

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 2

Monday 23 October 2006

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

AGEING, DISABILITY SERVICES

The Committee met at 3.00 p.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. Robyn Parker (Chair)

The Hon. A. Catanzariti
The Hon. A. Chesterfield-Evans
Ms S. P. Hale

The Hon. M. J. Pavey
The Hon. C. M. Robertson
The Hon. H. S. Tsang

Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

Mr B. O'Reilly, *Director General*
Ms C. Mills, *Deputy Director General*
Ms E. McAlpine, *Deputy Director General*
Mr J. Christian, *Regional Director, Southern Region*

CHAIR: I welcome you to the supplementary hearing inquiry into budget estimates. Thank you for returning to answer questions. I will go through some procedural matters in terms of broadcasting. In accordance with the Legislative Council guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings, only the members of the Committee and witnesses may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photographs. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee the media must take responsibility for what they publish or what interpretation they place on anything that is said before the Committee. There are guidelines on the broadcast on proceedings by the door.

Any messages from the public gallery are to be delivered through the Chamber support staff. Please turn off mobile phones. The committee has met and determined that the return of questions on notice that may be requested today by 9 November.

I declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Ageing, and Disability Services open for examination.

BRENDAN O'REILLY, CAROL MILLS, and ETHEL McALPINE, on former oath:

JAMES ALEXANDER CHRISTIAN, Regional Director, Southern Region, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Does anyone wish to make an opening statement?

Mr O'REILLY: No.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Has the Chair informed you that the Committee is proposing to spend approximately one hour on Nardy House—as the Committee considers Hardy House to be such an important issue—and then some time on some other issues. Recently, I received a letter dated 20 October which appears to have been sent by the Department of Ageing and Disability to Nardy House Committee, making what appears to be a further overture to the Nardy House Committee with regard to the department becoming some sort of mentor or partner with that agency in the future. Will you explain what was meant by the letter and what you expect to happen as a result of that offer that was made as late as 20 October?

Mr O'REILLY: Basically, over the past 24 months we have had a very large number of meetings and exchange of correspondence in an attempt to come to a solution that is satisfactory to both parties for the operation of Nardy House. One of those solutions that we understood Nardy House was considering was the suggestion we made about partnering another non-government organisation because the committee—and I must say the committee has done an enormous amount of work to try to get Nardy House up and running—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Which committee?

Mr O'REILLY: The Nardy House Committee. Equally, I think the department has attempted to work through a range of issues about the operations of Nardy House, rather than it being people with the best of intentions who have demonstrated that they have a very strong willingness to provide support and care with people with disabilities, but, nevertheless, we do not allocate funding direct to organisations without a track record. We normally go to expressions of interest. So we made a suggestion that perhaps if they partnered with another provider that had a proven track record, that would be one way to be able to start the process of opening Nardy House. The organisation was the Cram Foundation, but at the eleventh hour they elected not to be a formal partner in that arrangement, so it was back to square one. Given that the—

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I am sorry for interrupting. Are you saying it was the Cram Foundation or the Nardy House Foundation Committee that elected not to be part of the arrangement?

Mr O'REILLY: The Cram Foundation advised officially that it would not be a partner. It would provide assistance and support, but would not be a formal partner.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Was it not the fact that you wanted to funnel the money through the Cram Foundation?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Surely that is not the same thing as being a partner. If the foundation is a conduit for money, that is a completely different issue, is it not?

Mr O'REILLY: No, I do not think so. A lot of organisations—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But if I said you had a partner, would you say, "They are not a partner if they are the one that gets all the money"? That is what you are saying; that the Cram Foundation did not want to take the money, and then presumably dole some of it back to Nardy House. You are saying they were not a partner because they were not going to take the money, but that is a very narrow definition of a partner, surely. They needed a mentor to give them some advice, but that is a different thing from having the money funnelled through them, surely.

Mr O'REILLY: The money that would be allocated would be used for Nardy House. It would not be—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Then why would you want to pay it to the Cram Foundation rather than to Nardy House?

Mr O'REILLY: Because Nardy House is not a provider of disability services; it has no track record. What we did—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Well, they have got a house, and they have got a plan, they have got a budget, and they have got a mentor to give them a bit of advice. Why are you jibbing at the nature of that partnership?

Mr O'REILLY: Because that is not our practice under procurement. We just don't do that.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But it was not specified, when that arrangement between Nardy House and the Cram Foundation was set up, that the money would all be funnelled through the Cram Foundation, was it?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes, it was.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Was the deal: You have to have a mentor who takes all the money?

Mr O'REILLY: No. It was always that the partner with the track record would be the ones who received the funding.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Was that made clear? I don't think it was.

Mr O'REILLY: I might, on that, pass to Mr Chris, who has been handling it at the local level with the correspondence. But can I just say—in answer to your question, Mr Ryan—that when that fell through we said: Okay, if we cannot find another provider to act as that partner in the partnership arrangement, that letter stated that the department would. We would actually step in those shoes, we work with Nardy House over the next two to three years, to be able to get an established arrangement, and we would work from there. That was an attempt to open Nardy House.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Isn't this you becoming both the provider and the funder? Was there not supposed to be a provider/funder gap, and the department was supposed to get out a direct provision of service?

Mr O'REILLY: We run hundreds of services, which we fund, and—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Have you ever had a budget for Nardy House—because it would seem that Nardy House people do not believe that you have a budget to actually run the show, that they have never seen one, and you have never offered them one? Where are your bona fides in this?

Mr O'REILLY: We will to the records for you, if you like, to show our bona fides in all of this.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you have a budget to run Nardy House?

Mr O'REILLY: We do have a budget for Nardy House.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can we see it?

Mr O'REILLY: I can show you the financial spreadsheet where Nardy House is documented for the amount of money for Nardy House, yes. I can show you that.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: No. I am saying: If you were running Nardy House, where would you spend the money? What would you spend it on? They have a budget for a million dollars, I gather, to run the show.

Mr O'REILLY: No. And we never agreed to a million dollars, ever.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: No. They are saying it costs a million dollars, are they not?

