transparent to the people of New South Wales, but at the moment you're not providing any funding. You're talking about wanting to see it reduced but you don't know by how much, you don't actually know how many people are homeless at the moment and you're not measuring. Are you intending just to sweep this under the carpet?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, that is absolutely not my intention. As I said, the problem with a 50 per cent target by 2025, or something like that, is that that assumes that there still will be a significant number of people who are homeless. It might be less, but it is still significant. That's unacceptable to me. A significant number of homeless people, and we just accept that?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: But you have no means to measure it.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That's not the way that I see my role.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Won't fund it, won't measure it.

The CHAIR: The inquiry into community and outpatient mental health services being conducted by this Committee, which was mentioned earlier this morning, has received some really distressing evidence about the quality of the mental health access line in local health districts where that has been outsourced to Medibank services. Will you bring this critical service back to public management?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have to say, Ms Cohn, I found that evidence really interesting and I thank you for commencing the inquiry and hosting it. I wasn't aware of the different service delivery of the mental health lines across the local area health districts and the challenges that people had been experiencing until that evidence was provided to the inquiry. I have now asked for more information on that. Currently, those decisions are being made at the LHD level. The local health districts are making decisions about how that access line is delivered. But I can say I'm aware of that evidence. It does concern me, and I have asked that we look into what options might exist to ensure that that is being consistently delivered but accepting that currently it's not the Mental Health Branch and the Ministry of Health that is making those decisions; it is LHDs.

The CHAIR: On 10 October I asked you in question time about what is being done to ensure the safety of patients, particularly women, admitted to mental health services, and that was in the context of reports of sexual assault and harassment in mental health facilities. You indicated at that time that relevant protocols would be reviewed. I'm interested in understanding the status of that process.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely. It is still ongoing. That's not something that we've been able to turn around particularly quickly. I might ask either Dr Flynn or Dr Wright to reflect on what work is being done to ensure that that's the case.

MURRAY WRIGHT: I think you're referring to the guidelines on sexual safety in mental health inpatient units, and that's a document that was first produced approximately 10 years ago and it's up for revision at this time. By way of context, I would say that the issue of sexual safety in inpatient units is a really important issue to us, and every single instance of an identified sexual safety incident or allegation of a sexual safety incident is investigated thoroughly, up to and including referrals to police and sexual assault services where that's deemed necessary. The issue of trying to improve the way our services, firstly, identify people who are vulnerable in those settings and manage their inpatient stay in a way which prevents those incidents from happening is a combination of identifying in the individual the issues, training the staff in being able to identify vulnerable people, and also

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in de-escalating situations which might be deteriorating, and separating individuals who might be showing behaviours which put other individuals' sexual safety at risk.

It's a complex matrix. It's about the skills. It's about the policies and procedures. It's also about the built environment—that has a significant role in it—and then, from our perspective, it's about the investigation of incidents, the collation of that information and trying to drive change through a monitoring process. But I do take the point that the guidelines are now a decade old and that it's really important for us to go through the process of updating those.

The CHAIR: I agree it's very important that that be reviewed. Who is involved in that process of review? Who are you consulting?

MURRAY WRIGHT: I can't give you the details of the program, all the individuals and organisations involved but within the Ministry there's a team within the Mental Health Branch which has ownership of the policy. But they would be consulting widely both within the Ministry, including PARVAN, and other parts of the Ministry, including Health Infrastructure, HETI, which is the Health Education and Training Institute, the local health districts that are delivering the services and other peak agencies, both for consumers and carers, across the board. So it's a complex and large task. It's actually a very large and complex document. That's why I make the comment that there's a large number of factors which contribute to either a safe or less safe environment and we aim to update that with what we've learnt over the previous decade.

The CHAIR: Appreciating both the complexity of the issue but also the urgency of it, what's the expected time frame for that work?

MURRAY WRIGHT: My understanding is it's probably about 12 months.

BRENDAN FLYNN: That's accurate, yes.

The CHAIR: I've got a couple of questions about the Mental Health Acute Assessment Team. I understand that that was operating with only one crew in Western Sydney but that there were early indications that that was hugely successful, and I understand it's been particularly supported by paramedics working in that program. Why has the Government not committed to expanding the funding of that program and expanding it further?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I would suggest that when it came to a range of those programs the reason that we haven't made longer term funding commitments is because we're assessing how a range of overlapping services are going to work together in the future. As you know, and as this Committee has explored, and as I have been clear on the public record, the way that we respond to acute mental health crises in New South Wales needs to change. The process of exploring what that could look like is underway at the moment and, as a result of that, we will look to implement a new approach and elements of what we are currently doing that have been successful will feed into that. There are some things that we're currently doing that work a little bit, but not a lot. How can we make them work better? I'm happy to take on your feedback and feedback from others about the success of some of those programs and provide you the reassurance that we are looking to roll out a new approach to some of these challenges in New South Wales.

The CHAIR: I am interested in understanding mental health support for paramedics, particularly for PTSD and psychological injury at work. I understand that there's data showing that it's less than one-in-four paramedics who don't feel burnt out by their job at this stage, and the budget included, for example, online mental health assessments and a self-guided app. What work is the Government doing to actually reduce the incidence of psychological injury for paramedics?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It is a significant issue. I've met with representatives of the Health Services Union in relation to that matter specifically and they have articulated to me exactly some of the challenges that you have outlined. One of the things that we are doing is looking to connect them up with some of the services that exist. I can't recall the name of it off the top of my head—Brendan, you may—but Hunter New England has a particular program in relation to that, and I in fact recently met with the project delivery team for that program specifically in relation to mental health for paramedics and talked to them about their work. I'll get Brendan to give a bit more detail, but interestingly, Ms Cohn, one of the challenges they identified is that paramedics see themselves as caregivers and encouraging them to be care receivers is something that has been challenging. That's why engaging with the Health Services Union to engage paramedics in a way that actually connects them with the services that exist is really important. Brendan, do you want to add briefly in terms of that particular program?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I can't add a lot about that specific program. It's not delivered by HNELHD or by any of our LHDS, and I don't have visibility around some of the programs that exist within NSW Ambulance, but I do certainly endorse the concerns that mental health for first responders, and for all of our staff, is a significant

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issue. I do think that we need to make sure that we're doing everything we can to make sure that first responders can access mental health care across the spectrum. That can be difficult for people of any health employer who works in an environment if they are acutely unwell coming to a hospital perhaps where they're known or where they've worked. We're sensitive to those issues but a lot of the other care can tend to happen sometimes within the private sector as well.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I am going to turn to suicide prevention training. I understand that a large proportion of the State's funding for suicide prevention training is being delivered by LivingWorks. Can you tell us what percentage of that training's being delivered regionally or rurally?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can't, off the top of my head. Do you have a sense of that, Brendan?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I would like to take that on notice, Minister.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We're happy to take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Is there a measurement or KPI in place to ensure that that training's being delivered equitably across the State?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Is there a measurement of that in place, Brendan?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I believe there is, Minister. I would need to take that on notice as well, but I do understand that discussions with LivingWorks are ongoing.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: But I absolutely can recognise your point, which is that we do see significantly higher presentations of mental ill health and suicide in rural and regional New South Wales. It would be my expectation that programs that we are delivering are going to areas of highest need and that there is a particularly high need in rural and regional New South Wales, particularly as we see drying conditions, as we see bushfires. We acknowledge that that is of real concern, and it is my expectation that programs that we deliver would meet those particular and acute needs.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I'm pleased to hear that that's your expectation and look forward to answers to questions on notice as to whether that's actually happening at the moment.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Understood.

The CHAIR: Twenty10 was identified as the suicide prevention training provider for the LGBTIQ+ community living rurally and regionally. In the New South Wales LGBTIQ+ health strategy, I understand that that program wrapped in mid-2022 and now refers back to the Community Gatekeeper Training initiative for which LivingWorks is the primary training provider. Were there any findings of the program being delivered by Twenty10 before it ended?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As it ended in 2022, and that was prior to my time as Minister, I may ask Dr Flynn or Ms Willcox if anyone is aware of that, or had anything to add; otherwise, we will have to provide that information to you on notice?

BRENDAN FLYNN: Look, I think so. I'm aware of that program and I think to specifically answer your question, Dr Cohn, we need to take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Sure. Thank you. I look forward to the answer to that question on notice. I understand that ACON has been funded for in-person community-based suicide prevention and after-care services for people of diverse sexualities and genders in Sydney and in Newcastle and that people in other areas of the State can access virtual services. Has the evidence been evaluated for the success of the virtual model? Are there any plans for expansion of in-person services elsewhere?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can again ask the officials if that evaluation has occurred. I suspect it hasn't. I suspect that, as the program delivery is ongoing, that has not yet been an opportunity to assess the relative merits of the in-person and virtual provision. But, perhaps Dr Flynn, are you aware if that assessment has been done at this point?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I'm not, and I am also of the view that the virtual component of that work is relatively new, so it's unlikely there's been any definitive evaluation for that program. It is really important, and it has been a priority within our suicide prevention initiatives to make sure that we're meeting the needs of that vulnerable population group.

The CHAIR: Thank you. While I'm on my line of questioning about regional areas, of the \$700 million Statewide Mental Health Infrastructure Program, what proportion of that sum has been confirmed for locations in rural and regional areas?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can take the proportion on notice, but just to reassure you, Ms Cohn, that there is a significant amount of investment in rural and regional areas. I can think of two significant ones off the top of my head—the new Banksia unit in Tamworth, which I was pleased to visit with the member, Kevin Anderson, and really excited to see that new facility getting off the ground. There is obviously the new Maitland Hospital site as well, which also has an integrated new mental health unit there and, again, really hopeful that that is going to provide improved quality care for that community. Those are just two. In terms of the overall percentage, Brendan, what am I missing?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I don't have the overall percentage and could take that on notice, but I would certainly add the new mental health unit that will be part of the new Albury-Wodonga hospital. I would add Broken Hill—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Oh, yes.

BRENDAN FLYNN: —which is getting a new mental health unit, and I would add that some of the beds that are being built are statewide beds and are going to be—particularly I'm thinking of the forensic beds that would be available to consumers, no matter where they live, across New South Wales—but would be prioritised for those beds.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We'll take the exact percentage on notice but, I mean, as you can see there is a range of significant projects in key regional areas that feature as part of that program.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I appreciate your answer qualitatively and look forward to having the numbers on notice. I think Ms Sue Higginson has a question before I continue.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Just one. Minister, on 19 September following the tragic and wrongful death of Krista Kach in Stockton, the police Minister called a press conference in which she threw her support behind the PACER program. The next day you came out and said otherwise and that it wasn't going to be funded beyond 2025. Did you speak to the police Minister before you made that comment?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I don't recall not supporting the PACER program so, no. In fact, my comments have been that it is a worthwhile program that is delivering positive results. I mean, we're doing a big piece of work about what's next. In and of itself, PACER in its current delivery framework is not up to the task and we acknowledge that and we know that we need to do more. But I do think that PACER has played an important role. It's a welcomed program, both from Health and police, and I don't recall not indicating that I did not think it had added value.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware—is it funded beyond 2025?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It's not funded beyond 2025, Ms Higginson, and that is because what is funded into the future is going to be different to what is delivered now. I think that's a good thing because there are opportunities for us to review where programs have done well, where they haven't done well. You rightfully have identified a number of instances where the system has failed.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Did you speak to the Minister before making your comments, whatever they were precisely, the following day?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have met with the police Minister in relation to these matters and had a number of conversations with her. I can't recall whether those conversations were before or after those specific events that you have identified. But, yes, I have spoken to the police Minister about these matters and look forward to continuing to do so.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: There have been 15 deaths in 12 months at the hands of police responding to mental health situations in New South Wales. If police were called out tomorrow, have we changed any processes based on what we have seen over the past 12 months and those 15 deaths?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think that's a question that you have to put to the police Minister because I'm not responsible for—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But these are people experiencing acute mental health. If the police were called out tomorrow to address and respond to somebody experiencing an acute mental health crisis, would anything be different to what it was the day police responded to Krista Kach and killed her?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: If you have a question about police operational response, you'll have to put it to the police Minister, Ms Higginson.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Have you been invited to feed in, as the Minister for Mental Health?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes. We are, as I said, directly collaborating with Minister Catley and New South Wales police in terms of their review, in terms of what comes next, in terms of a reform agenda. Absolutely we are involved in those conversations.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But is it your understanding if we were called out in an hour, tomorrow, the day after, anything would be different, or you're not aware, to what it was the day we responded to Krista Kach?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm not aware and if you have questions about police operational response, you'll have to put that to the police Minister. But to reiterate, we accept that there needs to be a new model. Those conversations are ongoing and active.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you know when we might have a new model?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: My understanding is that the review that the Commissioner of Police is leading, or has initiated, is due to wrap up by the end of the year. That in and of itself is not going to be adequate because that has not been informed by consumers. That has not been informed by their advocates. I think it is excellent that police are so open to acknowledging that things need to be done differently. I think that's incredible. We are very excited to have that collaboration opportunity. I would imagine that, leading into next year, there will be that opportunity for dialogue and elements of co-design, I would hope, with consumers about how we might do things differently.

The CHAIR: My last question is about the housing crisis, which, I understand, is exacerbating shortages of healthcare workers, particularly in some rural and regional areas, but also widely across the State. I've heard really distressing reports of paramedics being forced to sleep in their cars or shipping containers to be able to continue their work supporting regional communities. What work is being done to support key workers?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As part of Homes NSW, a team that was previously in regional New South Wales and dedicated to delivering key worker housing is to be moved into the new agency, once it comes into existence. There is over \$100 million associated with that project alone. But we're also collaborating closely with Health Infrastructure in relation to what they can do with us to ensure there is more housing for key workers. The point that you make is absolutely valid. There is a project team and money behind it that is directly looking to deliver solutions for that problem.

The CHAIR: I look forward to you being able to update us on that next year.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So do I.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, when will applications open for the 2024 Regional Youth Taskforce?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm not sure.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you planning to continue the Regional Youth Taskforce?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I haven't made definitive decisions in relation to what the future of the Youth portfolio looks like. Currently we have the Regional Youth Taskforce, who I've met with on a few occasions and I look forward to seeing them again in Broken Hill in a few weeks, and we have the YAC. I've also met with them. The existence of these two overlapping advisory committees I'm not sure necessarily meets the kind of—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry. With respect, Minister, it's now November. Last year applications for the Regional Youth Taskforce opened in September. It sounds like you're not quite sure what you're going to do. I would put to you that the Regional Youth Taskforce actually has a specific role to represent young people in regional areas, where there are more challenges. You're also the Minister for the North Coast, which is a large regional area. Can you say, today, whether that taskforce will continue?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I haven't made decisions about how we're going to deliver and drive—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When are you going to decide? It is meant to start next year. You should be having applications now, if it's going to happen next year. It sounds like it's not?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As I said, we haven't had a Minister for Youth in this State for over a decade.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But we've had Ministers for regional youth.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And I'm sorry that kids in Western Sydney didn't have a voice under your Government, but they do under ours.

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The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: With respect, Minister, I'm asking you about the Regional Youth Taskforce. If you want to go toe to toe about the disadvantage in regional communities, I'm happy to do that any day of the week. This was a specific program. You say you're meeting with them in Broken Hill. What are you going to tell them, in a couple of weeks, about the future of that taskforce?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That isn't it exciting that we now have a statewide Minister for Youth who is looking to elevate—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You want to lump regional people in with the rest of State. That's what you're saying. You don't appreciate that there is a difference for those kids and what their challenges are that is worthy of its own taskforce. Under Labor, that goes. Is that correct?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, that's not correct.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When are the applications opening then?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am saying that I have not made a decision about how to deliver on the elevated, statewide role and voice for young people. There has been a decade without a Minister for Youth—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order: There actually was a Minister for Youth under the Coalition. We also created the second one, which was the regional youth, to ensure that there was a focus both on metropolitan and regional.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: To the point of order—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm just pointing it out.

The CHAIR: Ms Maclaren-Jones, that is not a point of order. The Minister can answer as she sees fit.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, when will you be making your decision on the Regional Youth Taskforce? Can you give young people living in regional New South Wales, right now, an answer as to when they'll be able to have a voice, if at all, under your Government?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, I haven't got a clear timetable in terms of how we are going to look to roll out a new, centralised, elevated voice for youth.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So you're moving to a centralised—you are not going to continue with the regional taskforce. If you were, why wouldn't you just open the applications?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You're looking for a definitive answer.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am. That's what budget estimates are for.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Unfortunately, I don't have one yet.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. We'll tell the thousands of people in regional New South Wales and those young people that their voice is going. Thanks for that.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Point of order: That's not a question. That's more in the nature of commentary.

The CHAIR: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You're from the regions. You should care about that.

The CHAIR: Can the member get to a question?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I ask you now briefly about the Argyll Estate? Can you advise the Committee why you had, I think, the entire Labor branch there at the announcement with you, including the former Labor candidate?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I had Councillor Tony Judge in attendance.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The council is supportive of the project, so why was he there?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You will have to ask him that. He wasn't.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You put him on the press release.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: He was on your press release. Is it your standard procedure to put failed Labor candidates on press releases?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Councillor Tony Judge has been an excellent advocate for the Coffs Harbour community. I thought it was important to have a local voice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But the council supports the project.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Well, that's on council. He is an excellent advocate for the community. I wanted a local voice. I don't think that's a problem.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think the community probably sees differently.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm pretty sure the community is supportive of my decision.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When were the social housing providers told about the decision of that announcement or the decision that you'd made about the Argyll Estate?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you have a more specific provider in mind?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How long before the announcement did you tell those local social housing providers that you weren't going ahead with the project?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'll have to take it on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Was it the morning of?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I don't know the details of when we alerted any particular—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did you speak to any of the social housing providers up there about the announcement?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As I said, I don't know who you are referring to. Which social housing providers?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did you talk to Mission Australia?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I've met with Mission Australia many times in relation to a range of matters.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But my point is you can't remember when you had conversations—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Did I personally call Mission Australia?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did you have conversations with providers there about the decision to cancel that project prior to the morning of the announcement? Did you speak to anyone at all locally, on the ground, in Coffs Harbour about that issue?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely. I have consistently engaged with representatives in the Coffs community in relation to those projects, and no, I did not call Mission Australia and let them know that I would not be proceeding with that redevelopment.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did you speak to any social housing providers? You can take it on notice, if you don't remember?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I speak to social housing providers every single day of the week.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But you just said you couldn't remember who may have alerted people locally about that announcement, so it's a bit unclear. I'm happy for you to come back on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I may have to take it on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: But, as I said, I absolutely stand by my decision as the one that has the support of the Coffs Harbour community, and I think that has been clearly demonstrated.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I want to move on to some questions around your Water portfolio. Obviously, as the Minister for Water, can you tell me how much of the State is classified as being drought impacted at the moment?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think we're at 49 per cent in drought or drought-like conditions.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Just over 50 per cent, according to the DPI. What role do you play in terms of drought preparedness? How often do you meet with your colleagues and make sure that that side of Government policy is being looked at from the water perspective?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Minister Moriarty plays the lead role. I play a significant role. We have already engaged at cross-water agency meetings in relation to our drought prep over in team water. Those meetings have kicked off and already have an action plan associated with them. I know that Ms Jones has briefed the entire secretaries board in relation to our work, and, across the public service, we are playing a lead role in terms of agency, preparation and leadership. It goes right from the work that we're doing in Sydney, our engagement with Sydney Water and our plans to expand the desalination plant. It goes through the Hunter and our plans to deliver the Belmont desalination plant. It goes right through all of our local water utilities and engaging with every single one of those in relation to their risk profiles. We've delivered money in the budget for a range of our key, high-risk regional towns.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It sounds like you're saying that you can see that this is a looming and, in fact, current issue, particularly for lots of regional New South Wales where we're seeing drought.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I do concede that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I ask about the Safe and Secure Water program initiatives? I note that one of the glossy brochures for the budget says there is \$217.5 million to support regional communities dealing with town water supply, quality and safety risks. Can you just confirm that \$217.5 million is over four years?

