

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 2

Friday 23 August 2013

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area

AGEING, DISABILITY SERVICES

The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. M. A. Ficarra (Chair)

The Hon. J. Barham
The Hon. P. Green (Deputy Chair)
The Hon. J. A. Gardiner

The Hon. L. Foley
The Hon. T. Khan
The Hon. H. Westwood
The Hon. E. Wong

PRESENT

The Hon. John Ajaka, *Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services*

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:

**Budget Estimates secretariat
Room 812
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

CHAIR: I declare this hearing for the inquiry into budget estimates 2013-14 open to the public. I welcome the Minister and his team. Before I commence I would like to acknowledge the Gadigal clan of the Eora nation, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I pay respects to the elders past and present of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginal people present.

I welcome Minister Ajaka and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Ageing and Disability Services. In accordance with the Legislative Council guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings, only Committee members and the witnesses may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photographs. In reporting the proceedings of the Committee, members of the media must take responsibility for what they publish or what interpretation they place on anything that is said before the Committee. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available on the side table by the door. I note that today's hearing is open to the public, and is being webcast live via the Parliament's website.

Before we commence I would like to make some comments about procedural matters. Any messages from advisers or members' staff seated in the public gallery should be delivered via the Chamber and support staff, or the Committee clerks. Minister, I remind you and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to the advisers seated at the table behind you. Transcripts of this hearing will be available on the web from tomorrow morning. Minister, the House has resolved that answers to questions on notice must be provided within 21 days. I remind everyone to turn off their mobile phones or place them on silent and away from the microphones.

All witnesses from departments, statutory bodies or corporations will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Minister, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament. I also remind you, Mr Coutts-Trotter, from the Department of Family and Community Services, that you do not need to be sworn in as you have already been sworn in at an earlier budget estimates meeting. I will ask all other witnesses, each in turn, to state their full name, job title and agency; and then I will ask them to either swear an oath or make an affirmation.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER, Director General, Department of Family and Community Services, on former oath:

PETER DeNATRIS, Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Development and Reform, Ageing Disability and Home Care,

STEVEN MUDGE, Chief Finance Officer, Department of Family and Community Services, and

JIM LONGLEY, Chief Executive, Ageing, Disability and Home Care, sworn and examined:

ALASTAIR HUNTER, Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery, Ageing, Disability and Home Care; and

SAMANTHA TAYLOR, Deputy Chief Executive, People and Choice Ageing, Disability and Home Care; affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Questions will be in 20-minute rounds. We will start with Opposition members, then 10 minutes each for the crossbench, 20 minutes for the Government, and then we will go to a second round. I declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Ageing and Disability Services open for examination.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Minister, welcome to your first budget estimates hearing.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Second. I had the Illawarra in the first week.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I thought I had an opportunity. I was going to say that I am not going to be gentle. As you are already experienced I need not worry about that. Minister, do you agree that funding allocations for the Community Care Supports Program [CCSP] need to grow annually to address the critical unmet and under-met need in the community, particularly in light of the fact that the target population is growing?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I would like to make something very clear in relation to the budget. As you are well aware, my budget is \$2.7 billion. I am incredibly pleased that in this year the budget was increased by \$117 million—a substantial increase in the area. Prior to 1 July 2012, services were provided through the Home and Community Care program for older people, younger people with disability, and their carers across all age groups. Home and Community Care funding in 2011-12 was \$671.62 million, and the program supported around 265,000 clients annually. Since 1 July 2012, following the Commonwealth transition, New South Wales has been responsible for the Community Care Supports Program providing community care services for younger people with disability. "Younger people" refers to people under 65 years of age, and under 50 years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Community Care Supports Program provides funding for more than 400 non-government, local government and New South Wales Government service providers to deliver community care services to over 50,000 clients in New South Wales.

Home Care Service in New South Wales is the largest provider in the State, and delivers personal care, domestic assistance and respite services across New South Wales. In 2012-13 and 2013-14, Home Care Service received approximately 33 per cent of the total Community Care Supports Program's budget. Community Care Supports Program services are generally low level in terms of hours and intensity, and provide basic maintenance and support to assist people to remain living in their own homes.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Minister, I have a question on the issue you have raised in that answer. The budget papers show a staggering \$23 million cut to the Community Care Supports Program. That is a 12.7 per cent reduction in real terms for under-65s. You would be aware that there is a leaked Ageing, Disability and Home Care memo, which outlines the cuts to the Home Care branch. How did your department come to the figure of \$23 million for reducing funding to the program?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I will just say this before I hand over to Mr Jim Longley. The total budget for the Community Care Supports Program in 2012-13 was \$231.65 million. However, after adjusting for non-recurrent payments and other technical alterations, the effective full-year budget for 2012-13 was \$223.41 million. The difference of \$8.24 million comprises a one-off allocation of \$5.5 million, which was

expended in 2012-13 but cannot be counted in the recurrent budget, plus an adjustment of \$2.74 million as the 2012-13 Home Care efficiency dividend. Mr Longley may wish to add to that.

Mr LONGLEY: What you have seen in the Community Care Supports Program numbers, which you have quoted, is a result of the split of the Home and Community Care program between the Federal Government and the State Government along the lines of the over 65s and under 65s for the general population and the age of 50 for Aboriginal people. As part of that split, various adjustments have been made so that the two-thirds of the program that has gone to the Federal Government is still delivered by the Home Care Service, and the approximately one-third of that program which is delivered by the Home Care Service but now rolled into the CCSP is captured within that split. That is significant in terms of understanding those numbers, because there are adjustments occurring there which do not lead to an actual drop, even though the numbers appear to point in that direction.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Could I just clarify? As I understand it, there is a split between under 65s and over 65s. When you look at these detailed budget figures it looks as though there has been a reduction in the amount of funding to the under 65s, which is the State's responsibility. How do you explain that?

Mr LONGLEY: As I was saying, it does look like that, but the reality is quite different. A fairly technical distinction is being drawn there, so I will ask our chief financial officer to go through the mechanics of that process. There are a number of adjustments between the Federal and the State governments which lead to that being the accounting outcome. The substantive outcome is quite distinctive.

