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GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 2

Wednesday 15 September 2010

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

COMMUNITY SERVICES, STATE PLAN

The Committee met at 2.00 p.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. R. M. Parker (Chair)

The Hon. I. Cohen
The Hon. M. A. Ficarra
The Hon. S. Moselmane

Reverend the Hon. G. K. M. Moyes
The Hon. C. M. Robertson
The Hon. P. G. Sharpe

PRESENT

The Hon. L. J. Burney, *Minister for the State Plan, and Minister for Community Services*

Community Services

Ms A. Gallard, *Chief Executive Officer*

Mr S. Matthews, *Chief Financial Officer*

Ms S. Stewart, *Divisional Director, Communities and Early Years*

Department of Human Services

Ms J. Mason, *Director General*

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Mr B O'Reilly, *Director General*

Ms S. Calvert, *Director, Strategy and Policy Delivery Unit*

Ms N. Munir, *Director, Keep Them Safe Implementation Unit*

NSW Office for Children

Ms K. Boland, *Children's Guardian*

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 budget estimates 2010-11 open to the public. Minister Burney is in attendance. We are examining the portfolios of Community Services and the State Plan. There are a couple of procedural matters that I need to note. A copy of the broadcasting procedure guidelines is available at the door. Only witnesses and members should be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photos. Members of the media need to understand that they take responsibility for what they publish and for the interpretation they place on anything said before the Committee. Messages should be delivered through the Chamber support staff or Committee clerks. The Minister is able to receive notes directly from her advisers. Everyone should turn off their mobile phones. If they are receiving data, keep them away from the microphone and Hansard equipment so they do not interfere. Minister, we have agreed to begin with the State Plan and then move on to the Community Services portfolio. There are 21 days for the return of questions on notice. Transcripts will be available on the website tomorrow morning. Minister, you do not need to be sworn, but we will swear or affirm your advisers.

SUSAN CALVERT, Director, Strategy and Project Delivery Unit, Department of Premier and Cabinet, and

VICKI D'ADAM, Deputy Director General, Department of Premier and Cabinet, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: There is no provision for opening statements so I will go straight into questions. In relation to the State Plan, who in your office or department is responsible for uploading the State Plan onto the website?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That would be the responsibility of Susan Calvert and her unit. We have a current website. One of the things we are working on to make it more interactive and more integrated with the rest of the Premier's Department is some fairly serious work on the website. But essentially it is the responsibility of Susan Calvert and her team.

CHAIR: There was quite a bungle, was there not, in terms of the 2010 release of the State Plan on the website?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Could you explain that a bit, please?

CHAIR: I think you said there was a document that was not accidentally posted on the website. However, there was a need to explain why it was uploaded onto the website the day before you were due to release the document.

Ms CALVERT: It was my responsibility. The issue to which you refer is that we had an event whereby we had 150 stakeholders attending a forum to talk about progress against the annual State Plan and the release of our performance report. The State Plan had been updated, as it is from time to time. It was put on the website so that people attending that event could access it prior to the event. It was not accidentally launched. It was purposely put in. Letters had gone out to the 150 stakeholders asking them to look at the website for the document. So there was no bungle.

CHAIR: How many targets in the 2010 State Plan have been watered down?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: There have not been any targets watered down in the 2010 State Plan. There have been some changes to targets from the previous State Plan. I think it is important for people to understand that the State Plan is in its third iteration. Some of the original targets from the first State Plan exist. A number of them have been aligned with, for example, Closing the Gap and also the Commonwealth Government's greenhouse gas targets. Obviously, that is going to be looked at again in the light of changes in direction in relation to Commonwealth policy. Additional targets have been put in, particularly around things like obesity, which, obviously, is one of the key focuses of the State Plan. But there has not been any watering down of State targets.

CHAIR: I will provide an example to show why I am asking this question. I notice that in the 2006 State Plan there was a target to reduce the proportion of the New South Wales population who experienced problems in their local area—things like noisy neighbours, public drunkenness and those sorts of things—but the 2010 target, instead of talking about experience, has now reduced that to the proportion of the population who perceive problems. We have gone from experience to those who perceive. I guess that is quite a difference in language. I wondered who made that decision to update the target. It seems like a watering down to me. It is not about actual incidence; it is now about perception. Is that not really what some people call spin?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No. The target actually remains the same. It is Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] data. It needs to be understood that this iteration of the State Plan came out of very significant consultation right across New South Wales. I personally participated in three of those consultations—one at Liverpool, one at Marrickville-Canterbury, and one in the eastern suburbs. The State Plan that we have in front of us at the moment is a living document. It changes with time, it changes with circumstance, and it also changes when people draw to attention, in a really consistent way, that there is something within the State Plan that needs to be included.

CHAIR: With all due respect, the question was about watering it down. It was about a difference between the word "experience" and now "perception". That is what we are talking about, not information.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Sure. I am sorry, Madam Chair. That is an outcome of the last round of consultations in relation to the State Plan.

CHAIR: But people did not want the State Plan to talk about experience then; they only wanted to talk about perception? Is that right?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: What people said to us, very clearly—this was a change in perception and a change in the way in which the community spoke about the State Plan. There became a really strong emphasis on what sort of place we want to live in, what sort of community would you want, and, for instance, issues around community safety. Much of the issue around community safety, as the Committee would appreciate, is around the way in which people perceive their environment. That was a very strong message that we got from the community.

CHAIR: Of the 13 targets relating to the protection of "native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways", how many of those are on track to meet the 2015 targets?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That comes under one of the areas of the State Plan, and that is the area referred to as the "Green State". That covers seven areas and includes tackling climate change, the development of a clean energy future, securing sustainable supplies of water and using our water more wisely, and the important one, protecting our native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways—

CHAIR: Yes, that is the one I am asking about.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: —improving air quality, and reducing waste. Besides that, we have all of the targets that are listed. In terms of bringing you up to speed with those targets, was it groundwater that you were asking about?

CHAIR: No. It is the one about native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Eight of the 13 are on track.

CHAIR: How many do you think are likely to meet those targets by 2015?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Our goal is to meet all the targets. I will be very clear with you: there are two real challenges in terms of the State Plan. We are very much on track in every area. Indeed, in some areas we are well ahead of the target. But there are two challenging areas. One is childhood obesity. You would be aware there have been a number of childhood obesity initiatives recently. Another challenge is meeting greenhouse gas emission targets, which is what I think you are drawing attention to.

CHAIR: Those five targets are about 40 per cent so they are unlikely to meet their targets by 2015.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The point I am making is that they are most definitely our biggest challenge in terms of meeting the targets in the State Plan. I cannot get into great detail but there is much work going on through the Cabinet and budget processes at the moment, with the view of understanding that they are some of our biggest challenges.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: With those eight out of 13 targets that you claim the Government has met, are you willing to table documents or some form of evidence to show to the Committee that this is a fact? According to our estimates, you have achieved none of those 13 targets.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am very happy—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: They are estimates.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: None of the 13 targets, we believe, has been achieved.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: How are you measuring these?

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: It is the Minister's duty to table information to show us how the Government—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you table yours? Will you table your consultations?

CHAIR: The question is: Are you prepared to table the documentation?

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Table the evidence.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The answer is yes, I am. They are public documents anyway. I am happy to table the document I am referring to. In that document you will see the tracking and trend to the targets within that section of the State Plan. As I said, we are on track with eight of them. I have already been very clear that this is our biggest challenge, not just in New South Wales but probably across the country, if not the world, in relation to meeting our various targets. But I am very happy to table what is a public document.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: And for the information of Government members, I am willing to table the New South Wales State Plan annual performance report 2010, where we see that these targets are not on track. We are happy to table the information.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is this document here?

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: That is right.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: As I said, it is a public document so I am very happy to table it. It gives you a good idea on where we are with every one of our State Plan targets. As I said, most of them are on target or complete, but I have been very clear about where we have the challenge.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: When the departments provide you with statistics as to how they are tracking against the various State Plan targets, who decides whether the old targets remain or how those targets are amended and modified with each subsequent State Plan? Do you decide, in consultation with the departments or Ministers, or it is purely the departments and Ministers?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am glad you have asked that question. The State Plan governance arrangements are different from most other areas of government. We have a State Plan Cabinet Committee, which obviously sits underneath Cabinet. On that committee are not only Ministers but also three independents who are well-known people within the Australian community—John Stuckey, Brian McCaughan and Wendy McCarthy. I am happy to talk about those people. John Stuckey is the former managing partner of McKinsey and Company in the Australian office. He provides us with enormous—

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Thank you but we can google those people and get their CVs. I trust that they are quite professional. My question is: If a department is not meeting its targets, do you seek an explanation as to why the targets are not being met? What is the process?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Government agencies that are responsible for the targets report twice a year, with a public annual report—this is the annual report—at the end of the year. Not only Ministers decide whether priorities are being met; there is also strong oversight by the Auditor-General, the Chief Scientist, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Transport Data Centre. Neither the government agency nor I decide whether the target is being met. In fact, it is not me; it is the oversight group, which I am sure you will agree—

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: So as the Minister responsible for the State Plan you do not ask for an explanation?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No. I just said that we require—

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: You let others do it.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No, that is not what I said. I said that the Ministers responsible for the targets have to report a number of times each year. There is a public annual report at the end of the year, which is the one you have just asked me to table. Three independents also sit on our Cabinet committee, and the group I just outlined—the Chief Scientist, the Auditor-General, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, and a number of other people—test whether what the government departments are saying is correct.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: When targets are not being met, why do the reasons from all those experienced independents and organisations not form part of the State Plan so that people can get an idea of where the Government is going or why the targets have not been met? There might be legitimate reasons why the targets have not been met. These independent experts, if they are apologists for the Government, should be allowed to put their explanations onto the website as part of the State Plan reporting process.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think you will find that actually takes place. One other thing that happens is that a State Plan Cabinet committee—which is chaired by the Premier and includes the independents—meets about once a month. Ministers must front up to that committee and explain why targets are not being met. More importantly, they bring along detailed proposals to advance State Plan targets. People need to understand that the State Plan does not stand on its own as a document. It is also used for some significant processes within government. It is within the budget process to ensure that the way the budget is being allocated will assist in meeting State Plan targets. It is used extensively with Cabinet decisions; every Cabinet minute must check itself against the State Plan. It is also used in a number of other processes within government.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: So why can we not have more public information on the website about why targets have been changed, improved, kept the same or reduced?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am listening to what the Hon. Marie Ficarra is saying but I am sure what she is getting—

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: In other words, give the public the information they require to understand where the Government has been tracking through all the successive State Plans.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: If you took some time to look at our documentation, look at each annual report and look at what is happening on the website, and also understand that we have a dedicated unit within the Premier's department—

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Who should be able to do this quite easily.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: They do do it.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: You are making it very difficult for the public.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: We also have a dedicated policy officer within the ministerial office who is there to talk to the public. We have public consultations. In fact, towards the end of last year I travelled to a number of communities to talk about their regional plans.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Thank you but time is limited and we want to move onto other questions. We note that the 2010 reincarnation of the State Plan is a full 110 pages—it is shorter than the original 2006 document—with many targets watered down. We also note—I have taken a long time to look at the State Plan—that the plan looks similar to the document released to community stakeholders by the former Premier Nathan Rees last November. Would you agree that that is correct?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I hope it is because that is the consultation document. The document that then Premier Nathan Rees released was the consultation document that went all over the State for consultation on what we would have in the next iteration of the State Plan, which is this. That is why you see such similarities. It would be a surprise to me if it were any different, I would have to say.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: What have you been doing as Minister for the State Plan since your appointment? If this is the same as what he was working on, what have you done?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do you want the Minister to answer the question? She has tried to answer it three times now and you keep saying you want to move on.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: What I have been doing is exercising my responsibilities as the Minister for the State Plan and travelling around New South Wales working with regional and local communities because, while we have the State Plan, we also have regional plans sitting underneath that. We are working very closely now with local government to make sure that its strategic planning takes deep cognisance of the State Plan. You

can see there that we have the State Plan, we have regional plans and now there is a local process going on. That is particularly important for areas such as the western region, for example, which clearly is a very large part of New South Wales. Having one regional plan for the Western Division and Broken Hill is not going to do much for Bathurst. So we are breaking up plans.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Why is the 2009 State Plan not on the New South Wales website? Who decided not to upload the 2009 State Plan onto the Government website?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is there.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: No, it is not.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The 2010 State Plan is on our website.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: No, I am talking about the 2009 State Plan. What happened to the 2009 State Plan?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The State Plan on the website now is this one, which was the consultation document, with the changes from the consultations from 2009.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Did one exist for 2009? Why is it not on the website? It is a very simple question.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No, the first State Plan was 2006 and it has changed over that period. But the one on the website now is the current one, which follows consultation last year.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: The one for 2009 has disappeared. It is not there.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am not quite sure what you are saying, so I will leave my answer there.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I refer to the discussion with the Hon. Marie Ficarra in relation to the Cabinet committee on the State Plan and the independent advisers. Will you provide a snapshot on the role of the independent advisers, in particular?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: As I said earlier, it is really a very unique arrangement to have three independent people participate in essentially what is a Cabinet process in relation to the State Plan. Those members include John Stuckey, with whom I am sure most people are familiar. He is the former managing partner of McKinsey and Company Australasia practice. There is also Brian McCaughan, who is a thoracic surgeon. It is terrific to have him here at the moment because of all the health reforms in New South Wales and the Commonwealth health reforms as well. He is an extremely experienced person. Both those people were on the original State Plan committee. We have invited them back for this one and we have also included Wendy McCarthy because she has such a strong base in the community, she knows about social inclusion and I thought it was important to have a woman there.

