

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 2

24 NOVEMBER 2003

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATE HEARINGS

COMMUNITY SERVICE, AGEING, DISABILITY SERVICES AND YOUTH PORTFOLIO

1. Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked Dr Shepherd, Director General, Department of Community Services—

Does the requirement in section 35(3)(b) of the 1996 center-based regulations stipulating that a teaching staff member of a childcare center has to have either a university degree in early childhood or other approved qualifications, training or experience include TAFE teaching qualifications? (Hansard page 1)

ANSWER

The Regulation requires services to employ a three year university trained Early Childhood teacher once the number of children in a childcare centre reaches 30. Two Early Childhood teachers are required at services where the number of children enrolled is between 40-59. Three Early Childhood teachers are required at services where the number of children enrolled is 60-79. Four Early Childhood teachers are required at services where the number of children enrolled exceeds 80.

The TAFE diploma qualification is not recognised as a teaching qualification, and does not therefore meet the regulatory requirement. The TAFE qualification does meet the regulatory requirements for Authorised Supervisor, and all licensed services are required to have an Authorised Supervisor. It also meets the requirement for a Qualified Staff Member 0 to two years, which childcare services caring for children under the age of two years are required to employ.

2. Revd Moyes asked Dr Shepherd, Director-General, Department of Community Services—

Could you please provide details of programs training parents in Arabic speaking women's groups in areas such as Lakemba and which are funded by your department? (Hansard page 7)

ANSWER

DoCS have a number of programs for Arabic speaking people. For example, there are two projects funded by the Department of Community Services that target all Arabic speaking parents not Arabic speaking women only.

One project, the Transitions program at Condell Park High School, was developed as part of the transition to school project for the Arabic speaking community and has been allocated \$150,000 per annum for two years. It is targeting both mothers and fathers in a workshop situation to share ideas, support, and to explore such areas as behaviour management. A program officer has been employed by DoCS to provide services.

The other project is a supported playgroup in Hampden Park, which is operated by Koorana with Families First funding. This playgroup attracts many Arabic speaking women, although fathers have also attended. It is not exclusively provided for Arabic speaking families. The parenting training at such a venue is low key and aimed at modelling appropriate parenting responses as well as using guest speakers on topics of relevance to the attendees.

DoCS also produced a Parenting Magazine focusing on teenagers. 20,000 copies of the magazine, which has been translated and printed in Arabic, have been produced.

DoCS also provides the Australian Arabic Communities Council with a total of \$518,799 to provide a range of community support services to Arabic-Australians in Bankstown and surrounding areas.

Current Australian Arabic Communities Council services include a Family Support Service, a Vulnerable Families Project, a Links to Learning Program, Community Settlement Services and Problem Gambling Counselling.

DoCS also funds a two year Intensive Family Support project, run by the Australian Arabic Communities Council.

3. Revd Moyes asked Dr Shepherd, Director-General, Department of Community Services—

Could you please provide details of the Department's support to breakfast clubs such as the very large one just opposite Parklea markets? (Hansard page 7)

ANSWER

The Department of Community Services supports "Breakfast Clubs" with funding through the Community Services Grants Program. Examples of breakfast clubs supported in this way are:

- The Meriton Village Multi-Purpose Community Project, auspiced by Wesley Dalmar at Quakers Hill, ran the weekly Sundowner Village Breakfast Club for approximately six and a half years, recently ending the program on 21 November 2003 to coincide with the closure of the Sundowner Caravan Park Village on 25 November 2003. An average of 26 children attended the breakfast club, ranging in age from two to 14 years. The breakfast club provided plain and chocolate milk, toast, muffins and cereals.
- The "Mt Druitt Breakfast Club", conducted once a week at Dunheved High School since 2001 and attended by up to 50 students. The breakfast club provides pancakes, fruit juice, toast and cereal.
- Crawford Public School, Doonside - a breakfast club. This has been conducted every weekday during school terms since 2002. The program is funded by DoCS and receives small donations from companies, and in-kind contributions. Up to 40 children are provided with the choice of cereal, fruit, toast and milo.

There are other similar programs operating in other areas.

4. Mr Ryan asked Dr Shepherd, Director-General, Department of Community Services—

Could you supply to the Committee details of the monthly call abandonment rate from the Helpline for the past six months? (Hansard page 9)

ANSWER

Call abandonment rates have declined progressively since 2001 when the average daily call abandonment rate was 38.1%. At the end of 2002, it was 28.9% and it continued to drop. In August 2003 it was less than 10%. In November 2003 the abandonment rates have increased temporarily as a consequence of the new computer system KiDS.