Mr MUDGE: As was said, there was a split between the Commonwealth and the State for the over 65s and under 65s. The reduction in the budget papers reflects a separation from the Commonwealth around a neutrality adjustment. When the separation occurred in the first place, there were a number of neutrality adjustments. Negotiations are still to occur with the Commonwealth regarding the accuracy of that adjustment. That is taking place with the Commonwealth later in the year. We would hope that an adjustment would come back to the State to equal the resources and commitment the State would have.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: We might revisit that later. The Opposition has come across examples of younger people with disabilities either having access to community care services reduced or no access. This has been documented also by NCOSS. I am sure you are aware of its document. Why did your department fail to take into account in this year's budget allocation for community care that significant unmet need and the fact that the target population is growing?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Thank you for that question. The Younger People in Residential Aged Care Program, which was introduced in 2007 by the then Government as a joint Commonwealth-New South Wales government initiative, was to provide accommodation and support to younger people with a disability living in or at risk of entering residential aged care. The program aims to help some younger people with a disability move out of residential aged care into suitable alternative accommodation, divert entry for some younger people who are at risk of inappropriately entering a residential aged care facility, and enhance the delivery of disability services to some younger people with a disability who continue to live in a residential aged care facility. Demand for disability services is growing substantially.

PricewaterhouseCoopers modelling estimates 10 per cent growth every year. If not met, there will be a long-lasting effect in the New South Wales economy. Stronger Together 2 in 2011-12 to 2015-16 represents an investment of \$2 billion, which is the largest investment in disability services by any Australian State. The Government continues to enhance actuarial modelling to predict and monitor the need and supply of disability services. Of course, the National Disability Insurance Scheme is essential and is the long-term aspect of support certainty for young people who will be entering the system. As I indicated earlier, there is the joint five-year program with the Commonwealth, which commenced in 2007. In 2012-13, \$26.1 million is ongoing in the national disability agreement, and there is no growth to the program. Of course, the reason for that is that we are moving from a program response to focus on the systematic improvements response of individuals.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: If I could interrupt, I was talking specifically about the Home Care program, not residential care. I was talking specifically about Home Care's capacity to deliver services to young people and the decline in its budget, not residential care.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Thank you. Of course, this ties in with the home care aspects of the budget. As you know, home care has been designed to help people with a disability, older and younger people. Of course, it is designed also to help their carers to live independently in their own homes, including domestic assistants. As I said earlier, the total disabilities budget was increased by \$117 million. One has also to take into account that as we move into the NDIS, ultimately we will be looking at a system where we go from a \$2.7 billion budget to one of over approximately \$3.1 billion provided by the States, plus a \$3 billion—

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Minister—

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: If I could just finish. Plus a \$3 billion budget—

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: But you are not answering my question, Minister.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: —provided by the Commonwealth. We are going to be almost doubling the entire budget in relation to that.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I am not talking about the NDIS in the future. I am saying that currently younger people with disabilities are not able to access the services they need because of a reduction in the budget.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I do not agree with that at all. What is clear is that new State and Commonwealth programs are coming in. Younger people are now with Ability Links, which is starting to assist them. We have planners coming in to assist them. In fact, they are finding more doors open for them to seek assistance. One has to remember that our budget is an entire pool divided amongst many programs. As one need increases in one program, part of that pool will increase in that program. As a lesser need occurs in another program, of course the budget aspect of that program will reduce. All programs work together by way of synergy. You cannot just simply take one little program out on its own and say there has been a reduction without looking at all the other programs where there have been substantial increases.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Thanks, Minister.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I keep repeating, there has been an increase of over \$117 million in this year alone.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: In relation to last year's budget your Government issued a press release stating that it would put aside \$12.9 million in growth funding for community care for the 2012-13 period. This has not happened. No service providers have received the growth money stated in that press release. Can you tell us where that money has gone?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I will ask Mr Longley to answer that as he will understand and also has specific managers.

Mr LONGLEY: Again, I think it is how you are constructing those numbers because changes have occurred flowing out of the Home and Community Care split. When you were talking about younger people, we actually thought you were talking about a different younger people program within the Home Care Service. I will ask my deputy, Sam Taylor, to make some comments on that split to CCSP.

Ms TAYLOR: We became aware of the adjustments that the Commonwealth was seeking to the national partnership agreement to move around the competitive neutrality matters to which Mr Mudge referred earlier at the time we were about to roll out the growth that had been allocated in that program. In order to manage that resource to not incur liabilities into the system—meaning we would have to pull back on services—the decision was taken to keep that growth money to offset the potential reduction in the budget that you are referring to arising from the change in the NP calculations the Commonwealth has proposed and which we are seeking to negotiate so that those funds come back into the support system for the under 65s.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Can I clarify that the growth money has not gone to service providers, NGOs?

Ms TAYLOR: No. We have kept that allocation because the Commonwealth proposed through the NP a reduction in the allocation that would go to people under the age of 65 under this program as a result of the

adjustments associated with the split of the Home and Community Care Program and to move those resources to the over 65 part of that program. We are negotiating that and have an understanding that the Commonwealth will give us a response or answer to explain its calculations in October this year.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Minister, this budgeted forward estimates detailed report for the New South Wales contribution for community care shows an underspend of almost \$11 million.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Sorry, I did not hear the last bit of your question.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: The budgeted forward estimates detailed report for the New South Wales contribution for community care shows underspending of almost \$11 million. Is this why a number of service providers have been told by ADHC to focus on providing services according to age group? Is this about saving money?

CHAIR: Do you wish the member to be more specific about the document?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I do not know to which document the member is referring, to be honest.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: It is a NSW Treasury document. It is the budget forward estimates detailed report, something I am sure you would have, given that we are here at budget estimates hearings.

Mr LONGLEY: I might ask my deputy, Sam Taylor, to respond.

Ms TAYLOR: The Community Care Services Program is exclusively provided through the non government sector and the Home Care Service under funding agreements with a range of organisations. That program was subject last financial year to the split arrangements, which were done under the auspices of the MP that I just referred to. There has been no change in the spend under those existing funding agreements that were the subject of the split that came about as a result of the reallocation of responsibility between the Commonwealth and the New South Wales Government. All those funding arrangements remain in place and are delivering the outputs that they were contracted for at the commencement of the contract period last year.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: There is a difference though between the actual and the budget figure.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: One just does not look at the amount of the budget and spend; what is imperative in this portfolio is the services provided to those with a disability. If one looks at 2012-13, one sees the Homecare Service of NSW delivered services to 51,400 clients. That was an increase of 1,900 clients compared to 2011-12. The way you present the question you make it appear as if there was a reduction in the services. It is the exact opposite.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: That is not what we are hearing on the ground.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Due to the great work of the department officers, due to the great work of all those involved in Ageing, Disability and Home Care and the non-government organisations, there has been an increase to services to clients, and that, to me, is what is important.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Not to the under-65s. That is not the information we are getting back. The under-65s, the new younger people with disabilities, are not able to get services. When they are contacting the service providers—people like Home Care—they are being told that there are not services for them, they have to wait.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Is that a question?

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Yes it is a question.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: It is not being put as a question.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: It has been put as a question.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You are making a speech.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: It is a question.