Those independent advisers, I can assure members, are absolutely independent. They are not there at anyone's bidding. They have detailed discussions with directors general, as well as anyone else within government that they feel they need to talk to. They have regular discussions with the Premier. I have also had regular discussions with them. They ask really hard questions within the Cabinet committee process and come up with really interesting ideas about different ways that governments can do things. They bring a wealth of experience and depth to the State Plan exercise.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you outline to the Committee the purpose of the State Plan? What is the Government trying to achieve with the State Plan?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The State Plan has had a number of iterations. I appreciate sometimes that there can be cynicism around any government State Plan process, but I really believe in this and so do the people involved with it—otherwise we would not be doing it. The State Plan is the Keneally Government's long-term plan. So it is not about this week or next year; it is a long-term plan that has targets through to 2013, 2020. It is important to understand that the State Plan is overarching; it does not stand alone. It is the plan that overarches the other strategies and plans within New South Wales. As I said, it contains really tough, very

realistic targets. As members can see through our publications and the website, we aim to be extremely transparent about where the Government is in terms of reaching its targets and being flexible regarding what the community says to us about the State Plan. It is also based on evidence and very careful deliberation.

The State Plan has 44 clear priorities and 90 targets. Importantly, it also sets out the responsibility as to who must meet those targets. It releases an annual report. We have a number of independent advisers, as I have mentioned. We have very strong underpinning consultation, and the community's vision is caught up with the State Plan—things around transport, economy, education and training. It was really interesting in the last round of consultation to speak to the community—I did that on a number of occasions, as did other members—and hear at a local level how well they thought of their local school, hospital and early childhood services and what sort of place they wanted to live in. That is one of the most valuable exercises one can undertake. Essentially, it is an overarching plan to help with decisions around budgeting, policy direction and shaping the other plans that sit beneath it within government.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Will you advise the Committee on the status of the annual performance report and the local action plan reporting process?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I will start with the local action plans. To me, that is what is important at a local community level. Those local action plans are being developed or have been finished. That is where we get the buy-in of the local community, but most importantly the buy-in of local government. I mentioned earlier that local government is in the process of developing its strategic plans for the next 10 years and part of what it needs to be mindful of in terms of the strategic planning process is the New South Wales State Plan, so that is where you can see the connect starting to happen.

The State Plan annual performance report will see where we are in terms of the 90 State Plan targets. As I said earlier, the targets and what the government agencies tell us are absolutely scrutinised, about which I am really pleased, by those places like the Chief Scientist, the Bureau of Health Information, the Auditor-General, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] and, interestingly, the Chief Executive of the Natural Resources Commission plays an important role, the Director of the Bureau of Transport Statistics and the Deputy Director of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It is also tabled within Parliament, so it is very much a high-profile document.

We will be releasing our local action plans in November 2010 and our initial review of this year's plan is—and this comes back to the Hon. Marie Ficarra's point—that 90 per cent of the 250 actions are complete or on track, and the strongest progress being made is in the Central Coast, the Hunter, the Illawarra, the western suburbs and south-western Sydney. I think I have mentioned already that we have had a number of community consultations and that 11 local action plans with over 250 locally-based actions are a result of that.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Minister, you mentioned earlier that there was a 2006 plan and there is now a 2010 plan.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is correct.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Can you tell us the difference between the two or the changes between the two?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes, of course. Because the plan is a very long-term plan—I think it was Premier Iemma who started the process of the State Plan—it is a false kind of notion to say, "Well, this target was here and now it is not", because the very reason for the plan was that it be a long-term dynamic plan, and we can go through appropriate consultation processes in terms of where it needs to change. Looking at the 2006 plan you will see that, after three years, to make sure the plan was reflecting circumstances, a State Plan review was undertaken in 2009, and I will go to what the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane has just said.

The difference between the 2006 and 2010 plans is that there are 10 additional priorities and 20 additional targets. I am happy to go through those if you want, but I do not think there is necessarily that need. The changes in the State Plan broadly, without going through each of those individually, were around things such as employment—employment situations were clearly very different in 2009 and 2006; issues around transport, which is probably the most talked about part of the State Plan; what sort of cities, country and communities do we want to live in; and the other thing that is very different, which I did want to draw people's attention to, is that there is a strong focus now in the State Plan on what we might call social inclusion.

Back in 2006 that was not so well understood; it was not so much the priority. It is about making sure that the most vulnerable and some of the people with the most challenging circumstances in their lives are front and centre of the New South Wales Government State Plan. So it does have a balance between environment, development, employment, social inclusion and transport. That is very much what we are trying to achieve or what we have achieved in terms of a balance. The social inclusion element is a very important part that is close to my heart. The other thing is improving local services. So the State Plan retains 75 per cent of the 2006 targets, but clearly you would expect some things to change.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Could you outline to the Committee what you believe are some of the key achievements of the State Plan?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes. The first place I would like to start is the fact that we actually have a plan that assists Government right across the board in terms of direction. Interestingly, when I first became the Minister for the State Plan, one of the early things I did was meet with all the directors general or chief executives across Government, and they were thrilled that we were going to have a real focus on the State Plan by creating a ministerial position within Cabinet and that that position would also be a member of the budget committee of Cabinet so that we could make sure that the decisions made in those forums were consistent with the overall planning process and what the community had actually told us.

I will not go through all of them, but the Clever State Strategy—we have invested in the last 12 months in education and training by an additional \$14.7 billion. The really pleasing thing is that New South Wales students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 perform above the national average in reading, spelling and numeracy. Our 20-year-olds to 24-year-olds have achieved a year 12 certificate, and that is really important in terms of further education. We have additional hours in TAFE. The thing that I am also very happy to tell people about is that we have seen such improvements in the participation rates of Aboriginal people in preschool and early childhood education. That only bears well for the future.

In terms of healthy communities, in terms of elective surgery waiting times, they are the best in the nation. We have had 6,000 patients treated each day in our emergency services. One important point that I am sure everyone will be interested in is that the rate of readmission to mental health units has remained stable in New South Wales for the past five years. Without going into too much detail, I think most people are very familiar with this, but certainly keeping people safe is a really strong success story within the State Plan in relation to crime statistics in New South Wales. Despite what we may or may not see from day to day publicly, I can say that 16 of the 17 major crime categories are falling. One thing I do want to make a point on is that alcohol-related crime is dropping.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: After the past weekend, how can you say that?

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Statistically. We do not operate off spin; we operate off fact.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The other thing is that there are additional police numbers, so I am happy to provide any further information, but that gives you an idea of the sorts of things within the State Plan. The other area that I have not touched on in the State Plan, and it is not a high-profile area, is the really good progress we are making in terms of cutting red tape, not just for business but also for community-based organisations. We are probably going to exceed our targets in terms of reduction of red tape.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Can you advise the Committee on how the community has been engaged in the development of the revised State Plan?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I can, and I think I have probably spoken a fair bit on that. I will not go over what we have already spoken about except to say that you do not have a State Plan that lives and breathes and means anything unless there is proper engagement by the community, and there is no point having a State Plan that does not reflect what the community is telling us. That is why we have taken such pains to go through the sorts of consultative processes that we have undertaken and continue to undertake in the State Plan. I have already mentioned the process we have undertaken to get to the iteration of the State Plan that we have now. As I said, I participated in a number of those consultations.

We have input from community representatives and I also have a very good relationship with local government. I spoke at the last big local government conference and have had a number of discussions across

New South Wales, particularly with local government. One of the memorable ones was in Dubbo, which was really well attended, not just by people in Dubbo but by mayors from right across the Western Division, from Nyngan, Narromine—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Cobar.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think I would remember if a representative from Cobar was there. There were also people from Orange and Wellington. That is when you hear what things mean to people in the community. It is our job to make sure that the State Plan reflects those sorts of things.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Can you advise the Committee on how the State Plan works to make real improvements to the performance of government services?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: As I said in my earlier answer, one of the first things I did was to speak with the chief executive officers across New South Wales. I have done that again just recently. Their joy at having a State Plan arose from the fact that it gives them a clear guide of what is expected at a macro level from agencies and gives them a clear guide on where to channel resources and energy, with the understanding that it is their responsibility to meet the State Plan targets. It is a way in which we can measure progress and a means of reflecting on where things need to be changed or improved. I hope I am a flexible person and I understand that if we make a mistake or something needs to be changed we should go about changing it. That comes by way of feedback both from government agencies and Ministers but also, most importantly, from the community.

This is an ongoing exercise, particularly in the sense of the 10-year strategic planning processes that local government is undertaking because that gives us a sense of continuity right across government. No matter who you are or where you are or where you stand in the political process, we have a document that gives us direction and overarches other documents and strategies and plans.

CHAIR: That concludes the budget estimates section on the State Plan.

(The witnesses withdrew)

JENNY MASON, Director General, Department of Human Services,

ANNETTE GALLARD, Chief Executive Officer, NSW Community Services,

STEVE MATTHEWS, Chief Financial Officer, NSW Community Services, and

NAZLI MUNIR, Director, Keep Them Safe Implementation Unit, Department of Premier and Cabinet, affirmed and examined:

SONJA STEWART, Divisional Director, Communities and Early Years, NSW Community Services, and

KERRY BOLAND, Children's Guardian, NSW Office for Children, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Minister, have all the recommendations that were listed in the Wood Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in New South Wales that were ranked as immediate been implemented?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes.

CHAIR: Has recommendation 13.6 been acted upon?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I will wait to find out what it is as I do not know what each recommendation is.

CHAIR: Recommendation 13.6 states that Department of Community Services [DOCS] caseworkers should be given more training.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes, that is being acted upon. In fact, there are a number of strategies. Obviously, not just DOCS caseworkers needed training in relation to Keep Them Safe. The monumental task we had in implementing keep Keep Them Safe related not just to the training of caseworkers but also to the training of all mandatory reporters across New South Wales.

CHAIR: What about recommendation 18.1, which refers to the recommendations of the Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Task Force?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: As I understand it, responsibility for that has been handed to the Ombudsman.

CHAIR: Recommendation 23.2 refers to the Department of Community Services reviewing the death of any child or young person about whom a report was made within three years.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes.

CHAIR: Has recommendation 24.2 been acted upon?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes.

CHAIR: Minister, how many children who were known to the Department of Community Services died in 2008-09?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am glad that you asked that question. Let me give you some background. Justice Wood said that responsibility for the Child Death Review Team would be transferred from the Commission for Children and Young People to the Ombudsman. We are part way through that transfer. The review of the deaths of all children and young people known to the agency relates to reports on children or their siblings within a three-year period preceding their death. It is important not only for this panel but also for anyone reading *Hansard* to know that the reviewable death of a child known to the Department of Community Services does not necessarily mean a child who had been reported to the Department of Community Services; it means that the child or his or her siblings had been reported in the past three years. It is important to make that point.

In 2009 the Department of Community Services was advised of the deaths of 149 children and young people who fit into that category. I am sure that all members would view the death of 149 young people as tragic. When we learn that these children were known to the Department of Community Services we assume that they died as a result of parental neglect or abuse; however, that is not always the case.

CHAIR: Nevertheless, 149 children died.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes, 149 children died.

CHAIR: We understand the background to it but we are trying to establish where things are heading. Three months ago a child in the Hunter who was known to the Department of Community Services was admitted to John Hunter Hospital with injuries and died shortly afterwards. Less than a month ago a three-year-old boy from Narrabri who was known to the Department of Community Services died from head injuries. I am informed that he was also sexually abused. You are talking about the implementation of those recommendations, but are the Keep Them Safe reforms doing anything better?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is not helpful to state that just because a child who was known to the Department of Community Services died tragically somehow Keep Them Safe is not working. If I had been allowed to continue—

CHAIR: It is not a remarkable improvement, is it?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: There have been stunning improvements in relation to those issues.

CHAIR: Not really because 152 children died in 2007, so that is not a remarkable improvement. There is a difference in the number of children who died but it is not a remarkable improvement.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Let us be clear about the nature of the deaths of those children. They died from things such as car accidents, congenital heart disease and sudden infant death syndrome.

CHAIR: In 2007, 152 children died and in 2006, 114 children died. Those children died in similar conditions so there really is not any remarkable improvement.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Most of these deaths were as a result of things such as car accidents, sudden infant death syndrome and fires. That does not necessarily correlate to our child protection system.

CHAIR: The two cases that I mentioned do not appear to involve car accidents. One child who was known to DOCS had been sexually abused and that child died of head injuries, and the death of the other child was not due to a car accident.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I understand what you are saying. Let us be honest in this forum. No child protection system will save every child everywhere in the world. We cannot stop parents from murdering their children. There is some sort of inference that because 149 children died this year—there were a similar number of deaths last year and the year before that—the child protection system failed those children who died in a car accident.