Month	Abandonment Rate
May	16.33%
June	14.3%
July	10.68%
August	9.6%
September	11.45%
October	18.57%

5. Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked Dr Shepherd, Director-General, Department of Community Services—

Could you please include details of the mean time for abandonment—how long people wait before they abandon the Helpline? (Hansard page 9)

ANSWER

The average time to abandon on 1 March 2003 was eight minutes and 28 seconds. At 30 August 2003, prior to the introduction of KiDS, this figure was two minutes and 30 seconds. In November 2003, the average time to abandon had increased to eight minutes and 8.94 seconds.

6. Mr Ryan asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

Please provide details of any additional positions created when the department was regionalised.
(Hansard page 20)

ANSWER

The creation of the Department brought together three entities (the Department of Ageing and Disability, the Disability Services Directorate of the Department of Community Services, and the Home Care Service of NSW) which each had some form of regional structure. At the same time, it was recognised that there was a need to build the capacity of the Department at regional level to enable the development of effective partnerships with other government agencies and with the non-government sector, to enable local decision-making around the needs of clients, and to improve contract performance of the non-government sector.

The new Regional structure is being implemented progressively, with the final stages occurring in the current financial year. Creation of new positions in the structure is progressively being offset by deletions of positions in the former structures, as each stage of the redeployment and recruitment process is completed.

In the period to 30 June 2003, the senior level positions and some administrative support positions were established in each of the eight Regions. The net effect is an additional 59 positions as of 30 June 2003. These will be further offset as the implementation of the new structure is completed, with the deletion of a significant number of positions.

7. Mr Ryan asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

- (a) Do all the regions then have a separate budget for each regional director?
- (b) If so, are you able to give the Committee a list of the regions and a list of the budgets that they have? (Hansard page 20)

ANSWER

- (a) Yes.
- (b) Budgets for Regions are indicative only and do not include some services that continue to be delivered centrally. The budgets are subject to variation in response to demand for services and operating circumstances.

8. Mr Clarke asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

- (a) What was the amount of unpaid arrears owing to non-government agencies for disability services as at 30th June this year?
- (b) (i) Are there cases in arrears?
(ii) Why is that the case? (Hansard page 30)

ANSWER

- (a) A total of \$6,354,250 (1.5%) of Disability Services delivered by the Non-Government Organisations prior to 30 June 2003 were paid in the 2003-04 financial year.
- (b)(i) Recurrent grants are paid on a quarterly basis in advance. Non-recurrent services are negotiated with service providers and approval and payments made via a submission.

- (b)(ii) Delays in payments may occur as a result of negotiating agreed services and funding retrospective submissions/requests for funds with service providers and the subsequent direction to release payments.

9. Mr Ryan asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

In relation to overspending in various parts of the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care: Can you give the Committee some detail as to what programs were overspent so that we have an idea of where you might have to take action to trim spending next year? (Hansard page 33)

ANSWER

The result for the 2002-03 financial year was an unfavourable variance in net cost of services of \$23m or 1.9% above the approved budget.

10. Mr Ryan asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

In relation to people having their social and community services award funding changed or denied: Can you give the Committee an idea what complaints and review processes are available to people in those circumstances? (Hansard page 33)

ANSWER

The NSW Government's Social and Community Services (SACS) Award Supplementation was provided to organisations that employ staff under the Award.

No organisation eligible to receive the supplementation will be denied this funding.

A review of all SACS Supplementation payments made in 2001/2002, 2002/2003 and 2003/2004 has been commissioned by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. This review is being undertaken by an independent agency, Ernst and Young, to ensure a transparent funding base for all services funded by the Department under the Home and Community Care, Disability Services and Ageing programs.

Where the review identifies incorrect application of the SACS Supplementation to grants paid to organisations, the Department will work with organisations to bring their payments in line with correct entitlements. Providers may seek a review of the Department's funding advice. In the first instance, these may be directed to the Regional Directors of the Department.

11. Mr Ryan asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

In some instances it appears that services in New South Wales do not appear to be growing as quickly as they are in other parts of Australia. Could you please respond to the snapshot date provided by the Auditor-General at page 17 of his report? (Hansard page 33)

ANSWER

Client estimates in the Auditor-General's Report are taken from the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA) Minimum Data Set (MDS) snapshot day data for 2001 and 2002. The data represent numbers of clients reported to access services on a specific day each year.