AMANDA JONES: In the current year's budget we have about \$251 million that we're spending in regional New South Wales on water security. So it's a mix of not just the Safe and Secure Water program; there are some drought projects. We're also spending money on operational support to local water utilities. We have additional funding to provide both technical support, which we've done in Walgett, as the Minister referred to previously, as well as supporting councils to identify their preparation for drought. We're also providing support for capacity building, so training opportunities for water operators in regional towns. Over 25 per cent of our budget is directed at regional water security.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. But just specifically, that 217.5 that's called out in the budget papers for Safe and Secure Water, is that allocation over a four-year period?

AMANDA JONES: Safe and Secure, there's over 270 projects. They run out to 2028.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes.

AMANDA JONES: You're talking about an annual figure that we're spending. There's about another up to \$300 million to allocate over that period out to 2028.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. So my understanding is there was a billion dollars allocated to that program back in 2018.

AMANDA JONES: A billion dollars in 2018.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And then the former Government actually topped it up \$90 million in last year's budget because the call-out figure from last year's budget was \$369.6 million which included that additional 90. I guess what I'm trying to find out from you, Minister, is: Have you put any extra money into Safe and Secure Water this year or is it just continuing that billion dollars that was already allocated? That specific program is what I want to know.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We haven't topped up the Safe and Secure Water fund.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So you haven't done any—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We're at 50 per cent drought-affected. You're basically just still riding on the coat-tails of the money that was there by the previous Government.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That's entirely—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You just said you didn't put any additional money in.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It's entirely inaccurate. We didn't put any additional money into that fund. We spent a considerable amount of money through various other initiatives. That fund was fully allocated when I came to government.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Why didn't you top it up then?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: When I came to government it was fully allocated and rolling out projects—and some of those projects are good projects. I'm not trying to knock that work. We need that work to

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happen. I think my biggest problem with that work is that some of those projects had a funding commitment going back to 2019 that hadn't even started. So actually putting some fire to the feet of projects under that fund is a key priority. To be sitting there for four years and have no progress, that's pretty frustrating to me. So we are getting that program moving. In addition to the Safe and Secure Water fund, specifically delivering programs for a range of our most high-risk regional communities—Tamworth being an obvious example but there are others—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: There is not a dam in Tamworth though.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: —as well as a range of other initiatives that Ms Jones has mentioned: our capacity building; our town water risk reduction work; our support of local water utilities to do their dam management and dam assessment because as dam levels drop, decisions around dam management become more and more high pressure and high risk, and so engaging specifically with them to ensure that those decisions are well made. All of that is work that sits outside that fund in addition to it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thanks, Minister, but you have confirmed that there's no additional money that you've put in under Safe and Secure Water. That's correct, isn't it?

AMANDA JONES: If you're asking about drought funding, there is additional money as the Minister said. There is \$10 million for dam safety work over the next two years. There's also—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Safe and Secure is what I was specifically—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As I said, there is so much work that is happening across a range of programs. The main thing that I am trying to do in relation to the Safe and Secure Water fund—just one of the components of that piece of work—is get projects moving that have been sitting there since 2019 with nothing happening and no action and no movement.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But I would put to you, Minister, that the former Government understood that there was more needed—the demand was higher for those programs. So that was why there was an additional \$90 million put in last year in recognition of the fact that those local water utilities wanted this support. But from what I can tell, there's no additional money coming from your Government for that particular program. So I think we've probably covered that. I want to talk to you now about—you just mentioned dams. I'm assuming that you would know in terms of water security, particularly, the challenges in the Lachlan Valley.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I met with Lachlan Valley Water yesterday.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Why did you scrap the raising of the Wyangala Dam wall? What was the rationale behind that?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Because it was unfunded. It would never have received regulatory approval through the planning process. It would not have solved the flood-risk issues in those communities, and the water security benefits which it was allegedly to deliver were being delivered to a very small number of landowners and not to the significant needs of the major towns across the Central West. For the billions of dollars unfunded that could have been spent on that project if it ever received regulatory approval, which it never would have, there is so much more that we can do to meet critical human needs in our towns. If you had read the business case for that project, which I released, you could not—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Not the unredacted one. Would you release the unredacted business case?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The only reason we made redactions was because some of the information was Cabinet in confidence to the previous Government, which supposedly I can't access. I didn't realise that. So we had to redact that and then a number of sort of small commercial—as I said, we released absolutely everything we could. I wanted the information out there because the information that came through the Water Infrastructure NSW business case and the other assessments that were done through Infrastructure NSW were absolutely definitive that that project did not stack up and would never have been approved.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, will you release the review by Infrastructure NSW that you've just mentioned?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm actually not in charge of deciding those matters. They're for the Treasurer.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Will you seek to see whether that could be—will you take that on notice?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely.

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The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Given that you're convinced that the advice that you have stacks up, it would be good if that is in the public domain as well.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Once the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy public exhibition period finishes—I believe that's due to conclude in a couple of weeks—will you publicly release the feedback from that exhibition period?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you have a date as to when you would expect that to be available?

AMANDA JONES: That should be available before the end of November. All of the regional water strategies, all of the feedback we get from community is all available online.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So before the end of November.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I want to take you to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan now in the few minutes I have left. Do you support water buybacks for water recovery?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In terms of the new agreement with the Commonwealth, you did sign up to that though, is my understanding.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, that's right.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But doesn't that include water buybacks?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Right. Do you have any proposals in terms of any further water infrastructure programs that your Government's proposing in order to deliver that Murray-Darling Basin Plan in full? How are you going to meet those requirements?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, we absolutely do. There are sort of two components to that. One is the SDLAM components, the 605 gigalitres. There are two projects in that suite of works that are going to need to be rescoped—Menindee Lakes, Yanco Creek rebadged to Better Baaka, Better Bidgee. They're going to need to be rescoped and we are going to need to look at alternatives for them, try and get the Commonwealth to accept the projects—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Have you got a time frame for that work?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It is entirely dependent on the Commonwealth legislation passing. This is the whole reason that I signed up to extending the plan. Without more time and more money and project scope, we are on the edge of a cliff. July 2024, the whole thing ends. Any water that has not been recovered under SDLAM projects must be recovered through buybacks. What a disaster that would be for New South Wales. I could not in good conscience crash New South Wales into that cliff after a decade of inaction, of neglect. We are facing a cliff, so we do need the opportunity to rescope those projects, to get Commonwealth approval for them, to get more time and money. But that is dependent on us having the opportunity to do that through the plan being amended. At the moment—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I guess, I suppose, Minister, in terms of time frames—and I appreciate what you're saying in terms of the Federal legislation—would you anticipate if/when that is passed you'd be able to provide more information to the community about what some of those infrastructure projects will be and time lines of delivery?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Because you know this is a massive issue in the regions particularly.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I do, and I want to assure people we're working on it anyway. The department is actively working on alternatives. If the legislation passes, yes, I would hope that within the first half of next year we would have the opportunity to look at what those projects could look like going forward, but it is contingent on that. The other thing that we are doing is—we don't want to see buybacks in New South Wales. I accept that they have a negative impact on communities. Being proactive in putting forward a suite of alternatives for the Commonwealth to consider, to say to them, "No, there are projects in New South Wales that can deliver environmental benefits, that can deliver water recovery, that are supported by stakeholders", and the work to collate that plan, that proposition, is also underway and is anticipated to be completed by the end of the year.

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AMANDA JONES: Yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That's the sort of specific water infrastructure, efficiency projects, rules-based changes et cetera, which is the New South Wales alternative to buybacks plan. We're not just sitting back; we're proactively putting alternatives to the Commonwealth. It is my expectation that they will take them seriously.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We look forward to seeing how that eventuates for you, Minister. As Minister for the North Coast, what involvement or role do you have in terms of the Reconstruction Authority? Obviously, I know that it's under Minister Dib. But yesterday we heard that the board of the authority hasn't actually met yet. Does that concern you? What do you do in terms of advocacy for those flood-impacted communities?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It does concern me. The rollout of the flood response in the North Coast absolutely concerns me. My role structurally is limited to nothing. I have no formal structural role. What I do have is a loud and annoying voice. I do use that internally to advocate, pressure, cajole, encourage my colleagues, not just in the ministry but in the departments as well, to take these matters seriously.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Will you use your voice to try to get a meeting of that board sooner rather than later?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be useful for those communities, I'm sure. I think that's my time.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, I wanted to turn to the issue of water sharing plans for a big issue, specifically to start with the Gwydir Regulated River water sharing plan. Have you been keeping a kind of watching brief on the revised changes to those water sharing plans in terms of flow targets and other things?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have, yes.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Are you confident that the flow targets in the revised Gwydir water sharing plan will be effective to protect the environment and downstream users, particularly from the extended floodplain harvesting that's been undertaken?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, I'm not. You would be aware that I have publicly stated that the downstream targets for Northern Valley water sharing arrangements, specifically the 195 gigalitres at Menindee Lakes, are inadequate. I've been on the public record in relation to that.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: What is your power as Minister to do something about that 195 gigalitres?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We're doing the expert panel on connectivity right now. It's had two meetings, three—someone can tell me. Anyway, it's had a number of meetings chaired by Amy Dula from the Natural Resources Commission. Five incredibly eminent scientists and experts, their whole job is to move me from where I am now—which is, to answer your question, no, I'm not confident that those arrangements deliver the connectivity outcomes that communities and the environment needs, to a position where I am. I will be using their expert evidence, their scientific knowledge, to provide that road map.

That work is happening right now. I expect it to report, probably, preliminary findings by the end of the year but more comprehensive findings early next year. There probably will need to be amendments to water sharing plans as a result of that. There's a consultation process for that, as there should be. There's an engagement process for that. Of course, we're committed to that. But that is my power. My power is to say, "I've asked the experts what we need to deliver connectivity". Then I'm going to engage with communities to update water sharing plans to deliver that.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I just wanted to hand something, if we can, to the Minister while that is being handed out. Basically, I've done extensive calls for papers, largely in the last Government. They're just two documents, multiple copies. As you are probably aware, quite a bit of documentation has come back. While that's being handed out, I just wanted to check. You were on the floodplain harvesting inquiry with me. You heard the evidence in relation to the Healthy Floodplains Review Committee. What has taken place internally to review those decisions since you've taken over as Minister, to review the decisions that didn't get made by that very secretive committee? Really it was only the work of our inquiry that uncovered what was happening with that.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Two things: I've discontinued the healthy floodplains committee. Secondly, I think we've engaged Maddocks. Is that right? Yes. We've engaged Maddocks law firm in order to review previous decisions to ensure that they are legally robust.

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Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Is that every decision that was made in terms of the requests by irrigators for an increase in what was assessed in terms of floodplain harvesting? We understand, by the work of that Committee, that was quite extensive. So Maddocks law firm is undertaking a review of all of that.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, it is.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Is that going to be made public?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I suspect if I don't make it public, you'll just pass an SO52 about it.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Learning very fast.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have really tried to be as transparent as I can in relation to every review, document, report. I went through all of the ones from the previous Government that I could release that hadn't been released. We put them up on the website. I don't have the report. I don't know what's in it. I'm not certain as to what the substance of it is going to be. But, yes, if I can make it public, I will.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The emails that, I understand, you have now—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The first one is from 13 July 2022. It's from somebody within DPIE Water, the director of healthy floodplains project delivery. That, essentially, says to somebody within the Minister's office that—this is in relation to Gwydir:

The alternate in-valley relaxation targets are about improved optics (in response to concerns from environmental and d/s water users)
- they are not about improved water management.

Does that concern you?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I would imagine that that outcome is what had been requested by the former Minister's office. It does concern me that that type of approach characterised decision-making under the former Government. But, as I said, my view is that public servants follow the direction set by the Minister. That's certainly my expectation and experience. Unfortunately, previous Ministers set expectations around the way decisions were made that were very problematic.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I agree with you. The second email is talking about the targets that were set, saying:

- They have been paired back as much as possible & present the lowest possible requirements to meet ecological requirements ...
- They are unlikely to significantly impact harvesting other than in extreme dry periods.

From your inquiries internally, what you've done so far since you've become Minister, are you satisfied with that—that the targets won't impact floodplain harvesting? I can tell you there probably isn't going to be any floodplain harvesting being undertaken in extreme dry periods anyway.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That's right.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: These flow targets seem to have been set to literally not impact floodplain harvesting at all.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It does concern me. I am of the view that that is what occurred, that previous Ministers gave directions about how these targets should be set, how they should be talked about, how they should be characterised in a way that did not deliver on the principles under the Water Management Act, did not deliver on—it's not just the environment, which I care about, and I know you do, too; it's downstream users. It's downstream communities that are negatively impacted by this approach. But, as I said, it's my view that that approach characterised the instructions and the directions that were given by the previous Government. That's changed. We're giving different instructions, different directions, have set up independent expert processes specifically to provide different advice. That is going to characterise decisions going forward.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That's very good to hear. When is that advice—for example, let's talk specially about the 195 gegalitres target in terms of Menindee. We know that that's incredibly low. I think that's almost what was there when the fish kill happened.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think it's less, actually, Ms Fachrmann.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: One-seventy-six or something, I think, was—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Right.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That's right.

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Anyway, the point you're making is fair. It's approximate.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The recommended contingency storage is around 400 gigalitres, in fact. This review you're undertaking, the directions you're providing internally, when are we going to see that actually play out and make a difference in terms of water sharing plans in operation?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As I said, we are anticipating recommendations from the panel early next year.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: What is that panel called again?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The expert panel on connectivity. That's what I call it, so I guess that's what it's called. If it does indeed recommend changes, which, as I have conceded—and I think you know—it is going to, there are processes in relation to consultation on amendments to water sharing plans that we have to follow and we should follow. If we are changing the rules, then people should have an opportunity to engage in that process and have their say. Nonetheless, those processes will kick off and the water sharing plans, if they need to be updated, will be updated. Communities will have a chance to have their say over that, but that process will kick off once we have an understanding of what the expert panel has suggested is necessary to deliver connectivity.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: There's licensed conditions on all floodplain harvesting licences in the Barwon-Darling at the moment. This is from Mungindi to Louth. It includes a condition that allows extraction from two flood plains—from the Namoi and the Barwon-Darling—so if a property is within the Barwon-Darling flood plain and the lower Namoi flood plain, they can essentially take from both. Are you aware of that?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You are really stretching the limit of my understanding of the operation of floodplain harvesting in specific valleys.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I just want to make sure that you are aware of it and get your thoughts on this. That is the case. There's only one property that is upstream of the confluence of the Namoi and Barwon that meets the criteria, which is Mercadool. That property is owned by Peter Harris. We know the history of Peter Harris. I want to make sure that you're aware of this condition that has allowed for that. Does it concern you to hear that? Do you think you should have a bit more of a look in terms of how that originated within the department—the decision-making process for that?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely, Ms Faehrmann. As I said, I take seriously specific examples of where decisions may have been made that are inconsistent with the principles of the Water Management Act and inconsistent with the obligations that we have to protect our water resources. I'm more than happy to take that on notice. It's obviously a specific property, a specific example, that I'm not across. But I am now. I'm happy to look at it.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Just to be clear, it's a condition that relates to and benefits one landholder, with the track record that you know that landholder has. I want to get to the fractured rock water sharing plan. There's a north-west fractured rock water sharing plan. I understand that the proposed long-term average annual extraction limit is higher than in the current water sharing plan. Does it concern you that we've got reviews being undertaken? And this one is actually coming, I understand, from the Great Artesian Basin. Does it concern you that there's increases to that long-term average extraction limit being approved in water sharing plans at the moment?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It does, except to the extent that those are long-term average annual extraction limits, and the other bases on which those plans are determined are based on modelling work that is done and that is peer reviewed. Models aren't perfect, but it's the best available information that we have about what those figures should be. Yes, it does concern me. I am, obviously, of the view that as we enter into a climate-uncertain future, extraction limits should generally not be increasing. So that does concern me. As I said, those figures aren't just made up out of nowhere. They are based on models, which are imperfect but are the best scheme we have for determining what those figures should be. I would add, on top of all of this, this is another reason why it's so important that we get our water resource plans in so that the sustainable diversion limit framework is also applicable and enforceable in New South Wales. I would add that too.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I agree with that. In terms of the modelling—you raised it; the peer reviews—are you 100 per cent confident in terms of the modelling undertaken by your department? As you said, it all comes down to the modelling. There were a lot of concerns raised about the modelling, again, in the floodplain harvesting inquiry. What have you undertaken, since becoming Minister, to give you 100 per cent confidence in the modelling that is undertaken? You mentioned peer reviews. Who is undertaking that?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I would say two things. Am I 100 per cent confident in the models? No. The models are imperfect. They are not intended, in my view, to give you 100 per cent certainty. That is not what—

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: As confident as you—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Am I 100 per cent confident that these models are the best effort that we can make to deliver quality planning? Yes, I am. Interrogated is perhaps an overstatement, but I have really clearly questioned the department about exactly these matters, Ms Faehrmann, because I—

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Who's doing the peer reviews? Sorry to interrupt.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I might take that on notice. I can't recall. I think it's more than one peer review, if I am correct.

AMANDA JONES: We can provide that information. Depending on the catchment and depending on the model, there are different independent experts who do the peer review.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It is true that there are, on occasion, more than one peer review that occurs for a model. Is that right?

AMANDA JONES: Yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We will take on notice who is doing the peer reviews.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Will you be issuing floodplain harvesting licences for the unregulated and regulated Namoi River and water sharing plans?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Eventually, yes.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: When is that—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Eventually, yes. As you know, I support the licensing of floodplain harvesting. When I am going to do that—I am still working through. I don't want to do that in a way that further exacerbates the problematic nature of decisions that have been previously made and that we have discussed. On the other hand, I do need to keep moving. I support licensing. In particular, I can't finalise the Namoi water resource plan until I have finalised the Namoi water sharing plan and until we have completed the licensing of floodplain harvesting. There are consequences to delay that have a negative impact on New South Wales. We need our water resource plans in, but I don't want to rush decisions in a way that, as I said, embeds poor planning. I do need to keep moving on licensing.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Has the department worked out or assessed the financial value of the floodplain harvesting licences already issued?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: If they have, they have not provided that information to me.

AMANDA JONES: I'm not sure that we've looked at the financial value, but we've looked at the water brought under the legal limits.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: In terms of the quantity?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That's right. The volumes, yes.

AMANDA JONES: On average, that's about 60 gigalitres at the moment having a licence, for four out of the five valleys. The water price moves, so—

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Sorry, what was that figure?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Sixty gigalitres for four out of the five valleys.

AMANDA JONES: I said that's about 60 gigalitres for four out of the five valleys. As you've remarked, the Namoi is yet to be done. The water price moves around. We could do evaluation on that, but it would be at a point in time.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: In the time remaining, I've got a few other issues to cover. I want to get an update about the progress towards cultural water. We know how much that is recognised in the Water Management Act, yet little progress has been made, if any, to give First Nations people literal water and water licences. New South Wales has got the agreement of 3 per cent of water returned to Aboriginal people under the Closing the Gap agreement. How much water in New South Wales has been returned to First Nations people? What is your target to return water to First Nations people? How are you getting there?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I don't know, off the top of my head, how much water has been returned. I think in the last briefing I had it was 0.2 per cent. It's a small and inadequate number. Amanda is that—

AMANDA JONES: There are only two cultural water licences in the State.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So a very small number. I am, like you, committed to delivering the 3 per cent by 2031 under our Closing the Gap commitments. What are we doing about it? Well, we are trying to progress our Aboriginal Water Strategy and our Cultural Watering Plans alongside that. We have established local groups of First Nations people to be involved in that collaboration. As I indicated to Ms Higginson earlier, unfortunately the status of that work when I became the Minister was stalled and underdone, I would say, and, in particular, not owned by Aboriginal people. They expressed to me really clearly, when I met with them, that they didn't feel as though that strategy and those plans reflected their views, priorities and interests.

