

UNCORRECTED PROOF

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 2

Friday 28 October 2011

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES, WOMEN

The Committee met at 2.00 p.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. M. A. Ficarra (Chair)

The Hon. J. Barham
The Hon. D. Clarke
The Hon. S. Cotsis
The Hon. P. Green (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. S. Mitchell
The Hon. A. Searle
The Hon. H. Westwood

PRESENT

The Hon. Pru Goward, *Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women*

NSW Department of Family and Community Services

Mr J. Moore, *Acting Director General*

Mr A. Hunter, *Deputy Director General, Ageing Disability and Home Care*

Mr M. Allen, *Chief Executive, Housing NSW*

Ms A. Campbell, *Acting Chief Executive, Community Services*

Ms C. Howlett, *Assistant Director General, Strategy Governance and Portfolio Management*

Ms N. Lawless, *Manager, Violence Prevention Coordination Unit, Office for Women's Policy*

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Ms V. D'Adam, *Deputy Director General, Strategic Policy and Coordination Group*

Department of Education and Community

Ms K. Boland, *Children's Guardian*

Aboriginal Housing Office

Mr M. Allen, *Acting Chief Executive*

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**

CHAIR: I declare this hearing for the inquiry into the budget estimates 2011-12 open to the public. I welcome Minister Pru Goward and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Family and Community Services and the portfolio of Women. Before we commence I will comment on some procedural matters. In accordance with the Legislative Council's guidelines for the broadcasting of proceedings, only Committee members and witnesses may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photographs. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee you must take responsibility for what you publish or what interpretation you place on anything that is said before the Committee. Guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available.

Any messages from attendees in the public gallery should be delivered through the Chamber and support staff or the Committee clerks. Minister, I remind you and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers whilst at the table. The Committee has agreed that the Family and Community Services portfolio will be examined between 2.00 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. and the portfolio of Women will be examined between 3.30 p.m. and 4.30 p.m. Transcripts of this hearing will be available on the web tomorrow morning. The House has resolved that answers to questions on notice must be provided within 21 days. I remind everyone that mobile telephones should be turned off or at least on silent and away from microphones. Mr Jim Moore and Mr Alistair Hunter have already been sworn to provide evidence to previous budget estimate hearings.

VICKI D'ADAM, Deputy Director General, Strategic Policy and Coordination Group, Department of Premier and Cabinet, and

ANNE CAMPBELL, Acting Chief Executive, Community Services Division, Department of Family and Community Services, affirmed and examined;

MICHAEL ALLEN, Chief Executive, Housing NSW Division, Department of Family and Community Services, and Acting Chief Executive, Aboriginal Housing Office, and

KERRY BOLAND, NSW Children's Guardian, Department of Education and Communities, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: I declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Family and Community Services and Women open for examination.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Minister, the Government's wages policy is estimated to save \$2 billion over the next four years. What savings will be delivered out of your portfolio this financial year and for each of the financial years in the forward estimates?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Thank you for the question. There are a couple of parts to it. Obviously, we have a \$1.9 billion expenditure gap over the next four years that we need to meet.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Minister, my question was about the savings figures. What percentage of the \$2 billion will be given up by your agencies?

Ms PRU GOWARD: That, in part, will be the result of some redundancies that have to be provided for, and they are provided for under the 5,000 overall government voluntary redundancies scheme.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: How many redundancies in your agencies?

Ms PRU GOWARD: One hundred and seventy.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: In dollar figures, how much of the \$2 billion will be given up out of your agencies?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I might ask Mr Jim Moore to talk about that across the cluster.

Mr MOORE: I am not in a position to quantify that for you here, but I am happy to take the question away and supply information on notice. The savings that will be identified there are savings against projected wage increases higher than 2½ per cent. With your indulgence, I will go away and make the calculation against our wages bill.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Of course. Minister, you mentioned 170 redundancies have been identified. Is that just in Family and Community Services?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Yes, that is in the cluster.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Are you able to identify where those positions will come from?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I can identify where they will not be coming from. They will not be coming from front-line positions.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: What do you mean by front-line positions, Minister?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Caseworker positions.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: No caseworker positions will be deleted?

Ms PRU GOWARD: No.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: There will be no net reduction in caseworkers over the next four years?

Ms PRU GOWARD: No. Mr Jim Moore might expand on that.

Mr MOORE: If I could clarify that the redundancies do not in any way relate to caseworkers at all.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I understood the Minister's answer.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Minister, can you give an estimate of the savings provided by repressing the fortnightly allowances for people who adopt children from out-of-home care with a \$1,500 lump sum payment?

Ms PRU GOWARD: The savings expected are not substantial. Of course, the hundreds of millions of dollars we need to save to meet that \$1.9 billion gap over the next four years that we have been left will substantially come out of improved efficiencies within the department and improved contractual arrangements, and in that sense this is a very minor part of it, although I am aware that for people who might be anticipating adoption there will be some who will be disappointed by that. The reason we decided to go ahead with this measure was that it was quite clear from the practices of the past Government that there was not a large increase in adoptions following the introduction of that particular allowance that equated adoption with foster care, and that what was really holding back the number of adoptions in this State was incredible red tape and bureaucratic processes around that. So that is where we have moved our focus.

But we did think it was important to recognise that people who adopt children do so because they love them and want to make them part of their families. Might I also add that we have grandfathered not only, of course, all existing adoptive parents who have adopted out-of-home care children but also anybody who began the process in any way before the day of the budget. So that should, I think, give some comfort to people who felt they had begun on one basis and would be finishing on another. There remains the fact that people can wait nine years to work through the court processes, and indeed there are more international adoptions than there are domestic out-of-home care adoptions in this State—between twice and 10 times as many in any one year—because of the incredible red tape. I remind the Committee that for international adoption they pay thousands of dollars and they are involved in considerable negotiation, and we do not give people with international adoptions any allowance at all, and there are still more of them. That reinforces the idea that this is actually about the love for a child.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Minister, you would also be aware though that children who have been in out-of-home care are usually a little older than children who are being adopted from overseas, and often those children have been abused and have very significant psychological and social needs.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Yes.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I would assume there has been some analysis of the cost that parents will bear for ongoing care, particularly psychological care, for those children as a result of the abuse that they have suffered.

Ms PRU GOWARD: We are going to prioritise children with disabilities in out-of-home care and with high needs. They will be prioritised through the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. So I do not consider that people adopting children with high needs will be at all disadvantaged by this measure, because they will still have those additional needs met by our cluster, by the Department of Family and Community Services.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: So is the department going to provide the funding, or directly provide counselling for these children?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I can get Mr Jim Moore to describe the technicality of that process, but that is certainly the intention of the change.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: What consultation was there with families, both foster carers and adoptive parents, before you made this decision?

Ms PRU GOWARD: There was informal consultation, but I have to say that we did not have a formal consultation over it. That often is the case, as you would know, with budget measures. We considered that this was in the interests of a sustainable system and because of the very strong evidence about bureaucratic difficulties in adopting children in New South Wales, my argument, and I think the department agreed, was that this would not inhibit adoption numbers. What would inhibit adoption numbers was persistence with processes.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: You confirm that families and agencies were not consulted before you made this decision?

Ms PRU GOWARD: There certainly were informal consultations.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: What feedback did you get from that consultation?

Ms PRU GOWARD: That most people adopt children because they love the child and would see money very much as a secondary consideration. You might note that in other States an allowance is not paid for children in these circumstances and the adoption rates are no different. I certainly got the message from adoptive parents that what really mattered to them was us getting the paperwork out of the way so they can actually achieve it. I did understand that there were children with high needs and that is why we are able to say that we will still retain a capacity within Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care [ADHC] to ensure that their needs are met.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Of course, parents may not adopt for money, but would you accept that changing the \$16,000 annual payment to a one-off \$1,500 payment would leave those families seriously out of pocket?

Ms PRU GOWARD: It is \$1,500 a year.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Yes, but it still leaves them out of pocket.

Ms PRU GOWARD: No it does not because, as I said, anybody who has not adopted a child in out-of-home care but who got that process underway before budget day will receive the full allowance. So they are not out of pocket.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: New families who choose to go down this path will be out of pocket. Would you accept that?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I think that is the wrong expression. They entered the adoption process on a completely different basis. I hope that what we can do is get the red tape out of the way so that they actually are able to achieve an adoption. That would be a good start.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I understand that the majority of the Aboriginal Housing Office housing portfolio actually is managed by Housing NSW, is that correct?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Yes.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Does this operate on a fee-for-service arrangement? If so, what is that arrangement?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I will ask Mike Allen to address that.

Mr ALLEN: Yes, Housing NSW provides a fee-for-service arrangement with the Aboriginal Housing Office [AHO] for the delivery of tenancy management services. I cannot recall the fee off the top of my head. I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Is it a percentage of rents received or something like that?

Mr ALLEN: It is a percentage of rents, but it is a complex formula and I would much prefer to give you an answer on notice that covers all of those complexities.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Given the transfer or the split of responsibilities between housing NSW and the Department of Finance and Services, I understand that properties and some staff are being transferred. Will any of the fee-for-service money for managing Aboriginal Housing Office properties go to Finance and Services for the maintenance of those properties or will that remain with Housing?

Mr ALLEN: Under the asset split arrangements, Housing NSW will still provide the tenancy management services for AHO's property portfolio and the Department Finance and Services will provide the repairs, maintenance and other asset-related services within the same funding envelope.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: When you answer the question you have taken on notice about the fee-for-service arrangement, can you also provide an answer as to how that fee or money will be disaggregated between Housing NSW for tenancy-related services, and Finance and Services for property management?

Mr ALLEN: Some of those financial arrangements between the two departments are still being finalised. I might not be in a position within the 21 days to give you an absolute answer on that. I certainly can give you as accurate an answer as we can at the point in time that we answer the question.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Just to be clear, the split has been embarked on without these details being worked out?

Mr ALLEN: No, the split has been embarked on with the services between the two departments being negotiated in a fine degree of detail within the existing financial envelope for the operation of Housing NSW and the Aboriginal Housing Office. Funding is available for that and the in-principle agreement has been reached around those details.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: You will provide the details you have in answer to the question on notice?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, we can provide that information. It is important for me to reinforce though, as I said, that the arrangements are still within the existing funding envelopes. There is no substantial change to the services that are provided nor necessarily to the arrangements between the various departments as to how those services are funded.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Given that the transfer of asset management to the Department of Finance and Services is occurring, what measures have you put in place to ensure that there are linkages between housing policy and property, tenancy management and asset services to make sure that people do not fall between the cracks?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I have coverage of housing policy. We have a charter that sets out the responsibilities of Minister Pearce and me. Our two offices work very closely and that charter sets out the way the two departments also manage their responsibilities. It is important to recognise that the reason I, as Minister for Family and Community Services, have now incorporated housing is the importance of recognising that housing is the significant path of homelessness, child protection, domestic violence and so many other issues that affect vulnerable people. Basically, my job is to look after the tenancy aspects of housing and the job of the Minister for Finance and Services is to ensure that the asset is well managed, and that means repairs as well as extending the supply.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: You said "extending the supply". Does that mean that Housing NSW no longer will have any responsibility for the construction of new housing stock?