It is difficult to draw conclusions about trends in service provision by comparing this snapshot data for a range of reasons including:

- The data do not indicate the quantity of service a person receives and the balance of support may differ between states.
- The one day snapshot is not well equipped to count service types where demand varies at different times (in particular demand for respite may be greater on weekends than on the mid week snapshot day).
- The 2002 data was collected in March of that year and does not incorporate any subsequent growth in the service system.

While it is difficult to draw conclusions from this data it is important to clarify that the data do not support a perception that services in New South Wales are growing more slowly than other States. In particular:

- The data show an increase in community access places in New South Wales from 3,663 to 3,960.
- Across Australia the number of community support clients decreased by 3,800. In New South Wales there were 278 fewer community support clients representing a smaller decline than for other States.
- Analysis of overall client numbers suggests a rate of growth in New South Wales similar to the national average.

All jurisdictions have now implemented a new CSTDA MDS. In New South Wales this will provide the capacity to quantify service provision for the full year. Over time the new data collection will provide improved capacity to compare service provision across States.

12. Dr Chesterfield-Evans asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

- (a) How much funding was allocated for advocacy initiatives for people with disability in contact with the criminal justice system last year and this year?
- (b) (i) Has funding been made available this year for implementation of the recommendations arising from the Framework report?
- (ii) If so, how much funding has been allocated for each of the following recommendations:
- establishment of specialist capacity to assess and meet the needs of people with cognitive disabilities who have offended or who are at risk of offending;
 - establishment of a system of justice plans to co-ordinate action between the justice system and disability services personnel;
 - ensuring a pool of funds is available to flexibly meet the needs of people with cognitive disabilities who have offended or who are at risk of offending;
 - funding accommodation and related support for people who have offended or who are at risk of offending; and
 - implementation of a screening process to enhance the identification of members of the target group? (Hansard page 33)

ANSWER

- a) All advocacy funded by the Department is available to people with a disability in contact with the criminal justice system. In addition in 2002/03, the Department provided \$500,000 for the provision of specific support to people with an intellectual disability when dealing with police and the court system. In 2003/04 the same level of funding has been maintained.
- b) No funding has been specifically allocated for implementation of the Framework Report, however, the Department is leading a range of initiatives to improve support for people with an intellectual disability who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

13. Mr Primrose asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

- (a) What is your department doing to progress its initiatives for an ageing population of seniors?
- (b) What has your department done in terms of organisational changes to improve services and outcomes for older people and people with a disability? (Hansard page 33)

ANSWERS

(a) In 2003/2004, \$5.289 million has been allocated to the Ageing Program, administered by the Office of Ageing, within the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. This funding includes recurrent funding of approximately \$1.8 million to some 37 non-government organisations that provide information and referral services for seniors and their families, including the popular Seniors Information Service.

Some important projects of the Ageing Program include funding to community organisations, such as *Alzheimer's Australia NSW Inc* and the *Older Women's Network NSW Inc*. The program also provides one-off grants for short-term projects, such as activities during *Dementia Awareness Week*.

The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and NSW Health will continue their partnership on initiatives under the NSW dementia strategy, *Future Directions for Dementia Care and Support in NSW 2001-2006*. *Future Directions* promises to develop a co-ordinated service system for people living with dementia, bringing improved access to early intervention, assessment and ongoing support. \$2.758 million will be allocated to the strategy in 2003/2004.

More than \$350,000 in one-off grants will be provided in 2003/2004 under the Ageing Program for several inter-generational projects that aim to foster links between older and younger people.

The government will continue to support the Seniors Online strategy with more than \$570,000 in 2003/2004, to promote the benefits of seniors using computers and the Internet to pursue their interests, obtain information and stay connected with friends and families.

The Department will play a key role in facilitating the Forum on Ageing in 2004 which will provide an important opportunity for key stakeholders and the Department to interact.

The Department is also involved in a number of events for Seniors. These include Seniors Week, the new Seniors Week Achievement Awards, the Seniors Week Grants program, the Premier's Gala Concerts for Seniors Week and Christmas, a new service for Senior Card holders called Seniors Shoppers, and a Seniors Information Service.

(b) The Department's regional structure is now in place with eight Regional Directors accountable for all aspects of service delivery in their regions, including relationships with non-government organisations.