CHAIR: It is a statement and it will lead into a question. We will not have sparring at the table. If the Hon. Helen Westwood provides specific details then I am sure the Minister and his team can get her a detailed answer.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: If I may say this: I repeat that I am proud of the fact that I read from the department that due to the great work of all of those involved in Ageing and Disabilities services will increase to 1,900 clients, and that is what I look for. I think it is a really sad reflection on all of those who work so hard in this sector that one tries to take that away from them. The reality is that more services are being provided, and this is whilst we are moving to a transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS], which will almost double the budget, which will increase clients from just over 90,000 in New South Wales to 140,000. That is the great news I want to present. Mr Longley might want to add something.

Mr LONGLEY: If I could just make the point that it is significant that the Home Care Service from 2011-12 to 2012-13 did service 1,900 additional clients.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Under-65s? Could you give me that breakdown, please?

Mr LONGLEY: That is in total.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: What proportion of those were under 65? Could you provide that, please?

Mr LONGLEY: We will attempt to provide that information.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: That is the important point. There is real concern about what is happening—and maybe you can clarify this, or your officers: Is the department looking at servicing over-65s, because you know that they will be moving to the Commonwealth-funded projects and will then be the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government, not the State Government?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Please be assured that that is not quite correct. My department will ensure that anyone moving to the NDIS will have all assistance from my department to ensure that their services are not reduced in any way but, in fact, are enhanced. The Commonwealth Government is working with the State Government to ensure that happens. In particular, Ageing, Disability and Home Care is working with Disability Care to make sure that the transition happens properly. We will still have a very large role in relation to this.

CHAIR: Is there anything that Mr Longley wants to add before we go to the crossbench?

Mr LONGLEY: Yes. In terms of the age splits, we do not have that information with us now. If we can take that as a question on notice we are certainly happy to look at that. It is worth emphasising that the number of clients has increased overall, but we will attempt to get that age split information for you.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Minister, I would like to ask about boarding house regulation. Could you provide information about the number of fulltime positions that are working on boarding house licensing and compliance?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am informed that in October 2012 the New South Wales Government introduced major reforms to the boarding house industry with the passage, as you are aware, of the Boarding Houses Act 2012. Boarding houses are privately operated, for-profit businesses, which provide accommodation generally for people on low incomes. The reforms are a culmination of a series of reports by the NSW Ombudsman and the State Coroner, which have been highly critical of boarding house standards and the pace of reform.

The central purpose of the Act, therefore, is to protect the rights of boarding house residents and to promote the sustainability of the boarding house industry in New South Wales. The Act establishes a comprehensive legislative framework for the regulation of registrable boarding houses in New South Wales. Registrable boarding houses are divided into two categories: general boarding houses, which are boarding houses which accommodate five or more people for a fee or reward; and assisted boarding houses, previously

known as licensed residential centres under the Youth and Community Services Act 1973. Of course, I am more involved in the assisted boarding houses.

Assisted boarding houses accommodate two or more persons with additional needs—people who need daily ongoing support for services as a result of their being aged or having a mental illness or a disability. The provisions of the Act relating to the boarding houses and initial compliance investigations commenced on 1 January 2013. Many of the standards in the new regulations existed in the previous Youth and Community Services Act 1973 and the 2010 regulations. The additional standards incorporated in the 2013 regulations include enhancement to certain service and facility standards, including a requirement for call bells; the keeping of a number of additional records; minimum staffing levels and a process to assess sufficient levels; required qualifications and skills of staff; a requirement for staff to undergo criminal record checks; a requirement to have procedures for dealing with complaints; an increase in the range of notifiable incidents; and any introduction of new accommodation standards.

Assisted boarding house compliance officers continue to monitor assisted boarding houses for compliance with legislation at a minimum of every six weeks. The introduction of the new accommodation standards, in particular standards 6 and 7, requires the premises to provide for single-occupancy rooms, and the establishment of a limit of 30 residents applies to assisted boarding houses. Ageing, Disability and Home Care will provide a template for pre-existing assisted boarding houses to plan and report annually on their actions to meet the two new standards. Currently there are 23 assisted boarding houses providing 526 beds across New South Wales.

The 2013 regulation requires the authorised operator of an assisted boarding house to notify the director general of a person under 18 years of age who is residing in an assisted boarding house. In addition to the provisions of the legislation that require them to notify Ageing, Disability and Home Care of the presence of a young person, the residential accommodation providers are required to immediately inform Community Services if they believe a resident is a child under the age of 16 years who is living away from home.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Are you able to indicate how many staff there are or what the budget funding is for that purpose?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Yes. There are three compliance officers at Ageing, Disability and Home Care with the centralisation of our regional activity, and they monitor all assisted boarding houses and investigate unlicensed premises. The director general might want to add to that.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Just one further point of detail. Staff inside Ageing, Disability and Home Care, outside the compliance team, are receiving training in the new regulatory environment. In the course of their ordinary duties if they pick up information they think is of interest and relevance to the compliance team they provide that. So there are three compliance officers but there is a bigger effort than that sitting behind them.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Will they be available to do any regional checks that are required? Will they do physical checks of those premises?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: My understanding is yes. In 2012-13, the department spent more than \$77 million in three main areas. One of them was community-based accommodation support services to former assisted boarding house residents with high support needs. It has been imperative to move them from a boarding house at their request. Also, support services such as case management, advocacy, primary and secondary health care, recreational and leisure services, personal care, and community transport to assist boarding house residents, are being looked at to provide the necessary assistance.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: In relation to young people in residential aged care, we know there is a severe lack of accommodation facilities. Will you advise what the budget program is, how much is being spent on new accommodation, and where that accommodation might be?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I can give you some facts and figures. There is a five-year joint program between the Commonwealth Government and State Government which commenced in 2007. The program came about in response to concerns about younger people living in or at risk of entering residential aged care. In 2012-13, \$26.1 million was ongoing to the National Disability Agreement. We have a need to move from a program-type response to a person-centred system, which is an improvement in response, particularly between the disability, health, housing and aged care systems. To date there are currently 297 participants on the

Children and Young Persons program who are afforded 1,530 services through the program. This is well in excess of the target that was initially set. There were three objectives to the program. Firstly, to provide more appropriate accommodation and care options; secondly, to prevent them from entering residential care; and, thirdly, to improve the lives of those who choose to remain in the program. The typical responses include supported accommodation, individual planning, support packages, equipment, home modifications and case management.