Ms PRU GOWARD: No, but policy decisions are made by the Minister for Finance and Services. Mike Allen could give more detail on how we are planning to do actual—

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: What I am trying to understand is who will have prime responsibility for building new housing stock?

Mr ALLEN: The Department of Finance and Services will be undertaking all asset-related services. Repairs, maintenance and the construction of new housing stock are all included in that.

Ms PRU GOWARD: But we have a policy impact on that, obviously.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: You have been Minister for eight months; do you still believe that your department and the courts unnecessarily remove children from their families?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Part of the reforms we have embarked upon have been to ensure that when possible we can restore children to their families, and that the courts have available to them a greater range of orders so that they do not necessarily see removal of a child until the age of 18 as the first policy option.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Do you believe that that is what the department has been doing? Has that been the department's first response to a child in—

Ms PRU GOWARD: You would have to say that a 15 per cent increase per annum in the number of children removed when the population was not growing anything like that was evidence that we were not employing enough of a variety of other means to ensure that we kept children safe.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Are you proposing to put a cap on the number of children being removed from home and going into out-of-home care?

Ms PRU GOWARD: No. The population is growing. Under the State Plan we are concerned about reducing the percentage of children being removed.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: But that was your policy going into the election.

Ms PRU GOWARD: No.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Your policy actually states:

Stopping the growth in the number of children being placed in out-of-home care. This will see the rate of children removed from homes capped at a maximum of 9.9 children per 1000 children until 2015.

Have you changed your policy since you have been in government?

Ms PRU GOWARD: If it is about a rate, a cap, we are aiming to reduce the rate of removal but, in fact, there is population growth. So the absolute number might not be reflected.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: But before the election you said there would be a cap. Is that still your policy or has it changed?

Ms PRU GOWARD: We are seeking to reduce the percentage of children in out-of-home care. I suspect that if we got to 9.5 we would consider that to be a considerable achievement in the first term.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: What happens when you reach the cap?

Ms PRU GOWARD: When we got to 9.5 we would then be looking at our systems and seeing if we could do better. I remind the Committee that even at 9.5 the rate of removal of children in this State would still be significantly higher than in any other State. Jurisdictions in other countries have significantly higher rates than our rates for minimal intervention.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Minister, when you talk about a cap that means you stop. Are you saying when you get to 9.5 you will not remove any more children who are at risk? What does a cap mean?

Ms PRU GOWARD: A cap means that is the target.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: What happens when you get to the target?

Ms PRU GOWARD: A cap is a word that can be interpreted in a variety of ways. You have chosen to interpret it in one way and my view is that a cap is a target.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: What do you mean by a cap? What happens when we get to the cap that you referred to in your policy leading up to the election?

Ms PRU GOWARD: When you get to a rate of removal of 9.5 children per 100,000 you are then able to say that we are now getting more money, we are now making available more money in early intervention prevention, can we further reform our policies concerning early intervention and prevention practices and court practices to see how much further we can go. As I say, 9.5 is still very high.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: With the early intervention programs and intensive family restoration programs that you have talked about, do you believe that your department has a sufficient budget to achieve your targets, as you call them, or your caps?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I believe that we can achieve this over a four-year term if we have the right systems in place, if we have the right people in place and if we have the right policies in place.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Do you have any comments to make on the Victorian Ombudsman's report on child protection released earlier this week?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I did not hear.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I asked whether or not you had any comments to make on the Victorian Ombudsman's report on child protection released earlier this week?

Ms PRU GOWARD: No.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Do you know about the report?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Yes, but I do not consider it is my business.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: You do not think it has any relevance at all to New South Wales?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I am quite busy enough running New South Wales. If you would like to give me a specific proposition you would like me to talk or think about I am happy to do that.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: He found that a practice had developed where the drive to meet numerical targets has overshadowed the interest of children despite evidence that they might be at risk. Are you concerned that setting numerical targets will put children in serious danger?

Ms PRU GOWARD: No, because there is absolutely no way we would not remove a child who was in danger. I have always made that very clear. What we believe, and I think is generally viewed as practice, is that we are removing children where restoration orders could be more widely used, and with earlier intervention prevention, alternative dispute resolution and intensive family support, we could reduce that rate without exposing one child to risk.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: You are giving a guarantee that under your policy no child will be returned to or left in a dangerous or risky situation, is that the guarantee you are giving us?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I am guaranteeing that we are going to embark on a system of reforms that should ensure that children will not be removed until they are at risk of significant harm and we will not be allowing children to stay in unsafe situations. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Minister, considering that 35 per cent of young people are homeless within the first year they leave care, what mechanisms has the Government initiated to achieve the stated targets of reducing the numbers of New South Wales homeless by 7 per cent and the number of rough sleepers by 25 per cent by 2013?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Obviously, care leaving is a very fraught situation for almost every jurisdiction and in this one it is no different. They are more at risk of homelessness, more at risk of entering the juvenile justice system, more at risk of teenage pregnancy, more at risk of unemployment, more at risk of continuing the cycle of disadvantage from which they came. That is why it is important to seek to reduce the removal of children in the first place. I take your point that we do need to address homelessness for this group of young people particularly. We do provide a significant amount of money in assisting them set up accommodation when

they leave care and we do seek to develop care plans whenever that is possible. I might ask Anne Campbell to give you more on that.

Ms CAMPBELL: I guess there are a number of key areas in response to that question. The first is that educational outcomes for young people in out-of-home care can strongly influence their outcomes going forward. The Act allows us to continue to make financial payments to a young person who has turned 18 and is due to be discharged from care. One of the key issues is about the development of leaving care plans. Clearly, an area is around accommodation. During 2009-10 community services allocated \$1.6 million to support young people who have left care—one-off financial assistance for items to assist them in establishing their independence, and contact with their family. There obviously is also specific specialist after-care services that include services for Aboriginal young people. These services work with care leavers to assist them in accessing a range of supports including accommodation, health care, legal advice, financial assistance, information about available resources, services and counselling.

For young people with a disability who are likely to have significant support needs case planning to address leaving care starts a couple of years before they leave care and it is carried out with the Ageing Disability and Home Care division of the Department of Family and Community Services. There is an existing memorandum of understanding between the two divisions and we have developed specific procedural guidance to strengthen our case workers' practice in relation to leaving care support for young people with a disability. In addition, a number of agencies within the Department of Family and Community Services, including Housing NSW, Age and Disability and Home Care, work in partnership to develop guidelines in relation to the leaving care program to maximise outcomes for young people leaving care.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Are you able to provide me with the amount of money that has been allocated to this, considering the poor delivery of leaving care plans up to date? How has that been improved?

Ms CAMPBELL: I do not have that detail here today but I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: The next question relates to non-indigenous children and young people who are currently in statutory out-of-home care: Would you have a number on that?

Ms PRU GOWARD: The total number of children in out-of-home care is 17,893.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: The next question is on housing.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Sorry, 17,896.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: In housing I found it confusing. In Budget Paper No. 3 there is reference to the number of clients who receive assistance under specialist homelessness services. The numbers are all the same for 2009. Do you have page 4-9? It is 27,600 across the page for 2010-11 for estimated actual. I was wondering if you could explain what an "estimated actual" is? The forecast is 27,600. Does this refer to the number of individual clients, or the number of requests for service?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I will leave that to Mr Allen.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Budget Paper No. 3, page 4-9 says:

People who experience crisis are supported to recover and to resume self-sufficient living.
... Clients receiving assistance under specialist homelessness services with only one support period.

Mr ALLEN: I understand the figure of 27,000 to reflect adults who have entered into the specialist homelessness service system: for example, people who have gone into a refuge and the actual numbers for those years are reflected there. Where you have an estimated actual it is because all of the annual reporting and data, I presume, has not been collated. I will take that question on notice.

Mr MOORE: I can answer that. Estimated actual refers to the fact that it is a comparison slightly before the end of the financial year, it is a very close to actual number compared to the budget forecast. There is a forecast for 2010-11 and then there is an estimated actual.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: They are the same?

Mr ALLEN: The budget papers are adjusted just before the end of the financial year, so we are not in a position to confirm the final actual.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: So you have kept them all the same until it is updated and finalised?

Mr ALLEN: Our estimate is that they would be the same.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Considering that the previous year was 27,600, can you explain how the actual for 2009-10 was 31,901? I am still not clear whether these are individual clients and whether you record those numbers seeking service.

Mr ALLEN: We will need to take the first part of your question on notice. My understanding is that the number refers to the adult head of household. It does not refer to the total number of people who may have received assistance within the household. We can certainly clarify that definition as part of our question on notice.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: A note on the page says, "This indicator shows the effectiveness of homelessness services in helping clients become independent". I could not work out how it did. I believe more clarity is required. The other issue is a regional breakdown—where the services are, how they sit against regional homelessness action plans. I am happy for that to be taken on notice too.

Mr ALLEN: Yes, we can take that on notice. There are geographic breakdowns of those numbers.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: My next question relates to Budget Paper No. 3, page 4-27, the Aboriginal Housing Office and funds for new dwellings—\$13 million to provide 30 new dwellings and then \$16.7 million allocated to provide 35 new dwellings in remote areas. Can you clarify that any further?

Mr ALLEN: The two figures are shown separately. The \$13 million refers to the Aboriginal Housing Office for what we call Business As Usual Program. It is normal capital supply for a construction program that occurs on an annual basis. The figure below that, the \$16.7 million, refers to additional new housing—the new supply that is funded specifically by the remote Indigenous national partnership with the Commonwealth.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: And New South Wales's contribution is \$477,000 per house, is that right?

Mr ALLEN: I am not sure where you are referring to that figure.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: It is \$16.7 million divided by 35, which makes it \$477,000 per dwelling.

Mr ALLEN: That program is a fully Commonwealth-funded program.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: The \$13 million is the New South Wales program?

Mr ALLEN: That is right.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Per dwelling it is \$433,000?

Mr ALLEN: That would be approximately correct, yes.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: That is structure only, not land or land and house?

Mr ALLEN: It can be a combination. In some cases construction occurs on land that is already owned. In other cases it would include the acquisition of the land as well as the construction of the dwelling.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Would you be able to clarify if I put further questions on notice about that?

Mr ALLEN: As much as the forward program is resolved, these figures are the dollars that are available and the dwelling numbers are the target numbers to be achieved. The program can move about during the course of the year depending on market conditions, such that acquisition might be the most appropriate

approach, otherwise new supply. There can be occasions for program changes during the course of the year for a variety of reasons. *[Time expired.]*

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Fathers groups such as Lone Fathers and Dads in Distress provide essential grassroots counselling and telephone support to single fathers in New South Wales who are in need of support and assistance. Does the Government provide any funding for these types of father advocacy groups? If so, which ones?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Do you mean within the child protection area?

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: No, just generally—fathers in a sole parenting situation.