CHAIR: Mr Ryan has asked a question. Can we deal with the questions logically?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I was after an update as to where we were with this. Obviously, the letter of the 20th that I have seen, you have indicated, is the way it stands now. If the department is a partner to Nardy House, I do not quite understand how the department can fund Nardy House as a partner, in a partnership. I must say some of that questioning was quite useful; I did not realise about the Cram arrangement. For example, when the department offered an amount of roughly \$400,000, did the department always intend to pay that to Cram House, to be given to Nardy House? I must say that all previous correspondence that I have read seems to indicate that you were going to direct block fund Nardy House with \$400,000. Is that not the case?

Mr O'REILLY: We were not going to direct allocate. What we wanted to do was recognise that Nardy House Committee did not have the background or the experience in providing paid support care for people with respite. So we were going to partner with an organisation that did. That having fallen off the table at the eleventh hour, we then said: Okay, we will do it with you.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: When the department made the offer of \$400,000, was it always understood that that money was never going to be paid as a block grant to Nardy House, that it was always going to be paid as a grant to Cram, to enable Nardy House to fund its operations, I imagine through the cheque books of Cram House? Was that always the intention from the outset?

Mr O'REILLY: If I could, I will pass over to Mr Christian.

CHAIR: Before you do that, could you explain to me whether that is an auspicing arrangement? Is that how Cram would operate the service?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr CHRISTIAN: Just for the record, the words that we have used in relation to the Cram Foundation's formal partnership with the Nardy House Management Committee is a consortium, or a joint venture, whereas as a licensed provider, currently providing similar services to those proposed by the Nardy House Management Committee from the facility, Cram would be formally accountable for the service delivery over a number of years while the Nardy House Management Committee developed its skills and demonstrated its ability to provide those particular services.

By way of record, there are minutes from a meeting actually taken by a minute taker brought along to a meeting by the Nardy House Management Committee representative, Denise Redmond, and held on 17 March this year, where Denise Redmond, the Nardy House representative, is quoted as saying, in her view:

A consortium bid means Nardy House operates under Cram for the first three years, then moves to its own licence.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: So, on the face of it, it looks like they understood that to be the case. Was that the \$400,000 or the administrator arrangement? I think there have been a few iterations of the relationship. First of all, I think they were going to have an administrator and some support staff; and then they were basically going to be funded by people using their packages; and then there

was the \$400,000 version, which seemed to go through a series of different descriptions, such as \$400,000 for six months and so on. Was the administrator also going to be direct block funded to Nardy House, or was that also going to go through Cram?

Mr CHRISTIAN: The history really is that numerous offers, in writing and verbally, were made to the Nardy House Management Committee over a considerable period of time for direct allocation of funds within the amount allowable by the Department without going to tender, for the provision of the respite co-ordination. That was for the employment of someone and some administrative support to co-ordinate respite through the facility. Under that arrangement, we would marshal existing, as well as any additional resources—that is, resources already allocated to providers in the Bega Valley who have also consistently said that they would be interested in accessing the facility, and that they would work with the committee. That direct offer was rejected on at least three or four occasions by the Nardy House Management Committee. We then shifted to looking at the possibility that, if Nardy could identify a formal partner with proven track record experience, it could participate in a tender or expression of interest. However, after a period of time where we had met with an interested provider, an experienced provider, and the Nardy House Management Committee that interested provider indicated that it was not prepared to work, or was not able to work, in a formal partnership in the way in which we discussed at least on one occasion at the meeting on 17 March, for which I have minutes, if you want copies of them—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes, we do.

Mr CHRISTIAN: —where they clearly understood what their role would be. Again, the preferred provider withdrew and indicated that they would provide a consultancy-type role. That meant that we could not proceed to an EOI because of the lack of a formal partner.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: When did the Cram Foundation withdraw?

Mr CHRISTIAN: I have the details here. I will just need to read through this and find them.

CHAIR: For the benefit of the Committee, did you say you would table those minutes?

Mr CHRISTIAN: Yes.

CHAIR: Would you like to do that now?

Mr CHRISTIAN: Well—

CHAIR: If you are using them, we can leave them with you.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: We can leave that until later. All we need is your agreement.

Mr CHRISTIAN: Okay. I will hold on to them for now. I can say that, on 18 May I wrote to the Nardy House Management Committee in response to a letter it sent to me on 1 May indicating that the committee could not move forward until the tendering process had commenced; and at that point the department was informed that their preferred partner, the Cram Foundation, had declined to formally partner with the committee. In that letter to them on 18 May I indicated that this place to the Nardy House Management Committee in a position where they needed to carefully consider whether they could satisfy the requirement of demonstrating a track record of service delivery.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Was the Cram Foundation present at that meeting you referred to earlier?

Mr CHRISTIAN: Yes, they were represented.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: In that meeting it was clear to all parties what was going to be expected of the Cram Foundation and, from what you have said so far, it looks as though in some way or other there has been further correspondence between the Cram foundation and the Nardy House Management Committee, and the Cram foundation has withdrawn; and the department found out about it from the Nardy House Management Committee some time in May. Would it be right?

Mr CHRISTIAN: We certainly found out—that was one avenue, but we did receive a letter from the Cram Foundation around the same time.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: By May it was obvious that they did not have a joint partner?

Mr CHRISTIAN: That would be right.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I note that less than a month ago the Minister announced that the offer of \$400,000 had been withdrawn. I imagine that from May until that time, the offer of \$400,000 was still available. What was the status of the offer then?

Mr CHRISTIAN: Just for the record, I have located the date of the letter. It was 21 April that we received advice directly from the Cram Foundation.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: From 21 April until, as I said, about two or three weeks ago when the Minister issued a media release, what was the status of the funding offer to Nardy House?