I'm not interested in putting out a New South Wales Government Aboriginal Water Strategy or Cultural Watering Plans that are not informed by and supported by Aboriginal people. It's a tick-a-box for me—"Yay, I did it"—but that doesn't deliver on the aspirations that we have for this work. It is important work. We put our shoulder behind re-engaging, listening again and talking to, and making commitments and delivering on them. Unfortunately, because of this, there's been delays. There has been not enough work done, and the work that has been done has not built the trust that we need going forward. As I said, we've got a handle on that now, I think. We've got a plan going forward. We're recommitted to listening and we hope to have the strategy done by next year.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: So at this stage there's no particular target by a particular point in time in terms of how much water is to be returned, if you like?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You mean between where we are now, which is inadequate, and the 3 per cent?

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Yes, because the 3 per cent essentially doesn't have a time target, does it?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: In 2031. I thought that was the time target.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Let's stick to the next four years then. Is there any milestones or any interim targets to reach that 2031? Or is this waiting on your review?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Well, it is waiting on our review and it's waiting on our dialogue and collaboration with Aboriginal people as to how they want that process to roll out.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: What about in the current? Because you've got the water sharing plan, and the whole process that you've mentioned in relation to the inadequate targets that would feed into that, wouldn't it?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely. As I said, the point of having the Aboriginal Water Strategy and water sharing plans, and other elements that sit underneath it, is to do exactly what you were describing. It is to provide that substance so that, as those other decisions are being made, we know that we have a plan to reach our goal and that we're on track to do it. That is exactly what we need to do but that does not exist now and that's a problem. As I said, that's partly the reason why I didn't want to just release a plan that was a series of generic motherhood statements that did not have the support, buy-in and substance to deliver that.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Thank you. In the two minutes I have I want to touch on the Restoring Our Rivers bill and what's happening federally. In the New South Wales Government submission to that inquiry, as has already been talked about, you state that the New South Wales Government does not support buybacks, and rules-based projects should be considered. What does the Government mean in terms of rules-based projects and in terms of what is being considered? If you are saying that they should be considered, what are you referring to?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think, as we have previously discussed, there are changes to our rules framework in New South Wales that we are actively considering and putting time, energy and effort behind. As a consequence of some of those changes, there may be water returned to the environment. Those are exactly the kind of things that should be considered in the alternative to water buybacks.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: So it's making up a component of the 450 gigalitres? Is that the New South Wales argument?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Our argument is that those type of changes should be considered as part of that and that there is a genuine opportunity to minimise buybacks in New South Wales—which we don't want to see and we do think have a negative impact on communities—and embed and reflect the work that we know we have to do on connectivity.

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Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Are you suggesting that returning the water by rules-based projects instead of buybacks would return an equivalent amount? Is that on your radar? Is that the work the department is doing—that there is significant water, let's say 200 gigitalitres, that can returned to the environment by rules-based projects, as a rough figure?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That level of detail is not currently in our planning, partly because we're still waiting on the expert panel but also because, as you can see from that submission, we want the Commonwealth to accept that this is up for consideration and dialogue. At the moment, we're not clear on their response to that.

The CHAIR: There are 4½ minutes for the Opposition.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Just on the Albury project, which has been given an extra 12-month extension, I am just interested to know whether or not you have also funded the Mount Druitt project.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: For funding extension? No, we have not.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Can I ask why a program that has proven to be successful in supporting young people, particularly those at risk of homelessness, has not been funded in Western Sydney?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Because it was not proven to be successful in its operation in Western Sydney. Barnardos, who had the contract in Mount Druitt, unfortunately did not see nearly as many positive outcomes—or, to be perfectly honest, many positive outcomes at all—from their work. Unlimited down in Albury did do fantastic work. There is absolutely no doubt that they proved that the work they were doing in that community—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: So has something replaced that program? Has that funding been rediverted into another program to support young people at risk of homelessness in Western Sydney?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We are looking at what alternative programs other service providers, particularly more locally place-based service providers in that part of Western Sydney, may be able to deliver. We haven't identified a project partner yet, but we are actively looking at that.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Can you update me in relation to Enmore Park and if there is a tent city operating?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: My understanding, from the latest information, is that there may still be one or two people who are sleeping in Enmore Park. They are engaged with us. We are aware of who they are and what their needs are. We've offered accommodation assistance on more than one occasion. That offer, at present, has not been taken up, but we will continue to engage with them to see whether there are services or support that we could provide that they would be interested in taking up.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: What about the Dee Why tent city?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: My understanding, from the latest information—although I haven't checked in in the last few days—is that that encampment has been removed entirely and that there are no people there anymore. We ensured that when that action was taken by the council there were some of our service providers—Bridge Housing and others—as part of that. They were there onsite, to try and connect people in with services. I could take on notice exactly how many people took up those offers. It wasn't everyone, but we were there alongside council as that encampment was removed to ensure that people, if they were interested, had service support available to them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I want to ask you about the issues around the harvestable rights on the coast, which I raised with you in the House a little while ago as well. You gave a response to Rod Roberts about the catchment-by-catchment assessment, and you said in that answer that you are "accelerating the catchment-by-catchment assessment" up there. Then in a written question back to me on the same day you said that this methodology will commence in priority catchments in the next 12 months. I don't see how doing it within a year is accelerating. Can you explain how that makes sense?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You should have seen the original timetables. Allow me to assure you this work was not due to be completed on the initial timetables that I had seen until 2029.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But some of this work won't start within the next year, from the answer that you gave me. What kind of assurance does that give farmers on the North Coast in terms of the time frames?

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The assurance that I can give them is that we are absolutely prioritising that work. There are 15 coastal catchments. Amanda, is that right? I may not be getting that number correct off the top of my head. There are a number of coastal catchments. Some are higher priority than others. Will we have all 15 done within the next 12 or 24 months? Probably not. They're big pieces of work, these assessments.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How long will they take?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We are doing everything we can to get them moving. The assurance that I will give is that, particularly for priority catchments where we know that there's a real interest in people taking full advantage of harvestable rights, and in particular where we may be able to have a higher number that is sustainable in that catchment—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Above the 10 per cent?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely. There may well be areas, catchments, where we can go to 20.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Go back up to 30?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Potentially up to 30, absolutely.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But you don't know the time frame of how long that work will take?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, I don't have a definitive timetable on every single one of those catchment assessments, but we are prioritising that work and hope to have it done as soon as possible.

The CHAIR: Are there any questions from the Government?

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: No, thank you.

The CHAIR: The Committee will break for lunch until two o'clock.

(The Minister withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

The CHAIR: Welcome back. I've just been advised that we have an IT error that's interrupting the live stream at the moment, but we'll continue in the meantime. I understand that we're okay in terms of our own record-keeping. Before I go to the Opposition, I think there were some questions from this morning that had some clarification.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Chair, there are a couple from the DCJ team, one pertaining to the street count figures and there is one other, if I may defer to Ms Campbell.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Thanks, Michael. Just to clarify, with the street count which came out of the technical report that you referred to earlier, which is the February 2023 street count, I've just pulled out the highest sort of areas. So obviously Byron, I think you mentioned, is 300; the City of Sydney was 277; Clarence, 69; Eurobodalla, 59; and Coffs Harbour, 82. Also, this morning, in response to a question around the increase in the homelessness budget—and that's specific to SHS—I said \$5.7 million and it was \$5.9 million. Sorry about that.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I let it go.

ANNE CAMPBELL: And just in terms of the total homelessness budget for this year, it's \$444.4 million, which includes the \$328.2 million specific to SHS, so there has been an increase in temporary accommodation in this year's budget as well as crisis accommodation maintenance.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. We will go to the Opposition.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Just in relation to the street count, is it intended that there will continue to be two street counts a year conducted?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I think I'd need to take that on notice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's fine.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Certainly we tend to do them annually because of the resourcing. I know there was one in August. There were a few that we had in the past because of changes in weather and that sort of stuff, but we can take that on notice and talk to the Minister.

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The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Yes, that's fine. In relation to End Street Sleeping Collaboration, does that still exist?

JAMES TOOMEY: Yes, it does.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Has it received any funding, or is it currently being funded in any way?

JAMES TOOMEY: It's currently funded through philanthropy. It's not funded by government.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You're currently on the working group of the collaboration?

JAMES TOOMEY: There is a board and I'm on the board. I represent the department on the board.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you have any update in relation to the work they've been doing around the By-Name program and that data that is being collected?

JAMES TOOMEY: The By-Name List is current and there is information on the End Street Sleeping Collaboration website. The work that we are undertaking from a departmental point of view is to work towards the consolidation of data across a number of organisations to get a single point of truth in relation to homeless people in New South Wales using the By-Name List.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: When you said you're working across a variety of areas to collate that information, what are you bringing in?

JAMES TOOMEY: Information which may otherwise be collected through DCJ's work in the housing and homelessness space, plus information which would be collected by other collaborator members of the End Street Sleeping Collaboration.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Is that being collated within the department?

JAMES TOOMEY: It's not being collated anywhere at the moment. The intention is to collate that but to use the By-Name List as the backbone really for that.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I suppose that data will be managed by the collaboration, or will it be managed ultimately by the department?

JAMES TOOMEY: We haven't—that's yet to be determined.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: It will be collaboration, okay. Just in relation to the Journey on Home app, which was announced last year, is that still operating and how is it tracking?

JAMES TOOMEY: Yes, it is still operating. The Journey on Home app is used by homeless outreach support teams to engage with rough sleepers and then to engage them with other services and opportunities which are available to them for housing and other supports.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Is it 12 months that it has been operating?

JAMES TOOMEY: I think that's right, yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you have any data from that at the moment, how many people have been entered and—

JAMES TOOMEY: Not on hand. I can take that on notice specifically.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Is it possible to get it by region or by month, or how it's collated?

JAMES TOOMEY: We can certainly get it by month, and we can see what we can get there. I'll have a look and see what can be broken down from that data, yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: In relation to the mobile regional outreach project which was rolled out last year, I'm interested to know—because that was being trialled for about a 12-month period—if there is any update on how that project worked, where it went to?

JAMES TOOMEY: The Assertive Outreach program is continuing for rough sleepers in New South Wales and last year there were 3,000 patrols with 4,900 engagements with rough sleepers, which learned that they led to the housing of 340 individuals off the back of those Assertive Outreach patrols, and they are continuing this year.

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The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And that's the mobile regional outreach project, the one that planned to visit Murrumbidgee, West and Far West areas?

JAMES TOOMEY: There was a Tweed Assertive Outreach in Ballina. There are other Assertive Outreach activities which happen in Eurobodalla and in the Bega Valley as well.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: But I'm actually more interested in the actual mobile outreach project which was announced last year in Albury, run by the district, and it went into 40 townships looking at not only homelessness but also housing operations.

JAMES TOOMEY: Right. Apologies; I misconstrued the question. Yes, there is an activity, which is a housing support activity, with teams that are going out into regional towns and meeting people on the ground in those towns. That continues, and continues to have success. I can take on notice the outcome of those activities, but they continue to have success in engaging people with housing outcomes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are you able to take on notice the towns that it went to during that period and, I suppose, the number of people engaged and the success rate of transitioning them into homes or into housing?

JAMES TOOMEY: Yes, that's fine.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You mentioned Tweed and Eurobodalla as doing outreach programs. Do you have a list of the LGAs where all outreach programs or outreach services are provided and patrols are actually undertaken?

JAMES TOOMEY: I don't think I have an actual list of that, but I can provide it on notice as well, yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: If you can, list it by LGA and also the number of patrols that have occurred over a 12-month period.

JAMES TOOMEY: Yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I might actually move to questions in relation to mental health. How many safe havens are currently in operation?

DEB WILLCOX: Twenty?

BRENDAN FLYNN: Nineteen.

DEB WILLCOX: Nineteen currently, yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Is that the original target or number that was set?

DEB WILLCOX: Yes. We didn't have a target as such, but that's the original number. Is that right?

BRENDAN FLYNN: It is. Yes. Look, thanks, Ms Willcox. The target for the number of safe havens, I guess, has varied with what's been able to be delivered with the funding provided. There are 19 currently open.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Yes. Have any opened since April this year?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I would have to take that on notice to be definite, but I believe that one has recently opened at Gosford. I'm just not sure whether or not that was since April.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are there any plans to open any additional ones?

BRENDAN FLYNN: Look, at the moment the funding for that program is currently expended.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Okay.

BRENDAN FLYNN: We know that it's well received. We know that the utilisation is very good, but we don't have plans to expand it beyond the current program.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Okay.

DEB WILLCOX: If I could just add, member, if you don't mind: There were four pop-ups as part of the wellbeing package for flood-affected communities as well as the 20 that are currently running.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Okay. Have there been any evaluations done or cost analysis on the effectiveness of safe havens?

BRENDAN FLYNN: Yes. Look, I don't—certainly I don't believe a cost analysis has been done. The suite of initiatives in the Towards Zero Suicides program, which includes the safe havens and the suicide

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prevention outreach teams, have not as I'm aware of had evaluation completed, but it is built into those programs because we're very interested to see if it is, what we believe, an effective way to decrease emergency department attendance for people who would find that, you know, more distressing than a safe space.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: There has been some work and research done in relation to people presenting to specialist homelessness services and their interaction with the mental health system. I'm interested to find out if there's any work that's been done on the support or the cost effectiveness of the intervention from a mental health perspective, preventing people then seeking homeless support on multiple occasions.

BRENDAN FLYNN: I'm happy to take that.

DEB WILLCOX: Yes, definitely.

BRENDAN FLYNN: I'm aware of mental health service initiatives with specialist homeless services, but they can differ in their local delivery. I'm aware of one on the North Coast that is specific and I don't know that that has specifically been evaluated. Apologies: I may need to go back to the question.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: No, no.

BRENDAN FLYNN: But there are some other overlap areas that are primarily funded by mental health. An example of that would be project Embark, which is for people with an intellectual disability who are either sleeping rough or at risk of that. It's a promising program.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How long has that been running?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I don't know how long it's been running. I don't know. I'd have to take that on notice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Okay. The other is the mental health homelessness in-reach program. Is that currently still in operation?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I'm aware of an example of an in-reach into a homeless service, and I'm sure that there is probably more than the one example that I'm aware of. In terms of a specific mental health funded or LHD or network delivered mental health service for homeless consumers, I'm not aware that we have—we have partnerships but we don't necessarily have standalone services.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are you happy to take that on notice?

BRENDAN FLYNN: Absolutely, yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And, if you could, also identify where it's being provided and how it's being funded at the moment?

BRENDAN FLYNN: Yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: The other question in relation to mental health is that in the budget they announced an additional 250 school counsellors to support students with mental health needs. Do you know where these are being allocated?

BRENDAN FLYNN: No, I don't. I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Yes. That's fine. Back to homelessness and youth: Currently, how much is allocated in the current budget to support young people experiencing homelessness?

ANNE CAMPBELL: Under the Youth Initiative program, the budget for this year is \$13.9 million. The Rent Choice Youth is \$12 million and the housing youth assistance program is \$12 million. I think that adds up to about \$35 million to \$36 million.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And did you say the Premier's Young Initiative—

ANNE CAMPBELL: It's called the Youth Initiative. It was the Premier's Youth Initiative.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Yes, and they've changed it to Youth.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: If I may just supplement that, half of our SHS clients are young people aged under 25 years of age.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Thank you very much because that's going to be my next question. How many are over the age of 18 and how many are under the age of 18 that were supported in the last 12 months?

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ANNE CAMPBELL: I can answer that, secretary.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: You're ahead of me.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Okay. So aged under 25 for women or women without accompanying children, 8,665 and for men it was 5,781; people aged 25 to 54, for women with or without accompanying children, 9,986 and for men 868; 55-plus, 854 women with or without accompanying children and 105 men. In terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 5,463 women with or without children and for men 2,118, and for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, for women with or without accompanying children 2,043 and for men 299.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you have the figure for unaccompanied children 12 to 15?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I think it's about 2,300. It's gone down a little bit, but it's still a bit too high.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you have that breakdown by region or LGA?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I can get that for you.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's fine. In relation to Aboriginal specialist homelessness services in particular, what work is being done to support ACCOs? Is there any funding in the current budget to support them or grow them?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes. There is \$12 million, I believe, committed over three years from 2023 to 2026. Through the Aboriginal homelessness sector growth project, the delivery of new homelessness services is designed and delivered by six ACCOs.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Okay. Do you have the names of those ACCOs?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: We can provide those on notice.

ANNE CAMPBELL: We can take that on notice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Yes.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: If I may just add to that, that's obviously separate to the 16 ACCOs in total delivering specialist homelessness currently in New South Wales.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Okay. In relation to the SHS funding, the \$5.9 million, where has that been allocated?

ANNE CAMPBELL: It's been allocated across all the contracts in SHS proportionate to the funding.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Okay. How are you, I suppose, monitoring or knowing where that funding needs to go? What data are you relying on?

ANNE CAMPBELL: We use data that comes through what's called the CIMS database. Obviously, we collect regular data in terms of Specialist Homelessness Services. Essentially the \$5.9 million was to ensure that we didn't reduce service delivery, given the increased costs of service delivery for Specialist Homelessness Services.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: In relation to a question on notice I asked the Minister in relation to how data is collected, I was advised that the department doesn't keep or track SHS numbers based on region or local government area. Is that correct?

ANNE CAMPBELL: We tend to—and I'm happy to take this on notice so it's an accurate answer—collect it by LGA and often the questions are about a specific suburb or whatnot, but I'm happy to take that on notice and provide a response.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Yes. The question was breakdown by each LGA and how many SHS providers are there and how many people have been supported.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes, and I think where the tricky bit is, sometimes a particular service provider goes across a number of LGAs. That makes it difficult to disaggregate. I think that could be the issue and that's not uncommon for an SHS provider to go across a number of LGAs, yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I'm going to turn now to the Land and Housing Corporation. What is the number of new social housing dwellings projected to be constructed over forward estimates? We heard 750 for this financial year and 1,000 next financial year. Have you got numbers for the outgoing years?

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MICHAEL WHEATLEY: That's correct. We continually work on our pipeline beyond that, but we do also deliver social housing through partnerships. We currently have a series of projects that are delivered under partnerships beyond—and they can extend up to 10 years. We have a pipeline of about 5,639 of social housing through those partnerships.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So that's 5,639 through those partnerships. Do you have a yearly breakdown of those?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: I can take that one on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That would be great. What is the number of new affordable housing dwellings projected to be constructed over the forward estimates? Do you have any oversight of that?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Through our partnerships, we do have 474, but there is obviously the HAF funding that is going to come into effect, and that is going to be the key driver for the delivery of affordable housing. We have been looking at that, but we will work with the CHP sector to see how many houses can be delivered out from the HAF.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to the increasing cost of building materials—you'd acknowledge that has been a key driver in recent years—what do you envisage the escalation costs will be in terms of construction over the forward estimates?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: I'll take that question on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Should building materials continue to get more expensive, has LAHC got any strategies in terms of being able to find additional funding to be able to support social housing development?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: I'll just reiterate what the Minister said in recognising there is work to be done on more funding for social housing, and we are working on those strategies to increase the supply of social housing, bearing in mind that escalation and increasing costs ought to be factored into that.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: This is for both you and for the Aboriginal Housing Office. There has been an announcement in terms of the self-assessment that both the Land and Housing Corporation and Aboriginal Housing Office will now have. Have you taken on any planners in order to conduct this self-assessment?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We already have significant resources in-house. We already have self-assessment powers, and our workload and our pipeline has those resources to do those self-assessments.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Do you believe you're adequately staffed, in terms of planners, to be able to do those self-assessments?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: At the moment, yes. And as we develop new strategies and new funding strategies in the forward years, we will look at the resources needed to deal with that future pipeline.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to the Aboriginal Housing Office, is that the same situation, or is there a need for planners in order to be able to do those self-assessments?

FAMEY WILLIAMS: At this point in time, I'll have to take that on notice.

The CHAIR: I just want to advise that the Committee has made me aware that we have no further questions for Mr Thomas, so you're excused. Thank you very much for your time and attendance today.