CHAIR: We are talking about the deaths of two children. There is no remarkable improvement in the number of children who died. Of those children who died in 2009 and who were known to the Department of Community Services, how many had their case files closed by the Department of Community Services prior to their deaths?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I would have to take that question on notice, and I am happy to do so.

CHAIR: At the same time could you tell us how many reports of child neglect or harm to the Department of Community Services either were not followed up or were closed due to inadequate resources?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: In relation to those children?

CHAIR: How many reports were made to the Department of Community Services?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: In relation to those particular children?

CHAIR: I asked two separate questions.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Could you restate your question?

CHAIR: How many reports of child neglect or harm to the Department of Community Services either were not followed up or were closed due to inadequate resources or competing priorities?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I will take that question on notice. It is not necessarily the case that the death in a dreadful car accident of a child who is known to DOCS can be attributed to our new child protection system. That does not make sense.

CHAIR: We are talking about children who died who had their case files closed before they died. Those are the children we are talking about.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The point you are making is difficult to follow. I will take those two questions on notice.

CHAIR: If their case files are closed and they die shortly afterwards—

Ms LINDA BURNEY: In a car accident?

CHAIR: We are not talking about car accidents.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: From drowning?

CHAIR: Why are you spending \$750 million on Keep Them Safe if it does not make any difference?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I take great offence to that, I am sorry. I am going to ask you to allow me to answer it fully. The \$750 million was the allocation made to Keep Them Safe for a five-year complete reform of the child protection system. Let us be honest about why we have done it. We have done it because the child protection system and the one responsible government agency were not coping. No-one is trying to hide that fact. However, to say that it is not working when it has been going for less than 12 months, to say that it is not working when we have had a big reduction in the number of calls to the Community Services helpline, to say it is not working when we have the best relationship we have ever had with the non-government sector in moving collectively towards implementing Keep Them Safe, to say it is not working when we have a whole new legislative arrangement, to say it is not working—let me finish—

CHAIR: No. With all due respect, Government members will have an opportunity to ask questions to which you can give full answers.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You can either ask the question and get the answer or you can ask the question and keep interrupting.

CHAIR: We have limited time in which to ask a number of questions. We are talking about numbers of children.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Can I just say that I disagree with your assertion.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Released under freedom of information provisions is the document called "Internal Child Death Review Report", endorsed on 3 April 2008, which names the child involved—I will not do so in this forum. I refer to part five entitled "Review findings" and ask why number two, which states, "There were four main missed opportunities for intervention and inadequate priority ratings", and which would have provided valuable information, has been blanked out by your department?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I will ask Ms Gallard to answer that.

Ms GALLARD: I think the report you are referring to is an internal child death report and it contained private and confidential information about other members of the family. In light of the fact that it contained that

private information about things like mandatory reporters, details about other children in the family, and other children in the family who were still alive, under existing legislation and policy we were required to block out those details.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Following the damning report by the NSW Ombudsman in July this year, which revealed that up to 4,000 children removed from abusive and violent parents are missing out on compensation worth up to \$50,000 under victims of crime law, how many claims on behalf of these children has Community Services lodged? In your answer would you please not include the 368 claims made in the four-year period prior to the release of the Ombudsman's report? You can take this question on notice if you wish.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: In the report to which you have referred the Ombudsman made 11 recommendations and the Department of Community Services in February 2010 accepted all of those recommendations. We are in the process of implementing those recommendations. Clearly, the report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services observed a significant increase in the number of children entering care, as we all know. The Ombudsman stated also that a single agency could not be expected to manage child protection matters on its own, hence the new system and the collective responsibility. Regrettably, the increase in the number of children entering care has resulted in work such as reviewing cases for compensation claims being given less priority by front-line staff. The focus rightly has been on making sure children are not at risk of abuse and neglect.

As I said, the 11 recommendations have been accepted. A number of legal service personnel available in the out-of-home care unit will be preparing applications for victims' compensation over the next 12 months. I will take the specifics on notice, but I want to make clear that we are conscious of this particular area. We know that since July 2007, 1,188 out-of-home care files have been audited. It is expected that this will increase legal resources over the next 12 months. These figures will continue to improve. The story I am telling is that we have accepted the Ombudsman's report, we are making a huge effort in respect of front-line staff and we are in the process of increasing the services in the audit of the out-of-home care unit. It is a high priority.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Why should children who are the victims of abuse or neglect not be able to claim compensation when the damage is estimated to be less than the compensation threshold of \$7,500?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I cannot answer that directly. I will take that question on notice.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Since the introduction of the new mandatory reporting threshold of risk of significant harm, what is the decline in actual numbers and percentages in risk of significant harm reports to the Community Services helpline from 24 January to 30 June this year? Basically, that represents half the year. Again, if you want to take that question on notice, you may.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No, I do not. I foreshadowed that there has been a decrease in the number of reports to the Community Services helpline. It is important that you have highlighted the new threshold, risk of significant harm. That means that the very serious cases are those that go above that threshold. They are the cases that are coming through to the helpline. The cases that do not meet that threshold are being channelled to the new Child Wellbeing Units, about which I am happy to talk.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I just want actual numbers and percentages.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am getting to that.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: You can take that on notice.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No, I am happy to answer that. Since between 24 January and 30 June this year there has been a 24 per cent drop in the volume of calls to the child protection line, a 33 per cent drop in child protection child and young person concerned reports, a 53 per cent drop in the volume of reports forwarded to Community Services Centres or Joint Investigative Response Teams, and a 3 per cent increase in the proportion of reports referred to CSC or JIRT that fall into the highest risk category. That translates to around 275 additional level one reports compared with the same period last year. In essence, I think that answers your question.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I appreciate that you have given the percentages, but can you provide the actual numbers? I do not need you to read them out.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Can I just say that there is a report precisely on that aspect on the Community Services website.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Thank you for that advice, but I still would like you to provide the actual numbers. What impact has this decline had on the cost and staffing of the Community Services helpline for the period 2009-10?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is a very important question. There should not be an assumption that because there are fewer calls to the helpline there is going to be a reduction in cost or a reduction in the need for resources. We have to remember that these are what we call the category one cases. From past experience we know that Community Services was challenged about getting to all those category one cases. But the indicators post Keep Them Safe are that the demand for the helpline has reduced in terms of the numbers of calls and the number of reports made. However, that is not translated into a reduction in demand for the helpline workforce. That is a really important point to make.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: So it is the same, basically?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is. It is around the same. But I want to make the point, because it is an important policy point, that the average time for a caseworker to complete a report is now longer than it was before. The increase in handling time is due to what we call a structured decision-making tool, which assists not only the helpline people but also other mandatory reporters in working out whether that report is above or below the threshold. It has also increased the complexity of calls. Staff are still adjusting to the tool, but the notion that somehow because there are fewer calls that means there is less need for resources is certainly not the case.

CHAIR: We will break for 10 minutes for afternoon tea.

[Short adjournment]

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Minister, in your June 2010 message in relation to the 2010-2011 New South Wales budget, it is stated:

About 62% or \$1,039.2 million of Community Services total budget is spent on supporting or procuring services from non-government organisations or other external providers.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is correct, yes.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: That is a big figure.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is well over \$200 million.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: I do not expect you to do so now—perhaps you could take the question on notice—but could you provide a breakdown of that amount, unless you have it here?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am happy to provide it on notice.

Mr MATTHEWS: We have lots of details on it.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: How much detail do you want?

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Perhaps you could take it on notice. I am interested in how much is allocated to direct service delivery and how much is allocated to non-client related services.

Mr MATTHEWS: Thinking of that \$1,039.2 million, \$800 million goes to the non-government organisations. The balance is what we pay to the carers. The wording says something like "external providers" and "other". The "other" is that \$200 million that goes out to carers.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Can you describe the carers you are talking about—the non-government agencies such as Anglicare and church bodies?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: These carers are people who provide direct care—what we might call people like foster carers. Places like Anglicare and agencies organise the carers. We are talking about the carers. The New South Wales carers allowance is the most generous in Australia. Clearly, we have the most carers. One of the other things that you might be interested in is that, of the \$750 million for Keep Them Safe, something like 42 per cent or thereabouts of the budget will be going to the non-government sector.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: According to the recent Ombudsman's report, "The need to better support children and young people in statutory care who have been victims of violent crime", the Department of Community Services does not have adequate processes in place for eligible children and young people, who may be able to submit a claim to the Victims Compensation Tribunal, to assist them with the application process. Have you and the department considered what I understand to be recommendation number one? It states:

Consider whether an amendment to s78 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 – which would require care plans to consider the issue of victims compensation – is warranted.

Could you comment on that? If that is the case, would you agree with that?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is an extraordinarily long question.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: I know. It is a bit of an explanation and a question.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Could you summarise it?

The Hon. IAN COHEN: It could be difficult. Are you aware of recommendation number one, which is whether an amendment to the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act is warranted, requiring care plans and consideration of the issue of victims compensation? Could you comment on that?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes, I can. The recommendation to which you are referring in our view is not necessary. One of the things we do is build those sorts of things into our practice. We do not think that recommendation is necessary. We do it already.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Are there any other changes that the department would undertake in order to respond to the Ombudsman's report in that respect?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think we work very closely with most of the Ombudsman's reports. I do not want to give a long dissertation about our relationship with the Ombudsman, but clearly the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman's office is a very important oversight body for Community Services. The 11 recommendations made by the Ombudsman in relation to victims compensation were all accepted, as I said earlier. As a result of accepting those recommendations, improvements are being made to the auditing and record-keeping practices of the child protection and legal files. The other point is that we are meeting regularly with the Department of Justice and the Attorney General's victims services staff to put in place necessary processes for the streamlining of those cases. I think the point was made earlier that we accept that there is much work to be done. The Ombudsman's report certainly has put that in front of us. It is not something that we are ignoring by any stretch.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: During debate on the amendment to the children and young persons legislation, I suggested that the department create an automated email notification system whereby parents are automatically provided with up-to-date information on the childcare centre their child attends, rather than regularly checking the site. I think the Parliamentary Secretary stated at the time that the system of email notification would be too complex administratively and too costly. Would you agree that that is the case?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think that would be very difficult. I understand your motivation, but I think that would be an extremely complex and difficult thing to do. What we have worked on really seriously is making sure that the Department of Community Services website is up to date. If you have gone onto it, you would know it contains an enormous amount of information. In particular, when it comes to the early education centres that we are responsible for licensing and auditing, we are extremely vigilant in making at least a visit a year to those centres. There are also spot visits. They have to meet very stringent requirements. The other point, of course, is that there is very important and key work that we do when centres breach their responsibilities. Sometimes that leads to fines and those centres being breached for certain things.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Have you considered that the department could invest a small amount to implement software that ensures the process is automated? Have you looked at it at all? I understand that it would not be such a prohibitively complex thing in this day and age of technology and whatnot.

Ms STEWART: I think it is important to consider that in the very near future we will be moving to a different system of regulating, monitoring and improving the quality of these services. From 1 January 2012, as part of the agreement with other State and Territory governments, we are moving to a whole new system. What you are talking about—

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Would that be included in that?

Ms STEWART: It is not on the table at the moment because no State or Territory can make a change without affecting every other State and Territory when we move to a new national system of improving the quality of all services across Australia. So I am not aware of that being on the table.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: You probably know more than most about it. It is not an unreasonable idea, is it? It is not an unreasonable concept.

Ms STEWART: I would not mind clarifying exactly. Can you restate exactly what the notification services would do?

The Hon. IAN COHEN: I understand that it would be a system of email notification directed to only those parents whose children attend a particular service. There would be updated email information for them.

Ms STEWART: Just to be clear, will it be notifying them about an incident that happened at the service?

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Yes, information on the child-care centre, their child's needs, rather than parents having to regularly check the site.

Ms STEWART: I am not aware that that is on the table at the moment. However, I am aware that what is happening—and it is a key platform—is improving the information that is provided to parents once we move to the new system so that parents whose children attend children's services in every State and Territory can go to the one website, which will be the Mychild website, and find information about services in terms of the quality of those services. From what you have said, it sounds like costly establishment of a new system. There is already a commitment to improve information to parents through this national system.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: I will leave it at that, given the time constraints. Under Keep Them Safe, can you indicate the amount of funding allocated to referral and coordination services, including child wellbeing units, and family referral services, in comparison with the amount of funding allocated to direct service delivery? I guess I am asking what percentage of the Keep Them Safe budget is directed towards providing and funding direct services to children and families in New South Wales.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: There are three parts to that question. The first is the establishment of the child wellbeing units across a number of government agencies: Health, Education, Human Services and Police. I am happy to get the cost of establishing the child wellbeing units. Secondly, you referred to family referral services. We have three of those in place at the moment: one in the Hunter, one in Blacktown-Mount Druitt and one in Dubbo. They are linchpins of the new system. The child wellbeing units have been established. At this point the allocation is \$11.7 million for those units across those agencies. The allocation for family referral services is \$5.7 million. That figure will change as we rollout continued family referral services. That is absolutely crucial to provide services to families for children who do not go over the mandatory reporting threshold. These are services for under that threshold.