Mr CHRISTIAN: There were several further offers made to the Nardy House Management Committee for the respite co-ordination function.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: It would seem that by the time the Estimates Committee was asking questions of DADHC, the circumstances already existed that the Nardy House Management Committee was unable to take up that funding offer at all, because there was no partner. I must say that I left the Estimates Committee hearing with the expectation that all the Nardy House Management Committee had to do was put up their hands and \$400,000 was available. I did not understand, when we left the Estimates Committee hearing that they not only had to put up their hands and say, "We will agree," but they also had to find another partner, other than the Cram Foundation, who would be prepared to take the money and administer it for them.

Mr CHRISTIAN: They were the two key avenues, yes. There was a direct offer on the table for the respite co-ordination, the administration, and that could be taken up at any time—including now; the money is still available. The second part was in the event that Nardy House was able to find a suitable formal partner—of which the Cram foundation was one consideration. We did, on a number of occasions as well, indicate to the Nardy House Management Committee that there might be other suitable providers prepare to partner with them, including in their local area. There are at least two existing services that are funded by DADHC for either accommodation or respite in the Bega Valley, and have a demonstrated track history.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Could you explain to the Committee where they are? Are they in Bega centrally or in other country towns nearby?

Mr CHRISTIAN: They are in Bega central. There is Tulgeen, which is a significant provider of accommodation services at present in Bega township. There is also Respite Care Bega Valley, which is also a local organisation currently providing a range of flexible respite options for people in the area.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How many beds are available in Tulgeen? There are usually seven or five beds. Is it much more than that?

Mr CHRISTIAN: They are funded for a number of group homes. I would have to get the exact number of bids for you. I can take that on notice.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Does Respite Care Bega Valley have beds also?

Mr CHRISTIAN: They have a centre-based facility that works in a very innovative way, where people from both in the Bega district or Bega Valley area, as well as out of the area, can book a time and a place, called the "Holiday House". They do have a centre-based respite facility and it is currently booked up well in advance. It is a very well-utilised service, as well.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So they are running a bed system. It is that right?

Mr CHRISTIAN: They are running a centre-based facility, yes, but it is run differently to the way in which the Nardy House Management Committee wants to run its facility.

CHAIR: If the Hon. John Ryan could complete this line of questioning, perhaps we could move on

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That has clarified some things, for me at least, in understanding the relationship between Nardy House and the department. I want to ensure that other members of the Committee have an opportunity to ask questions, but there are two other things I want to ask about. There has obviously been the vexed question of what is an appropriate amount of funding for Nardy House. I understand that one of the funding offers was for an amount, \$400,000, which would have funded Nardy House for a period of approximately six months. That would seem to be not far from the bid that Nardy House has made, saying that it would be appropriate to fund a facility such as it was planning to run—which was a seven-bed respite facility for people with high support needs—of \$1 million. The other area that the Nardy House Management Committee raised with me, which they believed was relevant to whether or not it ought to be \$1 million, was that a similar facility operated by the department would cost, in terms of staff, \$1 million.

They provided the Committee with the schedule, although I do not have it with me today, indicating the sort of way in which you would have to schedule staff, such as the number of staff you would require to run something for seven days. Put against the appropriate award, it seemed to come out to approximately \$1 million. What is an appropriate amount of money to run an establishment, whether it is Nardy House or the department, that is a seven-bed facility for clients with very high support needs, staffed around the clock on a 24-hour basis, probably with two wait staff right throughout the time? How much money would you need to fund the organisation? I imagine that with seven beds you would be looking at up to three or four staff at various times of the day. What would that cost?

Mr CHRISTIAN: Can I make just one observation? The Nardy House committee requested funding for six beds, which is all that the facility can cater to. The department's offer of funding or model was actually presented to the Bega Valley Respite Co-ordination Group which is a group that advises the department locally on respite issues. It is represented by service users as well as service providers. On 12 August 2005, I, along with another departmental official, went to Bega and presented the models that we were talking about. There were variations on the models, six different models, from memory.

During the course of our presentation, where there were initially Nardy House committee representatives, we presented the staffing proposals and the costings that go with those proposals. Unfortunately, the Nardy House committee representatives prematurely withdrew themselves from that meeting when the topic of respite co-ordination arose in the sense that there would be a requirement, for any one of those models presented, for there to be co-ordination about the respite services in the Bega Valley.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I am a little lost as to how that is an answer to what is an appropriate amount of money to run a six-bed around-the-clock respite facility.

Mr CHRISTIAN: Okay.

Mr O'REILLY: If I could: By rule of thumb, roughly for 24/7 care for a client, it ranges between approximately \$100,000 to \$120, 000, rule of thumb, per client.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Per year?

Mr O'REILLY: Per year, per client.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So six by \$120,000 is \$900,000.

Mr O'REILLY: It is \$720,000.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So the magic number is \$720,000. You reckon you can run a six bed facility—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: He said "rule of thumb".

Mr O'REILLY: Rule of thumb, but do not forget that that is 24/7, 365 days.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That is what they are talking about.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you reckon you can do it for \$720,000?

Mr O'REILLY: What we are saying is that we also want to co-ordinate across the Bega Valley. If the families say, "I want some respite"—say it is Tulgeen, for instance—and it is booked out, they can access Nardy House when there is a vacancy available, and that is the problem. We were not allowed to do that.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I do not understand how that changes the budget. If you are running Nardy House in the configuration they have requested, you are saying it would probably cost about \$750,000 if they had six clients boarding all at the one time on a 24-hour basis.

Mr O'REILLY: Yes, but the offer was always for clients and the other two would be brokered from other sources, so if Tulgeen had full capacity, they could move one of their clients.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: What they wanted Nardy House to do is to keep two vacancies available, which would be funded when needed.

Mr O'REILLY: That is right.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The other two vacancies?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: So that obviously would buy something that would cost a little less.

Mr O'REILLY: That is right.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The other thing that occurred to me generally is that you realise that the original proposal by the Nardy House committee was to use a facility located at Quaama for permanent accommodation.