Ms PRU GOWARD: We do obviously fund advocacy groups but we will take that on notice.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Yes, thank you. Yesterday I attended a Grandparents Day and was shocked to see how many grandparents have assumed responsibility as sole carer for their grandchildren. Minister, are you aware of how many grandparents are looking after their children's children in New South Wales? If so, what is the Government doing to assist these groups? I heard a lot of broken stories.

Ms PRU GOWARD: It is incredible to see grandparents taking on the care of sometimes very troubled little kids. It is a growing area of concern for us, as I am sure it was for the previous Government. I have not got the numbers. Ms Campbell may be able to provide them. They are certainly the fastest-growing group of kinship carers and they would make up the bulk of kinship carers. As you may know, kinship care is just over half of all care in New South Wales. They are a significant group. We have begun discussions with the Council on the Ageing [COTA] about better ways of supporting grandparents groups. We recognise they need respite and advice. Dealing with a teenager today is not what it was when they were looking after their own children. As well, sometimes they are managing very difficult relationships with the relinquishing parents who are either their children or their children-in-law.

We certainly recognise that more needs to be done. That is part of the reform that we are undertaking to stabilise the system and ensure that placements do not break down. A huge source of cost in the child protection area in out-of-home care is the breakdown of placements. There are children who have had 23 placements because they have not been able to be housed somewhere where they feel comfortable and welcome. Obviously kinship care is very good at breaking that but for grandparents there are huge challenges. In addition, they are often retirees on limited pensions. We need to make sure that they receive the family benefits that are available from the Commonwealth Government and do not keep letting their relinquishing parents keep that money. I will ask Ms Campbell whether she has numbers.

Ms CAMPBELL: No, we do not have specific numbers. As the Minister has said, grandparents would fall into a few of our key groups. They either would be kinship carers or could be receiving a supported care allowance. There certainly is more that we can do in that area. We are currently funding through Connecting Carers, which is an organisation that provides some training and support groups to both foster carers and kinship carers across New South Wales. In terms of specific numbers, I do not think we have that broken down in such fine detail.

Mr MOORE: We will endeavour through our various programs to identify, where we can, that the relationship is between a child and a grandparent. We will be able to give you some breakdown there. We will also see whether some broader data, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics, may be able to give you an indication. Not all grandparents who are caring for a child are within the Community Services database. We will do what we can to get you some further information.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Also the Family Court is another area.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I noted yesterday that for many of them, they thought they were going to have their best days in the twilight of their lives and they suddenly have a child. Some have mortgaged their homes to pay for legal advice to fight for the right of the child to have a safe place to live. It was devastating. So I would like some further information and I will follow up this issue in the other place.

Ms PRU GOWARD: It is a very important area.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: In your answer you referred to child protection, which brings up my passion of Bravehearts. As you would know, Minister, this could fall into the Education category and other categories. I am aware that child protection comes under your banner. Do you have any thoughts about relinquishing some funds to help Bravehearts implement an education program in schools?

Ms PRU GOWARD: We certainly have a variety of programs that we fund, for example, the Love Bites Program, which is about more respectful relationships and goes into a number of schools. For specific sexual assault advocacy, obviously there are care leaver organisations for whom that is appropriate. Ms Campbell may want to comment.

Ms CAMPBELL: I do not think there are any further, Minister.

Ms PRU GOWARD: That is perhaps the extent of our support.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Are you closing the door to any possible funding of the Bravehearts program in the near future?

Ms PRU GOWARD: It has to be directly linked to the statutory responsibility of keeping children safe, but do not think we do not do a lot in the sexual assault area—

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I was not suggesting that.

Ms PRU GOWARD: The Department of Health's forensic sexual assault kits and that sort of thing is very widespread and that is something that we need to be vigilant about because sexual assault remains such an enormous problem in some of our communities.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: You talked about respite care and the growing need for respite care, particularly for youth and disabled children. What is the Government doing to increase the opportunities to secure respite care in rural and regional areas?

Ms PRU GOWARD: That is an area of responsibility for Minister Constance in the portfolio of Ageing and Disability Services. But obviously the provision of respite for people who are providing care, particularly for children with complex needs, is certainly something that the Community Services department also has to take seriously.

Mr MOORE: In the disability component of the Family and Community Services portfolio there is a policy setting called Stronger Together 2, which is providing a very substantial growth over this and the next four years for a wide range of specialist disability services including respite, and it is tackling the issue of ensuring that respite is equitably available across the State. I have not got the material in front of me today to be able to give you about just what the components of Stronger Together 2—which is \$2 billion over those five years—are for respite and how those places may be distributed, particularly for rural and regional locations. But I am happy to take that on notice and get an answer from Minister Constance on that.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I am sorry about the crossover of portfolios—I think it is pretty close. While the Government transfers care from Family and Community Services to non-government organisations, what programs and funding has the Government initiated to maintain or provide out-of-home care services in regional areas of New South Wales?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Obviously the transfer has only just begun but there are a number of out-of-home care agencies, some of which are across New South Wales and they will manage placements in regional New South Wales. There are others that are much more localised and that would include, of course, a number of Aboriginal services that operate in regional and remote areas.

Ms CAMPBELL: I think the Minister has appointed a ministerial advisory committee that is chaired by the head of the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies [ACWA], Andrew McCallum, and Jim Moore. One of the key tasks at the moment is to develop a transition plan for the Minister by the end of October and a more detailed implementation by the end of December. There is also work occurring around looking at demand and where services currently are across New South Wales, and there are clearly gaps in out-of-home care non-government organisation provision in western region and northern region.

So part of this more detailed transition planning is looking at ensuring where the children are is where the services are delivered rather than having children having to relocate from the towns they have grown up in and getting disconnected from other family members. It is not a quick answer; it requires some quite detailed planning, and it will also include the need to develop capacity in non-government organisation sectors, and particularly in Aboriginal non-government organisations, in some of those rural and remote locations.

CHAIR: With Family and Community Services for such a long time the public, the media and at times the Ombudsman have commented on the challenges that face the provision of services, particularly in terms of transparency and accountability. As a new Minister coming in—having been a shadow Minister for many years in this portfolio—where do you see the challenges? Given the improvement in funding that we have had over the last decade, how will that impact on your view of these challenges?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank you for that very difficult question. As you can imagine, there is a range of challenges and that is why this is such a big reform task. You referred to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman recently outlined the challenges, as the Ombudsman saw it, to improving services in Community Services through his thorough work and his report on Reviewable Child Deaths in 2008 and 2009 and his report on Keep Them Safe and the Community Services' capacity to respond to vulnerable children and young people, which were both tabled in August. The information published by the Ombudsman reinforces the New South Wales Government's commitment to openness and transparency. These are key drivers of reform. They might be uncomfortable but they are key drivers of reform and they will improve the way we support vulnerable children.

Sadly, abuse and neglect are often hidden. Nearly half of the 57 children whose deaths occurred in 2008-09 as a result of abuse, neglect or suspicious circumstances had not been the subject of a report to Community Services. However, 30 of the 57 children who died as a result of abuse, neglect or suspicious circumstances had been reported to Community Services. The capacity of the statutory child protection system is obviously inadequate. During the period 24 January to 31 December 2010 only 21 per cent of children and young people with risk of significant harm reports were allocated a caseworker and received a home visit and a comprehensive assessment—21 per cent; just one in five—and that is after the reforms had begun.

The New South Wales Government shares the Ombudsman's concern at the lack of capacity in the child protection system. We certainly need more caseworkers seeing more children more often, and only real reform can deliver that. Billions of extra dollars under the previous Government have delivered, as I say, fewer face-to-face assessments of children at a higher risk of harm than hitherto. This Government therefore has to be serious about reform—there is no choice, because we have to improve the State's capacity to protect and support our vulnerable youth and children. We have to look afresh at how we work and spend the resources, to be as effective as we can be and get our great front-line and caseworkers across the whole sector seeing and helping families.

Labor bequeathed New South Wales 11 in 1,000, or well over one in 100 children and young people, in out-of-home care, and that, as I say, was 17,931 children in out-of-home care as at 31 March 2011. To improve capacity I believe we need to work better and smarter to ensure our front-line workers in government and non-government organisations can spend more time with families and less on administration, photocopying and paperwork. They need to intervene earlier and more effectively so that fewer children need to be removed from their families. Of course, improving the capacity means requiring that the department be financially sustainable.

I am committed to rural reform to release the full potential of Community Services—it is a wonderful department—and, of course, also non-government organisations with their sometimes very long historic interest in and commitment to this area. They are all committed to the protection and support of vulnerable children, young people and families and we have to harness that passion and that commitment. As I say, some non-government organisations have been doing this for more than 100 years. We have to harness that. I thank the Office of the New South Wales Ombudsman for its work in highlighting the need for us to do better, including through transparent disclosure of information about what are often tragic child deaths and the work of Community Services.

The service system this Government inherited was characterised by diverse and inconsistent funding arrangements that emphasised inputs, such as funding levels and the number of staff, and activities such as hours of operation and the numbers of clients; funding programs that had never been developed in a logical and coherent way; and stakeholders who were refused active and equal participation in program development and form processes. It is going to be very different. Under the O'Farrell Government, Community Services is in the process of implementing very urgent and now real reforms to the out-of-home care system in New South Wales

to reduce the number and proportion of children and young people reported at risk of significant harm and in out-of-home care.

These reforms include the greater use of early intervention options, such as family preservation services for those families with children imminently likely to enter the out-of-home care system. The reforms also include pursuing permanency in care arrangements through adoption, by getting the red tape out of the way, restoration to families where that is sensible, or transferring parental responsibility to family members or to the Minister in a timely way. Again, this is about clearing those roadblocks to adoption so that children have permanent families they can live with forever. Adoption was simply not a priority for the previous Labor Government.

However, the Liberal-Nationals Government thinks that it needs to streamline the adoption process and reduce the red tape and all the unnecessary steps that were put in the way of children being adopted. This Government is focused on improving services and outcomes—outcomes particularly for children and young people. This is about the outcomes; not the process. This is not about how many minutes you spend on the phone, but how often you see people. Reducing entries into out-of-home care requires real effort and real focus on permanent alternatives like adoption, and restoration where that is appropriate.

As outlined in NSW 2021, the Government places great emphasis on prevention and early intervention and intends to work in partnership with non-government organisations to deliver community services, care, accommodation and other support services to prevent problems from escalating and becoming entrenched to the point where we have no choice other than to remove a child. I would like to see more vulnerable families receiving support when they need it and more children and young people supported to remain safely—and the emphasis is on the word "safely"—at home. In recognition of the gap in service provision and supports to older children and young people at risk I will be giving greater focus to adolescents in particular and the ways in which our service responses can be strengthened and improved for this vulnerable group of people on the verge of adulthood.

The evaluation and other international research indicates that focusing services on those families at high risk of the occurrence of abuse and neglect yields the optimal benefit in improved outcomes when compared with services offered to lower risk families. Lower risk families should of course be receiving the universal services that we would like to think all families in New South Wales receive, such as decent access to health and education services. With this in mind the Government has endorsed a revised program model for Brighter Futures with differentiated services for families above and below the new risk of significant harm threshold that has been adopted.