(Brendan Thomas withdrew.)

The CHAIR: I'm interested in discussing the Mental Health Acute Assessment Team program in further detail. I did ask a couple of questions about it this morning. I understand that when that program was initiated it functioned with an extended care paramedic who had an extended set of clinical skills to be able to provide treatment outside of hospital, and that was then downgraded to a regular paramedic. Why was that decision made?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I'm going to take that on notice. Can I just clarify, Ms Cohn, if you're mentioning the particular team in Western Sydney?

The CHAIR: Yes. I understand that trial, at the moment, is in Western Sydney.

BRENDAN FLYNN: Yes. I might take that on notice.

The CHAIR: While you're taking that on notice, I'm also interested in who was consulted as a part of that decision.

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BRENDAN FLYNN: We can put that as part of the answer, yes.

The CHAIR: Thank you. On a different topic within mental health, with reference to 15 and 16 of the budget measures statements, I'm interested in the planned expenditure to ensure aftercare is available to people who have survived suicide attempts and how this compares to spending in the previous year.

BRENDAN FLYNN: Aftercare is a core part of the bilateral funding. I'd have to look up the exact amount—perhaps now or in a moment—but the key activity for NSW Health this year is to expand aftercare to make it genuinely universal across the State, which is one of the abilities that the agreement and the schedule that sits under it, as I understood it, do. In the last financial year our priority has been to extend the services in New South Wales that already had aftercare, and now the priority is to work with PHNs, districts and networks to get the extra services onboard.

The CHAIR: You mentioned the agreement. Are you talking about the co-funding with the Federal Government?

BRENDAN FLYNN: That's right—the bilateral, yes.

DEB WILLCOX: Ms Cohn, I was going to add, that allows us to extend from the existing nine sites up to 35, and the four-year funding from 2022 to 2026 is \$60.65 million under the bilateral agreement.

The CHAIR: With that agreement, can you detail how the \$60.7 million from the previous financial year has been expended, to date?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I can say that we have extended our contract with the existing providers to make sure that that's the first thing we've done, but extra expenditure since then I'd have to take on notice. It may not have happened yet because we're in the process of working with our partners to get the right providers on board to extend it across the State.

The CHAIR: I'm happy for you to take that on notice so that the detail is correct. In doing that, I'm particularly interested in how that expenditure is broken up by region or by local health district as well, if that's alright.

BRENDAN FLYNN: Yes.

The CHAIR: Coming back to housing—sorry, it's a very broad hearing that we're having today—I'm interested in the Blackwattle Bay development. Will any of the over 1,000 units in that development be set aside for public housing, given that the development is taking place on public land?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: That development is not part of LAHC's responsibilities. That is actually under Infrastructure NSW. I'm not familiar with the details of that particular project.

The CHAIR: Could I just ask you to speak into the microphone. I did hear you, but only just. I'm sure Hansard is having trouble as well. For how long will the 30 per cent of units that are allocated to affordable housing under the Bays West precinct development controls remain as affordable housing?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Again, that's not under our jurisdiction. That is under the department of planning. I'm not familiar with that project.

The CHAIR: I will ask those questions to planning. Over the last financial year, how many properties belonging to the Land and Housing Corporation were sold to a private owner?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We'll take that question on notice, if that's alright.

The CHAIR: Sure.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: I might be able to get back to you before the end of the session.

The CHAIR: Thank you. While you're looking, on notice, can I add some extra detail to that question as well? I'm interested in how many were sold to a private owner and how many were transferred to registered community housing providers as well.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Okay.

The CHAIR: In the last financial year, how much money did LAHC spend on legal representation responding to cases brought against it by tenants in NCAT?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We'll definitely have to take that one on notice.

The CHAIR: That's alright. I understand, with the quantitative questions, you're trying to give us an accurate answer. On that question as well, I'm interested to understand how that quantum of expenditure compares

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with the expenditure on the same line item in the previous financial year. I'd also like to understand if you engage private solicitors for that purpose or if there are in-house resources.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: As far as I'm aware, generally, they're dealt with by in-house resources, but we'll take the details on notice.

The CHAIR: I'm also interested in understanding how many cases brought by tenants are currently active in NCAT, and how many of those relate to maintenance issues.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Again, I'll have to take that one on notice.

The CHAIR: With the current staffing levels for Housing, how many tenants are there per client service officer?

JAMES TOOMEY: I will take that on notice, but in broad terms it's around about 300.

The CHAIR: I'm interested in understanding the trend with that over time. Are you able to tell us if that's increasing? Is it decreasing? How does it compare to, say, five years ago?

JAMES TOOMEY: I'll take that on notice in terms of the trend over time.

The CHAIR: Sure. How many vacancies have you currently got for those positions?

JAMES TOOMEY: I definitely have to take that on notice.

The CHAIR: While you're taking that on notice, how many of those staff are permanent as opposed to contractors?

JAMES TOOMEY: I'll provide that information as well.

The CHAIR: For those who are currently on the social housing waitlist, how much was spent in the past financial year on providing either temporary accommodation or private rental subsidies?

JAMES TOOMEY: I would need to take that on notice as well.

The CHAIR: I've got plenty more numerical questions so I'm just going to get them all on the record now and then you have all afternoon to look them up for me, please.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Saves you sending them in a supplementary.

The CHAIR: It does.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You might have an answer; you never know.

The CHAIR: At the end of September 2023, as I understand there were 57,411 households on the social housing waiting list.

JAMES TOOMEY: That's correct.

The CHAIR: Of those, how many have been on that waiting list for more than 10 years?

JAMES TOOMEY: We can provide that; we'll take that on notice.

The CHAIR: I'm interested in how many have been on the waiting list for more than 10 years, more than five years, more than two years or more than a year and how many of those require properties with one bedroom, two bedrooms, three bedrooms or more than three bedrooms. I certainly wouldn't expect you to know that one off the top of your head.

JAMES TOOMEY: Thank you.

The CHAIR: I also understand as at 31 August 2023 there were 3,416 LAHC-owned public housing dwellings vacant in New South Wales. How does that compare with the number of vacant dwellings at the same time last year?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Vacancies vary over time. We have up to between 8,000 and 10,000 people moving in and out of the houses annually and the number does change, and the number changes at any time and it depends on the normal process of tenants leaving or moving to other accommodation. The vast bulk of vacancies at any one time are that regular process of a tenant leaving and moving to another accommodation. So the number does go up and down but it hovers around that over a period of time.

The CHAIR: That's helpful to understand. Are you able to tell me how many of those have been vacant for more than six months?

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MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We will take that question on notice.

The CHAIR: I understand some of the vacant properties are either habitable or not habitable.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes.

The CHAIR: How many of the non-habitable properties have been vacant for more than six months and how many habitable properties have been vacant for more than six months?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes, okay.

The CHAIR: Has there been any costing done for how much it would cost to house all approved applicants on the social housing list, whether that's through the construction of new properties, acquisition of existing properties or headleasing?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Not that I'm aware of.

The CHAIR: It hasn't been costed?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: The total waitlist? The 57,000 people?

The CHAIR: Yes.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: No. We'll take that on notice but I'm not aware that it has been done because to understand each of those applicant's needs in terms of bedrooms—so we'll take that one on notice and confirm.

The CHAIR: I'm just interested. We had that commitment from the Minister this morning about what the aim is for Housing in the State and I would imagine that trying to understand how much it would actually cost to house everyone on the waitlist would be part of that work. What is the land valuation for the Waterloo public housing estate?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: I will take that one on notice.

The CHAIR: There's two more of these.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes.

The CHAIR: I'm also looking for Waterloo South and Explorer Street.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes.

The CHAIR: This year, as I understand it, DCJ has spent about \$47.9 million headleasing properties on the private market for approved applicants on the social housing waitlist. How does that figure compare with the amount spent on headleasing in the previous financial year?

JAMES TOOMEY: I can provide that on notice.

The CHAIR: Sorry, I feel like I'm creating a lot of homework for you. How much money is budgeted for headleasing in the upcoming financial year?

JAMES TOOMEY: Again, I would have to take that on notice as well.

The CHAIR: In November 2022 it was reported that DCJ are headleasing units in the private development at the site of the former Rachel Forster Hospital in Redfern, which I understand was sold off under the Iemma Labor Government in 2007. Can you confirm, firstly, whether that's the case? Is my understanding correct?

JAMES TOOMEY: We do have a headlease in there. I would have to ask whether we're thinking about the same building. I'm not sure what was there before, apologies.

The CHAIR: While you're looking that one up on notice, can you advise us what the current expenditure is for headleasing properties at that particular site and how many apartments that is, and for what duration, please?

JAMES TOOMEY: Okay.

The CHAIR: How much money is budgeted in the upcoming financial year for air conditioners or solar photovoltaics?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: In this current financial year?

The CHAIR: Yes, please.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: If you just give me a moment, I'll get you that number.

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The CHAIR: It's one that you don't then have to take on notice.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: I might have to take that one on notice. Next financial year is \$10 million, but this year, I think, I just need to check that.

The CHAIR: With that budgeting for next year, can you tell me how many properties that will cover?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: That will cover, as I said this morning, about 9,000. It's actually up to 8,800.

The CHAIR: I have some questions for Ms Robinson. I understand that your office has recently done some work with young people looking at their attitudes to vaping.

ZOË ROBINSON: Yes.

The CHAIR: And I'm interested in what recommendations for government have come out of that work?

ZOË ROBINSON: Yes, we have just released a report on young people's perspective on vaping. The qualitative includes 231 children and young people who participated in this as well as quantitative work around it as well. Some of the recommendations that they talk about is support around cessation, so an app to assist them, but they also talk about there being access to further education in schools. They also talk about peer-to-peer support, so being peer led in that response as well. I suppose probably one of the recommendations that people have read with great interest is that they have suggested that smoke detectors are not an appropriate investment in terms of trying to solve the problem of vaping. They also talked about the cost of them and that they are quite accessible, but then they also made an overarching statement that perhaps there should be more work done by adults to stop children and young people getting access to them so easily.

The CHAIR: What was the consultation process you went through in developing those recommendations from young people?

ZOË ROBINSON: Obviously this is a particularly difficult kind of report to do because you do actually require young people to acknowledge that they may be vaping or have vaped. And so, firstly, we had to create a space where children and young people felt like they could come forward and do so in a way that didn't have judgment necessarily. So we do have a reflection in there that talks about children and young people who didn't vape and could talk about why they wouldn't vape, children and young people who may have vaped, and children and young people who were talking about their peers and what they've seen amongst their peers.

We also made sure that we covered off both metro and regional areas as well, as we do in all of our work, and I can come back to you with the exact schools. That is not top of mind to me in terms of that breakdown. We ran it in terms of ACYP running it, so there was our staff in that room who are qualified in terms of social work and support. As you will see in the report, as we do in all of our reports, there are verbatim quotes from children and young people themselves, so we have used their words in terms of describing it, and it's their recommendations. We actually asked them, "What are some of the recommendations you have for government", and they are their recommendations.

The CHAIR: I think this is of particular interest for health bodies who are obviously trying to reduce the rates of vaping amongst young people. Did you explore what some of the reasons are that young people are actually taking up vaping?

ZOË ROBINSON: Yes, we did. It talks there about their own stress and anxiety, using vaping, potentially, as a tool to calm themselves. They also talked about peer pressure and seeing their peers do it. There is an acknowledgement also that there is risk-taking behaviour that happens and so children and young people are experimenting. But I think the focus for us on this is, when you hear something as an example—that they're using it to calm themselves in terms of anxiety—there's, obviously, an underlying issue there that we also need to address as well. They are probably some of the three high-level things as well.

The CHAIR: Absolutely. Given that finding around young people vaping to relieve stress and anxiety, which I'm sure most of us find quite concerning, have those findings been shared with the health department or people working on mental health? Have you spoken to each other about this?

ZOË ROBINSON: Yes. We sit on a cross-government group that is looking at this particular issue with our friends at Health. We have shared our findings. We have done a presentation to Health. We are attending the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Health's round table and providing a presentation on this to that as well. We've shared it with Education and our colleagues across government. We continue to work very closely with various departments, agencies and community. I want to acknowledge the Cancer Institute and their work that they've done across this. We work with all of them.

The CHAIR: In that answer I think you mentioned presenting it at the Premier's round table.

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ZOË ROBINSON: The Deputy Premier's round table on vaping. Yes.

The CHAIR: When is that happening?

ZOË ROBINSON: On 16 November.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Can I just follow on while I've got you, just in relation to those vaping reports. Have you met with any of the Ministers about the report?

ZOË ROBINSON: We haven't met with the Ministers since the publication of the report, but all Ministers have it. But I would suggest I'll take it on notice that we have sent it to everyone, but we haven't met with Ministers since then.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Just to clarify, the Minister you've met with is the Minister for Youth?

ZOË ROBINSON: Specifically about vaping, since the report has been released?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Yes.

ZOË ROBINSON: We haven't met with her specifically about that. She has spoken to our Youth Advisory Council and has a copy of the report. We met with the Minister for Health, prior to the report being published, in terms of discussing his portfolio once he stepped in. But we haven't had any specific meetings since the publication of this report.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You've mentioned you're going to the Deputy Premier's round table. Have you met with her to talk about this issue or any others in relation to her portfolio?

ZOË ROBINSON: I haven't met with the Deputy Premier.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Have you requested to meet with her?

ZOË ROBINSON: Yes.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You've made a number of recommendations. I think it says here "consulted hundreds of young people, aged 13 to 18, across New South Wales, regional as well as metro", and you made a number of recommendations, particularly around schools. This round table that's been established—do you feel it's just going to duplicate the work that you've already done?

ZOË ROBINSON: I think it gives an incredible opportunity. There are young people who will be attending that round table as well. So I think it's a great opportunity to bring both staff, students and members of government together to discuss some of the findings, both in our report and across other reports as well. My hope is that we hear what children and young people have said in terms of designing a solution that will help them and provide a positive outcome. I don't feel like it's a duplication. I think it's an important avenue to ensure that children and young people are heard.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Has either the Minister for Youth or any other Minister come back to you about those recommendations and a time line of when they intend to respond to them?

ZOË ROBINSON: I'll take it on notice. I haven't received any specific update from my team.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Wheatley, back to you, just some more questions around Waterloo, particularly Waterloo South. Will there be allocated portions of Waterloo South for essential workers, such as health workers, teachers and police? Is that envisaged?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: The details of the final proposals may come up with those, but we'll assess those as they come in. At the moment, we are planning on social and affordable. We're not specifically addressing key workers. However, the proponents may and are open to submitting proposals that include that.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Thank you very much. With respect to Waterloo Central and Waterloo North, is there any time line envisaged for those developments at this stage?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Not at this stage. We are focused on ensuring the outcomes of Waterloo South.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The parameters—would you be considering a 50 per cent social and affordable split when it comes to those as well? Is that what you're working under the view of?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We'll continue to maximise the outcomes of those projects in the future.

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The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to Waterloo South, is there any work that's been done so far on the mix of apartments and the needs in terms of one-, two-, three-bedders and the like?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We analyse, across all our portfolio, the needs of our social housing tenants. There is clear need for more one-bedders. We're working closely with the AHO on the needs for Aboriginal families because they have quite different needs. That information is part of the proposals. How the proponents respond we will need to adequately assess and put proposals forward that address the needs of all the potential tenants, both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to Waterloo South, how many people will be displaced, and require temporary rehoming, by the redevelopment?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: There are 750 existing social homes. The important thing is that everyone will have an opportunity to relocate back into the redevelopment. We've made that commitment. People can be relocated temporarily. The two developments—the Waterloo quarter and the Bridge Housing, Elizabeth Street—will provide homes in the immediate area for the duration of that relocation whilst the social homes are being rebuilt. The other part is this is not all going to happen; it's going to be progressive over the 10-year life cycle of it.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Have any relocations commenced as of yet?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: No, they have not. We are working to commence discussions. We're engaging with community. What we have said is that we'll start talking about relocations from the middle of 2024.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Beginning that discussion? When do you expect that those relocations will conclude?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: The relocations is a really important process. It takes time to do it right and to do it with the true consideration of the tenants' needs. We don't like to put hard time frames on it, because we have to work with each of the tenants, with DCJ, to get the right outcome for those people being relocated.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: We heard the Minister talk before about what is referred to as the LAWG and how that will be set up with Homes NSW and it coming online in February. Has Land and Housing Corporation had any insight at the moment into the land audit? Have you made any suggestions with respect to any properties?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We were going to do this separately, but I'd just like to correct earlier what the Minister said. The LAWG has actually been established. They have met. They are considering the first tranches of the property audit. Land and Housing and other housing agencies have the ability to review the recommendations of the land audit and identify properties that will be suitable for housing. We'll be given the opportunity to select those properties that are suitable for social and affordable housing.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You're part of that at this stage, the LAWG?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes, we are. We're currently going through the process.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: How many meetings have you had as part of the LAWG so far?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: The LAWG is run by DPE, looking at all the property. Before it gets to the LAWG, there is a housing focus committee. That was what the Minister was saying about being set up. We have been working with the department of planning. They have been providing us with the thoughts and the outputs of the audit for us to identify properties that would be suitable for social and affordable housing.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Is that part of coming to the shortlist in terms of what's been referred to as the shortlist?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The longlist is, I believe, 2,600 properties that we'd heard. Then that's being refined down into a shortlist. Is that correct?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: I'd have to defer that to the department of planning—Property and Development NSW.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In terms of the role that Land and Housing Corporation are playing with that, how does that work for Land and Housing Corporation in providing that advice on what properties should go from that longlist, so to speak, into a shortlist and the suitability of development on those sites?

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MICHAEL WHEATLEY: The department of planning shows us the shortlist. They will be doing that in terms of the initial desktop study of what properties they believe are suitable for housing. They give that to us. We look at them and go, "Yes, this really does suit our needs for social housing in these areas." And then we advise them that we have interest in those sites.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What are the parameters you use in terms of determining what is suitable for your purposes?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We use a range, but predominantly we look at the waitlist and the needs in those particular areas of those sites.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Do you look to the proximity to public transport or to—

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes, we do.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: —other amenities and the like?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: And its suitability for social and affordable housing, which includes its proximity to transport, amenities and general infrastructure, including health and education facilities.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And I imagine you look at the suitability of the site for development and whether it's an easier build—a flat block and the like—rather than if it's a difficult, complex build potentially as well.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: At the moment, we are not ruling things out. We're looking at all opportunities, and we will assess which ones are best suited for us.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to a frame around high density or medium density, are you classifying them in those sorts of categories as to whether it's suitable for high-density development or suitable for medium density or, for instance, duplexes and the like as well?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We deliver housing across all of those—high density, low density and medium density—seeking to get the best outcome of what's suited. Yes, we do assess the sites as to the most appropriate form for social housing.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: When you're putting that lens across them, are you looking at existing zonings that exist in that area or are you looking at the potential that you see in the site?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We take advice from the department of planning on what are suitable densities and zonings for each area.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Turning to a few more questions with respect to some of the existing projects, how many new and replacement dwellings have been completed by LAHC between January 2022 and present?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Just give me a moment. I can confirm those figures. I might have to take that one on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That's fine. When you take it on notice, if you could also—

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: In 2021-22, we completed 516. In 2022-23, we completed 663 social housing.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: How many were replacement dwellings in each of those years?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: When you say "replacement dwellings", can you—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Where, for instance, a site might not have been suitable for use any more but you constructed a new property on the same site, replacing like for like, effectively.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: I'll take that one on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Is the Government planning on pausing any major developments of existing social housing estates at present? For instance, we already know about the decision in terms of the Argyll Estate. Are there any others that are—

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We are having no other discussions about pausing.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Has there been any discussion about changing the mix of social, affordable and/or private housing in any existing LAHC projects that are on foot?