[Time expired.]

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I was pleased to hear that you spoke of victim compensation. I want to follow up on one question about the Ombudsman's report of July 2010, where the Ombudsman found that a child was wrongly removed and recommended that the department apologise and provide financial compensation. I think I heard you say that the department was planning to streamline the process. Has the department apologised to this person, and has the department paid compensation?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is an operational issue, and I will ask Ms Gallard to answer it.

Ms GALLARD: I am aware of this case and I made an apology on behalf of Community Services to that family.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Was that written?

Ms GALLARD: That was a written apology.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: What about the compensation?

Ms GALLARD: We have been in negotiations with the solicitors for the family.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: So this is planning to streamline the process.

Ms GALLARD: I am sorry, in terms of planning—

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: That was the Minister's phrase.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That was broadly. We are talking about this individual.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Yes, very broadly.

Ms GALLARD: In terms of planning to streamline the process, I think the Minister was referring to lodging victims compensation claims. Certainly, that is the case. Not only are we improving the training to staff, and putting on more legal staff to do that; we are looking at the points at which this should occur, and it is being built into the case planning process.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I have a couple of questions about out-of-home care funding. I am thinking particularly of non-government organisations. What has been the previous allocation of out-of-home care funding for non-government organisations? Does Community Services still have a budget overrun in out-of-home care? I am wearing my old hat in this one because I have argued with every one of your predecessors back to Rex Buckets Jackson—

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is a long time ago.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: —because the Government always seemed to have a policy of not providing enough funds for out-of-home care. Secondly, whenever there was a change, as I suggest might be happening now in your budget, the Government attempted to claw back some of the funding.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is three questions. I think I will answer them in reverse order, if that is okay.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Yes, sure.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: If I start to lose my way, please help me.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I will help you.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The first thing to say is that the Keep Them Safe report had some very important things to say about out-of-home care, including that out-of-home care provision currently jointly done between the Department of Community Services and a number of non-government organisations should be changed. We have accepted that recommendation, and over the next few years there will be a transfer of the bulk—I am not saying all of it—of out-of-home care funding to the non-government organisation sector.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Does the same funding go with that new arrangement—

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes, it does.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: —or is there a clawing back?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I can assure you that there is no clawing back. The overall out-of-home care budget for 2010-11 is \$680.2 million. That is both the money that is spent by Community Services and the money that we put into out-of-home care. This represents an increase of \$51.9 million or 8.3 per cent from the 2009-10 budget. So there has been an additional \$51.9 million in the out-of-home care budget over a 12-month period.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Another non-government organisation area relates to what happened in Christchurch last month and what if it happened here. The Government has an evacuation recovery program, and you have memorandum of understanding with the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, and Adventist Development and Relief Agency, which they have signed for only one year. Is that because we do not plan any crises after one year?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No. I think that is an important question.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Is it true that they had at least a verbal agreement with you that you would share costs with them on a 50:50 basis; however, the department did not agree to that and instead funded them a one-off payment of \$50,000?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It was \$75,000.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: It has increased since I was involved.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes is referring to our relationship with five non-government organisations that provide disaster relief in New South Wales. Those non-government organisations are the Adventist Development and Relief Agency—

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I mentioned their names.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: —Anglicare, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul. It is correct to say that we are in the process of having some very detailed discussions with them about the forthcoming memorandum of understanding. We have had discussions over the past 18 months.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Will that be about meaningful levels of compensation? You have said \$75,000.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think "compensation" is probably the wrong word.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: You expect them to do the service to get the volunteers, equipment, help them in the earthquake—

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is true to say that we would be unable, if we did not have the working relationship—I say "we" collectively—to do things after floods, earthquakes and so forth. The one-off funding to which you have referred was not \$50,000. In 2010-11 we gave each of those five agencies \$75,000 in one-off grants to do what they needed in order to improve their capacity for building these activities. I am really encouraged and very positive about the capacity for us to meet and collectively and positively work out an arrangement that is suitable to everyone in the forthcoming years.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I hope that is done quickly.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It will be done very quickly.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: My guess is that the \$350,000 the Government has provided for them to set up evacuation and recovery centres and to get volunteers and staff in place is probably less than one-tenth of what it is costing the five of them.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is important to say that all of those agencies get reimbursed.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Yes, afterwards.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: They cannot be reimbursed beforehand.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: No, but they can be given respectable allowances because they have to buy the equipment and have the trucks, the tents—

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is true, but they do get allowances. The issue at hand is funding on a more recurrent basis for things like training and some of the other capacity building that we understand is required for them. The other point I want to make is to remember that the New South Wales Government gives most of those agencies multi-million dollars a year for a variety of services. This is not the only service.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: And that money is spent on a variety of services.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Which is why we have such a wonderful relationship with them and we value them.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I lived with that relationship for 35 years.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I know that, and you know what I am saying.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Why is the sexual assault counselling service not provided in areas such as Sutherland, Kogarah, Engadine, the north shore, the northern beaches, the Central Coast or the North Coast?

Ms GALLARD: Sexual assault services are largely provided through Health. A small number of sexual assault services are funded through the Community Services Grants Program within Community Services. The referrals for sexual assault services happen through Health and through the JIRT referral unit. They largely go to health-funded facilities.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I refer to the Staying Home Leaving Violence program for women. Has there been any systematic data collected on clients to that program to enable an evaluation of its effectiveness?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The Staying Home Leaving Violence program is probably one of my favourite programs in relation to this area. It turns the way in which we deal with violence and women generally having to flee the home with their children, often in very difficult circumstances. The Staying Home Leaving Violence program is now in eight locations across New South Wales, including Bega, eastern Sydney, Wyong, Newcastle—

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I want to know what data is available about the effectiveness of that program.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: An evaluation is taking place. The year before last it was in two locations. We were seeing such positive outcomes that we have expanded it across New South Wales to our eight locations, because it speaks for itself.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Would you tell the Committee in writing why it was so effective?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you give information about the Staying Home Leaving Violence program?

Ms STEWART: The Staying Home Leaving Violence program is a really interesting one in that it came out of some research that was done by the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearing House. It started as a research project and then was trialled in two locations, one being Bega and the other being in south-east Sydney. It really does challenge the paradigm about a woman's right to stay in the home and to live free from violence. Out of this, as the Minister has said, there was actually expansion. There was an initial expansion to eight and then from 1 July 2010 we are moving to another 10 locations, which will bring the pilot from two to 18 locations.

To answer the question around what is the feedback about how it is going, it was evaluated in those first two sites and we can provide you with a summary of the evaluation that is on our website. But I think the thing that sticks in my mind—the most interesting thing—is how these women and children were able to leave a violent situation and remain in their home and how disruption did not occur to the children of those women, particularly in relation to their child care and their school attendance. Forgive me if I get it wrong, but around 80 per cent of the families that we worked with under this pilot were able to stay in connection with their child care.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: And all their supporting networks.

Ms STEWART: That is right. So it has been expanded to 18 locations. Every location gets \$150,000 per annum to work very intensively and to give these women and children a better life. We are doing an evaluation. Interestingly, we are also going back to some of those families in Bega and south-eastern Sydney that got this intervention four or five years ago. We are asking them afterwards: What were the key things that happened? How are their lives now? So I think it is probably one of the more interesting domestic violence programs. It does challenge the notion of the traditional domestic and family violence response, but it is showing enormous promise.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Will the Minister update the Committee on the impact of additional one-off funding for community-based preschools?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I know that preschool fees are a constant source of media attention, sometimes accurate and sometimes not. We are talking about community-based preschools, remembering that in New South Wales about 100 preschools operate as an extension or part of a primary school. We have community-based preschools and we also have for-profit preschools, but this question is about the community-based preschools. This year we were able to give about 85 per cent of those schools additional one-off funding. The reason we did that—the encouragement for it—was that they would use that money particularly to do things such as lower their fees, look at getting into those schools children who traditionally do not get a preschool education, and obviously some things around staff. New South Wales put more than \$10 million in one-off grants into community-based preschools and it was really about increasing enrolments. More than \$1 million was distributed in one-off payments to approximately 60 services, and that has increased utilisation by more than 15 per cent on the previous year.

There was \$135 million in one-off payments distributed to another 259 services, recording an up to 15 per cent increase on the previous year's utilisation. We made \$8 million available to a 662 service whose August 2009 data resulted in a resource allocation greater than the so-called funding allocation. That was a one-off payment, but when you think about the fact that \$10 million went into the community-based sector—and we have had in-depth discussions with the community-based sector about what that meant, remembering that there are a lot of other things happening in the preschool and early childhood education space between the Commonwealth and the State governments—we are talking about a \$10 million one-off payment from the New South Wales Government, which meant that there was an injection into those places that they were not expecting it.

The other thing to say is that what we are really on about here with this and all the other initiatives in early childhood education—it is most important to me, and I know both sides agree about this—is achieving what we would call universal access for all four-year-olds. That means that, no matter what your circumstance and no matter where you live, every single four-year-old in New South Wales and across the country will get access to at least two and a half days at preschool, which means that they will get those early reading and writing skills and get to school somehow on a level playing field.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Do you have any further information you want to give us about how Keep Them Safe has affected the operation of the Child Protection Helpline?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think I have already given you some. I did not quite realise until I was getting myself organised for estimates that this is the tenth year of the operation of the helpline. We all remember December 2000—I am sure some of the people around me remember it much better for lots of reasons. Another point I would like to make is that I think it is worth noting that the helpline operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It handles about 4,300 contacts a week, including inquiries requesting assistance and often, interestingly, parents ringing up who are desperate and who just want some help and direction about where to go. It is not

always a risk of harm report. In 2008-09 we handled about 166,000 calls compared with just over 152,000 calls in 2007-08.

Think about the incredible changes that we have had under Keep Them Safe. We have had a change to the threshold of risk of significant harm; we have had a new tool to assess reports, a structured decision-making tool; we have implemented an online mandatory reporter guide; and we have had feedback to mandatory reporters. That gets back to the point that Mr Cohen made: we want to make sure that if mandatory reporters ring the helpline with a concern they get some feedback on what has happened about their concern. That has been a big change. We have had an expansion of e-reporting; we have had the establishment of the Child Wellbeing Units and how they relate to the helpline; and also the establishment of the Joint Investigation Response Team Referral Unit. There is a lot more I could add, but I think that gives you a sense that things have changed with the helpline. There are fewer calls, but there is a lot more to deal with. I think it also gives you a sense of just how magnificent the implementation, coordination and effort behind Keep Them Safe has been.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Can you outline the impact of Keep Them Safe on the ability of Community Services to deal with the most serious reports it receives about children and young people?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think this is probably one of the most important questions today, so thank you for asking it. I mentioned that we are seven months into the implementation of Keep Them Safe. In relation to the chairperson's question—or it may have been a question from the Hon. Marie Ficarra—about the sorts of calls and whether there has been a reduction in the number of people ringing the helpline, I want to say that the collaboration and hard work of staff from the non-government and government sectors are to be commended in terms of the implementation of Keep Them Safe. The Cabinet and Premiers, police officers, nurses and teachers with a high level of commitment are involved.

As members are aware, Justice Wood found in his inquiry that Community Services was being swamped with more than 300,000 reports a year. In the first conference with then Premier Rees, I said that we were drowning. There was no other way for me to describe it. Many of the low-level reports, which did not justify intervention by a statutory child protection agency, were taking up much time. Justice Wood said we needed to get services to children and families early in their lives or problems so that we could prevent escalation to the statutory system. I can inform the Committee, as I did a little earlier, that there has been a 33 per cent reduction in reports to the helpline. This is a good trend. It shows that lower-level matters are not simply being referred to the helpline as they previously were. Mandatory reporters are going to those places that Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes asked me about—the Child Wellbeing Units and the Family Referral Services—and they are genuinely taking on board the message of shared responsibility.

Credit must go to all the professionals who have embraced the change and are working hard to make the new system work, but it is important to point out that, even though reports to the helpline have declined, it does not necessarily follow that Community Services is now able to reach every single serious case. It would be wrong for me to say that we are now in that position. We need to bear in mind that we are still in the first year of a five-year plan and we should not underestimate the depth of the underlying issue. Abuse and neglect, as we all know—I know the shadow Minister is present and has spoken about this—are intertwined with issues around drug abuse, often violence, poverty, mental illness and, the thing that keeps us all awake at night, intergenerational disadvantage.

Whilst I say that there has been a 33 per cent decrease in reports to the helpline and a 53 per cent drop in reports for the community services centres and Joint Investigative Response Teams, at the same time we have seen a 3 per cent increase in the proportion of reports that fall into the highest risk categories. So we have had drops, but there are more calls in the highest risk category. This translates to an additional 275 level-one reports over the same period last year, from 24 January to 30 June, which require a less than 24 hours response. So there have been decreases, but there has been a slight increase in the serious reports over the same period. There are still many instances in the serious section that Community Services caseworkers are unable to allocate when it comes to their attention. Difficult decisions about prioritising cases continue to be made every day. It is important that the Committee is aware of these facts.