In addition, \$10 million in funding will transfer from community services to the non-government sector for the trialling of innovative early intervention approaches with a focus on, again, older children and adolescents. The service gap for these young people was recognised in the Wood commission report and was the subject of recent comment by the Ombudsman. I see these changes as vital steps in our Government's commitment to expand the role of the non-government sector in the delivery of critical child protection services and ensuring a more effective, transparent, accountable service delivery and, overall, a department that has a sustainable approach to managing the significant needs of our vulnerable children and young people.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: My question relates to services for Aboriginal people in New South Wales. Could you tell the Committee about some of the challenges the Government faces in improving the lives of Aboriginal citizens? Perhaps you could tell us a bit about some of the lessons we can learn from previous responses to these challenges, particularly in the area of community services and housing?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for her question. I do not think anybody would be surprised to know that the rate of removal of Aboriginal children is much higher. Rates of domestic violence and of sexual assault are much higher in Aboriginal communities and the number of reports is much higher proportionately. Aboriginal children and their families must be a key focus for us. We have a wonderful working relationship with the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat which is the advocacy group that represents the Aboriginal community services sector.

In recent months, as you have suggested, both the New South Wales Ombudsman and the Federal Department of Finance have reminded us of how far we are from closing that overrepresentation gap with our Aboriginal fellow citizens. The New South Wales Ombudsman released a report "Addressing Aboriginal disadvantage: the need to do things differently", which was quite a feat. It brought together many reports,

complaints and reviews to plead for systemic and real reform in Aboriginal affairs and addressing disadvantage. The report reinforces that there is much for us to do across government to close that gap for Aboriginal people and communities. It is a very powerful call to action and a call to spend the billions of dollars we are spending more effectively and in a more coordinated way. It is not about how much money but how we spend the money that we have first got to get right.

In New South Wales Aboriginal people experience homelessness at a much higher rate—134 per 10,000 people compared to 39 per 10,000 people in the non-Aboriginal population. In addition to the many other disadvantages they face, they are also 2.5 times more likely to have a disability. Despite that, they are far less likely to access formal disability services. With that in mind, the New South Wales Government established a ministerial task force on Aboriginal affairs in response to the Auditor-General's report into Two Ways Together. The ministerial task force membership comprises Ministers, directors general and Aboriginal representation for the coalition of Aboriginal peak bodies and the Aboriginal employment strategy. The task force was established to advise the Government on actions to refocus efforts to close the gap in disadvantage and to open up opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The role of the task force is to produce a draft strategy for Cabinet consideration with recommendations for concrete reforms in three key areas: improved service delivery and accountability in Aboriginal affairs, with particular consideration of the recommendations of the Auditor-General's report into Two Ways Together and other arising reports; improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal people, education being the key to opportunity; and improved employment outcomes for Aboriginal people. The task force will release its draft strategy and recommendations by the middle of next year.

Part of the work plan for the task force is to examine the links between the work of the task force and the Ombudsman's report. It is important for the Government and the task force to consider the report in a careful manner. Many mistakes have been made in the past by rushing to change. We must focus on how to make a difference and get the real outcomes that we all want so much. To make a real difference clearly involves working with government at both State and Commonwealth levels. We have a productive relationship with my Federal counterparts and of course with Aboriginal communities.

The report highlighted a number of critical recommendations for the development of new Aboriginal affairs approaches which included but were not limited to: the need for strong leadership and governance arrangements to effectively drive change on the ground; to review the multitude of government commitments and frameworks to formulate a whole-of-government strategy which was integrated and strategic; and to create a more efficient and effective service sector through the adoption of a centralised approach to decision-making around service planning, funding and delivery to Aboriginal communities. I am closely involved in this process to focus efforts on closing the gap in Aboriginal disadvantage and improving outcomes for Aboriginal people in New South Wales. Clearly they are large groups when it comes to child protection and domestic violence.

To assist me, a working group of Family and Community Services heads of Aboriginal units and nominated operational people are meeting to provide specialist advice on service delivery improvements. The working group is being chaired by the Family and Community Services director of Aboriginal strategy within this service delivery improvement division. This group will provide me with advice on how we can better support Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities and how we can close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. Family and Community Services is working in partnership with Aboriginal people, communities, peak bodies and the non-government sector to respond to disadvantage and improve services.

Despite all the money spent and the right intentions, Aboriginal Australians remain significantly disadvantaged in comparison to non-Aboriginal Australians. After all this money and all this time nothing less than delivering services differently has any chance of improving the lot of Aboriginal people. Again, improving services and accountability and transparency in Family and Community Services is as crucial for Aboriginal people as it is for non-Aboriginal clients. It is also a big part of closing the gap. Improving transparency and accountability is part of the reform agenda and the aim of the task force is to improve outcomes for our precious Aboriginal children and young people in New South Wales.

As you mentioned, there are a number of lessons that we can learn from previous responses and challenges. Inevitably we learn from what did not work so well in the past, and so we should. The Ombudsman in that report said, "It is not about the money. It is about the way past governments have planned, funded and delivered services." Too often, according to the Ombudsman, program development in New South Wales has

been agency centred rather than centred on the person. Warm words and billions of dollars have not translated to equal opportunities for Aboriginal communities or solutions to their problems. The Ombudsman reported that New South Wales has a particularly fragmented approach to planning, funding and delivery of services to Aboriginal communities and that dysfunction is multiplied by very poor accountability mechanisms so that agencies are really not held to account for their performance outcome, which is, have we closed the gap?

I believe only real reform to the way we work can improve services to Aboriginal people. That challenge is strongly aligned with the entire Family and Community Services reform agenda. Family and Community Services needs to become a learning organisation and a continuous improvement organisation, and the election of the O'Farrell Government will provide that new energy and fresh opportunities to reform and better integrate and deliver services to our clients, many of whom are Aboriginal.

A number of initiatives commenced under the old Department of Human Services under the previous Government and they are starting to emerge. Multiple and complex needs patterns are one way in which senior managers across divisions are already working to improve better joined-up services to people whose needs are not being met through the current system. I am advised that since the election 121 clients have been considered, more than a third of whom are Aboriginal. In Bourke and Brewarrina, Family and Community Services continues to implement the One Place, One Plan program, which started before the election and which aims to better integrate local level planning.

Community Services is certainly refreshing partnerships with AbSec, as I said. We have a very close and warm relationship to improve responses to the high number of Aboriginal child protection reports and the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. Intensive family-based services also are working to better support Aboriginal families to remain together where possible. In the area of housing in particular, the Aboriginal Housing Office, as we have previously discussed, has a strategy called Build and Grow that focuses on growing the Aboriginal community housing sector. I am certainly looking forward to reviewing these existing arrangements with the assistance of my task force colleagues' perspective. The Government's reform agenda will build on this work and pay heed to the lessons of past mistakes in the State's response to Aboriginal disadvantage.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: From what I have heard today you certainly face a very daunting task as a result of what you have inherited. Is that the case?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Yes, there is absolutely no doubt about that. There is a \$1.9 billion gap because of the growth in demand for services and the expenditure on services, which is projected to be 9 per cent per annum, and only 5 per cent growth in revenue and, in particular, a 15 per cent per annum growth in out-of-home care. This might be an opportunity for Mr Hunter to go through the detail of where the \$1.9 billion expenditure gap comes from.

Mr HUNTER: The \$1.9 billion over four years is basically broken down into two categories: there is about \$550 million in efficiency savings, wage offsets and information and communications technology savings. They are savings that have been taken out of our budget over forward years. The remainder, which is around \$1.35 billion, is a series of risks which if they eventuate will cause us to incur expenditure, so when you add those two amounts together you get \$1.9 billion. The \$1.35 billion risk is broken down into a number of different factors. It is an estimate of an increased number of caseworkers for child protection and that deals with all children at risk of significant harm, which is a significant number. It estimates growth in costs and numbers in out-of-home care. It estimates costs associated with the Social and Community Services award and, as the Minister has just said, costs around the Build and Grow strategy. When you take into account those risks and the efficiency, information and communications technology and wages offsets it gives you \$1.9 billion.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: How many children known to the Department of Family and Community Services have died since you became Minister?

Ms PRU GOWARD: We do not have the figures in that form. I can tell you the number of deaths of children known to the department who died in the year 2009-10.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Do you not know how many children known to the department have died since you became Minister?

Ms PRU GOWARD: We tend to provide these figures on an annual basis.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Would the department not report those deaths to you as Minister?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Yes, but do you not want the total annual figure?

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Could you give me both?

Ms PRU GOWARD: From 1 April this year to the present date as far as we are aware—it is difficult to do this because sometimes a child's death is not reported for some months after the child has died so the figures bounce around a bit because of that, which is why it is better to provide them on an annual basis—31 children died who were reported to be at risk of significant harm. Further analysis would be required to confirm how many of these children were assessed as being at risk of significant harm. This figure may change as deaths are reported to Community Services retrospectively by the New South Wales Ombudsman, the Coroner, police or other sources. As you will be aware, the Ombudsman has noted that the cause of death of many of the children reported to Community Services was unrelated to the risk issues that were reported to the agencies. Accidents, congenital abnormalities and disease that would occur in any setting overwhelmingly are causes of death for children.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: When did you report those 31 child deaths to Parliament?

Ms PRU GOWARD: We intend to make that part of our new child deaths report that we will take to the Parliament in November.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: When you gave a commitment before you were Minister to report deaths to Parliament what did you have in mind?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Clearly we meant that when issues surrounding a child's death become a matter of public importance then as far as we are able—bearing in mind we cannot compromise a police investigation and we certainly cannot compromise the privacy of other children—and whenever it has been possible I have always answered questions about the role of the department. I continue to do that and in November the first child deaths report will be presented to Parliament.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I want to be clear: you have not reported any of those 31 deaths to Parliament?

Ms PRU GOWARD: No, because I have not been asked about them.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: What money is allocated in the budget for the Orana Far West Women's Safe Houses Project and can you guarantee that the director's position for the project will be funded until all safe houses are operational?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I might ask Ms Anne Campbell to give the detail of that.

Ms CAMPBELL: I do not have that funding detail with me today, but I am happy to provide it on notice.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: And the director's position will be funded until the safe houses are in operation.

Mr MOORE: We will provide you with advice about the state of tenure or exactly what the position is. I am unfamiliar with exactly what the position is, and whether it is related to the public sector or not, but we will have a look at that for you and provide you with some information.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am happy for you to take it on notice.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: In relation to your short-term care orders pilot project, it is envisaged that if there is an appropriate case for restoration the court will adjourn a matter for three months for Community Services to work with the family. What funding are you providing to the department to provide the intensive family supervision and support that obviously will be required for short-term orders to be successful and to ensure that no child is placed at risk?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Could you repeat that question?

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I will not repeat all of it. What funding are you providing to the department to provide the intensive family supervision and support required for children who are under short-term care orders for restoration?