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MICHAEL WHEATLEY: The Minister has talked about Telopea. We are looking at that because we would like to see that you can get more social and affordable housing there. But that's the only development that we're—at the moment we're looking at what our options are. As I said, we are only looking at what our options are at the moment under the existing agreements that were signed four years ago.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to that Telopea development, what is the current breakdown in terms of social, affordable and private dwellings on that site?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: The deal that was agreed four years ago set it at 22 per cent of social and affordable housing.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In terms of those agreements and changing them, is work being done on the amount of compensation the Government might have to provide in terms of any changes?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We're assessing our options. That information is commercial in confidence, but no.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You're currently looking at your options. Is there any engagement happening at present in terms of the consortium or the like that is delivering that project?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: There is an agreement in place. Our priority is to honour that and comply with that agreement.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Turning to the Modular Housing Trial, \$10 million was allocated for the Modular Housing Trial. The budget, am I correct in saying, provides \$1.5 million in this financial year for modular housing?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: How many modular homes do you envisage you can deliver for that amount?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: For that \$10 million commitment, we are looking at a pilot of around about 20 homes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Twenty homes from the \$10 million?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That \$1.5 million will start you on a portion of those 20 homes, will it?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Both planning and the preparation of those homes, yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to that planning and preparation, is there any site that you're looking at at the moment in terms of the delivery of those modular homes?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We have just started to assess the sites. Our first step is to assess what forms of modular homes are most appropriate to pilot and to prototype, and to choose some modular home types that best meet the needs of the portfolio and the waitlist. Once we've established those ideal product types that will get us the best outcomes, we'll then go to site selection. Some of the site selection and planning is being done in parallel with that.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And is there a view to having that in metropolitan or regional areas?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Both. We see modulars quite—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So they're not going to be 20 that are going to be located together. There's going to be separate developments?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes. Modular is quite important and an effective solution for regional areas.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: When do you think that the first people will be moving into these modular homes?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: I'll have to take that one on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I take it, then, that the cost of the modular home would be \$500,000, you're estimating?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Approximately, yes. Again, the cost of a dwelling is dependent on the type of dwelling. It does all average out at about the 550. But it can range from a small, one-bedroom modular to a unit that is part of a high-density development. The average is 550, but it is within a band that could be from

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450 through to 650, for example. It very much depends on how the housing is being developed as to what the actual price is.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What amenities are you expecting to include in each modular home?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We believe that the modular homes will be meeting the needs of the tenants commensurate with a traditionally constructed modular home. "Modular home" is an interesting term. We use the term "modern methods of construction". It's more about how the dwelling is constructed, rather than the quality of the development.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to the modular homes, are you expecting an improved time frame in terms of their delivery as part of the trial?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: That's one of the core reasons for doing the pilot—to prove up the speed at which a modular can be both fabricated and installed on the ground. A core benefit of modulars is its speed. We believe the pilot will show that.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What does success look like for you in terms of the pilot? Have you got any parameters that you're assessing that against?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We're currently finalising all of those success factors and criteria. That will, again, determine the ultimate types of products we choose and how they best meet the needs of the waitlist.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Of course, there has been the rollout of modular homes, in a sense, particularly following the floods and that. Have you got any feedback from that that is feeding into your modular home trial?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes, we are. We're establishing an advisory taskforce to help formalise that feedback. That will include industry, but it also includes the experiences from the flood. We are absolutely engaging with industry and other agencies on all their experiences to bring it and to identify the lessons learnt and also the challenges in delivering it so we can work across the whole of government to mitigate those challenges.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have water questions so I'm not sure if any water people are at the table. I only have a minute to go. I might just start with a quick one to you, Ms Jones, seeing as you're seated there—and a heads-up to the others to come up for the next session. I want to ask about the harvestable rights work I was asking the Minister about earlier. In terms of the decision to go from the 30 per cent back to the 10 per cent, was there any hydrological modelling that was used to inform that decision, or is that the work that will happen over the next 12 months in the catchments?

AMANDA JONES: Yes, that is the work that we need to do. I think the context for the coastal harvestable rights decision is that for the coast, unlike everything west of the Great Divide which comes under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan where there are sustainable diversion limits set, we don't have sustainable diversion limits. That means we don't understand the amount of water take that is sustainable in the coastal catchments outside of the metropolitan areas. We also don't have State-built infrastructure. We don't have built dams in the coast. They're very flashy systems. That means when it rains the rivers run fast and it runs into the ocean, and we have very low metering data.

Part of the challenge, and what the Natural Resources Commission has recommended to us over the last few years, is that we need to start with the big picture, which is how much water take is sustainable. Rights such as coastal harvestable rights need to fit within that framework so what the Minister has decided to do is a bigger decision than just coastal harvestable rights. It's a "We really need to, as fast as we can, move to understand what the sustainable limits are for the coast" approach. To do that without metering data, the first piece of work is to identify methodology that we can use quickly to undertake the modelling. We're trialling, at the moment, a method that uses satellite imaging, as well as other metering data that we can acquire, to see if we can prove up a methodology that will help us fast-track this work.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I might come back to this, but I think we've moved on.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I've got some water questions. I did ask the Minister earlier about the Dunoon Dam. I know that she said it's a Rous project and I understand that. I want to know, though, is the department cognisant of where that's up to in terms of Rous?

AMANDA JONES: I understand it's a project that the local water utility is investigating. We'll continue to work with Rous to look at how that project might fit into the overall regional scheme in terms of water security.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware of what stage that project is up to?

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AMANDA JONES: I'm not specifically aware of where Rous is up to with that work. We can report back to you on that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. Obviously it would have to be a State-injected, funded project and I'm interested to know whether you've looked at what that would cost or if we've got to that point at all, or we've got that on radar?

AMANDA JONES: I'm not aware that we've undertaken any costings on the project, but I can confirm that for you.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. It's such a controversial project. It's been on the books since a long, long time ago and it was taken off the books for a long, long time because it wasn't a viable project, and then it popped up. I'm curious. I think it was in a previous regional water strategy of some sort produced by WaterNSW—

AMANDA JONES: I understand it is in the mix, in the regional water strategy for that catchment, and so are a number of competing ideas or complementary ideas. Whether that dam is the most viable option or whether other interconnecting pipelines or reuse or other projects are more viable is something to be proven up.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Just on that, what is the department's view? What's the primary option for increasing water security on the North Coast?

AMANDA JONES: I think that we're still doing the analysis and working with Rous to prioritise which it is. It might not be one option. It might be that there are a number of opportunities, including water efficiency, that could be complementary to deliver the best outcome for water security.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Has small-scale desalination been considered as part of a security option?

AMANDA JONES: I have to take that on notice.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Groundwater?

AMANDA JONES: Groundwater is potentially an option as well.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I would love to know what the department has been doing because we have a view of what Rous is doing.

AMANDA JONES: The regional water strategy is on the website. We have gone through a process of multi-criteria analysis and some economic analysis on a range of options, including policy—so water plan changes as well as infrastructure options. So that is available. The next step would be to decide which is the best mix of options and that obviously would need to involve the Government, considering that, as well as working with Rous.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you have any particular time frame that you're working in to actually say—I think the position at the moment is that it's very unclear. For decades we in the Northern Rivers have been having things dropped on our community and then we all run around saying, "But we don't think that's the best." I think we're desperately looking for some leadership. We've seen strategy, document, strategy, document. I'm just wondering how long this might go on for?

AMANDA JONES: Yes. The next step would be for us to work to develop some advice to take to the Government now that the strategy work has been completed. That would be the next step.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. Are you aware of some of the incredible work that has been done by some of the civil society organisations there and the science community that has—I think it is fair to say—been working really clearly with Rous? Is the department aware of that work as well?

AMANDA JONES: The people working on the strategy area, yes, absolutely. They've had close relationships with the community.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Just staying in the Northern Rivers and looking at water, the health of the Richmond River is one of the most tragically studied rivers in the State in that it just keeps returning, report after report—since 1987. I've got pages of government reports identifying how sick the river is. Then back in 2014 there was a study done by UNE that rated parts of the river. It gave it a rating of F, which is the lowest possible health rating any water source could have. What do we do about that? What is the department doing about that? I accept that we've got a new government. I am going back to 1987, but obviously the flood really identified just how sick our river is?

AMANDA JONES: The question you're asking actually goes to a question that the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer was asking around the Menindee situation and the state of the Baaka. I think the answer to that question is partly in the recommendations of that report, which is that we need to look at what regulatory or policy changes need to occur to make sure that land use planning, and managing what happens on

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land, and water management can better come together to deliver better river health and river outcomes. Our department, the Department for Water, will leave the whole-of-government response to that so I'd suggest that perhaps some of the answer to the question you're asking for potentially all rivers from New South Wales might come from that work.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think all of these studies just keep referring to "We need a serious investment." Absolutely, we need regulatory change on certain things, but we also just need physical river health measures in place, including things like perhaps acquisition of riverine areas to generate filters and protection. Are you looking at that? Is that something the department—

AMANDA JONES: It's not something directly within our control, but it's definitely something that we are looking at now that we've been asked to produce a response to the office of the chief scientist's report on the fish deaths in Menindee. So what you're suggesting about the health of riverbanks and the protection of what happens on land adjacent to water goes to the heart of those issues and, yes, we will definitely come back with work on that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is there something specific? I appreciate the whole State is potentially suffering different environmental consequences, but for the Richmond itself is there a body of work or something? I'm aware of some things around the estuary, but is there a plan for the whole of catchment to help that whole system?

AMANDA JONES: I think "whole of catchment" is the key wording in your question. I'm not aware of specific Landcare work in that catchment, but that is part of it. That's got to be part of the answer.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is anybody leading? I'm just curious: What does someone in the State do if they're literally ringing an alarm saying, "Our river is dying", if it's not the department of water, and if it's not—

AMANDA JONES: That's why I referenced the whole-of-government response we've been asked to bring back to government with respect to the Menindee fish deaths report, because it's asking the same question that you're asking but about the Baaka. I think it does take government joining up on some of the Landcare work that is the responsibility of some other agencies, but it's really about water management and land management becoming more closely aligned.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: How, then, is the department of water doing that? Where does that happen in the instruments of the machinery of government? What is happening?

AMANDA JONES: For major developments, like the mining developments that we were asked about this morning by Cate Fachrmann—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Sorry, I understand that. I don't mean in terms of where do you feed in to harmful projects to make them less harmful. Do we have anything in the water agency that is actually working on recovering, say, the Richmond River? Could you point to anyone and say, "Hey, this person here has a project and it is how to recover or revive the Richmond River"?

AMANDA JONES: Yes, so in the State Water Strategy that you referred to this morning there was a key action which was about this question of bringing land use management and water management more closely together. We are about to release some work that we've been undertaking on a road map to improve that—those policy areas becoming better aligned—so happy to provide that to you as soon as we finalise that work.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: And how will that manifest?

AMANDA JONES: It will suggest steps to be able to make sure that the planning, so SEPPs under the planning law, even PEPs that haven't actually been used under environment law, and the water management work that we do—how they are better aligned for whole-of-catchment outcomes is what it's looking at.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I've just got this terrible feeling that, when I'm dead and buried, someone may be sitting in this seat asking precisely the same questions. Do you give me some assurance that that's not the case and that we won't just be adding to this list, and that we will have some river health outcomes?

AMANDA JONES: Yes, it's certainly our ambition that that's not the case.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can I just go to one project that is very local to here, the Parsley Bay project. I know that there's been a bit of controversy around that, but I'm just wondering if anybody could give me some understanding. Some of the community has been talking about the North Bondi treatment station and whether it can cope with the additional long-term load. Is there somebody who can talk to that?

AMANDA JONES: Roch Cheroux can speak to that.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you, Ms Jones. I must say it's not my locality—I'm not a city girl—but I visited there not long ago and, holy heck, it's beautiful country, isn't it? Parsley Bay is a beautiful little spot with an incredible ecosystem.

ROCH CHEROUX: It is indeed a very beautiful area. The situation in Parsley Bay is that we still have three outlets in this part of Sydney that are discharging untreated raw sewage back to the ocean. This project started back in 2018 and the objective of the project is actually not to have anything untreated going back to the ocean, but everything pumped back to Bondi where we've got a water resource recovery facility that is currently operating and collecting and treating the wastewater from most of the CBD of Sydney. This facility has the capacity to collect and to treat the about four million litres that are produced per day in this area.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Has it taken into account the proposed and soon to be imposed urban expansions of Waverley and—

ROCH CHEROUX: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. The capacity of Bondi Water Resource Recovery Facility is not an issue at all. The project goes back to 2018. We have been engaging with the community a lot through a number of different forums. We had a customer reference group. We had something like—I think it was 11 newsletters going to 13,000 homes in the area. We've done doorknocking to talk to the people living in these areas. We have had many forums online during COVID and face-to-face—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I was going to say I think COVID was a bit of an issue for people.

ROCH CHEROUX: Yes, but there has been a lot of engagement with the community and the engagement was very positive. The consequence of it is, for example, we've reduced the footprint of the pumping station at Parsley Bay by something like 80 per cent compared to the original design, so we've completely taken on board the feedback from the community and changed the plans to make sure that the outcome was—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I don't know what it is, but do you accept that there is some real mistrust there? I've been sent a massive petition with 5,000 signatures. I think the call is that the community is looking for an independent environmental impact statement and something more comprehensive. Is that something that you can take on?

ROCH CHEROUX: There has been an independent review, a review of the environmental factors, that we did and—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think that was one of the issues too, that it was an REF and not an EIS.

ROCH CHEROUX: Correct, but there has been an independent review and we've said to the community that we have actually commissioned another independent auditor to review again the ecological impact of the project.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is that happening now?

ROCH CHEROUX: This is happening this week.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Right.

ROCH CHEROUX: I met with the lady leading Save Parsley Bay on Monday morning and we had a good conversation about the project. I think there is also a lot of misunderstanding of what we're doing and why we're doing it, and why we're doing it in this specific location.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I met with some people there and there was a serious trust deficit. I think one of the issues as well is whether there is some guarantee about that incredible rainforest ecosystem, which I think has been assessed by somebody like Robert Kooyman, who's one of the world's leading rainforest experts, who said it's incredibly unique—that there will be no harm to that ecosystem.

ROCH CHEROUX: That's something that has been taken into account from the start of the project. As you say, it is a lovely place. We know that it's cherished by the community and we don't want to change that. Actually, the project is going—as I said, the footprint is very small. We're talking about something that is not going to put the ecosystem at risk but is actually going to improve the ecosystem. Because untreated sewage is not going to go back to the ocean anymore. It will be pumped and treated before it's discharged. This is going to improve the environmental ecosystem in this area.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. Can I just ask as well about the functions of the NRAR? Thank you very much, Mr Cheroux. When NRAR first started it was charged with a particular very broad but fierce mission of bringing the State into compliance. Has anything changed in terms of NRAR's internal kind of philosophy around prosecution and incentive-based regulatory action? Has there been any cultural change, given the life and the age of NRAR?

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GRANT BARNES: May I just start by acknowledging yourself and your former colleagues, I think. NRAR exists—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Because of our work.

GRANT BARNES: —in part because of that work leading up to the Matthews inquiry. We hold that legacy quite dear when it comes to what now the people of New South Wales expect in terms of the fair and firm enforcement of water laws. We've learnt a heck of a lot in those 5½ years. In being a firm and fair regulator, we deploy a full suite of tools. Many water users that we encounter find compliance a kind of vexed and challenging situation, some of which is embodied in how sheer complex the regulations themselves are and the water law system. They often are needing our advice and guidance. We're in a position now with the team that we do have to provide that advice and guidance for the willing. In most instances that helps to correct minor noncompliance with very little intervention. Through this work we understand that the vast majority of water users are honest operators and they want to do the right thing. That's in fact 70 per cent of our encounters determine full compliance.

There are instances of about 25 per cent—and I'm talking over 5,000 inspections per year, so it's a lot of outreach into rural New South Wales. And when we're engaging with farmers, they are looking for help. I've got in our team capable, really skilled folk who can provide that advice and guidance. But there are some that aren't responsive. Their culpability is such that it warrants a stricter response. There's an expectation that the sanctions applicable are in line with the harm that's being caused. That's where, as a regulator, we will apply the full force of the law. With respect to prosecutions, we've done so on 38 separate occasions and there's a pipeline of work before me at the moment where we will continue to prosecute. So I don't think it's a situation of and/or—sorry, it's not a situation of or; it is very much and. It's a full suite of enforcement tools that have been applied with a good understanding of harm, of risk, of culpability, of public interest and attitude to compliance.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you think any of the current regulatory settings are providing difficulties or hurdles when it does come to prosecutions? I'm think in particular of the Harris proceedings that were very long and protracted, but perhaps not even referring to specific ones. Do you think we've got the regulatory settings in a sweet spot or do you think that we need to be doing better?

GRANT BARNES: I think if you take it from the perspective of a water user and their behavioural insights, there are two factors that are at play here: the risk of getting caught and the consequences of criminal behaviour. With NRAR we have highly sophisticated means of detection. There is little chance that a water user can take water that they're not entitled to without our surveillance capability flagging that. Water users appreciate that and they understand that there is that broadscale surveillance. What needs to work equally and in partnership is that, where we find instances of criminal behaviour where there is a high benefit accruing as a result, there's appropriate consequences and appropriate sanction. It wouldn't be for me to question the judgement of the judiciary; I think other commentators have certainly done that themselves. But, when we look at the convictions that we have secured in the Local Court and the Land and Environment Court, I think a case can be made that in some instances those financial penalties weren't sufficient to act as a specific deterrence, which is a concern, but more broadly, is it acting as a general deterrence?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Just on that surveillance and the tools that we have now, what are some of those tools that we're using?

GRANT BARNES: It is primarily the use of satellite imagery. That in and of itself is not new. But being able to overcome some of the computational challenges using machine learning and to some extent artificial intelligence, we're able track the movement of water through the landscape: the taking of that water, the storage of that water, the application of that water to crop and the subsequent change in the optics of that crop. In that information we're able to then apply it back to the water licensing system and determine whether or not that crop of cotton has been grown in accordance with the user's entitlement. If it's not, it flags a red in our system and we will deploy our investigators out on-farm to raise some questions, ask some questions.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So all those sleepless nights were probably worth it.

GRANT BARNES: Very much so. And, again, my thanks to you and your colleagues.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: No, thank you. That's me, Chair. I've run out of time.

The CHAIR: Thank you. To the Opposition.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I've got just a couple of questions. In relation to temporary accommodation, how many people were assisted in the last financial year?

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MICHAEL TIDBALL: Some 26,149 households were assisted with temporary accommodation in 2022-23.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Thank you very much. Is that collected by local government area or by region?

JAMES TOOMEY: It can be provided.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: We can take that on notice. We're happy to provide it.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And if I could get a breakdown of the number of households supported by each, whether it's the LGA or by region—whichever way the data is collected. Just in relation to SHS and accreditation, are the SHSs on track for their accreditation? I think it's all due by next year. Is that correct?

ANNE CAMPBELL: That's correct, Minister Maclaren-Jones—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: "Tash".

ANNE CAMPBELL: Ms Maclaren-Jones, certainly we're looking at that at the moment. As you may know, the Minister has extended the contracts for SHS providers for two years. At the moment probably—and I'll double-check this—about 60-70 per cent are on track and we're just looking at the other providers.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: What will occur if they can't get accredited? What work's being done behind the scenes, I suppose, from the department to support them?

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes. We're looking closely, particularly at some of the smaller providers, just to look at what impact that will be. I can't really say at this point, but we're cognisant that we actually need specialist homelessness services. They do a fantastic job. We know they're under stretch in terms of the demand, so we'll look at that on a case-by-case basis. We don't want to see a local area without a specialist homelessness service because they haven't yet met accreditation and there may be very good reasons as to why that occurs.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And you've touched on just that we do know that they're stretched across the State. Do you keep any data on how they're tracking to meet, I suppose, or when they reach capacity, or is that something that's more monitored by Homelessness NSW or only internally?