I can also reassure members that Community Services is working intently to meet demand and, importantly, we are improving the recruitment processes to fill caseworker vacancies so that our front line is fully staffed. We are modifying training so that we can get new recruits working in child protection teams sooner—which is a really important change to our work practice—and getting people who come in into

intervention earlier. We are creating efficiencies so that we can reach more cases. For example, we are looking at how we can reduce the amount of time that helpline caseworkers spend on each call and streamline intake policies so they are not so complex and time consuming. We are also working with the Children's Court to streamline procedures around care matters and develop alternative dispute resolution measures that will give caseworkers more time with their families and less time in the court system. We are also exploring ways in which our partner agencies can work with Community Services to get help to families earlier. We support what Justice Wood said about the provision of services not just depending on Community Services.

The last point I want to make deals with the family case management project, which is providing integrated case management for families who frequently come into contact with a range of government agencies. We all know that story. It is important that members are aware of the depth and complexity of those families and of the reforms being undertaken. It is a difficult policy area, and that is why we are all here, I guess. We also have to focus on the early intervention and prevention area, which I will not go into now. That is as important as the question the honourable member has raised.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, can you provide details about the current staffing situation in Community Services?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Commissioner Wood—I know I have summoned up his name many times today, but that is where much of our work has come from—said this about our staff, "Recruiting and retaining a skilled diverse workforce to provide services in all parts of the State is an issue for DOCS", as it is for all other justice and human service agencies. In June 2010 there were 2,212 case workers, around 1,000 more than there were in 2002, with another 300 case workers in other duties or on paid leave. Does that make sense? In 2002 we had 1,200 case workers, but we now have 2,212, 300 of them doing other things. That is the highest number of case workers we have ever employed in Community Services.

The recruitment campaign is a rolling campaign and over 5,500 applications have been dealt with in the last financial year; 524 permanent and temporary employment officers were accepted for case work positions; and we have 70 new employees in the hard to fill areas—we all know where they are—particularly the western region, in places such as Bourke and Broken Hill and Cootamundra. I am very proud of Community Services' separation rates. The number of people leaving the service is lower than the average across other government agencies, not by a lot but it is slightly lower.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Over what time?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Over quite a number of years. I cannot say exactly how many, but it is not just this year; it is over a period of time. Also, 8 per cent of our workforce is Aboriginal, which is well above the public sector 2 per cent rate. In places where there are a lot of Koori people it is more than 8 per cent. In some places it is about 20 per cent. The other point I want to make is that qualifications and skills are very high, as members know. We have a system in place, particularly for Aboriginal case workers, under which they do not necessarily have to have a university degree as required by other case workers but on the job training, experience and a willingness to work towards qualifications.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I want to follow up one of the figures you quoted. You said there were 1,000 extra case workers since 2002. Does that mean there were 1,212 and we are up 1,000 since 2002?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I want to revisit the answers provided to two of my previous questions, one of which was about the Helpline or hotline, whatever you like to call it.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The Helpline.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Many people have called it either a hotline or a Helpline. You said there was information on the website about the number of calls.

Ms GALLARD: There is information. There is data on the first three months of Keep Them Safe relating to the number of child protection reports. It is on the Community Services website.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: We looked but we cannot find it. Could you give us the website link?

Ms GALLARD: We can provide that afterwards and show you where the report is.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I refer to the answers to my questions about the review findings and the freedom of information application for the document "Internal Child Death Review Report". When I asked you about sections that had been blanked out you said that no detail had been provided because it would reveal the identity of family members. However, normally there would be no personal details in the review findings because the findings do not include that sort of detail. I am sorry, but I believe and many people believe the section has been suppressed to save embarrassment to your department and your Minister. Can you tell me again why that was blanked out?

Ms GALLARD: I will answer that because I was the one who answered the question. The findings can contain information about other family members, not just about the principal person for whom the investigation was done.

CHAIR: I want to clarify some confusion around the numbers of child death reports because previously they have been for calendar years.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I beg your pardon. The number I gave you was for a calendar year. I think I said it was for the 2008-09 year, but I should have said 2009.

CHAIR: I want to clarify the number of child deaths in 2008 and 2009. You said there were 149 in 2008-09.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The numbers have remained fairly much around—not the same, but I will read this out so that I do not confuse you. In 2009 the number was 149, in 2008 it was 135, and in 2007 it was 156.

CHAIR: We have talked quite a lot about Staying Home, Leaving Violence and I understand the rationale for establishing it. Why is there only a summary of the evaluation on the website and not the full evaluation?

Ms STEWART: There is only a summary because it is only around two pilots at the moment. The evaluation of the program is yet to fully commence. What was on the website was a summary of the evaluation of the pilot and the program is yet to commence. As the Minister said, the rolling out has commenced and we are getting to 18 of those locations. The remaining 10 started from 1 July this year. As you can appreciate, there are some steps that we need to take to get to the evaluation and some key questions we want to ask, such as how much, how well, and was anybody better off. We need to create a service model, which we have done, and we are working on a uniform data collection system so everybody is collecting the right information about "apples and oranges".

CHAIR: So what you were calling a summary was in fact the full evaluation of the pilot. You called it a summary of the pilot.

Ms STEWART: Yes, I said there was a summary.

CHAIR: Why is the full evaluation of the pilot not there?

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Not enough people would be identified.

Ms STEWART: I can answer that question. As you can appreciate, when we are talking about a location such as Bega, a country town such as that would have a fairly small population. Forgive me if I do not get the number exactly right, but when we are doing this sort of work we are talking about relatively small numbers of women who are telling the story of their lives and the impact that it has had on them. As I understand it, there was an issue relating to individual women and their circumstances and whether they would be able to be identified. We acknowledged the fact that some of these women had had some awful experiences in their lives and we said that we would not be publishing the whole evaluation. That was one of the reasons.

CHAIR: Referring to the Bega evaluation, was the success rate based only on women who had jobs and who were able to maintain themselves in their own homes?

Ms STEWART: No, that is not my understanding. Perhaps I could speak more broadly about some of the findings of that evaluation. I have been able to recover my notes and hence be a little more accurate. I said that I thought it involved about 80 per cent of children when the actual figure from those two pilots was 88 per cent of children who maintained stability through early childhood education—whether they were in child care or in school. Two-thirds of the women who received a service under those pilots were able to remain safely in their own homes as a result of the intervention. They reported also that they had an increased sense of safety as a result of the fairly intensive support that they received. One of the key contributors that helped them with this sense of safety was that brokerage money was available to improve the safety of their houses when these women deemed it appropriate to stay in their homes.

CHAIR: The successful ones related not only to women who had jobs?

Ms STEWART: You are correct in that there were significant outcomes for some of the women who were employed. Around 90 per cent of women who had a job—the fact that they had a job was not the key contributing factor—were able to complete it and had stability of employment. As we know, that is a key issue in providing for their families, in particular when the traditional male has left the premises.

CHAIR: Moving from that point, in your interpretation those women who had a job were successful. How then would that program be successful in an indigenous or remote community where they might be surrounded by relatives but they might not have employment?

Ms STEWART: I am sorry if you misinterpreted what I said. I said that, in my understanding of the evaluation of the pilots, the fact that you were in employment did not result in improved outcomes. Because of the nature of the evaluation someone did not have to be in employment in order to achieve a good outcome. Two-thirds of all the women, whether or not they had jobs, were able to remain safely in their homes, and all those women experienced an increased sense of safety. I refer to your earlier question about Aboriginal communities. From the rollout we will be going to a number of communities that have a high Aboriginal population. In these communities service providers are working closely with the service system. In Walgett we are doing some preliminary work with the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service. Our advice is that this model will work in those communities.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I visited the service in Moree that is running the Staying Home Leaving Violence program and I spoke also to one of the women in the original program in Bega. She was not employed but she said that, for the first time in her life, her children were able to stay in school. Her son was receiving counselling and she felt normal for the first time in her life, which is remarkable.

CHAIR: Why did it take so long to roll out the additional 10 sites?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It has not taken long.

Ms STEWART: That commitment is on time and it was always staged that way. We went from two sites to 18 sites and we had to acknowledge that we were going into some areas where we needed to work with the service system. There was a commitment to go to the financial year 2008-09 and in some cases to the financial year 2009-10. We honoured that commitment and we rolled them out accordingly to get to the 18 sites. There has been no delay in their implementation.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: You cannot just rock in, pick a service and say, "We will run this program." It involves incredibly deep discussions with the police and the community; it takes time.

CHAIR: Many members are familiar with the program. I refer to the Boston Consulting Group and to the high-level recommendations made by that group. Could you provide a list of the recommendations that were implemented, a summary of the changes made, and the resulting changes in practice approach and numbers?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I will answer your question in part but I will ask Ms Gallard to give you additional details. Clearly the work done by the Boston Consulting Group is important work that included the agency for which I am responsible. I am providing leadership across the human services area. I will ask Ms Gallard to give you more detail. How much detail do you want, as we have a great deal?

CHAIR: We have only a few minutes. It would be fine if you wished to table that information.

Ms GALLARD: Some information on our website goes through the Boston Consulting Group report. The information that is on our website refers to each and every recommendation and specifies those that have been supported and those that have not been supported.

CHAIR: Are non-government organisations [NGOs] able to obtain specific information about changes of practice relating to them as a result of the report?

Ms GALLARD: Yes. A working group includes 10 out-of-home care providers in addition to the Association of Child Welfare Agencies and the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (NSW), or AbSec. They have been helping us to work through the major recommendations that have implications for NGOs. They are looking at things such as the cost of placements and, in particular, at contracting arrangements. We have been through each and every recommendation with them and we have discussed the reasons why the Government made the decision it has about those recommendations.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I refer to community services, corporate services. How many people are employed in that section? You can take that question on notice.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am happy to answer the question. Are you referring specifically to corporate services?

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Yes.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: We might need to take that question on notice.

Mr MATTHEWS: I can give you an approximation. It would depend on what you call "corporate services". Within finance, human resources and information technology there is a total of 120 people. In our learning and development function there are about 80 people. However, I think we would consider that as supporting front-line business. It depends on your definition of corporate services. Generally, those are the major functions.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Could you provide those details on notice, with a break-up of the separate sections?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Okay.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: In the years 2006 to 2010 inclusive, Sutherland Community Services Centre had 30 caseworker positions. When former Premier Morris Iemma was "heading in the right direction" he promised to increase caseworker positions at Sutherland by 70 per cent. Why has that not happened?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am not familiar specifically with Sutherland. I have visited Sutherland Community Services Centre but I cannot answer your specific question about the commitments made by former Premiers. But I can say that the dramatic increase in the number of caseworkers since the Greiner Government should be something worth noting.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: That is 16 years ago. Let us just deal with this last 16 years.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It may be 16 years ago, but we have had to rebuild Community Services. You can see just from the level of activity, from the early intervention and prevention and from the major reforms that we have—

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: My question was specific to Sutherland Community Services Centre—

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I understand that.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: —which requires more caseworker positions to service its community. If you cannot answer it you can take it on notice, but just provide a reason why.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am happy to take it on notice, but I just wanted to make those other points.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Albury Community Services Centre has around 120 children in out-of-home care who are known as resubmits. We believe these children do not have an allocated caseworker. Albury DOCS has a waiting list of potential caseworkers who could be employed for these non-allocated children. Albury has recently allocated four additional staff members. How many of those four have been tasked to work with children in the out of home care section?

Ms GALLARD: We have had a lot of success in recruiting caseworkers in the western region. In the last financial year we were able to recruit 70 new caseworkers. It is true that there are some out of home care cases that are in the resubmit system. That means that those cases will be allocated at a point in time, particularly when there is an issue like an allowance that needs to be reviewed or if there is a major issue with the placement, they will be allocated for a period of time. Our longer-term plan is to transfer many more cases to the non-government sector. We are working with that, with the NGOs that I talked about previously, so that we can build a sustainable out of home care system where the responsibilities for out-of-home care are shared appropriately between the government and non-government sectors. That is taking up a recommendation Commissioner Wood made and that has been endorsed by the Government under Keep Them Safe.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I appreciate you answering it in a more generic sense, but my question related to the four additional staff members recently employed at Albury. I do not expect you to know the answer offhand. You can take it on notice. How many of those four additional staff have been tasked to work with those children? It is of some concern that 120 children are classified as resubmits.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: When a Community Services staff member is relocated to a rural area, such as Cootamundra or Broken Hill, how many remain for only three months? In other words, how many return to a large town or city so that Community Services does not have to pay relocation costs? How does that process work?

Ms GALLARD: We have a system of what we call "tree changers". These are people who are in larger CSCs who volunteer to go to some of our smaller and country CSCs when there are particular staff shortages. They sign up for three months. That is the period of time for which they commit to go. Obviously, there are some issues with those people going for three months. Firstly, there are issues in their own CSC. Their own CSC is not necessarily interested in them going for a very long period of time. Also, they often have family commitments and cannot go for longer than three months. In some circumstances caseworkers go for longer than three months because they would like to stay there. In a few cases they have even decided to stay permanently.

