

**RESPONSE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGEING, DISABILITY AND
HOME CARE TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES COMMITTEE - 20 FEBRUARY 2006
SUPPLEMENTARY HEARING**

QUESTION 1 – JOHN WILLIAMS TRUST (The Hon John Ryan)

- a) *What is the progress on the purchase of properties for respite services from the John Williams Trust?*

Answer

- a) The Department is currently in the process of purchasing one five bedroom house in Thornleigh and along with the Department of Commerce, is looking for a further suitable five bedroom house to replace the capacity of the previous John Williams respite centre. The Department is also continuing to identify further options for the use of the capital funds that are available through the Trust.

QUESTION 2 – TRANSITION TO WORK PROGRAM (The Hon John Ryan)

- a) *How many people does the Department expect to leave the Transition to Work program and enter supported open employment this year?*

Answer

- a) In a survey conducted by the Department in September 2005, Transition to Work service providers reported that they estimated that in 2006, 71 service users will seek a place in open employment. It should be noted that this figure does not include supported employment (Business Services), where it is estimated that a further 34 places will be required.

QUESTION 3 – SENIORS INFORMATION SERVICE (The Hon Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans)

- a) *Are the tender documents as to the evaluation of the recent Seniors Information Service competitive tender available publicly? If not can we get them - it may need the equivalent of a Freedom of Information application?*

Answer

- a) The tender was managed through State Procurement in the Department of Commerce in line with formal Government tendering procedures.

The Premier's memorandum 2000-11 governs the provision of information regarding tenders. The details of the successful tenderer are currently being placed on the Department's website, however, the evaluation details of individual tenders are not made publicly available. These rules were included in the Request for Tender document.

The Department has previously provided the Committee with the evaluation criteria included in the tender. The specific evaluation criteria in the tender were:

- (a) Demonstrated expertise and experience in the successful provision of the specified or similar services on a similar scale.
- (b) Human resource availability, capacity, skills and experience, particularly in relation to key staff to be utilised for the purposes of this Contract.
- (c) Quality and availability of back up and support services.
- (d) An understanding of the aims, objectives and operations of the service/s and the needs of older people.
- (e) Tenderer's current commitments and availability to undertake the service for the term specified.
- (f) The adequacy of the telephone and related communications system including capacity to record data and report on calls.
- (g) Tenderer's proposed training plan.
- (h) Provision of a project plan with specific timeframes for implementation.
- (i) Quality management systems in place.
- (j) Degree of compliance with the technical and contractual requirements of this tender.
- (k) Tenderer's financial capacity to perform the contract.
- (l) Compliance with applicable NSW Government Procurement Policies, legislation and standards.
- (m) Existing or potential capacity of the tendered item to fit with the NSW Government's Better Service Delivery Program.
- (n) Price/value-for-money

The rules on disclosure on government contracts are set out in Premiers Memorandum number 2000-11.

For contracts over \$100,000 value the requirement is to disclose certain information such as the name of the successful tenderer, the price payable by the agency and the significant selection criteria and their weightings. Information on this contract can be located at <https://tenders.nsw.gov.au/commerce>

The guidelines explicitly state that information not to be disclosed includes the contractor's cost structure and financing arrangements, or "any other matters where disclosure would place the contractor at a substantial disadvantage with its competitors". All information contained in unsuccessful tenders is also treated as commercial-in-confidence material.

This information would naturally be at the heart of the working documents in any tender evaluation process and so these are not eligible for disclosure.

While each Freedom of Information application is considered on its merits, the details of the evaluation results of individual tenderers would generally be excluded on commercial grounds.

QUESTION 4 - WAITING LISTS (The Hon Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans)

- a) *Is there a master waiting list for all services delivered by the Department? If so, lists in what areas and who maintains them? How many people are on them?*

Answer

Local lists are kept.

i) Respite

Access to centre-based respite operated by the Department is managed on the basis of the person with a disability and their family need and is allocated in three monthly blocks, in line with its *Allocation of Planned Respite Care* policy. People with a disability and their families, who are eligible but unsuccessful in being allocated respite, are sent a request form for the next period and also advised of other avenues for accessing respite available through the non-government sector.

ii) Attendant Care Program and High Need Pool

Yes, there are 534 people with a disability on the waiting list for these programs.