As of 31 May 2013 we have 238 people up to 50 years of age living in residential aged care, which is below the figure of 381 people in 2007, and we have 1,986 people aged from 50 to 64 years of age. We have 121 people who have been provided with supported accommodation, and as at 30 June 2013 the number is 95 people, which is the remainder for the next 12 months. To date, we also have a number of enhancement services of 1,513, which includes the in-reach packages of individually planned recreation therapy, rehabilitation, community access, equipment, home modification and feedback. Most of the feedback that has been obtained from the department and from the meetings I have had is that these people want to be able to live the life anyone else can live. They want to be assisted in being able to enjoy the programs, whether it is recreation, study or any other aspect while living at home. This is what the department is trying to focus on.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Are you able to advise us on the number of units to be provided in the next financial year?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: The base unit price for assistance with self-care activities for Disability Care Australia is budgeted at \$34.05 but the current State-based equivalent is \$43.87. How are current service providers that are operating in New South Wales expected to cover the shortfall when transitioning to Disability Care Australia, and who is setting the price?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I will ask Mr Longley to take that on.

Mr LONGLEY: In the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Disability Care Australia has indicated a pricing regime that they are saying is based on market rates and so on but which is causing some level of quite significant consternation throughout the entire disability sector. You are quite right to bring attention to that. It is a matter of ongoing discussion and negotiation between us and Disability Care Australia, and the entire sector has raised that significant issue. To give a bit more detail, I will ask my deputy, Sam Taylor, to make further comments.

Ms TAYLOR: I agree with Jim's comment that you are very right to raise that. A number of jurisdictions involved in the launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme have made representations to Disability Care Australia about the pricing regime, particularly for some types of service activities, such as domestic assistance and personal care. We have been obviously working closely with Disability Care Australia at the national level as well as locally in the Hunter to establish the launch. I think it is fair to say that the amount of time available to Disability Care Australia between the making of the legislation and the making of their rules of which the pricing regime is a part was quite close to the commencement date of the launch.

We all acknowledge there is further work to do. Although we have not seen the parameters for the prices that Disability Care Australia have released publicly, our understanding is that they are based, as Jim suggests, on adjacent or complementary markets such as the lifetime care and support rates—for example, where personal care and domestic assistance supports are paid for through insurance-type arrangements by participants in that scheme. These rates appear to be close to that. Our take on that is it is quite a mature market. Through a transition period we are not entirely confident that that rate is correct. We are now participating in a joint review with Disability Care Australia and the national actuary to assess—along with a number of other jurisdictions—how their prices compare with real prices associated with the delivery of support in a transitional environment. That includes both our own directly provided services through the home care service as well as examples in the non-government sector.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Minister, you have made comments this morning about the quota of 30 persons with disability living in assisted boarding houses. How does the maximum capacity of 30 avoid institutional practices, poor quality outcomes and increased risk of abuse and neglect, which are known to occur in the congregation of people with disability?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: You are asking in relation to the abuse aspect?

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Yes. The number 30 seems to be a golden number. Why is the number not less, or does that take into account those risk factors happening? Do they increase?

CHAIR: The question requires a detailed answer—

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I am happy for you to take it on notice.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am happy to take it on notice. I know there is a cap of 30.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: That is right.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Your concern is you believe that number is too high?

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: There has been a concern noted to me that that number may influence the poor quality outcomes or increase risk. I am wondering how the department arrived at the number 30. Is 30 a safe number?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am happy to take that on notice. As I said earlier, the introduction of the new accommodation standards, in particular, require it to be a limit of 30. What was of concern was that it was much higher than 30 at one stage. At least we have reduced it. That is a good question and I will seek some information from the department on that.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Thank you. The Boarding Houses Act 2012 and Boarding Houses Regulation 2013 allows children and people with disability to be accommodated in assisted boarding houses for the first time. What risk assessment process has been put in place to ensure that the accommodation and support received by children and young people with disability living in assisted boarding houses meets their needs and is in their best interests?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: It is a private occupation. The Act does not exclude children from being accommodated. However, under section 9 of the Act, boarding house proprietors are required as part of their registration to include information such as the number of residents who are under 18 years of age. Proprietors must update this information every 12 months. The purpose in collecting this information is to better understand the demographics of boarding house residents and their needs. Also, all boarding house operators are required to comply with section 122 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, which requires a person who provides residential accommodation to a person whom they reasonably believe to be a child under the age of 16 living away from home without parental permission to inform Community Services immediately.

Family and Community Services [FACS], which is responsible for the authorised operation of assisted boarding houses, regularly monitors the boarding houses register for the presence of children and young people in boarding houses. When Family and Community Services becomes aware of a child or young person living in either a general or an authorised assisted boarding house, FACS staff visit that person to assess any action that needs to be taken, noting that the risk of homelessness is addressed in any action considered. Clause 13 of the boarding house regulation also requires proprietors of assisted boarding houses to report the presence of children and young people to the Director General of Family and Community Services. Section 85 of the Act also provides that where a person under the age of 18 with additional needs is residing in an unauthorised assisted boarding house, their parents or guardians will be asked to remove them from the premises.

If this cannot or does not occur, the young person is taken to be a child or young person in need of care and protection for the purpose of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 and may be subject to action by the director general for their protection. I am informed that since the introduction of the screening tool in 2010 no persons under the age of 18 have been assessed for entry into an assisted boarding house. I am also informed that there are no young people under the age of 18 currently residing in assisted boarding houses in New South Wales. But if it were to occur, the rules apply. Of course, they may be in general boarding houses but there is none in assisted boarding houses.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Can you explain specifically how the rollout of the national disability insurance scheme [NDIS] will provide expansion to the good governance program, Disability Safe Aboriginal Pathways Workforce Development and Educational Activities?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: The New South Wales Government is making significant investment to ensure that non-government disability service providers have the right skills and capacities to successfully transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Some \$17 million has been allocated to build the capacity of the specialist disability sector, jointly administered by Ageing, Disability and Home Care and the industry peak body, National Disability Services. Of the \$17 million, \$16 million has been committed to date for projects focused on building governance and leadership capacity within the sector and the capabilities of organisations that deliver person-centred services. A further \$5 million has been made available for future industry development fund activities in the lead-up to implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Key projects of the industry development fund include a suite of products to assist organisations to establish systems for quality service provision and meet requirements under the quality framework of disability services in New South Wales. We have had 343 registrations to date for quality reform workshops held across the State. The Government is leading initiatives under the good governance program. We have had 144 non-government organisation board members supported to attend training within the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Also, 297 organisations have been engaged by a change of management team to assist them to assess their readiness to transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This includes all organisations in the Hunter launch site.