The issue for us is not about paying the additional amount of money post the three-month period. The issue for us is making sure that we have a flexible workforce and we are able to get people who are prepared to volunteer and share their skills in some locations where there are short-term problems because of vacancies. However, longer term we want to see all those vacant positions filled. It is true that there will always be some challenges in very far-flung parts of the State. That is not an issue just for Community Services; it is an issue across the government and non-government sectors.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Continuing with Keep Them Safe—if this topic has been covered already, please let me know—what percentage did the Department of Premier and Cabinet recommend be allocated to direct services and assistance in its advice to Government?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: How many people in the Department of Premier and Cabinet?

The Hon. IAN COHEN: What percentage was recommended to be allocated to direct services and assistance?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am not quite sure that there was a particular percentage. The Department of Premier and Cabinet obviously is a lead agency, particularly in bringing senior officers groups together—for example, Keep Them Safe—and is the lead agency for the overall implementation of the program. I am not quite sure that a percentage of people or money was ever thought of. It plays an incredibly important role in leading the overall five-year plan.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: One of the main recommendations of Keep Them Safe is sector development. Would you indicate how much funding is allocated to sector development? What is the plan for this funding allocation?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I can give you some examples of that. I will start with the investment we are making in capacity building for Aboriginal organisations. I have not got the exact figure in my head, but it is something like \$2.2 million, which is to do some really exciting things. Obviously, with 30 per cent of children in care being of Aboriginal descent, we have a really good working relationship with AbSec. It has become an absolute partner in working with things like intensive family support services for Aboriginal families. We are looking at implementing a thing called the Lakidjeka model, which is the way an Aboriginal community participates in decisions about Aboriginal children. Some other really good work is being undertaken by the Children's Guardian in relation to accrediting Aboriginal organisations. We have about four providers of out-of-home care. That gives you one example of where we are actually investing specific amounts of money.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Could you indicate how much the non-government sector has received to deliver those services?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I have spoken already about the Keep Them Safe budget. It certainly was anticipated, particularly with the transfer of out-of-home care, that something like 40 per cent of the \$750 million will go to the non-government sector. I have a document here that perhaps I could table. In essence, to answer your question, 40 per cent of the \$750 million will go to the non-government sector.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: In talking about that, is it reasonable to ask how much has been spent on consultants as part of the Keep Them Safe implementation plan? Are you referring to that as well, or separately?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I cannot answer that question directly. I will take it on notice.

CHAIR: Do you want to table that document?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am happy to do that. That is the budget allocation. I am happy to find out the answer; I just do not have the specifics. We are talking about putting money into services, not buying consultancies.

Document tabled.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: The 2010-2011 budget has an allocation of an additional \$2 million to the Sustained Health Home Visiting program?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is right.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: It is estimated that this will increase the number of families assisted by the program from 450 to 750 in three regions—Kurri Kurri-Maitland, Cessnock-Wyong and Fairfield-Liverpool. What estimates have been made in relation to implement station of Keep Them Safe about the actual number of families across New South Wales that might be eligible for, and benefit from, this program?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: From that particular program?

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Yes.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am not quite sure that we have undertaken that program. It is a program that is not run by Community Services. It is actually a program that is run by the Department of Health.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: I did not know. I thought it was run by Community Services.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No. That is an easy mistake to make, though, I have to say. It is worth \$4.1 million, by the way.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: You seem to know a lot about it. I understand there are only approximately 2.5 per cent of families in need that will be reached by the program. Could you comment on that at all?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am sure you do not want a long dissertation on this.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: There is no time.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Remember that there is an enormous amount of early intervention and prevention programs in place. One of the things that we have been very conscious of as a result of Wood is that you will never change the statutory end unless you can invest adequately in the intervention end. But what I can say about Health's Sustained Home Visiting Program, Mr Cohen, is that it is really intensive. There are people actually working within the home with the families. It is the kind of families where the next step is going to be statutory intervention for those children. It is expensive because of the intensity, the nature of the program and the complexity of the families that Health is working with on the program.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Thank you. In 2010-11 there was an allocation of \$680.2 million for out-of-home care services in comparison to \$337.7 million for secondary intervention programs, including early intervention and placement prevention programs and Brighter Futures.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: You might want to take this on notice. Will you provide a breakdown of the expenses allocated to administration and coordination in both cases in comparison with the expenses allocated to direct services delivery?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think we could do that, probably.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Okay.

Ms GALLARD: When it comes to out-of-home care, it is \$608 million. I think something like \$286 million goes directly out to non-government organisations to provide direct services. Approximately another \$200 million goes to paying for allowances and contingencies directly to foster carers. Of the rest, a significant proportion is used to employ Community Services caseworkers. It depends on what you call administration, I guess. When it comes to prevention and early intervention services, the large majority of that goes out to non-government organisations to provide services. We can go back and give you the split between non-government services and Community Services and tell you a bit more about what those services are buying within Community Services, but I am not entirely sure that we can go specifically to the point of administration costs.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Perhaps you can comment on whether those amounts of funding are allocated to prevention and early primary intervention to support families before they reach crisis point? Is that a separate structure?

Ms GALLARD: Prevention and early intervention programs are provided to families before they reach crisis point. I am told that there is more detail in the budget papers, if you would like to have a look there.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Right. I will not take it further now. The Create Foundation—

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Say that again?

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Create.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes, we know Create.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: I do not know what it stands for.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is a great organisation.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Okay. The Create Foundation reports that 64 per cent of young people who left care in 2009 did not have, or know about, a leaving care plan. Could you perhaps comment on this, given that every young person currently should have a leaving care plan provided for them, with their full consultation, by their caseworker?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes. I am very happy to comment on that. The point that Create is making is correct. They undertook a national exercise and looked at each State and Territory to see how many young people are leaving care with the care plan. I am pretty sure that that was the New South Wales figure you have quoted. That is correct for New South Wales. Obviously, this is one of the areas of priority for us. In fact, just last Sunday I was at the foster carers' picnic, and the very thing I spoke about to the foster carers was leaving care plans.

There are a whole lot of people involved in a leaving care plan: there is the caseworker preparing it, there is the foster carer understanding what it is, there is the young person that is leaving care understanding that they have one and what it can mean to them in terms of ongoing support—learning to cook, working out how you write a cheque, the sorts of things about how you make your own appointments at the doctor's, and so forth, and all the rest of it—but also, most importantly I think, access and how you go about further education, particularly TAFE and in some cases university. Our relationship with Create is a very good one. We work with them on many, many issues. We are working collectively to increase the number of care plans created, but also on understanding about the fact that they are there and how they should be used.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Minister, my wife and I are very happy to be grandparents.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Are you?

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: We have two of our granddaughters who live with us all the time because that means they are close to the university. Obviously, we do not want any allowances to cover that.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: They are probably a bit old for an allowance.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: But there are many grandparent kinship carers.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: There are—thank heavens.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: They desperately need the allowance. Your department announced a review of that.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: We did, yes.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: When will it review be published? Can I follow that by saying: Can you give many of these worried grandparents, firstly, an assurance that the allowance will not be reduced and, secondly, that the eligibility criteria will not be narrowed?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is true we did start a review on grandparents and the supportive care allowance that they receive. We are looking at that in three areas at the moment—Dubbo, Shellharbour and Kempsey. It is not across the State. The trial project is due to be completed at the end of September 2010. I have to say, Reverend Moyes, that I have taken a particular interest in those because of the very issues that you have raised. We have actually met with a number of grandparents from Port Macquarie, I believe they were, who had a support group up there and who came down and spoke about their concerns.

I have met extensively with the Association of Child Welfare Agencies [ACWA] and the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat [AbSec] on the issue as well. One of the other things that we did to make sure that all the grandparents were receiving the information was create a central phone number where they could get the same information. We also made sure that the criteria were broad and covered the sorts of situations that I think you have some concerns about.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Will you give an assurance that their allowances will not be reduced, and that the eligibility criteria will not be narrowed?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I cannot give an assurance that every single grandparent carer will not have a reduction. I mean, it depends on what the situation is. It depends on whether the child in their care continues to need care and protection. It depends on the individual family circumstance. But all of those things are being very carefully and diligently looked at within the review.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: The director general made the point that about 40 per cent of the department's budget goes to non-government organisations. Who audits the non-government organisations? Does the department do that or do others?

Ms GALLARD: I am the Chief Executive of Community Services and my colleague Ms Mason is the Director General of Human Services. I am happy to answer the question. Each of the non-government organisations that we provide funds to are required each year to submit a report on how they have been using their funds. There are requirements under the service agreements that they sign. For example, they are required to submit audited statements, depending on the amount of funding that they require. Also, monitoring visits are conducted by community program officers.

I think that issue goes to the broader issue of red tape. We are doing quite a lot of work to reduce the amount of red tape that non-government organisations are required to go through in order to get government funding. It is a fine balancing act because we want organisations to be publicly accountable but we do not want them tied up spending a lot of their time on administration. There have been a number of initiatives in the past 12 months, for example, reductions in insurance requirements for non-government organisations. We have been working closely with the Council of Social Service of New South Wales and the Forum of Non Government Agencies [FONGA] on ways to further reduce red tape. There is a commitment across government agencies.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Respite carers get paid per night different allowances according to the case issues. Are there any differences in payment to respite carers working directly for the Government as opposed to those working for non-government enterprises?

Ms MASON: I might have to take that on notice.

Ms GALLARD: I take it that you mean respite carers who provide services to children in out-of-home care?

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Yes, that is right.

Ms GALLARD: The allowances for carers in Community Services are set by the Government. As the Minister said previously—

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Is the payment equal overall for both government-operated services and non-government organisations?

Ms GALLARD: Non-government organisations set their own allowances. My understanding is that in many cases the allowances they pay are higher than those within the government sector.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: They used to be in my day. I am aware that there are differences.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: There are, yes.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: You have run the program Fostering New South Wales, I think.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: We have.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Have you done an evaluation to see whether that was an effective expenditure of money in terms of recruitment? I remember previous government programs called Family Finders and things like that. Is it an effective program?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The recruiting foster carers campaign only began in April, and that consisted of television, radio, print and magazine advertisements. We focused also on connecting with the non-English speaking community and the Aboriginal community, which was important. What we have seen from that campaign is something like 20,000 hits on the website that was established for the campaign. I understand that we have 103 new foster carers but a lot of potential new foster carers in the pipeline. It takes a while for people to be trained and so on. We have certainly sped up the training process.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: You will be doing an evaluation. When do you propose to evaluate it?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes, there will be an evaluation. We spent more than \$1 million on the campaign so it is important that we undertake an evaluation. From our point of view, the statistics show that it has been very successful, not only for the Government but also for our non-government partners that have been participating and taking calls from potential foster carers.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: What strategies will be used to improve the number of young people leaving care with an after-care plan and their links with after-care service?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I partially answered that in responding to an earlier question. Our community partner in this is CREATE. Clearly, one thing we need to do within Community Services is ensure that we improve our performance in terms of providing care plans for all care leavers. That is the first thing. There are a number of things happening in the agency to make that the case. Another thing is to work closely with young people who are leaving care. I have developed some nice relationships with a number of young people who have left care. The other day I met one young boy whom I have come to know very well. He is 19 and has been in care all his life. He has just started his year 10 certificate through TAFE, which I thought was a huge achievement for him. It is about a range of things but most importantly it is about us producing more care plans. In 2009-10 some \$1.6 million was allocated directed by Community Services to support young people who left care with one-off financial assistance for basic furniture and so on. We also—it is not a lot of money but it was very successful—put \$30,000 into helping young people leaving care to get their licence. For many young people that is a challenge.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Is that statewide?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: We gave the money to CREATE, the organisation I spoke about, and it managed it.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Is it statewide?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is national. We have also given money to support a whole range of other organisations—I do not have time to detail them, but they include Relationships Australia—but I can give you some more information.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Will the Minister provide an update on the ways the Government is ensuring compliance with regulations in New South Wales children's services?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Obviously, complying with regulations is crucial. Now and again we see very high-profile cases where a childcare service has not complied. We monitor regularly and are formally notified when breaches of New South Wales children's services laws have been identified. We also work with the service provider to rectify the breaches. Recently we had the prosecution of three children's services in New South Wales. That was more than \$43,000.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Was that what you fined them?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The courts fined them. We also have a Community Services website where details of those services that are breached are listed so that parents have access to that information when they are looking for places to send their children. In the most severe cases we can cancel the licence of the provider if the breach has been so serious or there have been persistent breaches. I will not go through the details but there was a \$26,000 fine in one case, \$9,500 in another case where there were five offences, and \$7,450 for a range of offences including inadequate staff ratios. We are looking at breaches such as not having enough carers, food safety breaches, whether the building is safe and adequate, and whether the provider is doing what they are supposed to be doing in terms of giving information to parents.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Can you provide us with an overview of the system that is in place to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children in terms of children's services?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think one of the things that certainly parents should be able to expect when they send their little ones off to childcare or preschool is that they are going to a well run, safe place. It is often traumatic to leave a very young child in the care of others, particularly initially. I believe New South Wales has a strong and effective system of monitoring, regulating and auditing children's services. It is not only the work that Sonja and her team do, but it is actually through legislation and regulation that is very strong in New South Wales to make sure that services are run properly. There is an element of local government involved in terms of the actual physical DAs and making sure that the services meet those sorts of physical standards. We do not tolerate noncompliance, and I think that is demonstrated by my earlier answer. Those services that do not comply feel the very heavy hand of that noncompliance.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you provide an update on the roll-out of the triple-P parenting program through Families NSW?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I have been to a number of triple-P training courses. Some members are aware of the Positive Parent Program that was developed in Queensland, and New South Wales believes it had great application here. One of the really good things about triple-P is that you do not have to be in trouble. We can instruct some of our families to do triple-P. But triple-P is there for anyone who thinks that they want a bit of a reassurance, a hand, information about raising their children. It is also for families that are expecting a baby. It provides parents with information and support to help them with their parenting skills, their relationships with children, their nervousness very often, and a range of problems including behavioural and emotional adjustment for their children.