Ms CAMPBELL: I can answer that. The budget allocation is \$9.8 million. The Government is committed to reducing the number of children entering or remaining in out-of-home care. This new initiative is called the Extra Family Supervision Short-term Court Orders and Restoration Project. The project has three integrated components. It is a trial of extra family supervision, which is actually putting additional supports into the family, the expanded use of short-term court orders in collaboration with the Children's Court, and increasing the number of children and young people in out-of-home care successfully restored to their families, largely through greater investment in family restoration and casework support services.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Is that \$9.8 million allocated annually over four years?

Ms CAMPBELL: It is.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Can you also inform the Committee whether the early intervention, family preservation and restoration programs are currently being provided by non-government organisations or the department?

Ms CAMPBELL: Early intervention?

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Yes.

Ms CAMPBELL: Is this the Brighter Futures program?

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Those programs that the Minister talked about in terms of supporting children in out-of-home care or actually to prevent children leaving home. Are they being provided by the department or by non-government organisations?

Ms PRU GOWARD: You are talking about Brighter Futures?

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Yes.

Ms CAMPBELL: In terms of the Brighter Futures program, that is delivered at the moment by both Community Services and the non-government sector. Commencing in January, Community Services will focus on children above the risk of significant harm threshold, and that program will be called Stronger Families. The non-government sector, as the Minister alluded to earlier, will be getting \$10 million, in addition to the money they currently have to deliver the Brighter Futures program, to look at young people, so in the 9 to 14 years age group.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Minister, would you rule out providing government funding or grants to for-profit organisations to provide services and programs for vulnerable children?

Ms PRU GOWARD: No. I think the important thing is to fund organisations and services that will do the best job for children.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: So you do not have a problem with for-profit organisations receiving government funding?

Ms PRU GOWARD: To be honest, I have never met a for-profit organisation that works in this area. It just has not arisen. It is a hypothetical question. I have certainly met some that are not religiously based, but my understanding is that all the money received by every organisation that provides services in this area is turned back into the provision of the service. It certainly does not go to shareholders.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Minister, I refer to the Ombudsman's recommendation in the Keep Them Safe report. Did you make a commitment that you will meet those recommendations in terms of delivery of the

action plans? I am looking for a commitment to meet the recommendations made in the Ombudsman's report—that is, delivery of the action plan within six months.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I might ask Ms Vicki D'Adam to answer that question.

Ms D'ADAM: The Ombudsman has laid out three recommendations, with sub-recommendations within those. In terms of the six-month timeframes, yes, we are working towards meeting those timeframes in accordance with the Ombudsman's recommendations. There is a Keep Them Safe Senior Officers Group, which has been in existence for some time. It is through the auspices of that group that we are looking at how we respond to the recommendations.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Will there be a formal report to Parliament within that timeframe to advise how you will respond?

Ms PRU GOWARD: There is an annual report on the Keep Them Safe reforms. The most recent one has just been released, and there will be another one next year.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: But this is dated August this year. The recommendations are to report within six months. If you are not going to meet that six-month period, does that mean there will be a special report to Parliament or a Government response to the Ombudsman's report?

Ms D'ADAM: The intention is to meet the six months timeframe.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: I wish to ask a housing question. Is the social housing component of Barangaroo within your portfolio, and whether or not you are able to meet the percentage of affordable housing there? Does the social housing component meet the overall target of the Sydney City Council?

Ms PRU GOWARD: The Barangaroo urban development site is of course an opportunity to deliver some new housing and, while no social housing component is planned for Barangaroo, I understand Lend Lease is providing 2.3 per cent of the gross residential area as intermediate housing or affordable housing for key workers. As you would be aware, affordable housing for inner-city workers is very difficult to find, inner-city suburbs being the most expensive, and this will go some little distance to ensuring that people on low incomes who work in the city centre have access to affordable housing.

The delivery authority is currently developing a housing strategy for the whole site which will include the proposed affordable housing component for the second stage of the redevelopment. Housing NSW is working with the Barangaroo Delivery Authority to develop an appropriate housing strategy for Barangaroo, and to ensure dedicated affordable housing is provided on the site.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: At page 4-17 of Budget Paper 3 is the line item "Housing Policy and Assistance", and further down "Crisis accommodation places". There is a significant drop from the 2009-10 figure of 4,600 places to the 2010-11 actual figure; it is a drop of 242 places. This year's budget is forecast to take the number back up to 4,530, which is still short of the 2009-10 figure.

Ms PRU GOWARD: As you are very interested in this issue, it would be appropriate to have a formal briefing on the budget.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Okay.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Mike Allen probably can answer the first part of that question anyway.

Mr ALLEN: Those numbers, as you quite rightly reflected, vary from year to year. Minister, it is best to cover that also in the briefing or take that as a question on notice so we can provide a fulsome answer.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Thank you. I wonder if next year the Minister would be interested in a change to the format of the budget papers to deliver some of this information with greater clarity. It is confusing to track and define performance in these important social areas.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I share your grief, but you will have to take that up with the Treasurer.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: With your support I hope!

Mr MOORE: Can I elaborate on the Minister's offer? Given that this is the second hearing where I have seen you trying to use the budget papers to understand things, FACS is happy to sit down with you at some point to try to talk through some of the interpretations of the indicators and how they are not giving you a good enough feel for what you are looking for. As the Minister has indicated, it is not our business to change the format of the budget papers, but we may be able to provide you with some additional background briefing that might help you to better understand them.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: This issue has arisen in a number of sessions where the new Government has made a huge commitment to recognise the needs of regional areas—my crossbench colleague also has been strong on this issue. Without seeing a breakdown of what is going on in the regions compared to the metropolitan areas, it often can skew performance because you might not be meeting those performance measures in the most vulnerable areas. That is one of the major concerns. Numbers are numbers, but the question is whether the need is being met in some of these low socioeconomic areas. Is there a general commitment in your department, as there has been in other areas, to make a strong move on regional and rural areas to meet those desperate needs?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Certainly, regional New South Wales is a focus for us, particularly in the western and northern regions where there is such a high proportion of Aboriginal families. You are quite right, we have to keep a very close eye on what is happening in regional services and boost them whenever we can. It is true also that services to regional New South Wales generally after 16 years have been run down. I can assure you that, of course, in partnership with The Nationals, this is a very strong focus for the Government.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Obviously, sadly, homelessness is increasing in local government areas. Can the Minister explain whether funding is available for homelessness generally or whether local government can partner with something to address some of those issues in regional areas?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Obviously, homelessness is a joint Commonwealth-State initiative. It requires an enormous effort. We have been able to make some terrific inroads over the past few years because of extra investment from the Commonwealth, but nowhere near filling that need. We lead 38 projects under the national partnership agreement and implementation plan on homelessness. There are 368 services funded in the 2010-11 budget, which included a further \$104 million for long-term accommodation rather than crisis intervention. We have had very positive feedback from the national data collection reporting system. The committees of the Regional Homelessness Action Plan [RHAP], which you are interested in, oversight the development and implementation of regional homelessness and action plans covering all of New South Wales. In addition, you might recall that we launched Platform 70, which provides housing solutions for rough sleepers who are identified by a very assertive outreach program called street to home. Of course, we have a Premier's council on homelessness that we want to strengthen, as you said, to reflect the regional challenges in homelessness.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I was suggesting that the relationship not just be Commonwealth and State, but also local government. However, my time is up.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I am sorry, I missed that.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Minister, what commercial negotiation capabilities were developed by previous governments in community services? How are contracts in out-of-home care structured and priced? What is the Government doing to improve this area?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I am told that Community Services never saw itself as needing commercial negotiation capabilities. Notwithstanding its funding of community-based service providers for hundreds of millions of dollars, previous governments appear not to have changed this perception since the mid 1970s. This failure to recognise that all contracts need proper negotiation and that capabilities have to be recognised is longstanding. Changes in Community Services' funding practices, such as the introduction of more contestable and accountable approaches to the provision of funded community services, suggests that strong contracting and related capabilities would benefit partners and clients of the department.

Of course, Family and Community Services has responded effectively in many ways to the programs developed by the department or government by establishing contestability to ensure that best-placed providers are selected to undertake specific projects identified by the Government. Community Services developed and

implemented a number of accountability and performance management strategies ranging from standardised service agreements for renewable funding programs to reporting against service specifications in some programs and a standards framework in others.

The capabilities that were developed were focused on processes and following them efficiently and effectively, with a set way of doing things. Following a set process became the desired capability rather than negotiating for a better outcome for the children and families with whom we were working. By contrast, non-government organisations have a strong commercial and contracting capability. As we transfer more work to that sector, the Government is committed to expanding its own capabilities, as it must, to ensure that the taxpayers' dollar is spent as effectively as possible for children.

As Minister, in the early months of the new Government I saw examples of how past failures to invest in organisational architecture, such as systems and capabilities, hampered the potential of the billions of resource dollars that we spend every year to protect children, and the hard work of our wonderful front-line caseworkers in the government and non-government sectors. I would like to share with the Committee an example of contracts implemented under previous governments. They reinforce the need for real reform and for building stronger capabilities within the department than the previous Government evidently thought was necessary.

This first Liberal-Nationals budget addresses Labor's \$1.9 billion FACS budget gap and the legacy of financial unsustainability, and is part of that real reform process. The current out-of-home care service system is expensive and inflexible, and outcomes for many children and young people in out-of-home care are often poor and, obviously, unsustainable. Between 2004-05 and 2010-11 out-of-home care expenditure grew by 15 per cent per annum, more than doubling from \$304 million to \$694 million per annum—a very interesting story. This was driven by an increase in the number of children in out-of-home care and increases in the average unit cost of providing an out-of-home care place. One would think that explains it all, but it does not.

It was as much as anything about the contracts established by the previous Government. There was a huge variation in non-government organisation unit costs for out-of-home care placements, and these variations were not transparent. Children with similar needs ended up getting varying levels of services at varying prices and there was no clarity on why that was happening. There was an over-reliance on higher cost fee-for-service placements, which are called Individual Client Agreements, largely because there is no streamlined process for short-notice placement and there is a shortage of appropriate program-funded places. The current contracting regime is based around the delivery of specific out-of-home care service types rather than the specific needs of the children or young people concerned.

The entire sector, government and non-government, clearly shares the same motivation and commitment to protecting and creating stability for children and families, including where children cannot live at home to improve their care with longer-term stable placement. The Government's first budget reflects the first phase of that work in line with our election commitment with broader reforms to improve services while cutting inherited waste. The huge and unnecessary variation in the prices the Government pays for non-government out-of-home care placements for children and young people with very similar needs is wasteful. Converting expensive emergency placements and individual client agreements into program places which offer the same or better care will improve delivery while reducing waste. We also have to improve the delivery of residential care.

I would like to tell you a little more about each of them. To better protect children we have to reduce the huge variation in non-governmental organisation unit costs for out-of-home care placements. Currently the Government pays non-governmental organisations anywhere between \$37,000 and \$53,000 for the same general foster care, which is a huge variation in cost. Currently the Government pays non-governmental organisations between \$115,000 and \$446,000 for the same intensive residential care service, which is again a huge variation. The Government pays \$310,000 for a similar service for our most vulnerable children. Imagine what that would do if we had standardised that and managed it better: We could use that money for better care and give children a better chance in life. We would save millions of dollars which we could then put into providing care for more children.