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: In fact, that was what originally drove them to having that interest. Then it would appear that at some stage or other, during the time when Mrs Lo' Po was the Minister—I am not saying that she did this but it happened during the time that she was Minister—they were sort of diverted onto this other exploration of looking at respite as a possibility. For example, they build a facility which they now believe is to be used for respite, but what they really wanted was a facility to be used for permanent accommodation. Has the department ever looked at using Nardy House as permanent accommodation for all five clients, using it just as a group home and funding, in that fashion? That is what they wanted in the first place. I concede there may be some difficulties in using a place located at Quaama as respite but, as permanent accommodation, it may well suit five or six clients quite neatly. Have you ever explored that as a possibility, given what they wanted in the first place, instead of this exercise in respite? I do not imagine that a respite facility looks enormously different from a group home in terms of its physical structure.

Mr CHRISTIAN: We have sought advice from Nardy House on the possibility of using the facility as permanent accommodation. Their advice is that their trust deed does not permit it. It explicitly excludes permanent accommodation.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I think the trust deed was something designed by the department. Essentially what happened is that that was the purpose for which the place was funded by the department. Surely the department said it was willing to use it differently and that the trust deed is capable of being changed. Has that been explained to you?

Mr O'REILLY: I do not think anyone here was around in the very early days of all of this, but we would have to check out this trust deed and whether or not the department has the right, in consultation with the Nardy House committee. We would still have the issue though of how it is managed.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Of course. I have no doubt about that. The final question I want to ask you relates to what a relationship that the department is proposing with Nardy House will look like. What will the Nardy House committee do and what will the department do? I imagine that the employees, with the proposal you have in place for Nardy House, would be employees of the Department of Ageing, Disability Services and Home Care [DADHC].

Mr O'REILLY: Yes, they would be.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Basically what DADHC would be doing is taking over the management, using Nardy House committee as something of a management committee to provide support and advice. Is that correct?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The budget would be entirely a matter for the department. It would fund whatever was necessary. I take it the proposal that the department is still looking at is that there would be four permanent beds and two left vacant to be used as needed on a brokerage basis. Is that what you have in mind?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes, but we would not called them permanent beds. Under the arrangements, it is respite beds.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Yes, but there would be four beds.

Mr O'REILLY: Four beds, yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: They would be permanently operational as respite.

Mr O'REILLY: That is right.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: They would be filled by the management of Nardy House.

Mr O'REILLY: And two.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: There would be other people able to buy additional beds. The other two would be basically left. I guess there would be one or two bedrooms left largely vacant for other people in the Bega district to use on the basis that they pay for them out of their budget, or the client has brought their budget with them.

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That would be how they would be filled with additional staff. What would you imagine the staffing compliment would be to maintain four beds? I imagine you would not imagine that Nardy House would have any less than two staff on duty at all times.

Mr O'REILLY: We do not run any facilities that have two people on duty at night. We have one, but we do not have two people on at night.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: No facility of the department operates on high support needs and has two wait staff.

Mr O'REILLY: No. That is right, unless it was for a particular period—say, a one-month period for a new client with behavioural requirements, until they settle in.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Would you normally have sleepover staff at the same time?

Mr O'REILLY: No. We do not have sleepovers.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: So any DADHC-run facility at night-time usually only has one member of staff supervising.

Mr O'REILLY: That is right.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Of course I imagine there would be a manager in addition to the staff. Would there be a manager, or would they be part of the team?

Mr O'REILLY: The existing staff. We have got network managers who are responsible for the management side of the homes. That would just be added into the southern region's management structure.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Okay. You would not be employing additional management staff?

Mr O'REILLY: No.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: It would be the team leaders who are employed by DADHC already.

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Within the Bega region.

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The only other question that arises is based on the Minister stating in this press release that funding that had been originally offered to Nardy House was going to be distributed within the Bega district and surrounds as flexible respite packages. If you were to enter into this arrangement, where will the money come from, given that apparently it has been distributed to 50 other families?

Mr O'REILLY: We are very keen to get Nardy House open. We have allocated respite packages. We have reserved the \$450,000 for when we finally can broker a solution with Nardy House.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: So the Minister's press release is somewhat inaccurate, do you think?

Mr O'REILLY: There is a crying need for respite in the Bega Valley and surrounding areas. We have been trying to broker this for so long. The parents and some other providers were saying, "Just get on with it and do it. Get the packages out." The Minister said, "We have waited long enough. Put the packages out. Solve that problem. We will go back to Nardy House and see if we can negotiate a settlement satisfactory to both parties."

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is there still a need in the Bega Valley for additional respite over and above those flexible respite packages?

Mr O'REILLY: James has the figures on the respite packages we have handed out.

Mr CHRISTIAN: At close of business on Friday 20 October 34 families have applied for a package of \$8,000 per package. Of those, 20 have been recommended as eligible. So it has been a very well received initiative. In terms of the funding and the rollout of that funding, of course, we look at the financial year and what is left of the financial year. There might be some slippage in terms of what we can do to get the Nardy House facility open if the Nardy House Management Committee were to say that they were prepared to formally partner in the same sort of arrangement or way that they had previously agreed to partner with the CRAM Foundation. All we are doing is supplementing the partnership arrangement. As Brendan has indicated, funding is available for that initiative.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How long would it take to get that initiative started? Would you have to wait until the beginning of another financial year before you could get started?

Mr O'REILLY: No.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: There is funding available in this budget?

Mr O'REILLY: Funding is available now.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Notwithstanding the distribution of the respite packages?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You do have that money. Was the Minister's statement that the \$400,000 had been given away just a ploy to frighten the Nardy House people?

Mr O'REILLY: I do not believe so. I believe it was put out because the families are saying they want packages, they want respite, they are in need of it.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The suggestion was that the money from Nardy House had been given out as packages, was it not?

Mr O'REILLY: That is right.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That was the suggestion?

Mr O'REILLY: That is right.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That is not the case, is that correct?

Mr O'REILLY: We have reserved funding to be able to broker a deal with Nardy House.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Why was there a statement that the money had been given away?

Mr O'REILLY: Because we have been able to advise the Minister that we have now reserved funding to be able to continue—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So the Minister was ill-advised at the time?

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: There was a new addition of funding found.

Mr O'REILLY: We did not misadvise the Minister.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Why did the Minister say the money had been given away?