Triple-P is really simple. We have rolled it out to 1,200 health, welfare and educational professionals in New South Wales. They have been trained and then they actually become the trainers. We have more than 900 practitioners across New South Wales with 250 coming on-line. They are becoming accredited and so far 50 per cent of those practitioners are trained to provide triple-P in Aboriginal communities, which is fantastic. Without going into too much more detail, the other thing, of course, is that we are being very sensitive that it is not just provided in English. Some of the other languages are Arabic, Chinese for Mandarin speakers, traditional Chinese to Cantonese speakers, and Vietnamese, and many of our workers are bilingual. It has been an absolute success in New South Wales, and one of the programs that we continue to support.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Will the Minister update the Committee on the Community Services Grants Program reform?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Members have received many representations about the Community Services Grants Program [CSGP] in the past 12 months. The CSGP is so important in New South Wales and it is going through major reform that has been very much led by Sonja Stewart at the moment. She knows lots about it. Obviously we are working very closely with the peak organisation, which is the Local Community Services Association—I went to its conference recently. For many years CSGP has been the main funding program for community organisations, neighbourhood and community centres, which are really the glue of many communities. They have existed without a budget enhancement for a very long time. In this year's budget, much to everyone's joy, a \$10 million boost was given to CSGP, which was fantastic.

The organisations funded under the CSGP deal with the most marginalised and vulnerable people within our community and every local member of Parliament knows about those organisations. They are right across our communities. I am so committed to CSGP because it is about strengthening the capacity of neighbourhood centres and community organisations. From July 2010 the 900 Community Services Grants Program funder service will be separated into two streams—this is what I am talking about in terms of the reorganisation of the program. Approximately 425 community strengthening and development services such as neighbourhood centres will benefit from the \$10 million but Local Community Services Associations will benefit from \$11.5 million out of Keep Them Safe. The community sector is very happy with this and it is an amazing effort by them and members of government and the recognition of Treasury that there was a need for a funding increase in CSGP and it has happened.

I have about 10 pages of endorsement that I could go through. They are genuine. I am not trying to be cute in a process like this. I read the endorsements from many organisations to thank people formally, to say it is the first real commitment they have felt for a long time, to say that it is going to mean the continuation of their service and to say that it actually means that they are going to be able to reach the demand that they are getting really does speak volumes for the work that has been done collectively. The other side of the reorganisation will be called the Community Builders Program. I will not go into details because it is very complex.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: That was my next question.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: There are about 100 community-based projects that will benefit from this new investment. They are all not-for-profit organisations. I think we have been able to spread this one out across more regions than we have previously had it in.

Ms STEWART: Yes, that is right. The Community Builders Program followed from the reform of the Area Assistance Scheme which is time limited and also limited in geography to certain regions. As the Minister said, with the streaming of the Community Services Grants Program we are now able to have in one spot all the community development funding that also can go statewide. It is really significant, as the Minister said, about the increase in the budget recently of \$10 million to this program. It means approximately \$48 million for community development projects. Importantly, as the Minister said, with the new money, the \$10 million which has been very welcomed by the sector, that will allow for one-off transition into the new program just to allow these services whatever they need to transition in—whether it is more training for volunteers or new computer systems. Very importantly, it is allowing a 20 per cent increase to enhance their existing activities. So on top of what they get now they will get 20 per cent more.

The third aspect of the \$10 million will be to buy some new services in some areas which have not been able to benefit from the capital that they wanted. What we have got in the one spot is \$48 million now dedicated to community development.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, I wanted to ask a little bit more about Keep Them Safe and, in particular, what it is doing for Aboriginal children and their families.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The focus of Keep Them Safe around the question of Aboriginal children and Aboriginal families was substantial, and clearly it is something that I have a fairly strong background in, but the very fact that at March this year 32.8 per cent of children and young people in out-of-home care were Aboriginal really underscores a very serious problem there. And when you add that to the fact that we have over 50 per cent of Koori kids in juvenile justice, although there are some really good outcomes in education, it does make me very concerned.

Under Keep Them Safe over four years we are providing \$41 million to support Aboriginal children and young people. I have spoken in answer to Mr Cohen about the development of a new Aboriginal consultation specialist advice model, similar to the Lakidjeka model from Victoria. I have spoken about the Intensive Family Preservation Services model that was previously asked about; real work with the non-government sector in the Aboriginal community; and capacity-building of Aboriginal organisations and communities to have a greater role in caring for Aboriginal children. I do not know if the Children's Guardian would like to make a comment on accreditation? It is a really good story.

Ms BOLAND: Yes. Over the last number of years we have been working with Aboriginal agencies and, as the Minister mentioned before, four Aboriginal agencies as providers of out-of-home care have been accredited this year. That brings the total to seven and we have two remaining agencies. It is a substantial commitment by my office to work with Aboriginal agencies. What we did was introduce accreditation plans for each agency with milestones and a commitment not to reassess—to go back and look at the overview, but not to reassess; in other words, get rid of some of our red tape. We have changed our processes in addition, so rather than just require people to give us paperwork we actually visit agencies, assess their care, talk to carers and staff, and on occasion we have spoken to kids in care, and once we have that information we make an assessment of that. I think what has been most moving about this is that it has been a collaboration.

The Department of Community Services has committed to put some funding into this process and AbSec have a specialist officer allocated to them. That, together with our processes, has really assisted in what could only be described as an acceleration of Aboriginal agencies into accreditation. Last Thursday I was at one agency and I think it is really important to say that the value put on accreditation by Aboriginal agencies is nothing less than moving and profound. It is in fact a recognition that they can look after their own children, and they have embraced that with some enthusiasm—in one instance dancing at night. I can only say that we are extremely pleased with their progress and, given the number of Aboriginal kids in out-of-home care, they will be better off with that.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I ask Nazli whether she has anything to add to that?

Ms MUNIR: No, only that we have a really good relationship with AbSec and things are going really well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: A huge amount of progress has been made in quite a short period of time, so I congratulate you on the work done.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: My question relates to Lakidjeka and how it has worked to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children in the Victorian child protection system.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Can you give us some more detail about what we are doing to develop a similar program?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I can. I think Sonja Stewart led a delegation to Melbourne.

Ms STEWART: I was responsible for getting the delegation organised, but I did not get to go on the trip, Minister. But I heard it was very successful.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am sorry, I knew you were organising it. But, quite seriously, what we did is put a group of people together. We had been very aware of the model for some time, and what it essentially does is it ensures that there is Aboriginal community say in when a child is placed into care. Essentially that is what it is about. It is not only a government agency making that decision, or the courts necessarily; there is real Aboriginal involvement in the placement of the child.

My chief of staff, Leigh McLaughlin, and I visited Victoria for a day, met with the Aboriginal equivalent of AbSec in Victoria, looked at the incredible work they are doing there, including an explanation of the Lakidjeka model from one of the women that worked there—I think she was from somewhere around Swan Hill; she certainly was not based in Melbourne—and realised that it was something that has great applicability here in New South Wales. So we sent a delegation of Aboriginal people involved in children's services, child care and AbSec, down there to have an intense look at the model to see whether or not it did have the applicability that I thought it did, how we could implement it and where we needed to tweak it to suit New South Wales's circumstances. We are now on a journey funding AbSec to actually help us develop that model.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Does "Lakidjeka" have a meaning?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes, it does.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: But you do not know what it is?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I don't, I am sorry. It will be one of the Victorian languages. I am sure it is something to do with children.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: With the introduction of the new mandatory reporting threshold of risk of significant harm, in January 2010 there was a significant drop in the number of referrals from the community service helpline to Brighter Futures. Noting that drop via the community service helpline, how many unallocated places existed within the Brighter Futures Program?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Could I ask Annette to answer that question, please?

Ms GALLARD: I think you were referring to the drop in referrals through the helpline pathway?

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Yes, and I understand that is when the new mandatory reporting—

Ms GALLARD: That is right, and we knew that that was going to happen, so at the same time as the threshold changed, we introduced a Brighter Futures Assessment Unit within the helpline and it was able to look at all the reports that came in that might be below the threshold to see which of those cases should go out for allocation to Brighter Futures. As well, we have been doing work with the Child Wellbeing units so that they progressively looked at the cases that they were dealing with and applied the Brighter Futures eligibility criteria,

and they were also able to stream cases through so that those families would receive service from Brighter Futures.

I think it would be fair to say that at the moment there is an evaluation that is going on of the Brighter Futures Program and we would expect that the way in which cases get to Brighter Futures will be subject to some further discussion with non-government agencies and would be considered as part of the outcomes of that evaluation. Of course, the program was designed before the special commission of inquiry and that meant that the referral pathways that were in place prior to that were affected by the change in the risk of significant harm threshold. The other important thing about Brighter Futures is that Aboriginal Medical Services that are run by Health and targeted at Aboriginal families are able to make a direct referral to Brighter Futures services as well. They are not affected by the way the threshold operates and, of course, there is a community pathway so that non-government services can refer to each other and to lead agencies. That pathway is totally unaffected by the threshold.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Can you make a comparison between the unallocated places in the Community Services Brighter Futures Program and those in lead agencies for the non-government sector, or is that to be decided?

Ms GALLARD: I am not aware that there are unallocated cases in Brighter Futures. The situation may be that lead agencies will maintain a listing of people who have been referred to the program. We have been adjusting the percentages of cases that come from the helpline versus those that come through the community pathway in recognition of the fact that the threshold has changed, and we will need to look at that as a result of the Brighter Futures evaluation to see whether we maintain an 80-20 per cent split or move to something different.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Are there staff positions unfilled in the Brighter Futures Program in 2009-10 and, if so, for what period?

Ms GALLARD: At any time in Community Services there will be some caseworker positions that are unallocated because of natural turnover or because caseworkers have gone on extended leave, such as maternity leave, or they might be acting in higher positions. There is no reason why a Brighter Futures caseworker position should be left vacant, although I understand that in some places Brighter Futures caseworkers are temporarily seconded to do other work.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Are their positions in Brighter Futures filled and, if not, how are those savings used in Community Services' overall expenditure?

Ms GALLARD: Obviously, we have a staffing budget and we manage to that overall budget.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: On a point of clarification, I understood, and maybe I am totally wrong, that Brighter Futures was run by the non-government sector.

Ms GALLARD: No, it is 50 per cent.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The 200 Brighter Futures places that came through the last allocation of funds have gone to the non-government sector.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Are you acknowledging that there are unfilled positions in that process? How are the savings used in Community Services' overall expenditure?

Ms GALLARD: At any point in time there will be caseworker positions vacant so I would expect there would be Brighter Futures caseworker positions vacant.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Would those resources be allocated to direct services for children and families?

Ms GALLARD: At the moment we would be managing our budget. In the last year we have had a budget overrun on out-of-home care. We are devoting internal savings when positions are not filled to providing services to children in out-of-home care.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Looking at other early intervention programs, what amount does Community Services plan to put up in its bid to Treasury?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am not in a position to answer that right now. It is not appropriate for me to answer that.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Can you talk about the model that you will be putting forward?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: In our early intervention and prevention programs what we have planned and where we are with the implementation of the ones that existed prior to Keep Them Safe and the new ones under Keep Them Safe, which are funded through the \$750 million additional funds we got, there is a huge emphasis on early intervention and prevention. It is not appropriate for me to comment in terms of the forthcoming budget process except to say there will be no moving away from early intervention and prevention programs.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Can you comment on where that program would be available in the regions?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The ones we have now?

The Hon. IAN COHEN: The ones you will be looking at in your bid to Treasury.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Not at the moment, no.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: You cannot indicate in general terms—city/country? Are there any regions that the department recognises have a great need?

Ms STEWART: As the Minister explained before, the Community Services grants program was a multimillion-dollar program and it has now been streamed to community builders as well as early intervention and placement prevention. At the moment we are going through a process of buying some new services, which the Minister has referred to, which is new money under Keep Them Safe. That information is available on our website and so are the service models that we are interested in purchasing. It will be distributed on the basis of a resource allocation model and that model is based on the needs of children, families and young people. It is based on an economic model of where resources should go to planning regions.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: In the breakdown of funding can you identify the amounts allocated for delivery of Brighter Futures by the non-government sector and Community Services?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I can. For the lead agencies, which we refer to as the non-government sector, it is worth about \$47.5 million a year. That is what goes to the non-government sector.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: And the government sector?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is \$56 million in the government sector.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Can you also identify what funding, if any, has been drawn from the out-of-home care funding stream for intensive family support and preservation services?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No, it is quite separate.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: The Community Services budget has an allocation of \$1.8 million for a campaign to recruit foster carers. How will these funds be spent?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I answered that question earlier.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Can you advise whether the Fostering NSW campaign has been evaluated for its effectiveness?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: We answered that question too.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Who did the evaluation for effectiveness?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is still happening.