Individual client arrangements or agreements, which are known as emergency places, are used when Community Services or another agency cannot provide services through the funded program places. They can cost up to \$89,000 per annum, which is 200 per cent more than the average cost of a program-funded general foster care place. That is 200 per cent more because we could not get our organisation in order. Emergency residential places cost up to \$723,000 per annum, which is over \$330,000 more than the average cost of a

program-funded intensive foster care place at \$217,000. That is a huge difference and that money could be used for children. This is about our moral obligation to care for as many children as we can. Just think about the extra care and attention we could give children if we could rationalise these prices. There would be savings of millions of dollars that would be channelled into improved care for more children. That is what the reforms are about. That is why Labor's financial maladministration was not just about not managing the money. It was not just a waste of tax payers money; it was immoral.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Was it a dereliction of duty, would you say?

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You were doing all right until this time.

Ms PRU GOWARD: It was dereliction of duty to children who could not look after themselves.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You had to get it in.

Ms PRU GOWARD: We had to put every penny we could into those children and young people. There was no excuse for not managing the process to ensure that. Apart from those enormous differences in costs, the children will benefit from longer-term more secure placements rather than the short-term crisis-driven placements that I have described.

The last area of non-governmental organisation contract reform I would like to outline is the improved delivery of residential care. Under Labor's system some children were placed in very expensive residential care. With advice from the department, we now think that they could have been better supported in intensive foster care. So some children and young people are going into residential care that do not need to be there. Residential care is serious care. International best practice in child protection and out-of-home care recognises that wherever possible children who are unable to live safely with their parents should be cared for in a home-based setting, not in a residential care facility. The whole world agrees on that but it did not happen. Long-term harm and suffering can be caused to children and young people who spend that sort of time in institutional settings. Residential settings are regarded as particularly unsuitable for children under the age of 12. I am advised as at 30 June this year that there were 86 children under the age of 13 years in residential care. We need to get that figure down.

We need real reform in the way we support and care for vulnerable children and young people. That is why we will reduce the use of residential care for children and young people we believe could be better placed in intensive foster care. We will do this by building capacity in program-funded intensive foster care, which you will hear a lot more about. I certainly will not allow the chance for out-of-home care to the non-government sector to fall over because we have not properly addressed the inherited legacy of deficit and capability within the department to manage this better. We estimate that improving the way we work and contract with non-governmental organisations could release \$150 million currently wasted on poorly serving children and young people with mismatched and short-term services. That money could provide extra and better help for children, young people and families.

The former Government received plenty of external advice about the need to reform contracts and improve capabilities in the area. That advice was welcomed and I am delighted to be working with my colleagues across the table and outside the room to build those capabilities. You can write all the good policy you want but in the end you have to deliver it. You actually have to make a difference to a child's life, and that is what these reforms will be about.

CHAIR: We now move on to the examination of the women's section of your portfolio. I will allocate 20 minutes for the Opposition, 20 minutes for the crossbenchers and 15 minutes for Government members.

[Short adjournment]

NICOLE LAWLESS, Manager, Violence Prevention Coordination Unit, Office for Women's Policy, Department of Family and Community Services, and

CHRISTINE HOWLETT, Assistant Director General, Strategy Governance and Portfolio Management, Department of Family and Community Services, affirmed and examined:

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Minister, on 12 September you stated in response to a question on notice that the Premier's expert advisory council on women will meet in the near future. How many meetings, if any, has the council held since that time?

Ms PRU GOWARD: We have not held that meeting yet. We are still configuring it. We obviously want to ensure that the major committee advising the Premier on women is in alignment with the State Plan for women and, in particular, the increase in the capacity of the economy to respond to the needs of women in our State Plan to provide economic choice for women. We are still in the process of inviting people to join this committee.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: There are already members on the council.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Yes, but given economic growth is as much about private sector opportunities, as you have probably heard me say, in non-traditional areas of occupation, I thought it was important that these people be represented on that expert committee.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: So you have sacked the committee?

Ms PRU GOWARD: No, we have kept, I think, all the committee. We want to expand it to ensure that there is a contribution from the private sector and, as I say, especially in the non-traditional areas where we have to do a lot better in ensuring—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: When are you going to seek submissions for new members from the private sector for this council?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I think it will be by invitation. That is how I see it.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: The council will remain?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Yes.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: And you will expand it?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Yes.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I am still concerned that this is the Premier's expert advisory council for women and it still has not met. It is the Premier's key advisory council. It is concerning.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I do not think you should worry. It will meet and it will have a good cross-section of women on it who can advise us on the best way to achieve the aims that we have for women in the State.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Do you have a time frame?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Do I need to provide you with a time frame?

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Absolutely, this is your Premier's expert advisory council. When will it next meet?

Ms PRU GOWARD: When the committee is formed.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: When is that going to happen?

Ms PRU GOWARD: When we hear back from people we have extended invitations to.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: When was the closing date?

Ms PRU GOWARD: There was no closing date.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: At the end of this year or the beginning of next year?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I would have thought we would be doing this early in the new year.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: In the new year the council will meet?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Early in the new year.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Minister, how many of the more than 5,000 workers who will be sacked by your Government are women?

Ms PRU GOWARD: That depends on who takes the voluntary redundancies.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: They are not voluntary redundancies.

Ms PRU GOWARD: They are voluntary redundancies.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: There is no ultimatum, the Treasurer made that very clear during his budget estimates.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Let us see how the three months go and let us see who voluntarily puts up their hands.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Will you provide a breakdown?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I am very happy to, after the three months is up.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I would like to see a breakdown of how many of those 5,000 workers are women and from which agencies.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Of course, at the end of this process that should be possible. The whole idea about a voluntary redundancy—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: It is not a voluntary redundancy. Your Government is sacking over 5,000 workers in this State. I am very concerned. I want to know what percentage of those 5,000 workers are women?

Ms PRU GOWARD: They are voluntary redundancies—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: They are not voluntary redundancies.

Ms PRU GOWARD: May I finish?

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You can finish but they are not voluntary redundancies.

CHAIR: Let the Minister answer.

Ms PRU GOWARD: They are being offered as voluntary redundancies for three months, which means that people may choose to take redundancy or not. At the end of that three-month period we will have a final number of people who have elected to take a voluntary redundancy because by definition they have elected to do it. I can provide you after that time with a breakdown of who elected to take a voluntary redundancy.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Your Treasurer made a different statement during his budget estimates. I do not want to waste any further time. Can you tell me what percentage of the Government's job cuts will be

part-time employees? Part-time public sector employees make up 87.67 per cent of the New South Wales public sector. How many of those will be women?

Ms PRU GOWARD: That is a question better addressed to the Treasurer.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I would like a breakdown when it happens. The figures show that 87 per cent of public sector workers in New South Wales are women.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Absolutely.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I would like to know how many of those part-time workers—

Ms PRU GOWARD:—voluntarily elect to take a redundancy? I will let you know when we get the figures. As you know, and as you should recall from the 16 years of your administration, that will not be quick.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Minister, did you have any input into your Government's submission to Fair Work Australia on the equal pay case for social and community services workers?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Of course, that was primarily a submission made by the Minister for Industrial Relations.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: You did not have any input into it?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Cabinet generally has an input. As the Minister for Women I read the submissions made by the union and, of course, supported the position of the Government.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Were you consulted on the substance of the Government's submission?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Absolutely.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: When you say you are consulted, was that before the Cabinet meeting or during the Cabinet meeting?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Before the Cabinet meeting.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: So your department had input into the actual formulation of the document that was filed on behalf the Government?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I cannot quite remember this. I will have to take it on notice to track back what happened. As you know, it was within a fortnight.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: If you could provide us with a brief chronology?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I certainly had input and I believe we did take advice from the office. I would be more comfortable if I provided you with a written answer.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Thank you, Minister.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Did you agree with your Government's submission that the equal pay case for social and community services workers should fail?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Our Government's submission made very clear that we do not support a gender pay gap. It concerns us and we certainly believe in equal pay for work of equal value. I certainly think that there is nobody around the Cabinet table who would argue that community sector workers are often underpaid. But what did not happen in the submission made by the union was that a case was made on the basis of gender. In fact, the Commonwealth Government, your own side of politics, recently pointed out that the case for how much of this gap between community sector workers employed in the non-government sector and those employed in the government sector, how much of that gap was a result of gender discrimination had not been made. If I had been a member of that union I would have been furious. We all know that community sector workers are

underpaid, but it was a lazy submission that did not for a moment try to work out what was the basis of gender and what was, as is more likely to be the case, the result of an historical gap between two sectors. When you think about it, Barnardos, the Salvation Army, the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church have all been running these organisations for 100 years on the smell of an oily rag and historically they would have been paying their workers less, not because they were women but because they did not have the resources.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: They have only had an award for 25 years. There was not an award before that.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I am not talking about the award; I am talking about the history of the non-government sector. Historically, it has been run on very little money and I think probably began as a lower payer than the government sector—not because they are women but because of the resources available to the non-government sector. The union did not make the case—it did not attempt to estimate using a male comparator. How can you seriously expect a government to stump up hundreds of millions of dollars? Your Government would not do it; you dumped it.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Every other government has.

Ms PRU GOWARD: No, they have not.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: They have commended it.

Ms PRU GOWARD: There is no way we will not meet our obligations, that is quite clear. But the point I am making is that this was a case that was not based on gender.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Fair Work Australia found otherwise. That is the finding of Fair Work Australia; they have accepted that it is gender-based inequality.

Ms PRU GOWARD: They said—and I suspect you have not read the judgement—

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Yes, I have.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Then you would remember that the judgement said that much of this was the result of differences between the government and the non-government sectors and that the amount attributable to gender was not identified by the union.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: It also said that gender was a significant influence.

Ms PRU GOWARD: And it did not have any idea of how much, and that is the problem for the union and the Commonwealth now negotiating an outcome.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: The workers in the sector believe it is gender based, regardless of what politicians think.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I do too. But did you make the case?

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Do you remember when you referred to the "so-called gender pay gap" in answer to a question in Parliament earlier this year?

Ms PRU GOWARD: It was not in Parliament.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Indeed it was. It is in *Hansard*. You said "so-called gender pay gap".

Ms PRU GOWARD: I have also used that phrase outside Parliament. It is a phrase I have used to refer to the fact that it is so-called because it is not defined, because it is not measured.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Eighty-five per cent of these workers are women and you think their gender has nothing to do with undervaluation of their work, is that what you are saying?

Ms PRU GOWARD: No, I am saying the opposite. I believe a gender pay gap exists—I am absolutely confident of it. But the case was not made as to the extent to which it exists, and that is the problem for the Commonwealth Government now negotiating an outcome. But clearly a lot of this work has been undervalued. But the problem when you compare it, if you have a—

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Will you commit to funding the outcome of the equal pay case for social and community services [SACS] workers?