Under the disability work health and safety program, we have had 285 participants in manual handling training and of course we have had the human rights training underway under the person-assisted approaches. I can indicate that in the meetings I have held to date the feedback in particular from various non-government organisations is an absolute keenness to continue to develop in order to ensure that when they progress to the National Disability Insurance Scheme that they have done so. In relation to the aspect relating to Aboriginal non-government organisations, under the Stronger 2 program, \$3.5 million has been nominally allocated over five years to build the capacity of the disability sector. These funds include not only developing and strengthening existing Aboriginal non-government organisations but also enabling new Aboriginal non-government organisations to deliver disability-specific services. Activities funded under this will be linked to related activities under the Government's new plans for Aboriginal Affairs.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Thank you for that comprehensive question.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: It was a good question. I studied it last night; that is why I remembered it.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: It is good to know that the portfolio is in good hands.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I understand that Ms Taylor would like to add something.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: It was a comprehensive answer.

Ms TAYLOR: I simply point out that the fund that the Minister has described as a statewide fund not only relates to the question about the supports that we are providing to non-government organisations in the Hunter launch—although we have targeted assistance to the 40 plus non-government organisations that are the primary providers in the launch site. That includes targeting more of the good governance program. There is also some funding nationally through Disability Care Australia to expand some of the product that we have developed in New South Wales in partnership with National Disability Services, and to roll that out on a national basis.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I refer to the Stronger Together 2 annual report for 2011 12. Page 15 of the report lists a total of five-year expenditure for research and development at \$57.5 million. Can you give me a broad breakdown of how that amount is distributed and whether it contains any research grants in this particular area?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Which particular area?

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: That is what I am asking you. On page 15 of the report of Stronger Together 2 there is a reference to \$57.5 million. I am asking you to give me a breakdown of how that amount is distributed.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I will ask Mr Longley to answer that.

Mr LONGLEY: That amount is over a number of years.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Five years.

Mr LONGLEY: Yes, over the five years, so that is important to bear in mind. I will ask Ms Taylor, who has particular responsibility for that element of the Stronger Together 2 program.

Ms TAYLOR: As Mr Longley pointed out, that is an allocation over a number of years. We can give you on notice a complete breakdown. We are actually working out some of the detail of how that program in the later years will be phased and what it will purchase to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: You can take the question on notice and give me the information. I am happy with that. Can you indicate whether any of that money goes towards research grants in those particular areas? You can take that on notice.

CHAIR: You can take that on notice.

Ms TAYLOR: Not at this stage. We do fund a national centre for development for disability research through National Disability Australia under the auspices of Dr Ken Baker and we are also investing, as part of that allocation, in improvements to the national data collections which would support the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Again nationally, New South Wales is injecting a substantial commitment into building up those data sets to develop the evidence base to support the scheme as it rolls out.

CHAIR: With the concurrence of all members, we have decided to forgo Government question time.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: The answers have been so comprehensive today.

CHAIR: Therefore the Opposition will have 20 minutes and then 10 minutes each for the crossbenchers until the conclusion of the meeting.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Are you aware that in May this year the Ombudsman tabled a report on deaths of people with disability in care and that the report found that the average age of death of people in State-funded disability accommodation services was 30 years younger than in the general population?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: As you are aware, the role of the New South Wales Ombudsman is to deal with complaints about public sector agencies, local councils, police, community service providers, employment-related child protection issues, custodial centres and public interest disclosure. The Ombudsman also oversees and monitors investigation by agencies, scrutinises systems, et cetera and, of course, deals with the Child Death Review Team. Ageing Disability and Home Care is exclusively and ethically bound to cooperate with the New South Wales Ombudsman in the best interests of all parties, especially people with a disability.

Official Community Visitors visit operator-funded services to ensure that people are receiving quality services. They are independent and will report to both the Minister for Disability Services and the Minister for Family and Community Services. The New South Wales Government has approved amendments to the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act to facilitate the National Disability Insurance Scheme participants' access to safeguards, effective from 1 July 2013. Some of those amendments specifically relate to matters raised by the New South Wales Ombudsman. The New South Wales Ombudsman also continues to monitor and review services provided by the new participant providers, in particular under the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Minister, I do not want to cut you off but I have some specific questions. A family has made representations to the Opposition, but I will not name the young person or the facility in question. The young man has an acquired brain injury and is at an Ageing, Disability and Home Care facility. His father's doctor has documented the shocking and rapid—but totally preventable—deterioration of

this young man's health and abilities. When he entered the facility he could feed from a spoon but since entering he principally has percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy [PEG] feeding. The facility then took 12 months to reactivate limited oral feeding but this required ongoing advocacy by his father and his father's doctor. Regretfully, other aspects of his care also have been of concern, including infections, which have been documented, and weight loss—even just the monitoring and recording of his weight, which is so important. What procedures and standards of care have been put in place to address the inadequacies identified in the Ombudsman's report?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am as concerned as you are to hear of such a story and I would want to immediately act on it. I am aware that volume two of the report contained nine recommendations for Ageing, Disability and Home Care, which all align with previous years and include access and coordination. I am also aware that the Ombudsman acknowledges that good progress has been made to date. I will ask Mr Longley to speak about specifics and any aspect that is not answered I will take on notice.

Mr LONGLEY: The member has raised a specific case. When particular issues arise with a particular client we are happy to have a further look at those, and we would be happy to do so in this case as well. Our staff are well trained, have documentary procedures and are monitored. We have an incident management policy. We have a whole range of systems in place that cover where people think something might be going wrong. We can investigate but long before that we have supervisory mechanisms in place. As I have said, we have training and all of those records. The Ombudsman also has the capacity to investigate. I am unsure whether you would like to do that as a direct issue regarding that particular matter.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: We will certainly refer that particular case to you. The shadow Minister may have already done that; if not, she will give you the details. It is really the systemic issues that were raised as part of this case that we want some answers about. Do you think that self-monitoring is working at these facilities?

Mr LONGLEY: You do have documentary evidence, so it is not merely self-monitoring. There are check mechanisms in place. It is not as though there is one individual who is solely responsible here. They are done in teams and there are managers over those people. There are a whole range of checks and other systemic mechanisms in place to capture these. As I have said, we will be happy to look further into that particular issue.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: As I have said before, I take my role as Minister in this portfolio as one that must be bipartisan because we clearly want to see the best results for anyone with disability and their carers. My door is open. If you ever come across an issue or a story that you believe needs to be acted on, please feel free to come and see me immediately and I will act on it immediately.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Thank you. I will make sure that the shadow Minister provides the details to you. Do we have a commitment that you will investigate this case?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I would be very pleased to do that.

