

**Budget Estimates 2015-2016**  
**Ageing, Disability and Multiculturalism**  
**Transcript Questions On Notice**

**QUESTION 1 – Page 6**

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Minister, I asked a simple question. Do you have a date when you will respond to the Ombudsman's report?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** As I indicated to you, Health, FACS and Premier and Cabinet are working together to establish a transition plan that will enable early identification of people accessing health services to facilitate a streamlined intake to the NDIS.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** So when will that happen? Do you have a time frame, Minister?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Early data linkage work has identified that a significant number of people already access both Health and FACS services and therefore are identified.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Minister, do you have a time frame?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** The work is being done, Ms Cotsis. I have made it clear that the work is being done. Some has been completed and some is being done. Work continues to be done during the transition period.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Can you table the work that has been completed? Minister, you said that some work has been completed. Can you tell me what work has been completed and table that work?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I have already indicated a number of issues but the member will not let me finish. I am happy to take that question on notice and table the rest of my answer as the member will not let me answer it.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** So you will table that?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I will take the question on notice.

**ANSWER –**

The Report of Reviewable Deaths in 2012 and 2013 - Volume 2: Deaths of People with Disability in Residential Care was tabled in Parliament by the NSW Ombudsman on 29 June 2015.

In late June 2015, the NSW Ombudsman wrote to the Deputy Secretary, Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) to provide a copy of the Report and to seek advice about actions undertaken in relation to the recommendations.

I am advised an internal working group was formed to respond to the Report's recommendations, and ADHC is implementing a plan to address each of the recommendations.

I am further advised the Department of Family and Community Services anticipates that it will respond to the Ombudsman by the end of 2015.

## QUESTION 2 – Page 9

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** You said that the number of people under the age of 50 has decreased. Do you have the statistics?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I do not have the exact figures. I am happy to take that question on notice. Youngcare is a perfect example of a non-government organisation working with the Government and doing extensive work in this area.

## ANSWER –

I am advised:

In January 2007, there were 382 people in residential aged care in NSW under the age of 50 years. At May 2015 there are 197 people in residential aged care in NSW under the age of 50 years.

### QUESTION 3 – Page 10

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** Will you update the Committee on the effectiveness of the NSW Companion Card, which promotes the rights of people with a disability who require companion fare ticketing at events and venues? Will you indicate the feedback you have received from stakeholders about the card?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** The feedback has been incredibly positive. There was an occasion reported in the media recently where a companion card was not provided. A review was undertaken and following that review the companion card was in fact provided.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** How did that happen? What is the other side of the story?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I would like to say that each and every time someone applies for something the box is ticked immediately and they get a companion card. What is important for me is that when a companion card was not provided there was a mechanism for a review. Clearly, that mechanism was effective. It was reviewed and the card was provided. When I first became aware of the case we are talking about I was surprised that the card was not provided at first instance. But it is important that the review worked.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** That matter went fairly public before it was dealt with. Why did the review not work before it all went public? Was it only public pressure that suddenly made that review a bit more positive?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** No, I do not think that is fair.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** Was there a review before the matter went public?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I will take it on notice to make sure but my understanding is the review was being undertaken and a determination was being made. The media came out but that would have had no impact whatsoever on the review. The review is based on the merits. The department asked National Disability Services [NDS] that manages the card to review its decision, as the department is entitled to do. It was reviewed and the card was issued. As soon as it became evident that the card was not being provided there was a review mechanism, and it worked.

### ANSWER –

The NSW Companion Card is administered by National Disability Services (NDS) on behalf of the NSW Government.

The client has been advised of the outcome.

#### **QUESTION 4 – Page 13**

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** How much was the Home Care Service of NSW sold for?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** That has already been discussed in a press release so it is out there. I anticipate there will be approximately \$100 million remaining, and that \$100 million has been noted in the press release.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** So the \$100 million will be the net proceeds—the transfer from Australian Unity to the Government—is that correct? Is that what you are saying? I do not understand what you mean by "remaining".

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** You can use the term "net proceeds". That is probably a good term to use.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** What are the gross proceeds? What was the gross sale price?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I do not have that information with me.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Can you take that on notice?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I will take that on notice.

#### **ANSWER –**

I am advised:

Australian Unity is paying \$114 million to acquire Home Care.

## QUESTION 5 – Page 15

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Minister, I asked you a question earlier when you said that you were conducting consultations in relation to the transfer of supported accommodation. There was some mention that there were two lots of consultants—Ernst and Young, and KPMG. What is the cost of those consultants?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I do not have that information with me. I will take that question on notice.

## ANSWER –

I am advised:

The costs of consultants are being met through the Crown Finance Entity and do not form part of the Department of Family and Community Services budget. This question should be referred to the Treasurer.