Ms PRU GOWARD: We have already said that. The Premier has said that and so has the Minister for Financial Services. But we expect the Commonwealth to properly identify and fund its proportion.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Mr Moore, can you tell the Committee what proportion of that additional funding to fund the outcome of the social and community services pay case will be the Federal Government and what proportion will be the State Government?

Mr MOORE: We are not in a position to answer that question yet because we do not know from the Commonwealth Government what it is prepared to put on the table.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: You would be aware of the component of funding that is provided by the State Government to workers who are employed under the social and community services award?

Mr MOORE: We are aware of the various programs that employ social and community services workers that are Commonwealth and State funded. There is a variety of formulas that the Commonwealth and the States have agreed as to proportions typically shared. The point behind this is that Commonwealth responsibility for the extent to which it funds a wage increase has not been clear, and the case I think is very strong that the Commonwealth knows the cost of a wage increase that it has been a significant party to would far exceed any standard funding formula. The last time that there was a significant and much-needed increase in the social and community services regime, which goes back to the early 2000s, the Commonwealth stumped up not one cent. It did not even stick to its part of the bargain in things such as the Home and Community Care Program to provide 60 per cent of their funding; it left the State governments to hold the whole lot.

In this particular context, where the Commonwealth Government has worked with the unions on a case which the Minister has pointed out and has not quantified the nature of the wage case and what is gender, we would be expecting the Commonwealth to stump up a hell of a lot more than in the disability arena, 20 per cent, and a hell of a lot more in the home and community care services sector than the 60 per cent, because the way in which the whole case has been opened up does not allow the States to operate on a very rational basis. So our position is, yes, we will stump up for the fair bit—that is the fair share for us—but we do not consider the fair share, particularly in a historical context, should be according to the old formulas, because the old formulas, as far as I am concerned, leave the Commonwealth with a pretty paltry share of the contribution.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Things like women's health and generalist community workers, youth workers, workers in supported accommodation services like refuges—not all supported accommodation; there is a proportion of Federal funding—most of those programs are funded by the State Government, are they not?

Mr MOORE: The point is that the Commonwealth has been a party to a case that has opened up a wage increase that we are not saying is illegitimate but it has opened up a wage increase in a way that has limited the State Government's abilities to work this case into an appropriate structure.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Queensland and Western Australia have managed. They have funded it.

Mr MOORE: We are not arguing against the State Government funding an appropriate amount—that has been stated all along. What we are arguing, and what we would not want to have happen at this point in time, is a translation of an appropriate commitment from the State Government to the Commonwealth taking yet another ride on State finances to meet wage costs in the non-government sector when it should stump up more than the proportions at the moment that are shared in programs, particularly when you look at the history. The 2001 case was an outrage in terms of the fact that the Commonwealth funded not one cent of, I think it was somewhere in the order of, a 20 per cent wage rise. We cannot allow State programs to continue to be diverted because of actions of Commonwealth and State, particularly when they have not been well-conducted actions.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Minister, according to media reports you have declared it to be a top priority to increase the number of women working in non-traditional trades. Where is the policy document for that initiative?

Ms PRU GOWARD: We have just begun the work. The first challenge, of course, is to engage the TAFE sector, and that means the Minister for Education, and to develop some programs and some ways of raising awareness of these choices through the TAFE sector. But we also need to engage with employers, because employers are often reluctant to take—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Employers, industry, unions?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Yes, and also, of course, careers counsellors and school bodies.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: What action will you take to increase the number of women in non-traditional trades in the New South Wales public sector, public trading enterprises, State-owned corporations?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Obviously there is a bit of a pipeline problem there because most of these jobs rely on apprenticeships and that is where we have such a terrible dearth of young women. You cannot turn any number around overnight. Where we have government trading enterprises we have apprenticeships available to them and we are going to be encouraging them to take on young women.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: At this stage can you provide information about how many of these women are employed as apprentices and trainees?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I have got those numbers. They are very, very low.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Also, can you provide any information on the pay rates these women receive as tradespeople relative to males employed in the same positions?

Ms PRU GOWARD: In the public sector it would be hard to argue that a woman doing a job as a linesman earns less than a male doing a job as a linesman. We will have a look.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You will take that on notice?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I have got the numbers somewhere but it is easier to provide you with a list.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I have a whole lot of other questions about it but I will put them on notice. What is the total budget of the Office for Women's Policy?

Ms PRU GOWARD: It is part of the overall Family and Community Services budget as it was previously part of another department. It is made up of several sub-components. There are program and administrative components.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Can you give me a figure for the Office for Women's Policy budget?

Ms PRU GOWARD: The net cost of services for the three months to 30 June last year was almost \$1 million. We have had to identify some transfer costs. Perhaps Ms Howlett would like to—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Is Ms Howlett the permanent director of the Office for Women's Policy?

Mr MOORE: The permanent director is on maternity leave at the moment. It is currently being overseen by an assistant director general from the area of Family and Community Services, which reports directly to me. So Ms Howlett has that role and has stepped in to directly oversee the Office for Women's Policy while we are seeking short-term placements to fill the position while the maternity leave period runs. The budget number is \$6.358 million. To put that in context: That budget is the budget number effectively for the previous year transferred out of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, where it previously resided, into the Department of Family and Community Services.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: On that note, can I ask you why the Office for Women's Policy transferred from the Department of Premier and Cabinet to the Department of Family and Community Services?

Ms PRU GOWARD: It was a decision of the Government when we were elected. It had such a poor history in a central agency that we recognised it might be better directly under the wing of a department that has domestic violence and family programs as its primary responsibilities.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I have a media release that you put out last year, in which you said:

The whole point of having this Office in the Department of Premier and Cabinet is to give it the opportunity to work with a range of relevant government departments to improve choices for women.

Do you stand by that?

Ms PRU GOWARD: It still can, and I thought that was the best that could have been done under a Labor Government. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Considering the high levels of violence towards women involved in all types of prostitution, what programs exist to assist women in the industry in terms of psychological, physical and emotional assistance to help them get out and recover? How much funding goes towards these types of programs? If there are not any programs to help women leave this industry, why or why not in terms of harm minimisation to them?

Ms PRU GOWARD: We do not have a specific program to help women leave prostitution. I am not aware that there has ever been such a program. Many governments have had the view that women choose to be in this industry, even though you and I would say that choice is often very constrained. I agree with you—there is a level of violence associated with the industry that is terrible for women. While we do not have a specific program for it, I think it is important that we keep reminding women in this industry that they have the right to go to police, like every other woman who is assaulted. Similarly, a woman in a domestic relationship with somebody who leeches off her has the right to seek escape and to seek the support of our services, which are freely available.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Minister, with all due respect, we help alcoholics and gamblers. In terms of State funding, is there not some body that we contribute to that looks after that? If the women have that choice and choose to get out, do we have no funding going to any particular body, whether it be a non-government or government agency? I understand you are saying we do not have a government agency, but is there a non-governmental office we assist with funding?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I would be unsurprised if a number of the non-government organisations we fund who work with street services and street workers encourage women who feel vulnerable or who have been assaulted to leave the industry. But, as you know, they have complex needs themselves. They are often drug addicts of some kind or another. Leaving prostitution is a lot more complicated than offering them the choice of working in an unskilled job as a cleaner. We have to see it as part of the bigger problem rather than a freely made choice.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: How much money is spent annually on early intervention in relation to domestic violence?

Ms PRU GOWARD: We spent a lot of money on the Love Bites program, which we hope enables us to work with schoolchildren about respectful relationships. We are rolling that out.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: How much money? Will you provide a figure?

Ms PRU GOWARD: We have got the Love Bites program numbers here, I think, and we have got the Staying Home Leaving Violence program, which is another way of—

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Which I will ask you a question about in a minute. I am quite happy to have that on notice.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Sorry. At one stage we did have the numbers here.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I refer to the Staying Home Leaving Violence program, which assists women at risk of homelessness after fleeing domestic violence. How much will you be investing in that program this year? Who is responsible for monitoring the success of this program? Will there be a report issued on the program? Will this program be available in regional areas?

Ms PRU GOWARD: The Staying Home Leaving Violence program has been running for some time. It has had some promising early evaluations, particularly in regional areas. That is why we have committed an extra \$2.5 million to it. We are hopeful. You have to keep monitoring it. It is about more than locks on the door; you have to manage the offender and ensure that he does not persecute the household. It is something that we are keen to continue for the sake of the woman and also of the children. It is important to provide the children with stable accommodation so that they are not forced to leave and start at another school with another group of friends. We are very hopeful.

You might recall that the Premier made that announcement during the election campaign. This additional money enables us to take it to another five sites. Three additional locations will be introduced this financial year and a further two additional locations will be introduced the year after. That means there will be a total of 23 communities in New South Wales that will be serviced by this program. It helps victims and children to stay safely at home while removing the violent partner. In that sense, it is a great preventative program.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I note at this time that the Shoalhaven has 500 episodes of domestic violence and it has been mentioned that the real figure it is about 10 times worse than that. These programs are invaluable in terms of regional areas where we do not have the resources all the time.

Ms PRU GOWARD: One of things that really struck me when I was elected was that there was not any particular allocation of funding for programs based on the areas of highest need. That was true in some cases but not in others. Penrith is in the top 20 local government areas for domestic violence and it did not have an ongoing Domestic Violence Pro-Active Support Service. I have decided to fund that for three years because I think that the Domestic Violence Pro-Active Support Service should be available to a high-need area like Penrith. We are reviewing our \$2.9 million program and our domestic violence policies. One of the reforms I want to undertake is to ensure that we can map domestic violence across New South Wales so that we locate the services in areas of greatest need, not where there is a marginal seat holder who needs something to announce—or whatever the basis was for deciding the services under the past Government. I think Penrith stood out as an area that really deserved an ongoing service and for some reason did not have one.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: What is the Government doing in terms of encouraging women into local government? I am not just speaking about female candidates. For instance, in my other role my wife is an incredible individual who is mayoress by title but through the Local Government Act it is not recognised. I could not think of a better mentor—I mention my conflict of interest here—than her in terms of what she is doing across our city for young ladies and young girls. It is important to encourage that channel through local government, but it is not acknowledged in the Act that she has such a role. It should be noted in the Local Government Act. Given that we are trying to get people into local government, I think it is a slap in the face.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I could not agree more. The low representation of women in local government is amazing when you consider that in so many ways it is the most approachable level for people beginning a life of politics. I think we have to do better. We certainly fund or at least support the Local Government Women's Association.

CHAIR: As past president of that organisation I can say that we do support it.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Unfortunately the rhetoric has been different.

Ms PRU GOWARD: We can always do more and we must do more.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: I make the point that I was on the previous Ministerial Advisory Council on Women when a publication was produced to encourage women to go into local government. It was very good and covered a broad spectrum. I have a query about the Start Safely Program. I am confused about the funding, which is listed in a press release as \$5.5 million but in the budget as \$4 million.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Are you saying you do not need a briefing on the nature of the program; you are just querying the amount?

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Yes. Do you have information about the program and support for it?