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes, we get it annually, as you know. Last year I think it was 68,000 people who accessed specialist homelessness services—68,473, which is actually a drop from the previous year. But we also have local commissioning and planning staff on the ground within the districts who manage the contracts with those specialist homelessness providers. They have specifications about what they've got to deliver, what the volume is, so that's sort of negotiated at a local level. If there's a specific issue in terms of demand, that could get escalated into the sort of program area within my area to work with the district about how to support that provider.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Thank you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Let's get back to what we were speaking about before with the coastal rights, the time frame of that work and, as the Minister said, prioritising certain catchments. I'm happy if you need to provide it on notice, but where is the focus to begin with?

AMANDA JONES: The first step is the methodology to be able to identify the prioritisation of the catchments. We prove up the methodology, we identify the priority catchments, and we'll work forward from there.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So there's not an audit of catchments at this point. You are doing that initial work first?

AMANDA JONES: We're doing that. By the middle of next year, we'll have an order and a program.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Looking at whether any areas could go from 10 per cent up to 30 per cent, that's probably not likely in the next period of time.

AMANDA JONES: Basically, as we develop the work program, we'll be able to indicate which catchments, and that will indicate whether the coastal harvestable rights will be able to increase or not.

The CHAIR: That's the end of this session. We will break until 3.45 p.m.

(Short adjournment)

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The CHAIR: Welcome back. I've been advised by Committee members that we have no further questions for Mr Wheaton.

(Jonathon Wheaton withdrew.)

The CHAIR: Are there any answers to questions taken on notice that are ready?

JAMES TOOMEY: If I remember correctly the questions—the budget for head leasing for financial year 2022-23 was \$45,276,199. The budget for the current year is \$46,294,880. The site you referred to I now know was the Rachel Forster Hospital site, so thank you. We have taken out 110 leases, of which 108 are tenanted, and the annual rent is \$6,521,736.

ZOË ROBINSON: I can clarify some numbers as well. In terms of the vaping report, it was 261 young people. Just under half identified that they had tried vaping or identified as current vapers. That was five schools in an urban area and four from the rural areas. I can confirm that the report was sent to 7,000 people when the report was first released and that included every member of Parliament.

FAMEY WILLIAMS: I have one response in relation to the honourable member Mr Farlow around the self-assessment. We currently have 10 part 5 self-assessments underway, and we use external planners.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I just have a couple of questions for Ms Robinson. I'm interested in the Youth Advisory Council. I can see on the website how to apply. I can't see who the members are. Could you tell me how many members, the gender balance and some information about the council members?

ZOË ROBINSON: Absolutely, and your timing is impeccable, because it's just been announced—this year's Youth Advisory Council. Every year there are 12 members of the Youth Advisory Council, and it reflects the diversity of the State, as much as we can. I do have the actual information here, so bear with me whilst I go through a folder. I should say that this year it is chaired by a young Aboriginal man from Walgett, but I will find that information and come back to you in terms of demographics, regional and metrics.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If you could take that on notice, that's great. In terms of the regional representatives, what support do they get to ensure that they can participate on the same basis as representatives in the city?

ZOË ROBINSON: We support them to be able to attend meetings. The meetings are face to face and subject to how the Youth Advisory Council set themselves up. It is very much their show to run. It's six to eight meetings a year, face to face and usually in Sydney, although last year we did hold a regional one in Albury. We support them in terms of travel. If they're under the age of 18, they're given the opportunity to travel with a parent, carer or guardian. If they require transport, we support that as well. We make it as easy as possible for them to attend. We also have a social worker who will meet them at the airport, if they need to be met at the airport, and we also make sure they are transported to and from the meetings.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you. You clearly work with young people and get advice from them. Do you also have a panel of experts? For example, do you have a panel of experts in mental health that you can draw on as well as the lived experience of young people?

ZOË ROBINSON: Yes. There are a couple of things. We have previous members of our Youth Advisory Council who have suggested particular areas of focus. We have one member who is studying to be a paramedic and currently sits on a health youth advisory council as well, and we have another person who has put their hand up to support a mental health youth advisory council. So, if they have a particular area of interest, we would support them in sitting on another council as well.

In our office, as you may be aware, we have lived experience advisers who have had particular experience in the world in which we exist, which is, obviously, across government and across the whole of New South Wales. We also have people who have identified, through our mailing list, that they might have particular interest in an issue. So if a government department, a business or a community come to us with a particular issue, we can identify key people who might want to participate in that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You would have access then, and you would draw on academic experts.

ZOË ROBINSON: We do work with academics.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So it's not just people with lived experience.

ZOË ROBINSON: It's not just people with lived experience. Obviously, considering the remit of the work we do, it is a focus on young people and working with young people who might have particular expertise in

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an area. To give you an example that might be useful for that, when there was work being undertaken by our office in the former Government around consent, we worked with an organisation called Consent Labs. That is run by young people who designed the program themselves. We would work with experts like that on a particular issue.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can we talk a little bit about the 2022-2024 strategic plan? One of the goals identified is to decrease suicide rates for children and young people. Could you address, specifically, what your office is doing to contribute to this goal of decreasing suicide rates?

ZOË ROBINSON: In terms of the way that the strategic plan runs and operates, for a point of clarification, what we do when we're designing that is we lift up the voice of children and young people and their particular issues. Then we look across government to understand what is already going on in government and if there are any particular gaps. Part of what the plan does is recognise the cross-government work or the particular priorities of an agency or a department that might be focused on that area. In this specific area, we're obviously not a lead in terms of the plans, the ideas, the particular programs and the work that's being done with that.

What we would do and what we have done is a tracking report against our strategic plan. We took baseline data when we launched that plan, and every year we are tracking that. We share that information across government so they can know, in terms of that particular priority, in terms of mental health and wellbeing, how children and young people might be tracking. So we share that. But in terms of delivering a project specifically, that would not be within our office. That would be within areas like Health.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: To paraphrase, in terms of contributing to a decrease in youth suicide you track the rate rather than engage with problems being experienced by children and young people.

ZOË ROBINSON: No, I would say we are always engaging with children and young people in terms of things that are impacting on their lives. For example, in the previous Government, we worked on a particular issue that was related to cyberbullying.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can we focus on suicide?

ZOË ROBINSON: Sure.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are there any activities that your office is engaged in to specifically address this issue that manifests as a major issue for children and young people in our society?

ZOË ROBINSON: The key thing we would be doing is working with children and young people to understand their sentiments and data around that and sharing that with government agencies.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are you familiar with the concept of suicide contagion?

ZOË ROBINSON: I'm not.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: It is the process whereby one suicide or a suicidal act within a community increases the likelihood that others, especially young people, will attempt or succeed in suicide. I'm just wondering what you might be doing because, at the end of this month, we will be introducing voluntary assisted dying in New South Wales. That has been identified as a major suicide contagion risk in every other jurisdiction which has introduced it. Suicide contagion is particularly influential for young people, and I wonder what your office is doing to proactively protect young people from the effects of suicide contagion in this context.

ZOË ROBINSON: That being an important issue that you have raised, I would note that previously we have heard of examples that have been raised with us in communities. It being called suicide contagion is not necessarily a phrase that I have heard. What I would say is, with all serious issues like this, our office wants to work with children and young people in the first instance to understand their needs and what they might require in terms of support and understanding, but then work with our government colleagues around what they may already be doing across that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That's a lovely general answer.

ZOË ROBINSON: What I would say is we're not doing anything specific in that space at this stage.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: We have 26 days to go, and this has not been flagged as an issue by your office that needs work to protect children and young people in the society from suicide contagion.

ZOË ROBINSON: I think there is a lot of big work that's going on to ensure that children and young people are safe and protected from a number of issues that they're facing right now, and this specific issue has not necessarily been raised with our office. It doesn't mean that, broadly, the things that are impacting on children and young people which may lead to things like self-harm and suicide are not issues that we are dealing with or working with government in response to.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If I can paraphrase, your office has a reactive framework where you wait for the issue to affect children and raise it rather than proactively looking at the research so that you can get out ahead and protect children from these issues?

ZOË ROBINSON: I would dispute a lot of things in that question in the sense that, for example, we are consistently tracking every year and have done year on year in Youth Week, as an example, a quantitative poll that consistently raises the issues of children and young people. There are things that we proactively do in terms of working with government to ensure that, as an example, what children and young people feel about vaping is front and centre.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: In the suicide space, what are you proactively engaged in?

ZOË ROBINSON: The fact that we are continually tracking children and young people and what's going on for them in this State and have done so since the office started in 2015, and that is material that sits, for example during COVID, at secretaries board. There is data that we hold that we share across government that I would say absolutely prioritises children and young people in a way that they haven't been before.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you for collecting the data, but it's really important that that data is used for proactive programs. An identified risk in all the academic research, I would hope that that was being proactively addressed to protect children and young people from suicide contagion.

ZOË ROBINSON: I appreciate you raising the issue with me. I'm happy to take it back to our office and work across government and obviously continue to lift children and young people.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Ms Robinson, you mentioned the tracking data. When is the next set of data to be released?

ZOË ROBINSON: That will be released in early 2024. The aim of the office, and I can come back to you with the exact date, is February 2024.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: The only other area I wanted to look at was the special inquiry into children and young people. You announced in September this year that you'll be conducting a special inquiry, which is different to your other inquiries and that's because you can hold private and public hearings. Is that correct?

ZOË ROBINSON: Yes, we have an incredible power in terms of the formality or informality of that particular inquiry.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Did you initiate this inquiry or was it at the request of a Minister?

ZOË ROBINSON: I initiated it.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Did you speak to a Minister prior to announcing the inquiry?

ZOË ROBINSON: What you would probably understand in how the Act is actually worded is that it says that it can be at the direction of a Minister or the Minister as directed by the advocate. In the appropriate fashion, I came to Ministers with the specific request that I thought we should do a special inquiry into this particular cohort, and then a formal request was put through.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm interested to know whether or not you have been provided any additional funding or support to conduct this inquiry, because it is a very important area and I note you've got a limited amount of time to do that. I just want to know if you're adequately resourced for it.

ZOË ROBINSON: We operate within our funding envelope, as you are well aware, and I think it's very important for our office to maintain its independence so we didn't actually seek additional funding for this inquiry. What we've done is reallocated some of the resources within our own office to ensure that we can meet the terms and the needs.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are you intending to hold public hearings at this stage or you're waiting for submissions? They're due in the next month?

ZOË ROBINSON: We have put out a call for submissions and our intention is also to sit with the children who may be in these arrangements right now. In the terms of reference you may have seen that we've also sought that anyone who has been in an alternative care arrangement for the past 10 years can also make an application for us to hold a hearing with them, and we can do so as private hearings. The submissions close

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17 November, I think, and then from that we will focus on children and young people first and obviously other submissions.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Finally, when is the report due? Have you got a date yet?

ZOË ROBINSON: I don't have a date only for the concern that with this we want to make sure that we give the opportunity to as many children and young people to be heard and so we want to make sure that we're prioritising that. But my hope is early in 2024 because, as you said, it's an important issue and we want to make sure that they're heard. I do have the demographic data of this year's Youth Advisory Council that has just been announced if that's helpful as well.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Thank you very much and also for doing the inquiry because, as we all know, it is an important area and a national issue so it's good that you are doing it. I look forward to hearing—

ZOË ROBINSON: It's worth acknowledging the support that we've had from everyone. I think it's so important that this issue is supported across government and business and community as well. So thank you to everyone who supported it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Back to Water, and I'll just foreshadow I've got some Hunter Water, Sydney Water and Water NSW questions as well if we want to do some seat shuffling. I'll continue just briefly with you, Ms Jones. In relation to the review into the domestic and stock water rights that I believe is being conducted at the moment, is there any information that you can provide in terms of the time frame of that particular review?

AMANDA JONES: It's not a review so much as we're consulting to try and understand better how people with domestic rights use their water because it's an unmetered right. We don't have a predisposition as to what we might do in response to what we find but rather that we're genuinely trying to seek more information about how people are using those rights. These are rights where you live by a river or over an aquifer, and it's a domestic use kind of right. But just how people are using the water and how much water they're actually using we have no real data about. Why this is important is while it's a small proportion of what we need to account for in our water sharing plans, it still is an amount of water that we need to make an assumption about in doing all of our modelling work. So it's really an honest attempt at trying to find out more about the take rather than having a view about changing the rights.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It's not looking to potentially do licensing or anything; it's sort of a data gathering exercise.

AMANDA JONES: No, it's absolutely data gathering.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Was that something that the department initiated or was that on advice from the Minister?

AMANDA JONES: It's something we initiated. It's something that came out of the State Water Strategy, so one of the priorities there.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I note I think on the website it said that people could have a survey until 21 November, but is there any sort of time frame for any more information? Obviously some landholders are—concerned may be too strong a word. But I don't think this is something that has been done before and I think they're curious as to if there will be an impact in terms of their rights.

AMANDA JONES: That has been a concern that people have raised, and we've continually said we really are actually just trying to get better information about the way this water right is used. We have had an enormous response, about 1,800 responses so far to the survey. Really once we actually conclude the current consultation period, we'll then obviously look at what that response has been and figure out how we publish what we've heard. Hopefully it will help us kind of make sure that the calibration in our models, the assumptions we make about this form of take, are reasonable. That would be really beneficial to us as water planners.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We will follow that up with the Minister in due course perhaps. I wanted to ask now—and it kind of probably goes to Sydney and Hunter and Water NSW—a broad question in terms of customers getting financial support for financial hardship, so bill support effectively. My understanding is that all three agencies have some sort of support for that when you're the billing agency. I'm just after data in terms of (a) what is available and (b)—and you can take it on notice—how many might have been applying for any of those hardship provisions and how that compares to, say, the same time last year. They're broad questions, I know, but I'm happy for any or all of you to provide any insights in that space.

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DARREN CLEARY: I can start, if you'd like, with respect to Hunter Water. There is a pension rebate that is provided, and that is supported by the Government. It's a community service obligation that is provided back to Hunter Water. It is \$380 per eligible property. That is for people who are receiving a Commonwealth benefit. The total cost of the rebate last year was \$20 million, and it's roughly 46,000 households in our area that receive that rebate. Beyond the pension rebate, we have a range of support measures that we extend to customers who are potentially under financial hardship, payment extensions as well as a payment assistance scheme. This year, with the support of the Government, we have extended that payment assistance scheme not only to residential customers but also small business, recognising the current cost-of-living challenge. We have seen an increase in people seeking access to the payment assistance scheme and payment extensions. I'd have to take on notice the exact numbers.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could take on notice the detail, that's fine. We're just interested in that.

DARREN CLEARY: Absolutely.

ROCH CHEROUX: It's a very similar situation for Sydney Water. We've got a number of schemes supporting our customers when they cannot pay their bill. It includes all sorts of payment plans and rebates as well. We also have seen an increase, which is about 20 per cent compared to the same time last year, but I'll get back with the precise number.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great.

ANDREW GEORGE: Similarly, for WaterNSW, we have a code of practice for debt management, which is reviewed every 12 months, to take into account the prevailing factors at the time—a good example being, given the prevailing flooding across the State last year, we put in place a process to pause any debt recovery for five months to give our customers time to recover from the floods and get their businesses operating again. We did a similar thing during the drought, where there was a rebate in place for certain customers at the time, in agreement with the Government, as well. Those payment plans are available to customers. We don't have a huge spike in payment plans at the moment. I think currently we have about 190 customers on payment plans at the moment, which is a pretty small number.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you for that. I have some Sydney Water questions now. I'm interested in an update on the advanced water recycling centre. It's listed, obviously, in the budget papers. I think it was a \$1.3 billion cost. I just want some clarity in terms of how that project's tracking, particularly in terms of the budget allocation but also time frames in terms of when it is expected to be operational. I think there was some information about that in the media, but just some clarity around that would be useful, if possible.

ROCH CHEROUX: This is a really important project for us. It's going to service a large part of the growth in Western Sydney, including the airport. So this is a project for which we have a very firm deadline, which is the opening of the airport. We have now broken ground. That goes back to about three months ago. So the teams are working on site. The progress of the project is according to plan for a facility that will be delivered early 2026.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In terms of wastewater services to any new homes around the Western Sydney—I think I read somewhere you can't have the airport open without flushing the toilets. I would agree, and I'm sure passengers would agree with that. In terms of any support for dwellings around that new airport, is that on the same or a similar time frame? Or will that come after the date of the opening?

ROCH CHEROUX: Actually, it has started already. We've been investing significantly in Western Sydney. To give you an idea, in the next two to three years it will be about \$3.5 billion that we will be investing in Western Sydney. We have started expanding the water and wastewater networks. There has been several hundreds of kilometres that have been laid already. That will continue as the developments are happening.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think that's my time for now. But I will come back to some more water when we get another go.

The CHAIR: Sure. You get a bit of a rest. I'm going back to mental health.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry for the musical chairs, everyone.

The CHAIR: As you'd all be aware, this Committee's conducting an inquiry into community and outpatient mental health services. Some of the evidence that we're receiving relates to specific categories of mental disorders, where people have experienced particular challenges in accessing diagnoses or treatment. So I was hoping to understand what work may already be underway in those areas or at least to try to understand the scale of the problem. The first one on my list is ADHD. I understand that it's extraordinarily difficult for people to

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access assessment for adult ADHD, without significant expense in the private system. This has come up in the context of the Federal Government's inquiry, as well. What work's already underway to understand that problem or to address that in New South Wales?

MURRAY WRIGHT: I'm happy to start. The issue of ADHD is one which is under discussion, I think, within New South Wales and all other jurisdictions. That's based on the increasing awareness and prevalence of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, both in children, adolescents and in adults. We think the increase—that has led to increased demand for treatment, specifically around stimulant prescription. There are concerns about access to prescribers because, historically, that's largely occurred within the private sector. The issue that we have is that the treatment within the private sector in the past has been largely through paediatricians and child psychiatrists. Now that there's an increasing recognition within adults and they don't necessarily have the same access to expertise in that group, it raises the question of what role some of the publicly funded services should have.

That's really a statement of the issues as they are. It's not resolved. It is difficult. I'm sure you've seen or heard some of the publicity around some of the private practice models that have sprung up in trying to meet that need. There's often quite a significant cost to the individual consumer. I think, actually, in the next couple of weeks we're having discussions within the ministry about what can or should the publicly funded services be doing in response to some of these issues. It's certainly a problem that we're aware of. I don't believe that we've got a completely satisfactory solution at this point.

The CHAIR: Thank you for that answer. You mentioned that the services were largely private, for ADHD. Is there anywhere in New South Wales where you can have a public assessment of adult ADHD?

MURRAY WRIGHT: I am sure there are places, because ADHD doesn't occur in isolation from other conditions. So there are almost certainly individuals and clinicians who are working within the public sector who are actually addressing the attention-deficit issues. One of the challenges—it's not just about a resourcing issue; it's also about the skill set. Rightly or wrongly, it has been a treatment that has largely occurred within the private sector. So those clinicians who are working in the public sector don't necessarily have the expertise or the skills to make the assessment. It is a very specialist assessment. The last thing we want is to be giving wrong information to individuals about whether they do or don't have an attention-deficit disorder or whether they should or shouldn't be prescribed stimulants. It's not a simple matter. Yes, there's a resourcing issue. Yes, there's a cost issue for the consumer and the community. But there's also a skills-training issue for the clinicians. The problem is certainly there. Identifying and implementing the solutions is something that—the conversations have only recently begun.

The CHAIR: We've also heard evidence on the topic of ADHD from GPs, who, obviously, are providing holistic, longitudinal care for people, which often includes mental health care. I'm interested in your perspective, as the chief psychiatrist, on what the role of GPs can be as part of the solution.

MURRAY WRIGHT: The other thing that's happened in the last 18 months or so has been changes to the Authority Prescribing System within New South Wales. That includes stimulant prescribing. That's been done to reduce the red tape, quite frankly. As someone who has prescribed for some of these things in the past—it wasn't something you looked forward to doing. There was a lot of paperwork. The ministry has dramatically reduced that. We've had a series of consultations within the various stakeholders within the ministry. That includes the pharmaceutical services branch, the mental health branch and the alcohol and other drugs branch, with input from GP expertise, about how do we do this, because the regulations are there to protect the public. What we don't want is either inappropriate prescribing, which can be the wrong medication to the wrong person—I'm talking particularly drugs of addiction—or prescribing beyond safe amounts.