People on the waiting lists are prioritised for service using the approved prioritisation criteria in each program. The criteria reflect the different emphasis and objectives of the programs. Priority is based on living situation, functional need, risk, levels and sustainability of informal supports and availability of other appropriate services.

iii) Home Care

All referrals to Home Care are prioritised for intake by experienced assessors in the Referral and Assessment Centre. The key factors in prioritisation are the level of assistance required; the risk of current care arrangements breaking down and the branches' capacity, budget and service mix. The Referral and Assessment Centre keeps records of all Home and Community Care eligible referrals that are not prioritised for further assessment. In the last financial year, there were 9,423 referrals recorded.

There is a high demand for Home Care services and it is not always possible to meet this need. However, all of the 41 Home Care Branches currently have some capacity to service new people with a disability, frail older people and carers.

iv) Group Homes

The issue of waiting lists for group homes was addressed by the Department in response to the Committee's question at the hearing.

QUESTION 5 - SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH A HEARING IMPAIRMENT (Ms Sylvia Hale)

- a) *Would the Department be aware of the proportion of government services and documents that currently are available to hearing-impaired people, and the current timetable for making sure that that material will be available?*

Answer

- a) The New South Wales Department of Health has advised that it is not aware of the proportion of government services available to hearing impaired people. However, the *Ministerial Standing Committee on Hearing* was established in February 2004, to provide the Minister for Health with advice in relation to strategic directions for hearing services in New South Wales.

The *Ministerial Standing Committee on Hearing* has supported the development of a Hearing Health website. The site is currently under construction and will provide information relevant to the public health system and links to services provided by other government and non-government organisations in New South Wales. The Hearing Health website is located on the New South Wales Health Department website at the following address:

www.health.nsw.gov.au/hearing/index.html

The website will be further developed, to include information and links regarding referral and screening, diagnosis and assessment, and assistance after diagnosis.

QUESTION 6 – BOARDING HOUSES

- a) *How many of the 17 staff employed by the Department across the regions to monitor unlicensed residential centres are specifically employed to ensure compliance with the Youth and Community Services Act 1973?* (The Hon John Ryan)

Answer

- a) Most of the 17 front line staff has monitoring of this Act as part of a wider range of responsibilities. Monitoring of compliance with the *Youth and Community Services Act 1973* at a regional level involves both front line staff and their managers.
- b) *Has anybody visited the property on Palmer Street, in the city, owned by the recently elected member for Pittwater to inform him of his obligations under the Youth and Community Services Act and to ensure that he complies?* (The Hon John Ryan)

Answer

- b) In late 2005, in response to a request for information from a co-owner of the property, the Department provided (i) a copy of the *Youth and Community Services Act 1973*, (ii) an assessment tool used to assess if residents require relocation from unlicensed premises due to their support needs, and (iii) a contact number of an officer from the Department in the event that the owner required further information.

Subsequently, the co-owner reported that the facility did not require licensing. If residents of this property become unable to meet their own habilitation and support needs, they are referred on to the Aged Care Assessment Team or a mental health caseworker for assessment and follow-up.

- c) *Would newspaper articles, such as the ones placed in the Sydney Morning Herald and Sun Herald in regard to the Palmer Street property, automatically trigger an investigation?* (The Hon John Ryan)

Answer

- c) A diagnosis of schizophrenia does not in itself bring a person within the ambit of the *Youth and Community Services Act 1973*.

To enter an unlicensed boarding house, the Department either needs to be invited, or to obtain a warrant. There is no evidence to suggest that the residents of this property require habilitation and supervision. As a result, there are no grounds to justify the application for a warrant in this case.

If the Honourable John Ryan has information which would provide justification for a warrant, he should provide that information as soon as possible.

- d) *Has anybody visited the premises that were featured on various ABC programs that covered boarding houses that are right opposite Marrickville Council which are clearly unlicensed boarding houses and are clearly inadequate? (The Hon John Ryan)*

Answer

- d) Although no specific address was given for this property, regional staff from the Department did visit a property opposite Marrickville Council two years ago. At that time there was no evidence that handicapped people under the definition of the *Youth and Community Services Act 1973* were residing there. Therefore no action was taken.

The Department works collaboratively with councils to ensure fire and safety requirements are met, particularly when monitoring visits uncover an issue which is in their purview. However, as a further safeguard, in this case the Department will approach the proprietor for permission to visit the property again.

- e) *In relation to services provided by New South Wales Health to boarding house residents, what is the Department's response to issues raised in correspondence it has received regarding some of the dental care received by clients in the inner city area from the facilities at 117 Livingstone Road, Marrickville? In particular:*
- *why is the Department using the services of the Dental Hospital and not purchasing these services from elsewhere so that clients might get quicker treatment;*
 - *if the service is as bad as described in this letter, why would the Department be using a facility that is so bad;*
 - *would the Department tolerate that in a group home; and*
 - *would the Department be prepared to have a person in a group home eat for 12 months without dentures, when they need them? (The Hon John Ryan)*

Answer

- e) Residents of Licensed Residential Centres are able to apply for podiatry services offered under the public system. Under this system there is provision for emergency services from private practitioners. They may also be eligible for podiatry services under the Home and Community Care Program.