## QUESTION 6 – Page 17

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Your budget release in June this year contained a \$28 million commitment to continue the redevelopment of the Hunter residences, which will transition people with a disability. Do you have a progress report? I understand—and correct me if I am wrong—that there might have been funding provided in last year's budget. Can you give the Committee an update as to how you plan to spend that money?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Last year's budget provided \$30 million for the acquisition of land, which is taking place. The \$28 million in this budget, which you have referred to, relates to the further acquisition of land and for some construction. That is well underway. Great progress is taking place in relation to that.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Minister, can you identify the land that has been acquired? Is there a progress report?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Land is being acquired and I am happy to take that question on notice. If the member is asking me whether I know the address of every block of land acquired, I do not.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** I am not asking you that.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I am happy to take the question on notice.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** So you will take that question on notice?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Yes.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Will you do the same thing in terms of the \$28 million in this year's budget?

**ANSWER –**

In consultation with residents and families and other stakeholders, land has been acquired across NSW.

## QUESTION 7 – Page 17-18

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Minister, you mentioned that you have a design and construction plan. Is that correct?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** The Hon. Sophie Cotsis may be really surprised to hear that we do not just go out and buy a block of land and then someone throws a house on it without anyone obtaining appropriate approvals from the council—

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Minister, I did not say that.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** —pursuant to appropriate architectural and engineering plans.

**CHAIR:** The Minister is being argumentative. The Minister will answer the question placed before him without argument.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I was not arguing.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Minister, you mentioned that you have a design and construct plan.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I point out to the Hon. Sophie Cotsis that it is not my plan. I did not draw the plan up.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Will you be able to—

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I have made it clear that the department is meeting each and every necessary criterion. One of those criteria is obtaining council approval before any construction can take place. The member knows that. One cannot obtain a council approval without appropriate architectural and engineering designs and specifications. Clearly all of that is occurring. The home does not build itself.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** I understand that.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Why is the member asking me these questions if she understands it?

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** I am asking if that information has been disclosed.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Disclosed in what way?

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** To the public? Have you got a progress report about the expenditure of those funds in relation to the build and construct of new housing?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I go out with the families and carers to look at the group homes about to be opened. The group homes are on record—they are there—and the record is clear as to what is being built and where it is being built. It is all there.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** If you have the information why do you not disclose it? Is it on your website?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** You asked me to give you the plans. What plans are you asking me to give you? Do you want me to tender every architectural and engineering plan of every group home ever built?

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** I am asking for information on the expenditure so that we can see the number of new homes. That is what we need to know.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I have already taken the question on notice and you keep coming back to it. I do not know which part of "I will take the question on notice and provide details" you did not understand.

## ANSWER –

See 6.



## QUESTION 8 – Page 22

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** My question was not who they are; my question is how many are there?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** It is about numbers—I am realising that. Can I take that on notice and if there is no reason for it to be commercial in confidence I will provide a figure?

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Let me put the question on notice to you this way: If you do not give us the number because it is commercial in confidence, can you explain why it is commercial in confidence, given the transaction is over?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Yes. I think that is a fair question.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** The second part of that question is how many actually reach the tender phase?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Can I take that on notice on the same basis?

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Yes, thank you. The final question is on selection criteria. Can you tell us about the selection criteria?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I will take that on notice as well on the same basis.

## ANSWER –

I am advised:

A number of Expression of Interests were received. Due to commercial confidentiality the number of parties short-listed for the tender stage and the number of final bids received cannot be disclosed. Criteria used to assess final submissions included: operational considerations, risk allocation and contractual positions as well as financial value. Financial value was considered less important to the evaluation outcome than the operational and risk allocation criteria.

## QUESTION 9 – Page 23

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** What are the safeguards for those individuals who are clients and what are the service obligations? I do not expect you to give it chapter and verse now but there will be sections in the agreements between the Government and Australian Unity of the contract that will specify that. Are you prepared to release those publicly?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Could I say this to you, Dr John Kaye—and I will take some of this on notice, because it will be an extensive answer—under the agreement, all clients will transfer to Australian Unity and all services will continue to run as normal, now and after the transfer. What is also clear to me, from discussions with Australian Unity post the contract being entered into, is that their clear intention is not only to continue to provide the existing services. Their aim and intention is to grow those services for the best interests of clients, remembering that there will be a substantially larger number of people seeking funding for the first time, just in the disability services sector. This company has an incredible track record. I am so pleased it is them. I cannot imagine that anyone could criticise them, with 175 years of existence providing incredible services, and they are mutual, for the benefit of their members. I am so confident that not only will they continue to provide those services but I believe they will improve and expand those services.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Can I take it that you will give us as much as you can on the guarantees and the safeguards as a question on notice?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Yes.

## ANSWER –

I am advised:

The new owner will be required to provide services to clients under the Commonwealth and NSW Governments funding guidelines as apply to Home Care at present. Home Care clients are being advised that their services will be unaffected by the transfer to Australian Unity and this service continuity requirement is reflected in the sale documentation. Both governments also have their own quality frameworks in place for the relevant funding which requires third party verification.