In the past, a large number—the majority of prescribers—had to go through the process of getting an approval, more or less regardless of their levels of expertise. The issue for the GPs is one of—there are GPs who work quite closely with either specialist pedestrians, psychiatrists or addiction specialists. The question of do you require a specialist to get the initial approval and then the subsequent scripts from the GP—in order, again, to streamline the process, reduce what might be seen as unnecessary repeat visits to the specialist and reduce the overall cost to the individual person—that process is playing out now. My view of it is that there's been a significant reduction in the red tape and it should help to address some of those access-to-service issues. There is still a challenge with that, particularly that initial assessment process.

The CHAIR: I understand the overlap with the Federal Government, but I'm interested to understand if there are conversations underway regarding the ability for GPs to prescribe stimulants, appreciating your answer that some GPs have far more of an interest and skills in this area than others. I would use, as an example, the prescription of s100 medications for HIV, which is done by some GPs.

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MURRAY WRIGHT: In very high-level terms, what I would say is that when this conversation came up during some of the consultations, the feeling was that we wanted to get the process right. It's a very significant switch from a very manual, paper-based and clunky system to a more streamlined, online-type system. We wanted to get that right and try to get the authorisation for minimal red tape from particular prescribers who had a clear and recognised expertise. The issue in relation to the GPs who have a demonstrated interest and some expertise was considered to be a downstream issue once the process was clearly in place and working well.

The CHAIR: The next specific condition on my list—so all of the same questions about adult diagnoses of autism.

MURRAY WRIGHT: Is there a specific angle to the question?

The CHAIR: We've heard evidence to the inquiry that people find it extremely difficult, particularly without spending significant private funds, to access assessment for adult autism. Has it been discussed? What work is underway to understand or to address the problem?

MURRAY WRIGHT: I'm more familiar with it being discussed in a child and adolescent context. Certainly, it hasn't come to my awareness that there's a particular concern in adult autism spectrum disorder sufferers.

BRENDAN FLYNN: The only thing I would add is that I did hear that evidence that was provided at the inquiry. I would agree; we are much more familiar with the discussions around access to diagnosis with younger people. There is an emerging cohort of people who are getting that diagnosis as an adult. Again, traditionally that hasn't happened within the public sector. The only thing that I would say that I think is relevant or potentially useful is that I think we owe an explanation to people about why it is sometimes difficult to access particular services in the public sector. Really, we triage by acuity and not by diagnosis. That can make it quite difficult at times for access to a lot of these issues that may not present as acutely.

The CHAIR: Is there any work underway to at least understand the scale of this problem?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I would say that we are always interested. That's why we paid significant attention to the evidence that the hearings have heard, not just regarding autism and adult autism. But most of the evidence that has been given has highlighted concerns amongst the community for what the sector perhaps could do better or is missing. There is no formal work, though, that I'm aware of that's looking into access for adults for a new diagnosis of autism, but we're happy to consider that as part of our ongoing work and response to the inquiry.

The CHAIR: I've got the same question—I'm happy to repeat the question if you need me to—about dual diagnosis of mental health conditions with substance use disorder.

MURRAY WRIGHT: That's an issue that we have a longstanding interest in and I personally have a longstanding interest in. Firstly, the evidence for co-existing mental health and substance use problems, particularly in people who are presenting to our public sector services, is there is a very high prevalence, particularly with serious and enduring mental illness. Over 50 per cent would also have a substance use problem. It's in everybody's interests for the sectors to work very closely together. There are well-established, evidence-based models for how mental health services and alcohol and other drug services can and should work together to best meet the needs of individuals with comorbidity. The service models for mental health and AOD are quite different, and so they should be, but there's a lot of overlap of individuals who need the specialist attention of both. At the same time, there's a necessity that both mental health services and AOD services have some level of competence in assessing and providing an initial response to people who have comorbid presentations.

As fortune would have it, we're holding a forum next week in Sydney with all of the directors of mental health and AOD across the State to address this issue. We've got policy and guidelines in relation to how mental health-AOD comorbidity should be addressed at a service level. They're quite simple, but it's devilishly challenging to do this every single time with every single individual. So the forum which we're holding next week is designed to drive towards some agreement about some solutions which can at least improve the reliability with which we work constructively together with those individuals who require the attention of both services. In a dynamic, challenging clinical environment, it's much harder than you would think to do that every single time with every single individual. That's what we aim to do, and that's what we're discussing next week.

The CHAIR: I'm pleased to hear that forum is happening. I understand that there are some excellent clinical guidelines for dual diagnosis. I'm interested to understand if there has been any audit or data collection around how that's going in practice. I know from my own experience as a GP that I have had patients come back from community mental health saying we need to address the drug and alcohol problem first, and I've had drug and alcohol services send the same patient back saying you need to address the mental health problem first, which leaves them with no services. We've heard that borne out in the evidence to our inquiry as well.

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MURRAY WRIGHT: You'd be pleased to know that we've got a GP presenting as one of the keynotes as the perspective. I think I know what she is going to say, but I think the attendees need to hear it. I'm focusing on the services that we have a responsibility for, but it's more common than not that there are other interested parties—GPs, quite often private providers, whether psychology or psychiatry, and the families. The ideal is collaborative treatment planning.

The CHAIR: Is there any consideration—a review, for example—of those exclusion criteria from public services?

MURRAY WRIGHT: We're quite challenging of the idea of exclusion criteria. I would like to think that they are more in the past than in the present. I'm familiar with what you're referring to, where services would see that one problem needed to be resolved before the other problem could be addressed. That doesn't really work in the real clinical world. They are co-existing problems and they feed on each other, and they need to be addressed simultaneously. We are very alive to that. What we have done in preparation for the forum is get feedback from the districts as to—and I can't remember the exact details—how they're addressing certain aspects of what I'm calling the "collaborative treatment planning". The transfer of care from one service back out into the community is the bit which we think is the most critical to getting effective, safe care.

The CHAIR: The last specific condition group on my list is trauma-related disorders. I understand that is a space where there's a lot of emerging and evolving evidence, but particularly that this is a group of people for whom the continuity and established relationships with practitioners is critically important. The inquiry is hearing about fragmentation in the mental health system. That's particularly damaging for this group of patients. What work is currently being undertaken to address those trauma-related disorders?

BRENDAN FLYNN: Thank you, Chair, I will start. We know that people who have survived trauma are significantly over-represented in public mental health services across all problems or, if you were to use a diagnostic lens, across most diagnoses. I feel that it is critical that when we provide clinical care, we are aware that we need to do everything that we can to not re-traumatise people, to listen to them and to not ask them to repeat their story multiple times. I accept that one of the solutions that is required in terms of some of our workforce challenges can be, unfortunately, agency staff or medical locums et cetera. I do understand the perspective of someone with lived experience of trauma that seeking care in that way may well be experienced as fragmented and not therapeutic. I think it's an important issue. This is a very general statement but we very much do try to make sure that our consumers have an enduring relationship with at least one clinician. Should it mean that there is, for example, some discontinuity in medial coverage in a community mental health team, we are very keen on a long-term case manager engaging with all individuals but particularly an individual with trauma.

We know that a therapeutic relationship between two individuals is roughly worth about a third of every intervention in health. That includes medical and surgical interventions and it definitely includes mental health interventions. We need to make sure that we're doing everything we can to get that first block right, which is trying to make sure that there's continuity and trust. Now, that's not always possible, even with a long-term clinical relationship, but I do think it's something that we encourage our services to be aware of. By and large, even in difficult circumstances, I think they do achieve that. I did hear the evidence given around this and I can certainly accept that perspective of why that's particularly difficult.

The CHAIR: I'm really pleased to hear that that's the goal. I think it's really important. Has there been any data collection or any audit to actually see what proportion of the time that's happening in practice?

BRENDAN FLYNN: Not that I am aware of but I would say that would be—I am not against that, but I think that would be challenging just because so many of our consumers, as a proportion of those that we serve, have experienced significant trauma. We would need to go and particularly think about our data and demographics in a different way. Perhaps that's something that we should look at.

The CHAIR: I'm going to give myself one last follow-up. Specifically, the question not necessarily of patients who have experienced trauma, but the proportion of patients in community mental health services who have that ongoing, enduring relationship with one clinician.

BRENDAN FLYNN: Sorry, the data around that?

The CHAIR: Yes.

BRENDAN FLYNN: Off the top of my head, I don't have that data. I would be cautious about putting that on notice because I'm not sure that I can easily access that but I could certainly promise to come back with some thoughts around how we may best answer that question. To answer that question properly would involve an in-depth look. We have approximately 150,000 consumers of our community mental health teams in New South Wales and I just don't know how we could check for all of them around long-term continuity of clinical care.

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That's not to say that we shouldn't do it, but it just strikes me as something I want to pretend I can get back to you this afternoon.

DEB WILLCOX: Just to add, Dr Cohn, we did release, in February this year, an integrative framework for trauma-informed care for the entire system. Not just for our mental health consumers, where clearly it is a significant issue, but all staff in the New South Wales health system caring for patients. Every patient has got a story and whether they're coming in for surgery or mental health care, it's a part of our training. We're building resources for our staff to access like quick tips for busy clinicians that they can get off a website. This is just to set the scene that we understand this is an important thing for caring for all patients.

The CHAIR: Thank you, and my questions have related to that data and implementation.

DEB WILLCOX: I understand. Thank you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mine are water questions again. My apologies for the musical chairs. I have one for each of the three gentlemen who were up earlier, so I do need you all. I might just keep going with Sydney Water, Mr Cheroux. I want some more detail, if possible. The budget papers talk about the smart irrigation project that I think is happening between Penrith and Liverpool councils. Is there any information that you can provide in terms of how much funding has been allocated to this project by Sydney Water or State Government? What's the cost? Is that publicly available?

ROCH CHEROUX: I probably won't have the number but, just to clarify, we do not get any funds from government. Sydney Water is a State-owned corporation so all our revenue is coming from our customers paying their water bills. That's why the—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm assuming the councils are making some sort contribution and Sydney Water is as well?

ROCH CHEROUX: Correct.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, I didn't word that very well, but that's what I'm after.

ROCH CHEROUX: In these sort of smart irrigation schemes we are actually supporting the council, but the council will do the investment. The principle that is we are supporting the council to install soil moisture probes. They would be based on the weather data that is available. Based on this information, then we've got an algorithm that tells them it's better to water the parks and the gardens at that time of the day for this sort of time. We are basically supplying the software to support the councils to do smart irrigation.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And that's because the councils are trying to have a water reduction between 10 and 20 per cent, is my understanding.

ROCH CHEROUX: Correct. The objective is to help the councils to reduce their water consumption.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you doing that just with these two council areas?

ROCH CHEROUX: No, it is open to all the councils. That's something that we have offered to all the different councils. Some of them have taken that as a trial and we are supporting them. It's absolutely open to all of the councils.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay, that's great. If there's anything more on notice, you can provide it. A breakdown would be useful. To Hunter Water and the Belmont desalination plant, is there any update in terms of—I think the website said a modification report was going to go to Planning this year. Has that happened yet? Is there any update on the status of that project?

DARREN CLEARY: The modification report has gone to Planning and we are just confirming with Planning the time frame for a re-exhibition of the change in scope for that facility. The change in scope being the original planning approval was based upon plant being a drought response plant only. Now, based upon the outcome of the strategic work done for Lower Hunter Water Security Plan, the proposal is to build that plant up-front and then ramp up its production during drought to ensure that we can manage our water security needs. So for that change in operation, there will be a re-exhibition of that planning approval. We are just confirming it with Planning. The exact timing of that will be sometime early next year.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I know it's out of your hands with it's with Planning, but it's about a four-year construction period. Is that correct? That was, again, what was available online. I'm just curious in terms of—

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DARREN CLEARY: So at the moment we've engaged a delivery partner to come up with a final cost estimate for the project and then make the decision to proceed to construction. At the moment the time frame is indicatively four years. We're still finalising that time frame but it's a number of years, that's correct.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm presuming that you can't talk costs until you go through that process, in terms of the—

DARREN CLEARY: Correct, we are still finalising costs.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We'll save that for a later hearing.

DARREN CLEARY: I do have the number on hardship, if I can provide them quickly now?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That'd be great. It'll save you from having to do it later.

DARREN CLEARY: I've got three numbers, just to give you some context. In April 2022 there were 850 customers on our hardship program. In April 2023 there were 1,009 and in October this year there were 1,200 customers. I will also just point out our payments assistance scheme has increased this year from \$300 per annum to \$600 per annum. That provision from the Government of 20 million has included some increases not only to the pension rebate but also to the payment assistance scheme.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Just one more on the Belmont plant. How many customers do you anticipate that could service or support, if and when it is up and running? How broad is the impact, do you anticipate?

DARREN CLEARY: It augments our overall supply. We manage as an integrated total system, so the 30 megalitres a day increase in the overall yield of our water supply system augmenting what we currently take from our two major dams, Chichester and Grahamstown, and our Tomago Sandbeds, so it will service the entire community as part of the integrated network. The aim of it is to reduce our likelihood of getting to very low water levels and water restrictions. For example, it halves the likelihood of us entering stage three water restrictions where we ban outdoor water use. That is the intent of the facility.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you for clarifying that. The last one, before I hand to my colleague, is for you, Mr George. The agreement that was entered into last year about the pumped hydro scheme near Lake Burrendong—I think it was in December last year. Again, any update on that project, where it's up to and what time frames you're looking at in relation to that?

ANDREW GEORGE: Yes, so we entered an agreement with Ason Australia, who is the proponent for the project. They are undertaking the planning work to deliver that project and we're supporting them, if and when required. That is being led by Ason Australia.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am happy if you can do this on notice, but is there anything that they can provide to the Committee about that project, and particularly anything in terms of how transmission line planning will work? I appreciate that you've entered into it with Ason, but if there is anything that we can get from them that would be useful to the Committee.

ANDREW GEORGE: I believe the transmission line question would be better directed to EnergyCo as part of the REZ.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: All right, I will leave that one with you then and hand over to my colleague.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Please stay while I have a couple of Water questions and then we might be able to dismiss you. The budget papers make the note for Sydney Water in particular that dividends and tax equivalents from Sydney Water are forecast to rise to \$626 million in 2025-26 due to the gradual reintroduction of infrastructure contributions and the forecast higher revenue resulting from the commencement of the next IPART pricing dissemination. How much are you anticipating to yield in terms of dividends out of the development service plans that are coming into place for Sydney Water?

ROCH CHEROUX: I come back to what I was saying. We are a State-owned corporation. The calculation of dividend is basically based on the cash that is available in the company. We receive cash from our customers when we are selling water and wastewater services. This cash is the turnover of the company, which is about \$3 billion every year. We then expend this cash to run the operation of the business and also to invest into capital projects, like Upper South Creek that was just mentioned. What is available at the end of the year will be then potentially reinvested into the company or paid as dividends.

Starting from July 2024, the Government—a few years ago now—decided to reintroduce developers contributions. Developers contributions have always been existing in Sydney, but they were set at zero back in

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2008, so they will be coming back gradually—from 2024, 25 per cent; 2025, 50 per cent; and 2026, 100 per cent. The developers contributions are financing the assets that we need to supply water and wastewater services to growth areas, so it's the pipes and additional investments that we are building to service the new developments. The relationship between the two is not direct. As I explained, this is very much a cash calculation that we're making at the end of the year and the revenue may be coming from a different part of the business, and the expenses will be all capex and all opex. That will be what we need basically to ensure that we've got a good service across Sydney.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: But there will be an increase in dividends, which at least the budget papers are attributing in part to the reintroduction of those contributions.

ROCH CHEROUX: You probably need to ask the question of Treasury.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Okay. That's what has been indicated in the budget papers in terms of that being one of the reasons why Sydney Water dividends will increase. I am interested in terms of Hunter Water Corporation and the increasing dividends from Hunter Water Corporation. Is there any view to that being partly attributable to the reintroduction of developer service contributions? I know it's slightly different in the Hunter example as well, but—

DARREN CLEARY: We operate under the same regulatory model. As has been outlined, our developer charges make a contribution towards assets service growth. What developer charges do is, when our prices are set, IPART looks at a total revenue requirement and then we can recover that through customer pricing, and developer charges reduce that customer pricing because we recover a portion of that revenue from developers rather than directly from the broader rate base. Our economic regulatory model does not take into account dividend at all, so developer charges do not directly relate to dividend and, as has been outlined by Mr Cheroux, the dividend is then determined based upon the available cash at the end of the year and the dividend policy with Treasury. So our dividend is not growing because of developer charges.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Thank you. They are all of my questions for Sydney Water, Hunter Water and all the Water agencies.

The CHAIR: I don't have questions for them, so I am happy to excuse the Water-related witnesses. Thank you very much for your time.

(Roch Cheroux, Darren Cleary, Amanda Jones and Andrew George withdrew.)

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I think, Mr Tidball, this might be a question for you with respect to Homes NSW and its establishment. I know it falls under DCJ. Is that something you're across at all?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes, I certainly am.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Excellent. What is the expected date for the establishment of Homes NSW?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: It is 1 February next year.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In terms of Homes NSW, it is part of the Department of Communities and Justice. Is it intended to stay that way?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It won't be moving across to the new department of planning or the like?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: No, it is anticipated that it will be housed within the Department of Communities and Justice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And Land and Housing Corporation will continue to exist under Homes NSW, or will it be absorbed—

MICHAEL TIDBALL: No, it will be a component of Homes NSW.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And the Aboriginal Housing Office likewise?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Ditto.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Have you any estimated costs in terms of the establishment of Homes NSW?

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MICHAEL TIDBALL: No. What I can indicate is that it will be funded and absorbed within the existing resources of DCJ.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Have any consultancy firms been engaged by the Department of Communities and Justice to advise on the establishment of Homes NSW?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Off the top of my head, no, but can I take that on notice as I would want my response to be accurate?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That's fine, yes. If so, can you tell us which consultancy firms and the cost of that engagement?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Of course.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Are there any redundancies that are envisaged as a result of the establishment of Homes NSW?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Not at this stage. However, the structure for Homes NSW is clearly something to be worked through.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With respect to the CEO of Homes NSW, is that intended to report to you or report directly to the Minister?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: It will be a report to the secretary.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The application process for the CEO of Homes NSW closed just last Sunday, 29 October. Are you able to report how many applicants there are for the role?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: No, I'm not, because I have not inquired.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That's fine. Can that be taken on notice at all?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I'm very happy to take that on notice, yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And come back with whatever appropriate response?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: When do you anticipate that a final candidate for the CEO role will be appointed?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: This year.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: This year, prior to its establishment, thank you. I think that is all I have on Homes NSW. I might just turn back to you, Mr Wheatley, with some questions regarding the maintenance of social housing. Last year \$300 million was allocated to housing package asset improvement in the budget, and that was indeed a new program. This year's budget has indicated that new works are valued at \$202.965 million. Is that a continuation of that program that was allocated in last year's budget?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Some of it is a continuation, but there's been an additional top-up to maintenance for this financial year.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And what's that additional top-up?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: That's the additional \$35 million.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Okay, so that's \$35 million additional in maintenance this financial year. Thank you very much. What was spent on social housing maintenance in the financial year 2022-23?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: In 2022-23 there was approximately \$501 million spent on maintenance. Maintenance is spent in two categories: There's recurrent operating repairs and maintenance and there's also capital upgrade maintenance.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Could you provide us with a breakdown of each?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: I'll take that on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Yes, that's fine. How many urgent requests for maintenance to social and public properties were made in the financial year 2022-23?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: In 2022-23 there were 450,000 work orders.

