

**Questions on Notice taken at the Budget Estimates Committee
1 September 2006**

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to Mike Allen, Director-General, Department of Housing (Page 6 Committee Transcript).

- I refer to your budget media release of 6 June 2006. What proportion of the \$712.07 million is Commonwealth funding and why is this figure not acknowledged as part of the CSHA bilateral agreement?

Answer:

The Press release provides a brief overview of the budget. The Budget Commentary on the Housing Policy and Assistance Program, provides a more detailed view of the Department's budget and includes a detailed summary of the amount of Commonwealth funding provided for 2006-07.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to Mike Allen, Director-General, Department of Housing (Page 7 Committee Transcript).

- During the life of the current bilateral Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement has any Commonwealth funding been withheld? If so, why was it withheld and for how long was it withheld?

Answer:

No.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to Mike Allen, Director-General, Department of Housing (Page 8 Committee Transcript).

- Is it possible just to answer the question as to whether the eligibility criteria has changed for people seeking to go onto the waiting list for public housing?

Answer:

Income eligibility criteria were changed from July 2006 to reflect cost of living increases.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to the Hon Diane Beamer MP, Acting Minister for Housing (Page 8 Committee Transcript).

- Has the number of properties owned by the department declined since 1999?

Answer:

No.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to the Hon Diane Beamer MP, Acting Minister for Housing (Page 8 Committee Transcript).

- In the event that they have declined, can that decline please be explained? Can you explain why the average increase in the total number of premises under departmental management—and this includes public, Aboriginal, community and crisis housing—has been only 508 per annum in the six years from 1999 to 2004?

Answer:

Information concerning the number of properties constructed, purchased and leased is in the Department of Housing Annual Report.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to the Hon Diane Beamer MP, Acting Minister for Housing (Page 9 Committee Transcript).

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Are you projecting that in the next 12 months you will increase that amount of housing that is under departmental management by around 1,500?

Ms DIANE BEAMER: On management or ownership?

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Management—public housing, Aboriginal housing, community and crisis housing.

Ms DIANE BEAMER: I think I would have to take that on notice because there are other people there as well.

Answer:

Details concerning the supply of housing in 2006/07 are contained in the Budget Commentary.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to the Hon Diane Beamer MP, Acting Minister for Housing (Page 9 Committee Transcript).

- In the 2005-06 budget the former housing Minister announced that 715 new homes would be built, bought or leased and a further 835 homes currently under construction would be completed. Did this occur? That was for the last financial year. Did you build 715 homes? Did you lease 835 homes?

Answer:

The total number of properties built, bought or leased exceeded the target.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to Mike Allen, Director-General, Department of Housing (Page 10 Committee Transcript).

- I have broken it into two parts and the first part of the question I am now asking you is, rather than put a figure to you, can you tell me how many houses you built last year?

- I will ask the second part of the question. Can you tell me how many houses the department bought last year?
- How many new leases were taken out last year?

Answer:

Information concerning the number of properties constructed, purchased and leased will be available in the 2005/06 Annual Report.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to the Hon Diane Beamer MP, Acting Minister for Housing (Page 10 Committee Transcript).

- How many houses, townhouses and individual units owned by the department have a value estimated at over \$1 million?

Answer:

The Department of Housing has previously responded to this question on several occasions in response to questions asked by the Hon David Oldfield, MLC. As at December 2005, the Department had 14 properties.

Question:

Chair to the Hon Diane Beamer MP, Acting Minister for Housing (Page 14 Committee Transcript).

- I asked you specifically how many consultancies commenced in the last financial year and how many have commenced in this financial year?

Answer:

Information concerning consultancies in the year 2004-2005 is available on pages 147-148 of the Department of Housing's 2004-2005 Annual Report. The 2005-2006 Annual Report will be published later this year.

Question:

Chair to Mike Allen, Director-General, Department of Housing (Page 14 Committee Transcript).

- Are consultancies under way at the moment on the housing and human services accord, aspects of reshaping public housing, and reviews of various tenant participation initiatives? If there are consultancies relating to those items, who is undertaking those consultancies and what are their objectives or terms of inquiry?

Answer:

There are currently two consultancies underway for the Housing and Human Services Accord. The first Accord consultancy is being undertaken by Age Communications Pty Ltd to develop a joint assessment framework. The second is being undertaken by ARTD Consulting to develop agreed cross agency performance indicators.

Age Communications Pty Ltd is also undertaking a consultancy in relation to reshaping public housing investigating tenure arrangements.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to Mike Allen, Director-General, Department of Housing (Page 15 Committee Transcript).