Ms GALLARD: We are still recruiting foster carers, so the evaluation will occur as part of the campaign.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: We are not ready to evaluate.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Would that evaluation be done within the department, or is it separate? Who will do it?

Ms GALLARD: There are funds set aside for an evaluation so we will be looking for somebody to do that, but the Fostering NSW campaign is not just a Government campaign; it is run with non-government agencies as well. No doubt they will want to contribute to the evaluation in terms of how successful it has been in recruiting foster carers for them.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is too early to do the evaluation yet.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: In the process of assessing foster care there is an allowance for non-statutory support care arrangements. How much money is allocated to the process of assessing carers, including staff requirements and staff allocations?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It would be extremely difficult to answer that question off the top of my head.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Will you take that question on notice?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I will take that question on notice.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: How much money is the department expecting to recoup or to save as a result of this process?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: We do not have a set target in mind. That process will take some time. I said earlier that we were trialling it in only three regions at the moment. There is no set target.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: What are those regions and why have they been chosen?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I mentioned them earlier. I cannot remember now where they were.

Ms GALLARD: They are in separate locations. While my colleagues are finding the locations, I know that one of them is Shellharbour and another is Dubbo. I think that the third might be Kempsey. We have chosen those locations because they have large numbers of children who at the moment are on the supported care allowance. We thought that would give us a good basis for estimating what the impacts would be across the State.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Kempsey was the third place.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: I refer to Pathways of Care and to the progress of the Community Services longitudinal study into children in out-of-home care. Given that progress on the development and implementation of this study appears to be slow—and I am not saying that it is slow—

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is a longitudinal study!

The Hon. IAN COHEN: —the commencement of data collection is said to begin in 2011.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Could you provide figures for the cumulative costs of this project for each year since 2005?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I do not have a figure on the cumulative cost but I am happy to provide that information to you.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: And where it is located in the Community Services budget.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I mentioned earlier that Community Services engaged Chapin Hall Research Centre at the University of Chicago and the Australian Institute of Family Studies to work with it to complete a detailed study of children in out-of-home care. We are not taking lightly this significant piece of work that will have a much broader application in New South Wales. It is about improving casework practice and strengthening the out-of-home care service system. It is a large study that will be tracking 1,000 children over a period of five years. It will assess their socio-emotional, learning and health development outcomes.

There are three cohorts of children—infants under the age of one, children aged three to five and children aged 12 to 14. Carers will also form part of this process. Carers will be interviewed by an independent specialist data collection agency called I-view. As has been said, that field work is expected to commence in 2011 and the study is expected to be completed by 2014-15. We will progressively release the results of that study. I am happy to take on notice that part of your question relating to cumulative costs and provide that figure to you.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: What resources have been allocated in this year's budget for that longitudinal study? I appreciate that it will travel across many budgets, but you must have had an allocation at this stage?

Mr MATTHEWS: I can answer part of your question. It sits within the out-of-home care budget. I think we should take on notice what is the dollar amount.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: I appreciate that.

Mr MATTHEWS: I have a figure in my mind but I do not want to give you the wrong number.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: You are saying that there are no delays in the progress of this project? I understand that, as it is a longitudinal project, it will take a number of years.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is a longitudinal study.

The Hon. IAN COHEN: Are you saying that there are no delays at this point in time?

Ms GALLARD: It is a very complex study. A number of organisations have been helping with the design of the study. It was always envisaged that because it is a big investment and it is happening over a long period we would need to invest some time and some resources in order to ensure that the design was right. Eminent professionals such as Judy Cashmore and Jackie Goodnow have been involved in the design of the study. We have had discussions with the Australian Institute of Family Studies and, as the Minister said, Chapin Hall Research Centre at the University of Chicago has been working with us. We are now getting to the exciting stage where we are recruiting families and we will be interviewing carers and children. The first of those interviews will happen in a number of waves over several years.

CHAIR: Minister, I have a few additional questions. I refer to the Brighter Futures Program and ask whether you have any statistics relating to the number of parents who have been notified to the department after voluntarily seeking assistance under the Brighter Futures Program?

Ms MASON: We expect those kinds of comprehensive statistics to be available shortly once the evaluation, which is imminent, is completed in the next few weeks. We expect to have a comprehensive profile of the kinds of issues that you have raised.

CHAIR: When can we expect that information?

Ms GALLARD: We are hoping the evaluation will go on the website on 30 September.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I had a meeting with those who are doing the evaluation and I sought an interim report that is close to being completed.

CHAIR: Skipping from there to legal aid, do you keep a record of how many cases of child removal have been involved in legal aid defence, as opposed to independently funded legal representation?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No, we do not.

CHAIR: Do you have any statistics relating to the outcome of cases involving legal aid?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Minister, can you or any of your agency executives give us an undertaking about whether the current contracts with non-government out-of-home care providers will be renegotiated? If so, when will that happen?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: If I do not fully cover all these issues I will ask some of the officials to respond. Clearly, the whole issue relating to contracts has been fraught with problems over a period. Since becoming Minister I have worked closely with non-government organisation providers to renegotiate contracts that are now underway. We established a reference group comprising many of those involved in the contracts to ensure that we worked through the process with them. There has been enormous frustration on the part of some of the providers because we had to recommence some of the earlier work that had been done. Some of that work, which is extremely complex, relates to the cost of the provision of services, which is one of the reasons I wanted that reference group to be established.

As at June 2010, 43 new performance-based funding agreements have been signed with 28 of our out-of-home care providers. In 2011 those contracts will be worth about \$207 million, which is a large amount. However, I have heard what you said. We are working in good faith with these providers. I will not give you a completion date as I do not think that would be responsible. However, we are as anxious as the providers to finalise that contract process.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Given that kinship care is a legislative requirement for indigenous children entering out-of-home care, what supervision is given by Community Services to kinship carers for children placed in statutory care?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Kinship care, as you are aware, mostly refers to the placement of Aboriginal children with extended family, be it grandparents, aunts, uncles or nieces and nephews. Obviously, you just do not place children with someone because they happen to be a relative. There is a process that kinship carers are required to undertake—working with children checks and a range of other things—before the child is placed. More often than not a kinship carer is a grandparent who will have not just one child but the whole family. Kinship carers can and do access the same sort of support as other carers, particularly through the Foster Care Association. I know a number of specific Aboriginal kinship carers groups have been developed around the country. I am very much aware of one at Broken Hill.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: What level of supervision is given by your department?

Ms GALLARD: The level of supervision depends firstly on whether they are in the statutory or the non-statutory system.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Could you cover each of those?

Ms GALLARD: Okay. If they are in the statutory system, there are some legislative requirements that are the same whether they are a kinship placement or a foster care placement. They include things like an annual review of the placement and some requirements around things like educational and health plans. It would be fair to say that Community Services is working towards those goals and does not meet those goals in every case at the moment. Supported care has two regimes. There is a regime that applies to children who are in supported care where there is no court order. That applies from 24 January this year. The other regime applies for children who entered supported care prior to 24 January. It would be fair to say that the requirements of those children post-24 January are pretty much the same as for children in statutory care. Again, it would be fair to say that Community Services is working towards meeting those requirements rather than necessarily being in a position to say that we are meeting those goals at the moment.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: You are aware of the deficiencies?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Absolutely. One of the really good things is the information we get back through AbSec, which is the peak advisory body on Aboriginal issues. That advice is taken seriously. Right across the Foster care arena, not just in kinship care, we have done some very good work in the past couple of years in providing more support. It is not altogether there, but it is better than it was.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: How many children in kinship care have no contact at all with Community Services?

Ms GALLARD: I do not have figures on that. It would be an expectation that in order for them to continue to receive an allowance some contact would have to happen.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: How many Community Services staff are involved in the supervision of kinship care placements and at what level?

Ms GALLARD: Caseloads are not broken up into statutory care and kinship care or supported care. It is quite usual that a caseworker will have a caseload that includes a combination of both.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Are there any interim evaluation results available for the family case management project?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It has not been evaluated. It is a new program.

Ms MASON: It has commenced only recently.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Have you any idea how long it will take before an evaluation is performed on the success of the program?

Ms MUNIR: We should have some interim findings at the beginning of next year. The evaluation will be completed at the end of the following year.

CHAIR: Earlier you talked about Child Wellbeing Units and referral centres providing services to children who have not reached the threshold. What services are provided to families and children who have reached the threshold, and under what program?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: If they have reached the threshold, that means they are reported to Community Services, obviously, and an assessment is made. It can take a number of different pathways. It could be home visits to that family, certainly assessments of that family and where things are at for those children—monitoring that family, seeing whether or not it gets to the point where the child needs to be removed—but preferably trying to have intensive interventions that avoid having to remove the child from the family. Of course, that is not always successful.

CHAIR: Why were neighbourhood centres given transition money plus a 20 per cent increase when Family Support Services receives only transition money?

Ms STEWART: As the Minister said previously, both these types of services were once funded under the Community Services Grants Program. When the Minister went to the budget committee to seek enhancement for community builders, there was a clear connection that the enhancement of the money had to go for the enhancement of the services, and acknowledging that as some of those neighbourhood centres had not received any enhancement of their services for a number of years, this was an issue they were raising through their local networks as well. We call it streaming: you are either going down the early intervention and prevention placement stream or you are going in community builders. There are some different objectives required for the funding of each. The 20 per cent was acknowledging that we were looking for a 20 per cent enhancement of those services that previously existed for the community builders stream.

CHAIR: But not the other one?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is not to say that there has not been additional funding for those other services, because there has been.

CHAIR: What about the neighbourhood centres that do both?

Ms STEWART: That is a really good question. Just because you are one building does not mean you just do one thing or you are one organisation. We are not asking those organisations to forever choose that they can be only one or the other. We are encouraging them and their management committees to look at their services. There is no reason they cannot provide three or four service models. We also acknowledge that some neighbourhood centres in fact receive funding from other agencies: Commonwealth, State Government or local government level. We are not asking them to choose just one stream.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: How many Child Wellbeing Units have been established in each of the government agencies of health, education, police and human services?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: They have all been established, and they are all functioning.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Do you receive any feedback from the health department concerning the regional referral services that are being piloted for a 12-month period commencing May 2010?

Ms MUNIR: The data has not come out yet. We are expecting the data fairly soon. However, the anecdotal advice that we are getting is very positive. We understand that family referral services are dealing with quite complex cases.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Do you have an approximate time line for the evaluation and when you expect it?

Ms MUNIR: I will have to take the family referral services evaluation on notice. It is the data of cases that family referral services have been receiving that I was referring to. That will be available shortly, but it is not available yet.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: If a referral to a local service cannot be made, due to the capacity or incapacity of that service, what happens then in this program?

Ms MUNIR: Would you mind repeating that?

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: If a referral to a local service cannot be made because of the capacity of that service, what happens then? Are there any gaps?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think what you are referring to is if a wellbeing unit gets a call-in.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Yes.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: They ring the local rape crisis centre or the local drug and alcohol centre. If they are not able to take the person on then it is really up to, and is a responsibility of, that family referral service to find another place, if that is at all possible. Of course there are challenges within some regions for that to happen, but our understanding is that most referrals are being dealt with. The other point is that you would not refer everything from a wellbeing unit to a family referral service. If you are a school, for example, and you refer to Education and Training's Child Wellbeing Unit, we have had some really good feedback that the school has actually sorted out the issue and it did not have to be referred on, or the home school liaison officer has been involved. The whole thing is trying to say back to the wellbeing unit and then to the referral services, "They are reaching their threshold and we want you to work through it." People are actually starting to get used to that.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Is cumulative harm recognised as having the potential to cause significant harm and is it actually recorded?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: It is?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Great. What role does a community program officer play in a regional Community Services office?

Ms GALLARD: Community program officers [CPOs] are there to support and monitor non-government organisations that we fund.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Approximately how much is this position expected to earn per annum?

Ms GALLARD: I will need to take that on notice. They are grade 7/8 positions. I am not totally aware.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: And how many community program officers are employed by Community Services?

Ms GALLARD: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Could you also take on notice how many community program officers are required to monitor non-government out-of-home care providers? Could you give us that information?

Ms GALLARD: Generally, the way that community program officers work is that they have a load, I guess. They monitor around 30 to 35 projects. Obviously, because there are some out-of-home care projects that are very large you will find two things happening: the first is that some of those out-of-home care projects are monitored from the Community Services head office where they are multimillion dollar outfits, or in other cases you will find that a community program officer will have a smaller number of organisations that they monitor because they are dealing with very big organisations.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: We are happy to send the Minister home a bit early.

CHAIR: Thank you. It is an early mark for everyone, including the many advisers at the back of the room who have been sitting there very patiently all the way through. Thank you very much.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.