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The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What is the average wait time for fulfilment of social and public housing maintenance?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: It does depend on the nature of the request, but I will take that on notice and come back to you.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Thank you very much. How many maintenance requests remain unfulfilled as of today? I expect you'll probably take that one on notice.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Absolutely. That will change on a daily basis. I'll get you that on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What is the average waiting time for a maintenance request to be resolved for a plumbing issue, for instance?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Again, it depends on the nature of the plumbing incident. Obviously, a replacement kitchen or a replacement toilet will take a lot longer, but we do categorise our responses based on the urgency and the essential nature of it. Something like a broken toilet we absolutely prioritise, and our contracts have minimum standard times in terms of hours. If it is not an urgent thing like a broken toilet, the response time may be a bit longer. We can look at an average. I'm not quite sure we can give you an average because it does very much depend on the urgency and the priority of the request.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Whatever you can give us on notice, that would be appreciated; similarly, any average waiting time you have in terms of requests for mould issues to be resolved in a property as well. How many requests for maintenance to social and public properties were made in the financial year of 2022-23?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: In terms of requests, we don't have that data, but we have responded to 450,000 requests, work orders.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Has there been a tenant satisfaction survey conducted with respect to maintenance on properties?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Also, if you want to take it on notice, if it hasn't been done, is there one that is intended to be undertaken.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: There was also a commitment with respect to the establishment of three sites for housing with mental health support. Does that fall under the Land and Housing Corporation? Are you familiar with that commitment?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: That's the Haven. Are you referring to the \$20 million Haven residence?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: For the Haven Foundation, yes.

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes. We have been allocated to deliver on that, yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Okay. When will the location on the Central Coast be confirmed?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We're currently working with the providers in assessing our options at the moment to select and agree to the site.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: When is it envisaged that project will be delivered?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: We're going through a review process with INSW at the moment. Subject to that and getting that through the Gateway process to access the funds, we'll be able to confirm the timing.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Has any work been done on identifying the two other locations for that mental health housing?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: Yes. We're working with the provider, Haven, to finalise the other sites.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What's the funding envelope for each of those locations? Is it equal apportionment of funding for each location?

MICHAEL WHEATLEY: It depends on which site we choose. I will take that one on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Thank you very much.

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The CHAIR: Dr Wright, I suspect you'll be deferring some of these questions. Just coming back to my previous line of questioning around particular conditions or particular patient groups that have come up in the inquiry, my last one is eating disorders. I'm very aware of the Federal Government support for eating disorder management plans, which can be very beneficial for people who can afford the gap payments for psychologists, dieticians et cetera. What work's being done to improve access to eating disorder management in the public system for people who need it?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I'll take that, thank you, Chair. At least, I'll make a start. I think the first thing I would say is that we are trying very hard in NSW Health to get better outcomes for people in the community with disordered eating. We know that there have been access gaps at times, and we also know that it's work that both general hospitals and acute mental health units and community mental health teams and private practice and general practice—all groups see individuals with an eating disorder. What makes it particularly complex is often the communication between those groups. NSW Health has invested \$12 million recurrently in improving outcomes and we've got numerous mechanisms that we use to address this.

There is a statewide steering committee that includes consumer representation, carer representation, the Butterfly Foundation, the InsideOut Institute, which is a repository of expertise in terms of evidence-based care, and representatives from local health districts, including at a chief executive level. There's very senior buy-in, which is very much to progress the statewide eating disorder service plan. This group meets and I'm a part of that. What we're very interested in to see is if there's a difference at district and network level in terms of outcomes. The outcomes that our consumers tell us that matter include the emergency department experience, if that's a part of their journey; the medical part of care, so often that's in a hospital under a general physician or under a gastroenterologist; the acute component of mental health care, which may be in an inpatient unit; and ongoing community care.

Also, with the assistance of the Federal Government—they've contributed \$13 million in capital—New South Wales is going to have a statewide residential eating disorder centre, which is going to be at Charlestown in Newcastle. That's to provide care for a cohort of people who are not unwell enough to need hospital care but are really not managing at home and could do with an extended stay. I've been really fortunate to visit the one at Wandi Nerida in Queensland, which is the only one at the moment that's provided nationally, and that's provided by the Butterfly Foundation privately. But what struck me there, talking to consumers and staff—and this is what we're trying to replicate in New South Wales—is a genuine multidisciplinary commitment. That includes a chef as a therapist. It includes significant input from different health disciplines. It also includes cover from psychology, psychiatry, and really interestingly to see how this is done is the use of peer expertise at Wandi Nerida, which is something we would really like to replicate in New South Wales. That's a bit of a picture, I guess, cross-sectionally. I don't know if that assists initially in outlining a response.

The CHAIR: Yes, absolutely. It's all really helpful information. The \$12 million recurring funding, could you detail how that was spent in the last 12 months?

BRENDAN FLYNN: Yes. I may pass to Ms Willcox in a moment, but it funds our partnership with InsideOut. It funds our eating disorder coordinators, which are in every district and network, and their role is to provide expert advice but also to capacity build. There is a very important message to get across for caring for people with an eating disorder, which is that it's everybody's business and that every mental health clinician and every physical health clinician should feel comfortable in having conversations with consumers and knowing that a large part of what is required is already within their skill set, but who to ask if it's not. I don't know if Ms Willcox wishes to add anything?

DEB WILLCOX: No, you've summarised it.

The CHAIR: That is really helpful. I'm following on with more evidence from our inquiry. It's obviously really topical. A significant number of consumers have told us that they would really value the opportunity to have care provided in their own home, for whatever reason. Whether it's a sense of safety or mobility or their domestic situation, it is very challenging to come into a clinical setting. We have also heard evidence from the Nurses and Midwives' Association, who reported some concerns of quite unsafe practices with home visits. Is there is any planned review of the policies in place for risk management for home visits for those clinicians?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I am happy to answer that. There is a continual delicate balance that mental health services strive to manage. That is, giving members of the community care in the place that they would prefer, which usually is home—I think that everybody would generally agree that, when possible, that is the right place—and also paying attention to the safety and wellbeing of our staff. Home visits are a great example of where that balance needs to work well. In recent times in New South Wales, very sadly, there has been a tragedy involving the death of a mental health clinician.

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We are very conscious of the work that's involved in making sure that our staff feel safe and supported in doing that work, but also, again, not really wavering from our commitment to try and provide most care, when possible, in the community. The question, I think, that you ask—I am happy to be corrected—is around whether there is any planned review of the risk assessment process for home visits. I am not aware of that. That is probably more in the occupational health or workforce portfolio. It may happen at a district-by-district level, but I am not sure if the branch is aware of any work in that regard.

The CHAIR: It is of interest to me because of the clear benefit that getting the balance right would have for mental health consumers. Are you aware of that feedback from clinicians, as we have heard through the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association?

BRENDAN FLYNN: Very much. I'm a practising clinician as well, and I have done many home visits. Many people in this room have. It is a much better way to provide care. It is very important to make sure that we are thinking about everybody's safety in that situation. I am conscious of the evidence that was provided at the upper House inquiry.

The CHAIR: I wanted to ask you about the Mental Health Review Tribunal. We heard from them that their database was actually not up to date enough for any meaningful data for research purposes to be extracted from it. I think that was concerning for a number of members of the Committee. Is there any work being done to better support the Mental Health Review Tribunal?

BRENDAN FLYNN: Yes, there is. We have had a meeting with the president of the tribunal, Magistrate Huntsman, and we are aware of the concerns that she raised on Monday at the upper House inquiry. What we have done in response to that, initially, is to put a project officer on. That role is currently being advertised; it is not yet filled. But the intention is to assist the tribunal, essentially, in terms of a digital infrastructure review and, understanding what the tribunal have told us, I think they are making a case for significant change there. We need to assess it. We need to triage it in the current fiscal environment that New South Wales Government is under. But we do very much want to prioritise that work. We have listened and we have responded and regularly meet with the president.

The CHAIR: It is obviously potentially really important data about the value of community treatment orders, in particular, and how they're going. Following this process, I am pleased to hear that something is underway to do that digital upgrade. Does your department have the capacity to meaningfully use that data? Can it be used for research practices?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I think it would be up to the tribunal. It will be the tribunal's data. I agree; I think there are numerous reasons that data and its security is important. We are talking about very vulnerable consumers. We're talking about often significant forensic and legal issues and the capacity to look at some of the research that was discussed on Monday. But my view is that it will be the tribunal's data—to determine where and who uses that for research.

The CHAIR: I wanted to ask about the Your Experience of Service survey. We've also heard evidence that it is perhaps not as accessible as it should be to consumers. What kind of consultation process did you go through to develop that survey in its current form?

BRENDAN FLYNN: I admit that I did not hear that evidence. I've tried to attend most of the hearings, but I didn't hear that. I may outline what I know and, if there's anything else, I will take it on notice. The Your Experience of Service survey is a national tool. That is used along with a carer experience of service—the YES and CES surveys—that we take very seriously, because they tell us how we are doing both in terms of inpatient care and community care. Our community results are actually, generally—there is always more work to do, but they are generally quite positive. Again, I am happy to take this on notice, but I think there potentially are issues for people who may have English as not their first language. Sometimes they are offered on an iPad. That may be difficult for some people. If someone has issues with literacy, the traditional pen and paper pathway may be difficult. The thing that we can do most about, which we do work very hard on, is ensuring our staff offer the Your Experience of Service survey option for consumers both in their community and inpatient units to fill out. But I may be missing some information that was presented in evidence around other difficulties.

The CHAIR: You have named a couple of those groups already, and I am not open to the right page; I am open to home visit safety. If I recall correctly, off the top of my head, it was people with intellectual disability where we'd heard that evidence.

BRENDAN FLYNN: Yes, okay.

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DEB WILLCOX: In the last survey, Dr Cohn, just over 21,000 consumers participated. It's a reasonable spread, but we expect there would be many more people of the nature that you have described where we could get greater penetration.

The CHAIR: Absolutely. What work is done to ensure that sample is actually representative? If you know you have a certain number of patients with intellectual disability, is there any data analysis to actually assess whether you are getting the expected number of surveys from that group?

BRENDAN FLYNN: Yes. I can take that on notice. I suspect the answer might be something along the lines of the proportion of individuals who are identified as having an intellectual disability and the proportion of returns that we get. We can do our best to answer that.

The CHAIR: I would be really interested in people with intellectual disabilities as well as the other groups that you named. My last lot of questions are for the advocate. We have already discussed, earlier today, the engagement from your office with mental health issues, which was really interesting to learn about. I am interested in any work that your office has done, particularly with the impact of the housing crisis on young people and how we can do better to address housing issues.

ZOË ROBINSON: It is not yet published, but I am happy to talk about it. We have recently done a piece of work around cost of living and the impacts that has on young people. Housing, not surprisingly, and the rental market is something that has been raised by young people, in that sense. Obviously, there are people who talked today about the homelessness data and youth homelessness, so I won't necessarily touch on that. In terms of cost of living—and this report will be public. In 2023 the cost of living became the number one issue for young people in New South Wales for the first time—that was in our strategic plan data—with over one-third, or 35 per cent, mentioning the issue unprompted. This was up from 4 per cent in 2021. This is in reference to our strategic plan data which, again, is public.

In the 2023 Youth Week survey, over half—55 per cent—of young people were very or quite concerned with the cost of living. The vast majority—85 per cent—said that the cost of living had increased. They also talked about 65 per cent of young adults reporting housing stress, spending over one-third of their income on accommodation. And 76 per cent in that data experienced housing stress that they talked about, as well.

The CHAIR: I don't expect you to read the whole unpublished report to us.

ZOË ROBINSON: I would be very happy to.

The CHAIR: Does that include recommendations around housing from the point of view of young people?

ZOË ROBINSON: It will include recommendations. I obviously don't have them here but it will include recommendations, and there has been work that we have done previously in a submission we've done around renting on behalf of young people as well, and there is certainly—I've got here—in terms of what they are talking about in terms of rental property and their anxiety around that. So there will be no doubt recommendations that young people have themselves.

The CHAIR: This is obviously really important data. What is the expected date for that to be published?

ZOË ROBINSON: I have looked at a final report, and my team is in the back, so I imagine it would be before the end of this year that you would see that.

The CHAIR: Fantastic. I'm also interested in the work that your office may or may not have done around engaging young people better in local government processes.

ZOË ROBINSON: Yes.

The CHAIR: It's something that I've had feedback that can be really highly variable between local government areas. What should the State Government be doing to improve the platform of young people with local government?

ZOË ROBINSON: We have done work previously with the Minister for Local Government, and actually we have run a number of training sessions for local governments who have come to us and said that they want to have a youth advisory council. We have a very clear document that helps people set up a youth advisory council, and we've had some key councils who have come to us. I can provide that list on notice in terms of those councils that we've worked with in terms of establishing their own youth advisory council.

The CHAIR: Please.

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ZOË ROBINSON: I don't think, off the top of my head, we've done anything this year but I know previously we've done a lot of work in terms of local governments sharing the information of the work that we're doing, sharing in terms of how children and young people can participate. Always there's work to be done to ensure children and young people are participating at all levels of government. But certainly we have run a number of training sessions, and I can provide them on notice.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I'd really appreciate that list of councils on notice. I've only got less than three minutes left for a much bigger topic, which is our response to natural disasters and recovery. We obviously had an estimates hearing yesterday for Emergency Services, which included the Reconstruction Authority. What kind of feedback have you heard from young people with regards to disaster response and how we can do that better?

ZOË ROBINSON: We did our 2021 report in terms of the voices of children and young people in response to disaster and so there were some clear recommendations, and they talk a lot about preparedness and education and training and obviously being actively involved in the recovery for a community. Perhaps also to a previous point from a member in terms of proactive work our office has done, we currently receive funding to work with children and young people who are in pod villages up in the Northern Rivers, and that was something that we actively sought because we knew, based on the work we had done in 2020, the impact that disaster has on young people beyond that moment. So we continue to work in those pod villages in terms of children and young people accessing their schools, accessing supports and all that.

In terms of recommendations that children and young people have had, some of the key ones are "Include us in any of the planning, development around preparedness response." There has also been work done in terms of what we do both in a state of emergency and when you move children and young people into evacuation centres, and there has been recommendations around that. Children and young people have talked about themselves wanting to become volunteers and so being actively engaged in the volunteering process, and then, in terms of recovery, making sure that they're also included in decision-making about what a future school could look like if it's in relation to the design of a school, parks, playgrounds and all of that. The work that we're doing up in the Northern Rivers is ongoing. I acknowledge my colleagues, who we have a very good relationship with, in terms of feeding information that we hear from those people in pod villages and how we can support young people in those villages.

The CHAIR: I'm really interested in the work that you're doing in the pod villages. Could you detail actually what that means practically on the ground? What is that work?

ZOË ROBINSON: Absolutely. We have currently two people who are on the ground in the Northern Rivers and a team here as well that go up regularly. We have engaged with children and young people to understand their experiences of moving into a pod village, whilst they're in the pod village and some of the things that they might like there. To give you an example, some children and young people talked about wanting to ride their bikes in pod villages, and so that has been a successful thing that we've achieved in terms of feedback with our colleagues—connection to school, transport. So we have the practical consultations we do with children and young people to understand what they need.

We also have a referral pathway now in response to what they said. We have people on the ground who pod villages and people who work in pod villages can refer to our team, and then there is a kind of triage of what's needed in trying to connect those young people to available services that might benefit them, noting that we are not caseworkers and we are not proclaiming to be caseworkers; it's more a connection service around that. We've also hosted barbecues, run Youth Week, we have a round table that children and young people themselves are leading in the Northern Rivers on 17 November—a whole variety of work that we keep doing up there.

The CHAIR: My last follow-up is has any of that work been compiled in terms of lessons for future disaster recovery?

ZOË ROBINSON: Yes. So we both report monthly to Reconstruction—Resilience. I think I have Resilience written on a document but I'm sure it's Reconstruction. We provide that feedback. I also receive monthly reports from the team as well, and those are issues that we then work across government to share as well.

The CHAIR: Have you had the opportunity yet to meet with the new Minister for Emergency Services since the change of government?

ZOË ROBINSON: I haven't met with him but we do have a regular conversation in terms of other issues. I haven't met with him in relation to this issue.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Following on from the last question in relation to the villages up north, did you receive any feedback from young people about any anti-social behaviour or any challenges that they may face living in their villages?

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ZOË ROBINSON: We have received feedback in terms of children and young people, from their perspective, being able to have friends come and access to see them like you would in a normal capacity of having friends over. We've certainly had that feedback. I have more detailed notes in this folder that I'm happy to share with the Committee. But I know that we've certainly heard in terms of their engagement with their friends being able to come and visit, and I think there have been matters in terms of safety that have been raised, but I can provide detail to that on notice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That'd be fine. Just in relation to youth, so following on more broadly—and these might be more for Mr Tidball—in relation to the announcement that was in the budget around the multicultural youth network program, does your department have any dealing or oversight of that? I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: My initial answer is no, but I will confirm that and report back.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: If it is under the Minister for Youth, I'm interested to know the selection process for the new platform, they call it, and also the budget that has been allocated to it as well. In relation to Youth Week, how much has been allocated this financial year for it?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I will need to take that on notice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's fine. The other thing is in relation to the youth participation and inclusion budget and also the rural and remote subsidy. I'm interested to know, and happy for you to take on notice, how many councils were eligible for the subsidy—that is the rural and remote subsidy—and how many councils took up that subsidy, and then also how much has been allocated in the budget for the youth participation and inclusion budget and if there is an allocation of funds for the future year.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I'll take those on notice, if I may.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's fine. The next one is in relation to mental health and the Youth Aftercare Pilot. Interested to know when does the pilot end.

BRENDAN FLYNN: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: If you could also take on notice how many participated in the pilot, funding that was allocated for the pilot, whether or not the pilot will be evaluated and also—I understand that it is or has been operating in Bankstown, Blacktown, Coffs Harbour, Tamworth, and it was announced that a new site would be up and running in Western Sydney—whether or not that has occurred.

BRENDAN FLYNN: We'll take that on notice.

DEB WILLCOX: I could just add, if I may, that you're quite right, of course: four sites—Mount Druitt, Coffs Harbour, Tamworth and Bankstown—for young people at increased risk of suicide, as you stated, or self-harm. Eleven million dollars from 2021 has been invested as part of it. It's a partnership between NSW Health and the Australian Government through the Health Innovation Fund. The service is currently funded till 30 June next year. We'll follow up on those additional questions that you asked and the evaluation.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That'd be good. Thank you. The other one is the suicide prevention outreach teams. I'm interested to know the number of services that are actually operating.

BRENDAN FLYNN: There are currently 10 SPOT teams. That's rural and regionally. But I'd have to take the total number in New South Wales on notice, unless I can come up with that in a moment. But they have been, in fact, quite pleasingly, rolled out since we've had the funding for those under Towards Zero.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How long has it been funded for?

BRENDAN FLYNN: The Towards Zero funding is over four years. From memory, it's till 2026. After that we would need to be presenting its evaluation to the Minister and to go from there.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Then I'm happy for you to take this on notice: how many people it has assisted and whether that is available by region or LGA.

BRENDAN FLYNN: For the SPOT teams?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Yes.

BRENDAN FLYNN: Yes. We'll take that on notice. Thank you.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's fine. The only final question is in relation to the New South Wales homeless strategy, which is due to come to an end, and what steps are being taken for a new strategy.

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ANNE CAMPBELL: I'm happy to take that. Obviously, the contracts have been extended for the two years. We're looking at a strategy being in place by 1 July next year. Currently we're consulting with the peaks and others but also looking at what are the outcomes from the existing SHS—there's been an evaluation; that's underway—and looking at unit costings and those sorts of things.

The CHAIR: Are there any questions from the Government?

ZOË ROBINSON: I do have the YAC demographic that I was asked for before. I feel like that's a great way to end, on young people. For this year we have a six-six split in terms of regional and metro, to ensure, obviously, representative. We have public schools, private faith schools, private independent schools, vocational education and university, out-of-home care, disability. Refugees and migrants are on this—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, people with experience of youth justice, LGBTQI+. To correct the record, they've had their first meeting but officially haven't been announced yet, which we hope is pending as well.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much to everyone who's attended today and for your evidence. The Committee secretariat will be in touch in the near future about any questions taken on notice and any supplementary questions.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.