Mr LONGLEY: The member has raised an issue about food. In 2010-11 the Ombudsman released reports that indicated that the main cause of external death was with regard to food. Ageing, Disability and Home Care responded to that. In February this year a new mealtime management e-learning course for staff was released to specifically address this issue, which was one that was known and had been specifically raised by the Ombudsman. We are very responsive to these issues being raised.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I turn now to the issue of boarding houses. Minister, do you think it is appropriate for children to live in assisted boarding houses?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: From what I have been informed there are currently no children residing in assisted boarding houses and, clearly, Ageing, Disability and Home Care will take every action possible to ensure that is maintained. I understand that there may be children residing in boarding houses generally. As I said earlier, the Act does not exclude children and young people from residing in them. But when one looks at the various sections of the Act in relation to under 18 years of age and, in particular, section 122 of the Children and Young Person's (Care and Protection) Act in relation to under 16 years of age, some very stringent regulations apply to ensure that Ageing, Disability and Home Care and Family and Community Services are immediately notified. Procedures are then put in place to ensure that a caseworker goes out to look at the premises and at the needs of the child to ensure the safety of that child. That is all occurring.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I understand representations were made under the draft Act that there would be a regulation that children would not be allowed. Was there a reason why that did not happen?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am not aware of that. I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Would you support a regulation that prohibits children from being in assisted boarding houses?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Before I could answer a question such as that, obviously I would want to ensure the best interests of young people. I would want to be aware and have a briefing on all aspects. I will give you a good example. I would not want to create a regulation that prevents a young person from living in a boarding house where the only other option is for that young person to be homeless and living on the street. If that was the outcome of my bringing in a regulation of that nature then no, I would not support it. I would really need to know what encompassed the entire aspect of it. In the three short weeks I have been a Minister I have been receiving that information and I am aware. My priority, first and foremost, is the best interests of the child. That is clearly my priority and I can guarantee you that I will do my best to implement whatever it takes to achieve that.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I understand that your department is clearly advising you, but it has said to stakeholders that children with disabilities would otherwise be homeless if unable to access accommodation in assisted boarding houses. What is the evidence to back that up?

Mr LONGLEY: Are you referring to assisted boarding houses or general boarding houses?

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Assisted boarding houses.

Mr LONGLEY: There are none in the system.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: That is what I said earlier. I am informed that we do not have any children in assisted boarding houses. There are, of course, children in general boarding houses. But if you are asking about assisted boarding houses there are no children. Obviously Ageing, Disability and Home Care has worked very hard to ensure that accommodation has been found for them. If you are asking me to pass a regulation that completely prohibits any child being in any general boarding house, my answer is that I would need to examine all the facts and circumstances that apply. I would be concerned, and whether I have any evidence to date is irrelevant, if I brought in a regulation that had an adverse effect on what currently stands. I want to ensure that I do not create a problem.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: There is no regulation that excludes them from assisted boarding houses. Is that correct?

Mr LONGLEY: There is the requirement, however, that they be notified immediately or within a very short period of time. That is the point where Ageing, Disability and Home Care would actively come into play. We would liaise with our colleagues in other parts of the broader Department of Family and Community Services and, indeed, other agencies across government. Remember, of course, that under the age of 18, whilst legally a minor and hence required to be notified, we may be looking at someone who is 17½ who is fully capable of making their own decisions and that is what they are deciding to do. The principle that we are all moving towards is empowerment of people with disabilities.

By contrast, it might be someone who is in a very different situation. That is why it needs to be done on a case-by-case basis. Having a blanket exclusion might create issues. Someone who is 17½ with a physical disability might intellectually be fully capable of doing exactly what they want, and that is what they want. I think as a society we have some requirement to respect those sorts of decisions. There is that requirement and we would certainly take it very seriously in making those case-by-case assessments. In fact, there is a requirement to notify immediately if they believe there is a child under the age of 16 who is living away from home.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Why are the minimum standards for assisted boarding houses not the same as the new minimum standards under the State environmental planning policy for affordable rental housing?

Mr LONGLEY: The State environmental planning policy for affordable housing covers a broader range of housing types. Boarding houses, of course, are quite a specific type. They were the subject of very extensive consultations across the community, so it was a very active process. Those regulations have been formulated with them in mind. They would have been done bearing in mind the other requirements of government. If there are any particular differences that you want to highlight, I am happy to look at those further on notice.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I will put them on notice. Minister, how much money has your Government spent on Living Life My Way seminars that were held to explain the benefits of individualised funding?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: The New South Wales Government continues to demonstrate its commitment to increasing choice and control for people with disability through individualised funding arrangements. On 3 July 2013 the Government released the Living Life My Way framework, which will guide the expansion of opportunities for people to exercise choice and control over their supports as New South Wales transitions to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The framework reaffirms the commitment of New South Wales to increasing individualised funding arrangements for people with a disability and details how it will achieve that.

The commitment is reflecting the fact that New South Wales successfully negotiated with the Commonwealth Government to become the first State to agree to fully implement the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This State will contribute \$3.1 billion a year from 2018-19, along with the Commonwealth's investment of \$3.3 billion. Simple mathematics tells us that that is a total funding of \$6.4 billion. As the National Disability Insurance Scheme launched in the Hunter progresses, the Government will continue to implement a Stronger Together 2 reform, including self-directed supports, individualised funding arrangements et cetera.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: My question referred to the amount of money spent. Would you answer that part of the question?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am happy to take that on notice and provide the specific amount.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Despite the former Minister reiterating his commitment to the Stronger Together 2 promise to be able to convert the value of current services into rollout portable, individualised packages by 2014, well after the National Disability Insurance Scheme was announced your Government appeared to back out of that commitment with a statement on the website of the Ageing, Disability and Home Care that, "the date of July 2014 is now redundant with the NDIS agreement." Will you explain why? Do you appreciate the community concern because the expectations of people with disability, their carers and family had been built up through the seminars and then you walked away from it?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Certain key performance indicators were given for the State and the Commonwealth and imposed by the Commonwealth. This Government is on target and in many areas ahead of target. The scheme is approximately eight weeks old. There have been continual changes from what I call slight teething problems in negotiations between the State and Commonwealth. As soon as those problems are brought to our attention they are looked at, dealt with and rectified, and the system is changed. In many respects the impression I have gained is that they have no fear or apprehension about the National Disability Insurance Scheme but are very keen to move that way. I will now hand over to Mr Longley.

Mr LONGLEY: It is significant to note that Family Advocacy released a statement on 12 June claiming that the New South Wales Government had backed away from its promises and was not going to deliver choice and control for people who want that flexibility in the lead-up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Family Advocacy took that view without clarifying the approach being taken to individualised funding in New South Wales by the New South Wales Government. Our concern is that the message from Family Advocacy would unnecessarily confuse and disappoint people with disability who were preparing to take that step to realise their ambitions for choice and control. The department has been open with Family Advocacy and publicly about the implications of the National Disability Insurance Scheme agreement.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: The statement that "the date of July 2014 is now redundant with the NDIS agreement" was on the website after you had gone out to the community, particularly to people with disability and carers. I would like an answer to that statement.

