

Budget Estimates 2011 – GPSC 2

Questions on Notice relating to the Portfolio of Family and Community Services, and Women (Minister Goward)

Friday, 28 October 2011, 2pm–4.30pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE – FROM HEARING TRANSCRIPT

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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.

ANSWER

Over the forward estimates (2011/12 – 2014/15) Family and Community Services will save \$76 million implementing the previous Labor Government's wages policy.

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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.

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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.

ANSWER (to both page 4 and page 5):

Core services undertaken by Housing NSW on behalf of the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) are covered by an 8 per cent management fee based on gross market rent of AHO properties. Extensive modelling is currently underway to ascertain how this fee will be disaggregated between Housing NSW and Department of Finance and Services within the existing budget envelope.

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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.

ANSWER

During 2009/10, \$1.6 million was allocated directly by Community Services to support young people who have left care. This included one-off financial assistance for items to assist them in establishing their independence, contact with family, and medical or education needs. In 2009/10 an additional \$2.4 million was allocated to fund specialist after care services, including services for Aboriginal young people.

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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.

ANSWER

The answer to this question is provided in response to Supplementary Question 53.

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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.

ANSWER

The NSW SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report 2009-10 is the source of the 31,901 figure, which counts the number of clients receiving only one support period, excluding accompanying children.

Because this figure measures clients who do not have repeat episodes where they are homelessness or at risk of homelessness, this is taken as an indicator of clients who succeed in becoming independent and no longer need to use Specialist Homelessness Services.

The Regional Homelessness Action Plans, available on the Housing NSW website, <http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au>, contain a regional breakdown of where services are and how they sit against the Action Plans.

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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.

ANSWER

Community Services funds community groups and organisations to provide preventative and early intervention services to families and children at risk of entering the statutory child protection system. Single parents, including fathers, are provided supports through a range of programs that address Community Services core functions in child protection.

Community Services is not funded to provide general programs targeted specifically at fathers with children. Where there are child protection concerns single parents are supported within the existing early intervention and prevention programs and provided specific supports based on the need of the family at that time.

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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.

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.

ANSWER

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics data, in 2003, there were 22,500 Australian families in which grandparents were the guardians of their grandchildren (31,100 children aged 0-17 years). This is the most recent comprehensive statistical count of grandparent carers. In NSW, Community Services would become aware of those grandparents who become carers for their grandchildren through kinship and supported care. However, it is not possible to accurately quantify the many different kinds of care provided by grandparents, which range from very informal family arrangements through to cases where grandparents have the care of their grandchildren through Court orders.

It is important for grandparent carers to be aware that they may be able to access Australian Government payments made in support of families. In cases where a child or young person is considered to be in need of care and protection and might otherwise enter a foster placement, the Supported Care Allowance paid to eligible grandparent carers is the same as the allowance paid to foster carers.

Community Services funds Karitane Connecting Carers NSW (CCNSW) to provide state wide peer support and network services for Community Services Carers, including grandparent carers. CCNSW offers access to free ongoing training, education and peer support.

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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.

ANSWER

Please refer to the response Minister Constance has tabled regarding this matter.

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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 projection 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.

ANSWER

The Orana Far West Safe Houses Project commenced in 2007 as a partnership between Community Services, Housing, Aboriginal Affairs, the NSW Women's Refuge Movement, the department of Families, Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the five existing Safe Houses in Lightning Ridge, Walgett, Brewarrina, Bourke and Wilcannia. In 2011-12, the Safe House services will each receive renewable Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) funding of \$351,128.63 plus indexation.

All of the five Safe Houses are operational. The Project is due to conclude at the end of 2011, with aspects of the mentoring and network establishment continuing into the first half of 2012. The building program, managed by Housing NSW, will continue until approximately the end of 2012.

The Project Director position will continue until March 2012, with responsibilities transitioning back to the usual business functions of Community Services' Partnerships and Planning Program. The Program will continue to be provided the same support offered to all funded programs under the Specialist Homelessness Support (formerly SAAP) program, post 2011.

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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.

ANSWER

Whilst crisis refuges and transitional housing continues to operate across the State under the current National Affordable Housing Agreement, the Crisis Accommodation Program no longer exists. Instead the 'Housing First' model has become the preferred response to homelessness where homeless people move immediately from the streets or refuge accommodation into their own homes with support tailored to their needs.

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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.

ANSWER

As agreed, information will be provided when it is available.

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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.

ANSWER

As agreed, information will be provided when it is available.

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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.

ANSWER

The Department of Family and Community Services was involved in developing the Government's submission to Fair Work Australia from 11 April 2011.

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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.

ANSWER

The 2010 Pay Equity Audit of the NSW Public Sector showed that the pay gap between men and women in the NSW Public Sector was 6.7% (significantly lower than the gender pay gap for NSW as a whole which was 15%).

The gender pay gap calculation for the NSW Public Service is based on average salaries. The various awards and grading structures present within the public service mean that a man performing work at a grade 9/10 level in an agency would be paid the same as a woman at the same grade (assuming that both had been in their positions for the same length of time and thus were on the same increment within the grade).

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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 a 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.

ANSWER

The NSW Government recognises that early intervention is critical to reducing Domestic and Family Violence. Funding for early intervention and prevention programs is delivered across a number of departments and a global figure is not available. For further information, please contact the office of the Attorney General, Police and Health. The review of the existing Domestic Violence Action Plan will consider potential strategies to prevent Domestic and Family Violence.

A total of \$722,860 has been provided to the Love Bites program under the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Grants Program.

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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?

ANSWER

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) and the NSW Law Reform Commission (NSWLRC) jointly released their report "*Family Violence—A National Legal Response*" on 11 November 2010.

The reference for this inquiry was provided by the Federal Attorney-General and the ALRC was directed to work jointly with the NSWLRC with a view to developing agreed recommendations and consult with other state and territory law reform bodies as appropriate. The Commonwealth Government this year introduced the *Family Law Legislation Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Bill 2011* which is proposed to substantially implement many of the recommendations of the ALRC and NSWLRC report. This bill is yet to pass the Senate.

The remaining recommendations are still under consideration by the Commonwealth Government. The NSW specific recommendations are being considered as part of the statutory review of the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* currently being undertaken by the Department of Attorney General and Justice. Further questions on this issue should be directed to the NSW Attorney General.

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