Mr ALLEN: I understand it is approximately \$4 million of funding per year for the program but we will confirm that specifically. It is a very valuable program that provides an additional resource for women suffering from domestic or family violence. It facilitates women in those circumstances being able to rent accommodation in the private rental market by providing considerable support for 12 months.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Is it for renting? Will the money go towards premises to develop a stock?

Mr ALLEN: The funding is to help women in those circumstances rent accommodation in the private rental market and allow them to subsidise the rental they would pay for that private market property over the course of 12 months while they got themselves established to the extent that they would be able to continue in that leased property without the subsidy.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: In regional areas and regional coastal areas rental properties are scarce and expensive and even with assistance women and their children trying to flee situations often have to move quite a distance to find something affordable. Given your dual portfolios, has any consideration been given to accumulating more stock rather than just assisting in that area?

Mr ALLEN: We assisted almost 300 women in the 2010-11 year, which is quite a substantial number. It is a complementary program which fits in with a suite of other programs. Staying Home, Leaving Violence is another program. It is meant to provide more opportunities and fit within that wider suite of programs. It operates reasonably well in regional locations.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: So you see that as the flexible end?

Mr ALLEN: That is correct.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Is there any new money in the budget for crisis centres that provide services particularly for culturally and linguistically diverse groups?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Do you mean crisis accommodation for culturally and linguistically diverse women? We fund a number of services that recognise the importance of working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Are you maintaining the budget or increasing it?

Ms PRU GOWARD: There is a whole review of domestic violence policies and how we spend the money. It is quite alarming to see how non-transparent it is. I think we need to have a closer look at it. The needs of culturally and linguistically diverse women cannot be underestimated.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Especially the need to provide interpreter services so they can access services.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Yes.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Do you have a figure for annual community awareness campaigns relating to domestic violence?

Ms PRU GOWARD: As far as I could see one has not been done for a couple of years. They tend to be a Federal initiative because of the role of television and radio in promoting domestic violence awareness messages. We could probably do more with social media, which is cheaper. That is probably an issue for a ministerial council meeting with State, Federal and Territory Ministers for women to discuss whether there is a need for another campaign and whether we need to target particularly the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse women and draw their attention to the availability of appropriate services.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Rather than developing campaigns from the top down have you considered giving smaller amounts of money directly to community groups. We found in working with young women in high schools that they produce culturally relevant material and it is such good value. They are working from the

ground upwards with skills in media and technology and they speak to each other. It is such an important way to do things. Somewhere there has to be an evaluation of top-down approaches versus bottom-up approaches.

Ms PRU GOWARD: That is an interesting point.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: I know you have a history of raising the issue of body image for young women. Are you going to target that in any way through programs or support for women?

Ms PRU GOWARD: As I think you would appreciate, it would be wonderful to do everything. I know body image is an issue and I know the Minister for Health is always concerned about this. Again, it lends itself more to a national awareness campaign. I have to say my priorities are very much going to be in the more traditional trades area and expanding the range of economic and professional life choices for women, particularly girls from disadvantaged homes.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Will you be setting targets for women's representation on government boards?

Ms PRU GOWARD: We do not need to do that. We have had a terrific response. We think that in order to get more women onto government boards you have to improve the pipeline. There is a database on which women can put their names. I sense that that was not used by the previous Government because it completely lacks any strategic value. In our first six months we have been able to increase the percentage of women on boards, which is terrific, but in a sense it has been because of the goodwill of members of the Cabinet. Some Ministers, such as the Minister for the Environment, and Heritage, are very conscious of this. She has increased the proportion of women on her government boards quite markedly and has got the figure up to 36 per cent from a very low base.

Overall, 42 per cent of ministerial appointments made in the September quarter that were the responsibility of the Cabinet went to women. That clearly recognised the importance of increasing the figure as much as we can. I do not think targets are necessary; what we need is a really good strategy, which means a good pipeline. The Australian Stock Exchange [ASX] has managed to do extraordinary things in increasing the number of women on boards without a quota. It has a wonderful strategy whereby it identifies board-ready women and ensures that they are exposed to and meet with boards who might be seeking additional board members.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: I might be wrong but I understood that reports about the Australian Stock Exchange suggested there were a small number of women on a lot of boards, not a broad representation. I think that is the problem.

Ms PRU GOWARD: That is exactly right and that is what they sought to overturn, and they had amazing results. They looked at it intelligently. They said the problem was the pipeline. You need women with the right experience who can be introduced to and become familiar to board members. As you will be aware, boards tend to appoint their own replacements and newcomers and that means there has to be a level of familiarity and confidence in the background. There is certainly a pipeline issue but it is also about mentoring and ensuring that women with the capacity are introduced to boards.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Education as well.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Yes. We are certainly keen to do that but to date it has not been done at all strategically and we want to do it properly. But there will be no quota.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: The Australian and New South Wales law reform commissions produced the report "Family Violence—A National Legal Response". Have you been able to deliver a response to that report and its recommendations, or is it on the books to do that?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I will ask Ms Vicki D'Adam to respond to your question.

Ms D'ADAM: The most recent report, as I understand it, will be delivered by the Law Reform Commission to the Federal Attorney General on 11 November, and we will be doing a response post that date.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: I think this report is last year's. I do not know whether there has been a report since then.

Ms D'ADAM: There have been a series of reports. The most recent one, which you may not be referring to, is being undertaken at the moment. That is into the impact of Commonwealth legislation regarding family and domestic violence. Are you referring to the New South Wales Law Reform Commission report?

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: I think there was a joint one at the end of last year or at the beginning of this year.

Ms D'ADAM: Yes, there was a joint one. I will have to take the question on notice. Predominantly that would fall within the portfolio of the Attorney General, but I will take on notice where that response is up to.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, can you tell the Committee how improving opportunities for New South Wales women is aligned to the Government's reform agenda within your portfolio?

Ms PRU GOWARD: It has been a pleasure for me, as a former head of an office, as a public servant and as Sex Discrimination Commissioner, to now be the Minister for Women. I am very keen to see the office really become a policy powerhouse for women. It has been very moribund over the past 16 years. We need a unit that can work effectively and across government. Really, it is a theme portfolio rather than a portfolio with direct spending responsibilities. The NSW 2021 plan has very clear goals to improve the lives of women in New South Wales. There are two specific targets with particular relevance. Those are, firstly, to increase the proportion of women employed in non-traditional occupations in New South Wales, and that is in the plan; and, secondly, to reduce domestic violence, which is also in the plan. I think there are a number of ways in which we can tackle this. The first, of course, is always to start with the evidence, to build a stronger evidence base. That is why we are in the process of establishing a Bureau of Women's Statistics, and the first annual report on the status of women is planned to be delivered by the end of this year. From evidence, scrutiny and transparency come accountability and the will for reform.

The National Centre of Social and Economic Modelling at the University of Canberra has been engaged to develop and deliver the first report on the status of women in New South Wales. For the benefit of Committee members, that is one of the most outstanding economic modelling organisations in Australia. The document will be an invaluable resource in driving initiatives as well as measuring ongoing improvements. We are also identifying program and policy work to improve the status of women and their economic outcomes, because economic growth should give opportunity and choice to all members of our community. That includes increasing the participation of women in non-traditional occupations, which in regional towns are often the only jobs available other than unskilled or farm jobs. This is a wonderful opportunity for women to be sparkies, plumbers, carpenters and painters and decorators. It is extraordinary that at least half the painting in the home is done by women and yet the percentage of women painters and decorators is down about the 3 per cent mark. There is much more we can do for the representation of women in leadership as well.

When it comes to the non-traditional trades, we need to provide some mentoring, because these women are often pioneers; they are often on their own and do not have another woman to talk to. We need to recognise that to encourage them to keep going they will need some mentoring, which can be done by men as well as by women. Introducing part-time apprenticeships might be one consideration, because that would enable women with child and family responsibilities to balance their family and carer commitments whilst acquiring a very valuable and highly transportable skill. We also need to encourage more female students to take up school-based apprenticeships by breaking down the concepts of what are traditional female and what are traditional male occupations.

There is a lot of overseas evidence that other countries do not regard being a sparkie or a painter and decorator as purely the province of males. It is interesting that in the white-collar areas there are more women information technology executives than there are women information technology technicians. That, I think, is an extraordinary contradiction. We need to provide more support and additional mentoring across the board. We also need to use social media better to help us to raise awareness and highlight the training pathways and career opportunities that are available, because as we know a woman's life journey is somewhat different from a boy's. There are opportunities for women to engage and re-engage with training that are different and are driven by different factors, basically child bearing, and that too has to be taken into account.

When it comes to violence against women, I think we need to wait until we get that independent review of the Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan that we have commissioned, and to coordinate that with another review that we have asked for, that of the Domestic and Family Violence Grants Program, and then we can start to provide strategic advice across government on a range of criminal justice and education initiatives, as well as regional initiatives that might help us secure that breakthrough change. It has just been the same for too long: If the numbers go up, we say that is because women are more confident about reporting domestic and family violence. We have to get a game changer with domestic violence. We have been at it for too long.

We have already delivered some important achievements. We are continuing to support the Domestic Violence Pro-Active Support Service. It is my dream that all local government areas with high levels of domestic violence should have a domestic violence service, and that is why we have committed \$400,000 to the Bridge Project in the Penrith and St Marys area. That is a local government area just crying out for that. Funding is essential to provide support for victims of domestic violence and to raise awareness and reporting to police of these crimes.

Staying Home Leaving Violence is another area where I think there is great opportunity to really promote and extend the program. Obviously, it has never made sense that the victim of a crime is the one that loses the house and that the children lose their ongoing, stable community life, while the perpetrator, be that a man or female, in a sense is invisible and remains in the family home and their life goes on largely untouched. Staying Home Leaving Violence is currently operating in 18 locations, and I would like to see that extended much further. That is why we have the extra \$2.5 million.

In reviewing what has been done, particularly for women's occupational status, in a sense we have focused on getting more women into universities. That is great, but it is essentially a very small part of the population. Most people do not become surgeons, lawyers or accountants. It has been a great disappointment that we have let down a huge cohort, a majority of girls who will not go to university but have never been given any focus or emphasis in terms of the choices that those girls have. As a beneficiary of the first large wave of women at university, I am not complaining about the fact that women have been able to access university, and we now have more female graduates in law and medicine than we have men. It is just such a pity that for so long we have lost the opportunity to concentrate on a much bigger group who were always going to need a bit more help to break through the barriers in the non-traditional trades. It will be a much bigger challenge for the women's movement and for governments to increase the numbers of women in the trades areas than it ever was at university.

CHAIR: There is much bipartisan interest in White Ribbon Day and the awareness campaigns about which you have spoken regarding domestic violence situations. Parliament will host a lunch on 25 November for White Ribbon Day with Phil Gould as guest speaker, and many White Ribbon Day ambassadors will be here. The Hon. Sophie Cotsis has a brief question for you.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Minister, will you circulate a memo to New South Wales Government agencies, State-owned corporations and public trading enterprises advising them to support White Ribbon Day in whatever way they can?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I believe that has been the tradition and I think it is a very good one. If it has not, we will start it now.

CHAIR: I thank the Minister and her officers for attending today.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.