Mr LONGLEY: That is with regard to the specific date but our commitment to individualisation of funding remains as strong as it has ever been but it will now bring that into alignment with the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The Minister released a statement on 14 June to reaffirm the New South Wales Government's commitment to increasing opportunities for individualisation and those individualised funding agreements. So that is the significant element with regard to that. So we are still doing that work.

But we are not doing a lot of big investment in individualised systems that would then be redundant within only a few years because of the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS]. So that is the only thing that we are not proceeding to do. But in fact we are still proceeding to take expressions of interest from people who want to move to individualised funding—so we are still doing that. The percentage of people who are moving to individualised funding is still increasing because we are committed to individualised funding. So all of that is still there. The only thing that has changed is that date—it has become redundant because of the NDIS. So there is no reduction in our commitment to individualisation; it is just that it has been aligned with the NDIS.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Minister, as you would be aware, earlier this year the Legislative Council passed a motion calling on the Government to consider lowering the age to access the Seniors Card to 45 years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Can you provide the Committee with an update on that?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Certainly. I take this opportunity to note all the hard work that is being done in this area by the Hon. Jan Barham. I am advised that the Office for Ageing is considering the idea. I am awaiting a report on that. I am happy to report back to you on that.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: I have some questions about the NSW Elder Abuse Helpline, which is operated and managed by Catholic Community Services. I am informed that more than 7,000 clients are being managed. Can you advise on the protocols around situations where abuse might be reported that involves Catholic Community Services?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Thank you for that question. Elder abuse is a massive problem. Elder abuse stems from myriad complex social issues, and instances of abuse can seriously reduce wellbeing and undermine confidence. For example, bullying of older people can occur. We call that elder abuse. On coming to Government, the Liberal-Nationals Government tackled this problem head-on and launched the NSW Elder Abuse Helpline. The New South Wales Government delivered on its commitment to protect older people as part of its ageing strategy. I am proud to say that New South Wales now has the NSW Elder Abuse Helpline taking calls. The helpline was a key priority identified in the NSW Ageing Strategy and provides an outlet for seniors who are suffering in silence.

The NSW Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit commenced operation in February 2013. According to the Australian Institute of Criminology, as many as 50,000 people aged 65 and over in New South Wales have experienced some form of abuse or neglect, whether it is physical, psychological or financial. The new helpline will provide practical assistance to older people, family members, and frontline service and support staff. The NSW Elder Abuse Helpline is a statewide service to the community. It is a free call to 1800 628 221. I recommend that anyone who needs any support contact that helpline.

The helpline will provide practical guidance and advice to older people living in the community—including information about how to appoint or change a power of attorney; information about how to speak to Centrelink or their bank if they are concerned about financial abuse; and information about in which circumstances they should contact the police. As a solicitor for many years, this was an area of practice that always concerned me. I was well aware of what occurred in this area. I practised extensively with the NSW Trustee and Guardian and the Guardianship Tribunal of New South Wales. So this is an area I take very seriously and will always monitor.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Is Ageing, Disability and Home Care [ADHC] able to review those complaints? Are you advised of the number of complaints received annually and can you inform us of that?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Mr Longley will answer with those specific details. If he cannot provide that information we will take the question on notice.

Mr LONGLEY: We collate the information from the elder abuse hotline. As at 30 June 2013, the unit had received 285 calls. Of the 285 calls, 208 were directly related to abuse situations and 77 were requests from service providers for community presentations. Current call data reflects trends identified by other States and Territories, probably as you would expect. Calls primarily relate to financial abuse, followed by psychological abuse and neglect. Sons, daughters and spouses were identified as primarily responsible for the abuse and older women, aged 75 to 84 years, were most at risk of abuse. We have a second phase of development for this project.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Is there a budget for promotion to advise people that that service is available? How do you let people know that the service is available?

Mr LONGLEY: The elder abuse hotline is well promulgated through a lot of the aged care organisations, including both peak bodies and community groups. It is a very well-publicised hotline number. Every now and again there is a bit of an advertising campaign. The number is pretty well known. It is in the phone book and is accessible, but we do periodically, as we meet with people in different community groups, talk about that hotline.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: I am particularly concerned about people who are already isolated and therefore at risk.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: You are absolutely correct to raise that issue. From my own personal experience, I discovered that in this area community and friends are vital in bringing the information to the relevant authorities—whether it be Ageing, Disability and Home Care, the Department of Family and Community Services [FACS], or the police. That is the message we are getting out, and that is also the message of the helpline. This hotline is not just for the people who are suffering abuse but also for people to report issues if they suspect that elder abuse is occurring. This issue really requires a whole-of-community approach. Again, I congratulate you, Hon. Jan Barham, because I know the amount of work you have done in this area.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: I am particularly interested in employment strategies for older people. The strategy refers to supporting opportunities for older people. Do you have anything specific in place at the moment?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: That is a terrific question. My mother is 83 years of age. The first thing she said to me after she congratulated me on becoming a Minister was could she have a job. She was absolutely convinced that I would be able to give her one. That just shows how serious this issue is. People of all ages want to work.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: And it shows how valuable they are.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Yes, it shows how valuable they are and how much they have to contribute. People who reach the age of 65 today, we are all pleased to know, will live longer than those of any generation before them. Most people will be healthy and active for the majority of those years. That means they will be able and expect to be an active part of their communities, neighbourhoods and workplaces. More and more people are making the choice to stay in work longer. In the 10 years to 2012, the number of people over the age of 55 in the workforce increased from 24 per cent to 34 per cent—that is a 10 per cent increase. Many older people tell us that they would like to work more. There are many benefits to staying in work, beyond just collecting a pay packet. Older people tell us that there are many barriers to them staying in the workforce. Clearly, as the Minister for Ageing one of the things I want to do, and want to ensure that the department is doing, is knock these barriers down. That is the answer to this issue in its shortest form.

We have a number of strategies, including working with employers to promote age-friendly employment practices; using changes in the vocational education system to improve the skills of mature-age workers; and reviewing whether New South Wales laws impact on workforce participation. We also need to work with businesses across New South Wales. Government departments, whether Federal or State, need to be major players in employment in this area. Earlier this year the NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing [MACA] convened a forum, together with Global Access Partners, which focused on mature-age employment. I have had an opportunity to meet with MACA, and this area is one of their key priorities. A number of large employers were represented at that forum. They identified shifts that need to occur in order to see more older

people in the workforce. Before I entered Parliament two employees in my firm were over 65, and they were the most effective employees I had in that firm.

We are looking at improving these areas for our older people. Finally, there is the issue of education. We also have programs in relation to information technology. I was pleased to read about the take-up of information technology [IT] programs by a number of people. I came here at 50-plus years of age and I had never used a computer. I am now proficient in using a computer because of the information technology training that I received here. We need to move those programs out to the entire community because it changes the whole dynamics of one's eligibility to enter the workforce.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: I return to the Disabilities area. Can you explain about the Industry Development Fund?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am sorry, Ms Barham, I was distracted by the Hon. Trevor Khan, who does not believe I am proficient in computers, and I was not focused on the question. It was rather rude of him to do that to you. Could you please repeat the question?