As a safety net, the Department provides funding to New South Wales Health for allied health services such as podiatry and dental services for licensed boarding house residents under the Boarding House Reform Program. In this financial year, \$0.9 million is being provided for this purpose. Referral to private practitioners is an acceptable use of Reform funds. These funds also support the development of a health care plan for residents of licensed boarding houses. This individualised care approach has recently been strengthened by the approval of Departmental funds for caseworkers for boarding house residents.

- f) *In the answer that the Minister for Disability Services gave in response to questions without notice, he indicated that the Boarding House team had identified 26 people who were eligible for other forms of supported accommodation living in boarding houses and that only 10 of those people had actually been moved out of boarding houses. What is happening to the other 16?* (The Hon John Ryan)

Answer

- f) Of the 16 people, eight who were assessed as eligible for aged care placements have expressed reluctance to move. They are being assisted to make informed decisions by advocacy services, and a guardian appointed when required. Of the other eight people:
- Four have very specific location needs, primarily in regional New South Wales;
 - Three people's needs have changed and alternate supports have been organised; and
 - One is in a secure situation in a small well-run boarding house where she has lived for 20 years with local community services support. Her situation is kept under review and she is currently able to make an informed choice as to her accommodation and support.

All 16 residents are kept under regular review.

- g) *How difficult would it be to make sure that they (boarding house residents) get screened, or that they are checked to see whether they need screening, at least on a 12-monthly basis?* (The Hon John Ryan)

Answer

- g) A survey in 1998, of all licensed boarding house residents who gave consent, identified about 400 residents who required further assessment of their accommodation and support needs. More than 300 of these residents were moved to community-based accommodation in the first stage of boarding house reform.

A further survey on this scale is not required. Not all residents require formal re-assessment and the Department aims to minimise intrusive processes. The Boarding House Reform Program has elicited a support approach that is ongoing and holistic. Workers from funded services have been able to monitor the needs of residents and make appropriate referrals for assessments and services.

To further enhance the effectiveness of services and ensure that residents are able to access mainstream and Reform Program services, the Department will fund eight caseworkers through the Boarding House Reform Program to work across the State to assist residents of licensed boarding houses. Recruitment will occur over the next few months.

The caseworkers will work with the existing service network to identify residents whose needs are not being met in their current situation and will ensure that appropriate assessments and service plans are in place, including appropriate accommodation and support options.

- h) *With respect to boarding houses, would you care to explain the procedure for inspection of boarding houses to ensure basic standards are maintained; in other words, provide an overview?* (The Hon Greg Donnelly)

Answer

- h) The Department's role is to monitor Licensed Residential Centres for compliance with the conditions contained within the *Youth and Community Services Act 1973*, rather than against a set of standards. The Department carries out two forms of monitoring activities for licensed residential centres: a full service review and routine monitoring inspections.

To conduct a full service review, the licensee is notified by the region of this intent in advance, and must be in attendance during all interviews during the review. An officer from the Department will then visit the premises, assessing compliance with all licence conditions. An action plan is negotiated with the licensee to address any breaches. The outcome of this plan is documented and further follow up is undertaken as required.

Routine monitoring inspections occur every six to eight weeks or as required. These are conducted without prior notice. Any outstanding or new breaches, along with actions to resolve, are documented on a report and signed by Departmental staff and the licensee. A copy of this report is left with the licensee. Follow up is conducted by the Department as required.

- i) *Do all clients in licensed boarding houses access day care programs?*
(The Hon Patricia Forsythe)

Answer

- i) Learning and Life Skills Development Services, funded through the Boarding House Reform Program, are available to all residents of Licensed Residential Centres. About 90 per cent, or 900 residents, choose to access this service to some degree.

Day care programs do not target the residents of Licensed Residential Centres. Day care programs funded under disability services target people with an intellectual disability with moderate to high support needs from 18 to 65 years of age. Day care programs funded under the Home and Community Care program provide centre-based services to frail older people. People with these profiles have needs that are not generally suited to a Licensed Residential Centre environment.