Mr O'REILLY: Because at that time the money had been put through the system. We then said we are still going to be stuck with Nardy House, we have to find a solution for this. We have been able to work through a whole range of slippages across the financial year.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: And you found the money?

Mr O'REILLY: The bottom line is that you plan for a set number of staff to be employed by day one. You may not be able to recruit on the day you thought. You have factored for them, that is the funding you use.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You said rule of thumb was \$120,000 per person per year?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you would expect Nardy House's budget to be \$720,000? Have you ever produced a budget on how Nardy House would be funded on \$720,000?

Mr O'REILLY: No, I did not say they would get \$720,000. It was always four beds, not six.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Four beds at \$120,000 each year is \$480,000. You say the show can be run on \$480,000 for four beds?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes, rule of thumb, \$480,000. We have got \$450,000 reserved. We are now into October for this financial year.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can you show Nardy House a budget where you can run a four-bed unit for 20 weeks, or are you talking full time?

Mr CHRISTIAN: We are talking about full time. We have offered previously to present the model to Nardy House, including to the respite co-ordination group back in August 2005 where we did present the detailed costings to enable us to run a service from the Nardy House facility.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: For \$420,000?

Mr CHRISTIAN: The figure at that time was \$492,000. That was allowing for benchmarks or similar staffing levels to other units that we operate. So we benchmarked it. It was also allowing for adjustments for payment of wages under the relevant non-government sector awards. We have never presented a proposal to Nardy House to run the facility at \$1 million or more. That has never been a model that has been presented to the committee.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Nardy House has not asked for a model of \$1 million. It has asked for a model that shows the budget you say you can run it at. Surely that would not be a national secret, would it?

Mr CHRISTIAN: I certainly have not seen correspondence or had communications with the Nardy House committee where they have been open to an invitation that I have given them to sit down and go through the department's costings. I am more than happy to do that.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can you give us a departmental costing that would run the show on that money?

Mr CHRISTIAN: We can.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can you table it now?

Mr CHRISTIAN: I will see whether I have the documents here with me, otherwise I will need to take that on notice.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you say they do exist?

Mr CHRISTIAN: They do exist, yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Documents exist that give the costings to run the show for four people continually on a figure somewhere between \$400,000 and \$500,000?

Mr CHRISTIAN: That is right. I do make the point though very clearly that it is not on the same basis as Nardy House have proposed. I will enter another letter from 7 October 2005, if I can, when on receipt of the Nardy House costing proposals I gave it detailed feedback as to where their costings were inflated and unrealistic. Again, when presented with their proposal we have given them detailed feedback about why \$908,000 or \$1 million-plus is not in the same ballpark figure as the department would generally fund for similar services.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is that available to be tabled?

CHAIR: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Did you have a proposal to run four beds at 20 weeks for \$420,000?

Mr CHRISTIAN: That was a proposal that came about as a result of the meeting that we held with the Bega Valley respite co-ordination group on 12 August 2005. At that stage we were looking at utilising existing money that was in the system for respite. Based on taking those existing funds, our original proposals at that stage were that we could fund the facility for 20 weeks.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It is a big anomaly. It was four beds for 20 weeks for \$420,000. Now you sit here and tell me you could run the whole show for one year with four beds for between \$400,000 and \$500,000. You have managed to get another 32 weeks for virtually nothing.

Mr CHRISTIAN: I am not actually saying that. What I am saying is that at 12 August 2005 the information that Nardy House gleaned from the presentation was about money that was already allocated for respite that could be redirected to open Nardy House at that point in time. The costings, of which there are a number of proposals that we tabled, because they were different staffing structures, all were in the vicinity of \$500,000 for full-year operation. What I am saying is that at that point in time in August 2005 we had identified a source of funds that was already allocated and available to be redirected to opening Nardy House would get the facility open for 20 weeks. Of course, additional money that has been announced more recently by the Minister, the \$400,000 for the 50 respite packages, adds significantly to the ability to marshal those resources to get the facility open.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You have not answered my question. At one point you have got four beds for 20 weeks for \$420,000. You were putting that on the table as a serious proposal. That comes to a budget to run the show of about \$1.6 million if you are running it with six beds. Now you say you can run the whole show for between \$400,000 and \$500,000. Why is there a huge difference in the amount per person per day?

Mr CHRISTIAN: We have never proposed to Nardy House that they run the facility at \$1 million or \$1.6 million.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The \$1.6 million is an extrapolation of your figure, not Nardy House's figure, for four beds for 20 weeks for \$420,000.

Mr CHRISTIAN: It is incorrect to extrapolate it in that way. What we have said is we could operate the facility in the order of \$500,000 per annum. That would be full-year funding costs. At the time the information to Nardy House management committee, which you have referred to several times, was a figure of 20 weeks using existing dollars. So, for example, if we had in 2005-06 allocated to the Bega Valley \$160,000—not that that is the actual figure—we could have operated the facility for the number of weeks that \$160,000 buys on an annual budget of \$500,000. That is the formula.

That is the model that was presented to Nardy House. Again I stress we have never presented a model for \$1 million or \$1.6 million to Nardy House.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Your costings were four beds for \$420,000 for 20 weeks. You seemed to think that was a valid costing. Then when you come up with money for full-time, you seem to manage to run the facility for a whole year with the same amount of money.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: I can understand the explanation perfectly well.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Lucky you, mate.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: Mr Christian has explained it twice and the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans has asked the question a third time. It was clear, it was 20 weeks based on \$500,000 for the whole year. I can understand it.

CHAIR: If it takes the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans longer to understand, he will use up the time that is available to him.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am getting to the bottom of it. Can you explain how you get the extra 32 weeks for practically nothing?

Mr CHRISTIAN: We are not proposing that. Our costings come in at around \$492,000 using appropriate awards, appropriate staffing levels for four beds of respite. At the time we had that particular discussion whether Bega Valley Respite Co-Ordination Group, including for part of the meeting only Nardy House management committee representatives, we were talking about using existing allocated dollars that would enable us to get the facility at that point in time open for at least 20 weeks of the year. That left a residual to try to work through concerning what other dollars were available. Again, that is the way those figures were worked out. We are saying that the facility can be operationalised for \$500,000 per annum.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can you provide those figures? Those existing dollars do not seem as good as future dollars; they seem to be worth only half as much. I would like to see the difference in those figures. How can it be that some dollars are not worth as much as other dollars? Can you give the Committee those two sets of figures?