**QUESTION 10 – Page 23**

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** We understand that ADHC's Home Care Service is charging Community Support Program [CSP] clients a service fee of around \$68 an hour whereas the base rate available by other service providers is about \$48 an hour. Why is ADHC charging so much more?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I will take that on notice. I want to give you details.

**ANSWER –**

I am advised the Home Care Service of NSW (Home Care) generally charges \$48-\$50 per hour for this service.

**QUESTION 11 – Page 24**

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Minister, you recently revealed that 13 staff took voluntary redundancy [VR] from Multicultural NSW. Firstly, has that number increased?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** My understanding is that it is currently still 13 and no further redundancies have been taken.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Can you tell the Committee the total cost of these redundancies?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I will have to take that on notice.

**ANSWER –**

Redundancy payments are made in accordance with Public Sector Guidelines.

## **QUESTION 12 – Page 30**

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Have you engaged any consultants for your Multicultural NSW organisational restructure?

**Mr HARMAN:** Yes, we did have assistance from external consultants.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Who were the consultants?

**Mr HARMAN:** Fyusion.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** How much did they cost?

**Mr HARMAN:** I will take that on notice.

## **ANSWER –**

Information is publicly available in the Multicultural NSW Annual Report.

### **QUESTION 13 – Page 32**

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Can I ask then, and this is not to you, Minister, but through you to Mr Harman, whether Multicultural NSW has been in communication with the Department of Education and Communities and the department of skills with respect to both TAFE and schools?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I will provide the same answer—that is, I am not going to go into specifics. To be fair to you, Dr Kaye, I will take that question on notice.

#### **ANSWER –**

Multicultural NSW communicates with other government departments.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** Minister, I would like to revisit some of the issues around the Wollongong office of Multicultural NSW shutting down, or resiting, depending on how you put it. Minister, you said that you consulted widely on this. Was the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and the South Coast aware of the changes? Did you speak to him about the changes?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Personally, no.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** What about professionally?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** No.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** So he is not aware that the office is closing down?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** At this stage I have not spoken to him about it.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** Has anyone from your department spoken to him?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I am not aware. I will take that question on notice.

#### **ANSWER –**

Multicultural NSW consults with a wide range of community members.

## QUESTION 14 – Page 33

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** That is fine. Quite often those one-person offices, particularly in the multicultural sector, may have 20 or 30 key people under them. Minister, this is a very important issue. Certainly in my area there are key people in the multicultural services. They may have 20 or 30 people under them from multicultural communities. They are key players. You cannot just take them out because they are like the pillar and the voice for the multicultural community. My question is: Will that one person be working in the Service NSW Wollongong office or will he or she be re-sited to the Sydney office?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I will take that question on notice and come back to you. I can indicate to you on the work being done that the funding being provided in relation to multicultural affairs is also provided to a number of community organisations who work with and are part of assisting Multicultural NSW. They are our eyes and ears, if I can use that expression, throughout the Illawarra. I have continued their funding—in fact I have increased their funding this year; and they are incredibly pleased about that. We are talking about one administrative person in an office. Instead of having to line up and wait for hours, people are now able to go into Service NSW for more efficient service from more people.

### ANSWER –

Multicultural NSW staff will be located in the single head office location.

Service NSW will be accepting translation bookings. There are currently 41 shopfronts in operation and this will be increased to over 50. This is a massive expansion of service provision to the people of NSW.

Instead of only having access during business hours and limited locations – clients now have access 7 am to 7 pm and also on Saturdays.

The NSW Government is proud of these achievements and improvements to services and access to the people of NSW.

## QUESTION 15 – Page 33-34

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** I understand that the Community Relations Commission organises the Youth Harmony Festival.

**Mr HARMAN:** Correct.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** That festival usually draws thousands of people from various faiths, races and ethnic backgrounds as they spend the day enjoying food, song and dance. Minister, I have three questions for you. First, will the festival be happening next year? Secondly, will the Government be allocating any funding towards it? Thirdly, as it is proving so successful, will the festival be rolled out in strategic areas across New South Wales?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I will take those questions on notice. The festival has been incredibly successful; there has been great feedback about it. I also indicate that a number of non-government organisations, in particular religious organisations, have also been following suit and doing exactly the same thing—namely, knocking on our door seeking funding or some contribution for funding—and they have been very successful. But I will come back to you with the specifics, in particular about rolling it out in other areas.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** Minister, are you aware of the budget allocation for this?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I will take the question on notice. I have a figure in mind but I want to confirm it.

## ANSWER –

The NSW Government allocates increased resources to successful programs for young people including the Multicultural Youth Network, youth networking evenings and *Ideation* (youth leaders day).