The new organisational model enables the Department to focus more on providing greater support to facilitating access to services, and has a greater capacity to match clients to early intervention and prevention services. It will also see a greater focus on identifying service capacity, and ensuring that community supports provided to clients are equitable and sustainable.

The Department is now using the integrated regional structure to put in place more systematic intake and referral arrangements, as well as service planning and improvement with the non-government sector. This includes more structured approaches to monitoring and vacancy management of services delivered by Government and non-government providers.

The Department's regional model brings together all facets of its business and sees decisions about individual clients and services being made with a full understanding of the needs of local communities, individual circumstances and the best ways to use resources.

14. Mr Primrose asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

What is the Department doing in terms of providing respite support to people with a disability and their families? (Hansard page 33)

ANSWER

Government funding for respite care has doubled since 1996, with a total investment of over \$122 million in 2003/2004. Of this, \$58 million is from Home and Community Care funding and \$64 million is Disability funding.

The Government has recognised the increasing demand for respite services by allocating an additional \$11.2 million over the next four years for the provision of additional flexible respite for young people with a disability and their carers. This includes an extra \$1.6 million in 2003/04 and \$3.2 million per annum for the following three years.

This funding has been allocated for the provision of an additional 400 flexible respite care places for young people with a disability and their carers, to be delivered annually across all regions of the Department from January 2004.

Priorities for the additional funding include: a prevention and early intervention focus, families with children and younger people with a disability and investment in innovative models to achieve goals of prevention by supporting families to enhance their caring capacity.

The Department aims to ensure that people with a disability and their families have access to responsive and flexible respite services.

In total, the Department funds over approximately 230 organisations to deliver respite services. It is estimated that in 2002 approximately 47% of respite services funded under the Commonwealth, State and Territory Disability Agreement were centre-based

In 2002/2003, through the Home and Community Care Program, respite services such as in-home respite and centre-based day care assisted around 17,000 frail older people and younger people with a disability.

On any given "snapshot" day, there are around 619 people with a disability accessing respite through the disability services program. This respite may include flexible respite such as host family, in-home, overnight, weekend or centre-based.

The Department will continue to develop and provide a range of flexible respite options and supports to carers, frail older people and those with a disability throughout NSW.

15. Mr Primrose asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

Can you explain what is happening with home and community care funding, and when growth money will roll out to services? (Hansard page 33)

ANSWER

The 2002/2003 HACC growth amount of \$32 million is in the process of being distributed.

\$21 million was made available for new HACC services, service development and service re-development across NSW this year. Purchasing of these additional services is currently underway. Notifications to providers were made towards the end of October 2003 and already the first quarterly payment has been made to service providers who have signed funding agreements. This group represents 75% of the total growth dollars. Further payments will proceed as soon as funding agreements are returned from service organisations.

The remainder was allocated to service providers to cover staff and other cost increases, to maintain existing services.

The 2003/2004 NSW HACC State Plan describes the priorities for the use of growth funds and the new services to be targeted, in line with regional planning priorities.

While awaiting the endorsement of this year's State Plan by the Federal Minister, the Department has begun the process of determining service provider allocations of growth funding. Requests for Expressions of Interest were advertised in newspapers on November 10. The remaining growth funding will be allocated through selective tender and direct allocation processes.

NSW HACC funds in 2003/2004 will be \$386.221 million in recurrent as well as some one-off funding taking the total spending to more than \$400 million.

16. Mr Primrose asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

Can you tell us what the department's commitment is to supported accommodation services for people with a disability? (Hansard page 33)

ANSWER

The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care has allocated approximately \$446 million in 2003/2004 to provide permanent accommodation for people with a disability in NSW.

Since 1995, this Government has expanded investment in accommodation services for people with a disability by over \$232 million. This investment will be further supplemented in 2003/2004 as relocation and support programs continue.

In 2003/2004, the Department will provide around \$180 million to non-government organisations to deliver a range of accommodation options across the state. In addition, the Department will spend more than \$260 million on directly providing accommodation services.

The Department is introducing a range of reforms that are designed to improve the targeting and responsiveness of accommodation services for current residents, and new clients seeking to access the system.

In 2003/2004, the Department will implement a new vacancy management approach to manage placement of clients in its own group homes, to ensure that the accommodation provided is well planned and responsive to individual needs.