Mr CHRISTIAN: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am interested in your adequate staff. Do you think that one wake staff with no-one sleeping over is adequate for four to six profoundly disabled people? Is that adequate staffing? Is that the department's position?

Ms McALPINE: It depends. Part of the art of running a respite service is which people to put together. We find that we can run respite for that.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: For profoundly disabled people?

Ms McALPINE: Yes. Not every person with a profound disability has exactly the same needs. Their needs vary and that is part of the art of respite, on how to group the people together. Mr O'Reilly did note that there are times when we do put an extra person on, for a time-limited period and for a specific purpose. It might be someone who has an added physical disability because of an operation and might need a two-person turn during the night for a period. However, it is not our usual practice and, indeed, not the usual practice in other service providers or other jurisdictions, to run houses with two active night staff.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I recognise that is not standard but there are not very many, if any, respite care facilities for profoundly disabled people.

Ms McALPINE: There are many respite centres that service people with quite significant disabilities. We operate a number of them.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are you talking about profound disabilities?

Ms McALPINE: Yes, I am; for people with an IQ of less than 30.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: What about children, would you have normally have two staff on?

Ms McALPINE: Not necessarily. It would depend on the nature of the children and their needs.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: If they were in a child care facility licensed by DOCS, you are not allowed to have the facility operate with caring for children with fewer than two staff.

Ms McALPINE: We usually do not have children under the age of five in respite.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: But you would—

Ms McALPINE: No, DOCS regulations are around child care, and that is for children under school age. There would be very few children who use centre-based respite under the age of seven.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Mr Christian, you have said—

CHAIR: Order! Ms Hale may ask questions.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Wait a minute, hang on. John had 40 minutes, much of which was taken with the literature.

CHAIR: The Coalition had a proportion of the time, during which the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans asked questions. You may finish this question and then the questions will move to Ms Hale.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You said that on the basis of the minutes of the meeting of 17 March that Denise Redmond represented Nardy House and was well aware of the mentoring arrangement that all of the money had to go through Cram House. I put it to you that Nardy House people knew that they had to have a mentor who would give them advice, but certainly did not realise that they had to have a partner through whom the money would be channelled. I put it to you that Cram House did not realise that either, and that is why Cram House pulled out. I put it to you that this is just another obstruction to the way they wanted to do things. The department created a hoop that they wanted them to jump through. What evidence do you have in writing that you made that channelling agreement clear earlier than that?

Mr CHRISTIAN: Earlier than 17 March?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes, that is when you said a remark by Denise Redmond showed that she was aware. I am not sure that she was aware and I am not sure that that remark showed that she was aware either. At what time did you make it clear that any monies had to be channelled through the mentor? I understand that it was called a "mentor" and not a "partner", in the earlier times.

Mr CHRISTIAN: Firstly, I again refer to the minutes that were taken by the Nardy House management committee representatives on 17 March. I am stated as saying that the department would require Cram, if they are Nardy's preferred partner, to be a formal partner, and ultimately accountable for any funding agreement because of their previous history and service delivery.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That is a new statement from you on 17 March?

Mr CHRISTIAN: It is the same meeting that I referred to earlier. I will table that now, if you wish. In addition to that I would be happy to take on notice and provide the Committee with

copies of correspondence that I sent to Denise Redmond prior to the meeting on 17 March, making it clear, of course, that the parties at the meeting were aware of the purpose of the meeting which was to discuss the formal partnering, not a mentoring arrangement, where the requirements for funding would be satisfied.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: They may have seen that as a change in the rules, coming from that meeting, which you had put together. I note that they do not wish to deal with you, in their letter of 23 March; is that because you had put a new spin on the partnering agreement?

Mr O'REILLY: No. I was not at the meeting, but we have just tabled the minutes that the Nardy House committee took, not DADHC.

CHAIR: You have taken on notice a letter, your correspondence. Ms Hale may ask questions.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Was it always clear at Nardy House and Cram that the agreement was that any mentoring or partnership had to go with the funds going through Cram? At what stage was that made clear to the two? Can you show the document that made it clear?

Mr CHRISTIAN: I will answer that by way of the minutes that have been tabled for the Committee as well as taking on notice the letters that were sent to the parties.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Christian, there seems to be some confusion or uncertainty as to what was and what was not understood. I understand that Minister Della Bosca claimed that the initial infrastructure grant to Nardy House was under the innovative joint partnership projects. Is that correct? I understood that Nardy House made two applications; one under the innovative joint partnerships and the other under the flexible respite program. Under which program was the money initially granted to them?

Mr CHRISTIAN: The innovative partnerships program.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Being an innovative partnership, does that not suggest that it was going to be different, it was going to be innovative and, therefore, the department should have been conscious that there was a likelihood of a variation from accepted policies and procedures?

Mr CHRISTIAN: If I could refer the Committee to the section of the funding agreement under which those initial construction dollars were allocated to Nardy House, section 4.2 (2) says that the provider must establish and maintain formal and informal links with other respite service providers to ensure the centre-based respite is one of a total co-ordinated range of services. On that basis the negotiations and the models being prepared by the department were about Nardy House management committee working with a whole range of existing providers, in particular the marshalling of those existing resources to enable the facility to be open. Unfortunately, on a number of occasions, the Nardy House management committee have made it absolutely clear that they will not allow any other service providers access to the facility.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: In what respect did the department see this grant as being innovative? What made it eligible under that innovative joint partnership project? What was the essential difference from what Nardy House was proposing?

Mr CHRISTIAN: Essentially, it meant that a range of partners were involved, one of which was donating land and the other was council indicating that it would support the Nardy House management committee through assistance and in-kind assistance. They were the key points at that point in this proposal being approved.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: When they made the proposal, did they suggest a funding mechanism or what they saw as the ongoing requirements in terms of recurrent funding?