- Why is the tenant at No. 108A Derwent Street Glebe, who has applied for a transfer, being continually offered relocation to the dwellings that have stairs when the tenant has specifically requested a ground floor dwelling because the tenant suffers from crippling arthritis?

Answer:

The tenant has been offered one property in Glebe. The Department was not previously aware that the tenant had arthritis. The Department has recently spoken with the tenant and has requested that she provide further information about her medical conditions. The Department will continue to endeavour to locate a suitable dwelling for this tenant.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to Mike Allen, Director-General, Department of Housing (Page 19 Committee Transcript).

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Are you aware of claims that children were playing on land adjacent to these properties without appropriate safeguards being taken?

Mr ALLEN: I am not aware of those claims, no.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Would you investigate whether those claims have been received by the department?

Mr ALLEN: I am comfortable to take that as a question on notice. Could you give me a little more specific information about which properties and on what particular occasion?

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: I am asking whether claims have been made to the department. Either they have been made or they have not been made.

Mr ALLEN: Whether any general complaints have been made in that regard?

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: About children playing on land adjacent to those properties without appropriate safeguards being taken. That is not a general complaint; it is a specific complaint. I am asking you to take on notice whether that type of complaint has been received by the department.

Mr ALLEN: I am comfortable to take that question on notice. I am simply trying to be very clear, because you said "those properties" and I thought you were referring to specific properties.

Answer:

It was reported to the Department that children were seen throwing projectiles at the properties being prepared for demolition and trying to access these properties through the protective fencing. The Department and the Police followed up these claims with the parents of the children allegedly involved.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to Mike Allen, Director-General, Department of Housing (Page 20 Committee Transcript).

1. **The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK:** How much is the Gordon estate demolition and relocation program, including the purchase of properties and the transfer of tenants, estimated to cost?
2. **The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK:** In terms of the costs being incurred this year, is there any estimate of what costs will need to be funded in the 2006-07 year?
3. **The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK:** And also the source of those funds—which part of the housing budget those funds will come from?

Answer:

1. & 2. The total cost of the project will depend on a number of factors including the cost of additional dwelling and return on dwellings sold as part of the project which are largely determined by market forces.

3. Department of Housing Capital Funds

Question:

The Hon Charlie Lynn to the Hon Diane Beamer, acting Minister for Housing (Page 21 Committee Transcript).

- Minister, how many refurbished houses have required further repairs due to vandalism prior to occupation?

Answer:

The Department's maintenance reporting system is able to identify whether work completed was required due to vandalism, it cannot identify whether vandalism occurred prior to or after other maintenance work.

Question:

The Hon Charlie Lynn to the Hon Diane Beamer, acting Minister for Housing (Page 21 Committee Transcript).

- Could you also advise how many vacant properties were completely destroyed in the 2005-06 financial year?

Answer:

In 2005/06, just 0.32% of public housing properties.

Question:

The Hon Charlie Lynn to the Hon Diane Beamer, acting Minister for Housing (Page 22 Committee Transcript).

- We would also like, if it is possible, for you to provide us with a monthly breakdown of vacant properties by area and location for a 12-month period, and a further breakdown of those properties identified for sale or refurbishment programs should also be possible. Are you able to provide this information?

Answer:

The information to answer this question in full is not readily available, and the time involved in obtaining this information is high, and considered an inappropriate diversion of resources.

The number of properties that are vacant varies from month to month, for a variety of reasons including because properties are in the process of being prepared for reletting to applicants on the public housing register, or they may have been identified for either sale or redevelopment into more suitable accommodation.

The Real Estate Institute figures, as at June 2006, show the vacancy rate for private rentals in Sydney was 2.3%. The vacancy rate for public housing in Sydney at that time was just 1.3%.

Regarding the identification of properties for sale or refurbishment, the Department regularly reviews its assets to determine their cost-effectiveness, viability, and long-term benefits to assess whether they meet the current and projected future needs of clients. Decisions regarding individual property sales, purchases and refurbishments are based on these assessments, as well as local real estate market conditions.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to Mike Allen, Director-General of the Department of Housing (Page 24 Committee Transcript).

- How many tenancies have ended as a result of gaol?

Answer:

In 2005-2006 a total of 319 tenancies were vacated due to the tenant being imprisoned.

Question:

The Hon Catherine Cusack to the Hon Diane Beamer, acting Minister for Housing (Page 24 Committee Transcript).

- With respect to the Gordon housing estate, how many houses have been purchased in Dubbo to replace the Gordon housing estate?

Answer:

7 properties were recently purchased by the Aboriginal Housing Office.