The Department is also developing an integrated approach to vacancy management that will enable a more efficient use of vacancies as they arise across all government and non-government services state-wide. This will allow people currently in accommodation to relocate as their needs or personal circumstances change.

The establishment of accommodation and respite units as part of DADHC's new regional structure will further ensure local planning of accommodation requirements. It will help with the matching of services to individual need, focus on improving outcomes for residents, and create equitable access to accommodation services by those who need them most. The accommodation and respite units in the regions will allow for systematic reviews of accommodation requirements at a local level and better links with services provided by non-government organisations.

17. Mr Primrose asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

Can you provide us with some detailed information about the department's initiatives for young school leavers? (Hansard page 33)

ANSWER

There are 3,138 people with a disability in the Adult Training Learning and Support program (ATLAS) and Post School Options programs. A strategy to improve and reform ATLAS and Post School Options was announced in the 2002/2003 Budget. This is supported by an additional \$36 million in funding over four years. It is a priority for the reform process to achieve more consistent standards of service across service providers and across regions.

The Department recently undertook a comprehensive assessment process for ATLAS participants and for school leavers seeking access to the program. 2002 school-leavers who were found to be work ready were referred directly to appropriate Commonwealth employment services.

A series of working groups involving advocacy organisations, service providers and peak organisations recently started meeting to provide input into how to improve transition programs for school leavers with a disability.

At the ATLAS State Conference held in August 2003 in Albury, the Department discussed progress on the reform strategy with service providers, including the success of the pilot projects supporting young people to make the transition to employment.

The registration process for young people with a disability leaving school in 2003 has now commenced. For the first time, the Department is trialling electronic registration and referral, through the secure electronic referral system developed for the Better Service Delivery Program. It is hoped that this approach will in time allow for more regular assessment of the needs of participants, allowing better tailoring of support to their needs.

18. Mr Primrose asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

(a) (i) Can you tell us what progress has been made by the department to improve its funding arrangements with non-government providers?

(ii) When are these improvements expected to take effect?

(b) Given that we have had the summit here for people with a disability in New South Wales: Can you tell us what is happening in relation to nutrition,? (Hansard page 33)

(a) i In 2003/04, the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care's budget of \$1.275 billion includes \$633 million on grants and subsidies to our community partners. This is an increase of \$65 million or 11% on the 2002/03 budget.

The NSW Government's commitment to non-government organisations was clearly demonstrated in its response to the salary increases to *Social and Community Services Award*, determined by the NSW Industrial Relations Commission in late 2001. The Government worked with representatives of the community sector to develop a package of assistance totaling \$290 million over five years.

This package has resulted in growth of between 14% and 26% for most providers over the last two years, including indexation for those years.

ii In addition to the roll out of funds for new services, nearly every organisation funded by the Department will receive additional funds in 2003/04.

Indexation for services funded under HACC, Disability and Ageing programs will be passed on to providers in January 2004 and backdated to 1 July 2003. Providers will be advised of the rate applying to their services in December. The amount provided in indexation will depend on the contribution of the Commonwealth.

A new regional structure for the Department is now in place. The Department is working on a number of concurrent funding activities in 2003/04, including reviewing the funding base for all organisations following a series of complex adjustments to payments over the last two years. This work is well advanced and regional staff will soon be in a position to talk with those organisations where corrections to the base may be required.

(b) The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care has developed the Ensuring Good Nutrition Policy in consultation with the Nutritional Health Expert Advisory Group. This is a specialist group established by the Government to provide expert advice and assist with the development of this policy.

In order to develop an informed and comprehensive policy, the Government undertook a state-wide health and nutrition survey to identify clients with high nutritional support needs and to obtain a better understanding of nutritional health and safety needs for people with a disability.

The Ensuring Good Nutrition policy is underpinned by a strong commitment to prevention and early intervention. It aims to ensure that any signs of deteriorating nutritional health are identified and addressed before they develop into serious problems.

The policy will be implemented across Government and non-government services, supported by the necessary resources to ensure its effectiveness, including training and resource material, and the establishment of multi-disciplinary nutrition support groups within each region.

19. Mr Primrose asked Ms Alison, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability Services & Home Care—

What mechanisms are available to assist caseworkers who are involved in placing people from non-English-speaking backgrounds in nursing homes? (Hansard page 33)

ANSWER

The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care does not administer residential care services for elderly people.

APPROVED

The Hon Carmel Tebbutt, MLC
Minister for Community Services
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Youth