Mr CHRISTIAN: Nardy House's intentions have been made clear to the department on a number of occasions. However, when we go back to the original funding agreement, it was also explicit, I believe, in saying that additional funds would not necessarily be allocated, and that it would be the responsibility of the funded organisation to secure the funding to be able to operate the facility. Of course, that particular aspect became more complicated with the quite non-specific offer of recurrent funding made by the then Minister Faye Lo Po'.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So you are saying that the non-specific nature of the offer of funding has given rise to the subsequent differences in interpretation as to what Nardy House might reasonably expect and what the department is prepared to grant; is that correct?

Mr CHRISTIAN: During my time trying to broker a solution to get the facility open my position has been very consistent. On at least 22 occasions since early 2005 we have either written to or met with the Nardy House management committee to discuss funding models and options. We have tried to provide that clarity.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: The fact that they have been so adamant and prepared to stand out, as it were, despite numerous approaches by the department and whatever, indicates that they must have had a very strong notion of what they were requesting the department to provide at the time. Much of their consistent refusal to agree to the department's wishes comes out of that lack of confluence between their original proposal and what the department now wishes to do.

Mr CHRISTIAN: I do not think I can answer that question entirely, because it depends on what Nardy House perceives and believes to be the agreement or otherwise that it had in terms of getting the facility open. However, we have been very consistent in trying to lead the Nardy House management committee down a pathway that would see the facility open.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: The Minister's press release of 5 October states:

The Iemma Government is distributing 50 new respite packages, each worth approximately \$8,000, to give families a choice of respite services from a selection of approved organisations in the Bega Valley and surrounding areas.

These funds were part of a package rejected by the Nardy House Management Committee.

That \$400,000 was coming out of the funds that were originally to be allocated to Nardy House; is that correct?

Mr CHRISTIAN: Those funds were tied up in the original proposal for respite co-ordination that had been put to the Nardy House management committee, yes.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: The Minister goes on to say:

I again confirm the Government's offer of recurrent funding to employ a full-time coordinator and provide administrative support to allow Nardy House to open and provide respite.

What is your estimate of the cost of the full-time co-ordinator and administrative support? Is that the additional \$400,000?

Mr O'REILLY: The total package is \$500,000. We have handed out \$400,000 in respite packages and we have money aside for the co-ordination model.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How much?

Mr O'REILLY: About \$100,000 or \$110,000.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You said earlier that you had had 34 applications, of which 20 were deemed to be eligible and presumably approved. Were the other 14 ineligible?

Mr CHRISTIAN: The 14 are awaiting assessment. We are assessing applications weekly. So, 14 are pending either an assessment or being taken before a panel to be recommended for approval.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So you still have at least 16 grants awaiting applications.

Mr O'REILLY: Do you mean the balance?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Yes.

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Of the 20 that are deemed to be eligible, how many were for profoundly disabled people rather than several disabled people?

Mr CHRISTIAN: Using the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 16 of the 20 have a profound disability. The balance have a severe disability.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Of the 14 you have not yet decided, how many are severely disabled and how many are profoundly disabled?

Mr CHRISTIAN: I will have to take that question on notice; I do not have that information here.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Presumably, if it is in the same proportion, we are looking at about 16 out of the 20 being severely or profoundly disabled.

Mr CHRISTIAN: Profound.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What facilities are available in the Bega Valley to meet the needs of profoundly disabled people? Where are they going?

Mr CHRISTIAN: A range of services is available, and if I were to list them I would probably miss a few. There is the Tulgeen Group—

CHAIR: Perhaps you could provide a detailed list.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You are saying that there is Tulgeen and respite care at Bega Valley.

Mr CHRISTIAN: There is Bega Valley Respite, Meals on Wheels and so on. There is a range of respite-related services that the department funds.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: That surprises me because I have an email from Denise Redmond dated 21 October stating that there here are places for people to use their packages if their disabilities are severe. However, there is no place to send a person with high support or profound needs. There are holiday cottages and so on, but the level of staffing and type of facility does not cater for this level; hence, Nardy House. Are you saying that Denise Redmond is incorrect in asserting that—that there is nowhere that can offer the equivalent services to those proposed at Nardy House?

Mr CHRISTIAN: Yes, I am saying that the statement is incorrect. Bega Valley Respite provides services to people with significant profound disabilities. They broker in support when it is needed, for example, nursing support and other carers.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What is the cost of that a night? I understand you have to take your own carer unless you get a brokered carer.

Mr CHRISTIAN: There are aspects that are taken care of during the planning. Bega Valley Respite is not the only provider.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: No, let us talk about this holiday cottage. What is the cost a night for profoundly disabled people if they provide the carer?

Mr CHRISTIAN: That depends on what they broker in.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Give us a ballpark figure.

Mr CHRISTIAN: It will be the actual cost of the staffing.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Of course it is the cost of staff. What is the cost?

Mr CHRISTIAN: To provide an accurate figure I would have to take the question on notice.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If you are trying to cost these things, surely you should know that.

CHAIR: Please take that question on notice. Our timing has moved on, so perhaps we should talk about—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: No, I think we should continue with Nardy House for the moment.

CHAIR: Perhaps we will, but we will have to come back to the honourable member.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Government members said that they wanted to ask a couple of questions about Nardy House.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: We do.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Even though I suspect they are prepared questions and answers, they probably contain information that we should have.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: They are actually about the issue on the table.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Yes.

CHAIR: I think it is only fair that the Government asks some questions.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: You have mentioned the respite services in the Bega Valley. Can you elaborate on what action the Government is taking to improve these services?

Mr CHRISTIAN: The New South Wales Government is committed to making disability services in the State fairer and easier to access, and more effective at providing the right kind of help at the time. In May of this year the Government announced its 10-year plan for disability services, Stronger Together, which includes an additional \$1.3 billion in the first five years. The plan includes increased respite supported accommodation, therapy, day programs, in-home support and a range of other practical supports for people with a disability. As a further example of the Government's commitment to support people with a disability, their families and carers across New South Wales, funding of \$400,000 was announced on 3 October to provide respite for people with a severe or profound disability and their families in the Bega Valley.