QUESTION 7 – CANTERBURY MULTICULTURAL AGED AND DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (Ms Sylvia Hale)

- a) *Will the Department make public the outcome of its investigation into governance and financial issues relating to the Canterbury Multicultural Aged and Disability Support Services? When will the report be completed?*

Answer

- a) The Department expects to finalise the report from WalterTurnbull during March 2006. The Department is not planning to make the report publicly available. However, once the report has been reviewed by the Department's Legal Services Branch, the outcomes and recommendations contained within the report will be communicated to interested parties in line with confidentiality and privacy requirements.

QUESTION 8 – REDFERN-WATERLOO HUMAN SERVICES PLAN (Ms Sylvia Hale)

- a) *Phase one of that human services plan focused on demand and provision of youth and family services. Phase two will presumably focus on aged care and disability services. Do you have any idea when phase two will be released?*

Answer

- a) Phase Two of the Human Services Plan will continue the implementation of Phase One initiatives and also identify priorities and improve service delivery for the following groups:
- migrant communities;
 - the aged;
 - people with disabilities; and
 - homeless people.

The Redfern-Waterloo Authority will identify priorities and actions required to improve service delivery in conjunction with service providers and community members involved with these groups. Specific actions will be finalised and incorporated into the Human Services Plan in early 2006.

- b) *Because the built environment plan, to my understanding, is on public exhibition for comment up until the beginning of April. You will look into these land use decisions being proposed prior to the thorough assessment of the demand for community services. The built environment plan failed to provide clear targets, goals or criteria for the provision of aged care and disability services in the area. Will your department be supplying these requirements to the Redfern-Waterloo Authority?*

Answer

- b) The Redfern-Waterloo Authority has developed the draft Built Environment Plan. No other government agencies have at this stage had input. The document is

currently available for consultation and the Department will be providing a submission with respect to issues for older people and people with disabilities.

- c) *Both the Department of Community Services and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care are represented on the Implementation Senior Officers Group. How many times has the group met and what schedule has been set for future meetings*

Answer

- c) The Department has been represented at fortnightly meetings since January 2006 and this schedule will continue. In addition, the Department is represented at the monthly Phase One Implementation Senior Officers Group and the monthly Human Services Ministerial Advisory Committee for Redfern and Waterloo.

QUESTION 9 – RACHEL FOSTER MEDICAL CENTRE (Ms Sylvia Hale)

- a) *Where will medical services to aged and disabled residents be provided when the Rachel Foster hospital site is developed for residential use and will the medical centre be retained?*

Answer

- a) The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care does not have jurisdiction over the Rachel Foster hospital site or medical centre. Questions on this issue should be directed to the New South Wales Department of Health.

QUESTION 10 – GROUP HOME VACANCIES (The Hon John Ryan)

- a) *You have given us details of where the (group home) vacancies occur but I would be grateful if you could give the committee details of where the applications came from so we would be able to find out how many applications were made in Hunter, Metro North, Metro South, West and so on to enable the committee to determine where the beds are occurring in the places where the applications are coming from. Is there a higher level of applications in places where there are lower levels of vacancies?*

Answer

- a) The demand for accommodation services in each region of the Department exceeds the supply of vacancies. All regions operate a vacancy management process that considers both Departmental operated and Departmental funded service outlets.

The table below provides a breakdown, by region, of people with a disability requesting accommodation and the number of vacancies available throughout 2004/05.

	Hunter	Metro North	Metro South	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
Number of people with a disability requesting accommodation	183	165	199	279	23	127	976
Number of vacancies	32	27	28	13	3	1	104

Source: Returns from Regional Placement Committees – October 2005

QUESTION 11 – FERGUSON LODGE (Ms Sylvia Hale)

- a) *Ferguson Lodge at Lidcombe. What arrangement has the Government reached with ParaQuad and the residents of Ferguson Lodge about the residents' long-term tenancy at the facility?*

Answer

- a) The existing funding for Ferguson Lodge will be transferred to the new facility for the purpose of permanent accommodation and respite. This will ensure a permanent place for the existing permanent residents of Ferguson Lodge. A number of beds will also be available for respite and short-term care. No final decisions have yet been made in relation to the design and configuration of a new facility. ParaQuad is working to finalise these matters as soon as possible.
- b) *Have all existing residents been guaranteed a place at Ferguson Lodge? It is my understanding that that is central to their concerns - they wish to remain together as a collective or to be moved temporarily off site while the premises are upgraded.*

Answer

- b) The Department has made a commitment that the present residents at Ferguson Lodge will be able to remain living together in a new replacement facility. There are 26 residents and 26 permanent beds will be available.
- c) *Has a new lease been entered into with ParaQuad for Ferguson Lodge?*

Answer

- c) The Department is not aware of any new lease.