CHAIR: He did not say how well he operated a computer.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Certainly not proficiently.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: Can you provide a breakdown of the \$25 million that has been allocated under the Industry Development Fund?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Yes, \$17 million was allocated to build the capacity of the specialist disability sector and \$5 million has been made available for future industry development. Some of these key projects are in relation to transition support and workforce development. Career Commonwealth investments are also in this area. If you require further information, I ask that you place it on notice and I would be more than happy to give you more specifics. I do not want to take up the time of the Hon. Paul Green.

CHAIR: What a Minister!

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: And that is why you are a Minister for caring. Responses to the abuse of older people in New South Wales will be overseen by a government committee. Can you inform members what stage the committee is at?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am happy to take that question on notice and come back to you. In fact, I am waiting for a report on that myself.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Are any other initiatives on elder abuse underway at the moment? We just heard about the hotline. What other initiatives does the Government have to deal with this issue?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Again, that is part of the report and briefing that I am yet to obtain. I am informed that the next step, in addition to the hotline, is to increase community awareness. I am pushing that because, as the Hon. Jan Barham has said, it is not sufficient just to have the hotline; we need to get the message out to the community that they need to be actively involved. The department is developing and distributing resources to public and front-line services. It is enhancing technology infrastructure, including access through websites and social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and it is enhancing data collection to identify trends and unmet needs to inform policy decision-making. The steering committee also has responsibility for overseeing the New South Wales policy on elder abuse. It is developing protocols for responsible agencies to respond to elder abuse and identifying future statewide policy direction. From my perspective, it is not sufficient to simply be notified. Being notified at the right time and as promptly as possible is imperative.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: In terms of the NSW Ageing Strategy we note that New South Wales is committed to working with the Australian Government to ensure a positive approach to ageing policy. Given that local councils are best placed to develop and implement initiatives in local communities, how would the New South Wales Government under your administration work with local councils and the Local Government and Shires Associations to plan ahead and work strategically in response to population ageing?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: As the member is aware, I served four years on a council and this was one of the major areas that we also faced at our council. Age-friendly local government grants are a big part of the initiative and 29 local governments were funded in 2012-13 to improve access for older people and plan for population ageing. An allocation of \$600,000 was made to councils across the State to fund a range of projects for development of local ageing strategies, access improvements, pedestrian access, mobility plans and age-friendly exercise equipment.

Two projects have already been completed and both were officially opened on 23 April 2013—Maroubra fitness and exercise equipment, which obtained a grant through Randwick City Council, and Ingleburn Exercise Equipment, which obtained a grant through Campbelltown City Council. Facilitation is also underway for the development of two regional ageing strategies under the Government's regional action plans for 2013—that is for Northern Sydney and the North Coast. Both of those were two-year strategies delivering on the NSW 2021 plan.

The strategies aim to identify population ageing issues and agree on a joint plan of action for each region. Each region is to commence implementation in 2014. Finally, the impact of population ageing on older people's housing choices is an ongoing priority under the Ageing Strategy. In May 2013 the Urban Taskforce conducted a forum on Apartment Living for Seniors. The event was sponsored by the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing to stimulate discussion and innovation about providing flexible accommodation options for people as they age.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: On the question of homelessness among the ageing population, I note that the 2006 census suggests that in New South Wales about 2,200 people over the age of 65 were homeless. Do you have any up-to-date statistics on how many people of that age are now homeless?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: As the honourable member would know, that is under the portfolio area of Minister Goward and is a question best directed to her. I do not have any statistics in relation to that, nor am I responsible for any of those programs unless they come within the disability sector.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: You note that the Ageing Strategy refers to active ageing. Can you inform the Committee on what sorts of practices or strategies you have to ensure that active ageing continues and what sort of budget has been allocated to that, given that prevention is better than cure?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Yes, I am happy to do that. I read some information earlier but I will try to do it from recollection. One of the real concerns one has is that the increase in the number of people aged over 65 in the next 30 years is just extraordinary. As of 30 June 2010, there were 1.02 million people aged 65 and over living in New South Wales. There are 1.9 million people aged between 45 and 64 in New South Wales. The Community Participation, Life Choices and Active Ageing Programs has been created to achieve a number of goals. First, people with disabilities will receive support to participate in activities. Funding is individualised, with the focus being on outcomes. Also, a range of flexible life skills and employment initiatives are being created for those in the ageing bracket to blend day-to-day activities with employment.

I will take the other aspects of that question on notice and come back to you. However, a number of grants have been made and I will be happy to provide those on notice. The grants are: Active Living, \$90,000; Seniors Week, \$27,500; Linking Seniors to Information, \$474,000; My Life, My Decision, relating to legal instruments and the like, \$50,000; and Lifelong Learning Opportunities, \$95,000. I mentioned earlier Local Government and Communities, and the grant for that is \$687,000. Further grants are: Abuse of Older People, \$329,000; Grandparents Day 2013, which we debated in the Chamber, \$250,000; and for research projects, almost \$600,000. This Government takes these initiatives seriously.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: With respect to age-friendly local communities, given the recent summary of your time in local government and the fact that most of us around the table have been in local government, and noting that infrastructure to service the ageing population is going to become a problem because we have to retrofit a lot of things—

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Yes.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: —how will the department assist our ageing population?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Again, one of the grants I mentioned earlier for the local council is to find better methods. There are three stages, as you know. First of all, we have to ensure that every new thing that is built is built appropriately to provide access for the aged and those with a disability. That is an absolute priority. The second priority is looking at those areas that can be easily modified, whether they are public or private. There will always be a third area that, regrettably and, unfortunately can never be modified or retrofitted because of heritage aspects or simply because of the costs involved.

One has to find alternate arrangements in relation to assist both the aged and the disabled. As you know, the Government has increased funding enormously for public transport to roll out easy access upgrades to trains, stations and platforms as quickly as possible to assist the elderly and those with a disability. Finally, to assist councils in developing and implementing plans for older people, as I said earlier, there have been individual grants made of anywhere from \$25,000 up to \$60,000. Councils will have a big role to play in this.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I would ask the Minister how many grants have been expanded, but I only have seconds remaining.

CHAIR: The Minister could take it on notice.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Mr Green, you can submit questions on notice. If you need any further information please feel free to send those questions on notice.

CHAIR: Minister, I thank you and your officers for your attendance at this hearing this morning.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I also thank the Committee members, the Secretariat and Hansard.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.