The Government is distributing 50 new respite packages, each worth approximately \$8,000, to give families a choice of respite services from a selection of approved organisations in the Bega Valley and surrounding areas. Respite plans will be tailored to each individual's needs to ensure they receive the support they require. Many of the people receiving these respite packages will be adding them to existing supports which are already funded by the New South Wales Government. These funds were part of a package that was rejected by the Nardy House management committee, and the committee was informed last month that the funding will be distributed directly to people with a disability and their families if they continued to refuse the money to provide respite.

These respite packages will end the delays experienced by those families in the local community who have been seeking respite while the Government has made genuine attempts to open the Nardy House facility. These 50 individual packages, coupled with recent increases in funding for

respite for older carers, is evidence of the many people in the Bega Valley who have government-funded respite packages and who may wish to use them at Nardy House, for example. While it is disappointing that the Nardy House management committee has refused to accept the Government's offer of funding, the release of these respite packages will greatly benefit many families in the area who are in need. This \$400,000 injection of funds is an acknowledgment of the needs that have been identified in the local area by the department.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Christian is just quoting word for word from the press release of 5 October 2006. Surely, in the time lapse there has been the opportunity to come up with something better for this Committee.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: Why is Sylvia wasting our time? This is our time.

CHAIR: I did ask for a brief response to the question, given the amount of time. It is a press release. Perhaps it could be tabled?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: We allocated up to four o'clock to examine this matter. Whilst the Government members say they are having their time—I think it is possible to conclude this is a point of order—I have elected to give them leave to ask questions which I think are relevant. I sincerely hope the Government has got questions on something better than the stuff that is publicly available, like a press release.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Give us leave.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: We have given him leave.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: Who is "we"? Who is the Chair?

CHAIR: The point of order is we have a limited amount of time. We have had an hour on Nardy House, we have now gone over that hour on Nardy House. Do you have other relevant questions that require brief information? For the purposes of the department if there is something you are going to read, if it is public knowledge could you just table it please?

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: With respect, the time that was given by you it was not our questioning, it was the Opposition. I am suggesting you allow this question to be answered and we will take appropriate action.

CHAIR: I think Mr Christian has completed his answer, so perhaps if you move on with a final question.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: In that case, we do not have any other questions at this stage.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Can I ask some general questions? I am happy if the crossbench wants to return to Nardy House and ask other questions. It is not an issue that is exhausted, it is just there are a couple of things I wanted to look at during this time. I wanted to get some follow-up to some questions I put on notice just for some additional information, in addition to what we had already been provided by the department. The department gave answers to questions on notice and gave some information relating to staff under investigation, indicating there were 190 staff under investigation. The department made the claim that this represents 1.5 per cent of staff employed against whom an allegation has been made, and later in the answer you indicated the department employs more than 12,000 staff in various business agreements across New South Wales.

Could the department give the Committee any information as to how many of the 12,000 staff it employs have actual contact with clients, because I am not sure that it is fair to compare office staff at DADAHC's head office in the same status as people who might be, in fact, operating in a respite facility where they are having face-to-face unsupervised contact with clients?

Mr O'REILLY: Point taken. If I could take that on notice I will be able to give you exact figures. From memory, roughly 85 per cent of our staff are direct contact. But I will confirm that with you.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: In relation to the answer you gave to a question on notice regarding criminal and working-with-children checks, the department indicated that employees who commenced work prior to the implementation of the checking process are not required to undergo a criminal record check. Without a significant amount of research on my part I am not sure I would be able to work out when that process commenced. Could you give the Committee information as to prior to what time, in terms of a date, and how many of your staff would therefore be in the situation of having not undergone a criminal record check? Is it possible to provide that to the Committee?

Mr O'REILLY: I can certainly find the date and we might be able to do some back work about how many staff changes have occurred since then.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I suspect probably it is going to result in a proportion of your staff but, nevertheless, I do not imagine you would have the exact number. For my purposes I would be happy with what percentage of the staff who currently have unsupervised contact with clients have not undergone a criminal records check. And a follow-up issue: Whilst I recognise there is no obligation for staff to submit to a criminal records check, has the department given consideration to asking those people who are not covered by those arrangements to volunteer to undergo a working-with-children check and therefore would you have some idea as to how many would at least volunteer and those who have not?

Could I now ask some questions relating to your answers regarding the Bankstown Handicapped Children's Centre? The department indicated that it had spent \$40,738 in various inquiries into the centre. As I understand it, there were a number of issues that had been identified in the Walter Turnbull report, one in particular relating to the expenditure of funds on a private motor vehicle that had been unresolved. Has that matter now been resolved and are you able to say with clarity no monies have been inappropriately spent on a private motor vehicle in the ownership of the chief executive officer of the Bankstown Handicapped Children's Centre?

Mr O'REILLY: If I could take that on notice. I need to confirm with the region where they are up to with the follow-up on those questions.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: You indicated in your answer that the department's metro southern region is currently conducting a service review which is part of the integrated monitoring framework. I am not sure of the date, but has that review been completed, and was the information captured in that review part of the documentation that was recently tabled in the New South Wales upper House?

Mr O'REILLY: Again, if I could take that on notice I will give you the date on which that review has been conducted.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is it a fact that subsequent allegations were made by another former employee of the centre that were drawn to the department's attention and were subject to an investigation by the department itself? What was the outcome of that investigation?

Mr O'REILLY: I might need more specifics about—

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I understand that the investigation may have involved the use of medication, locking staff out of a facility, and other issues relating to access of staff to an office.

Ms McALPINE: Further allegations regarding staff management were received in 2006 and they have been investigated by the metro south region. That investigation showed that little evidence was found to support the allegations. However, practices for maintaining adequate staff and client ratios require review, and the region has communicated the findings of those investigations to the specific components involved.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Was the complainant ever specifically interviewed as part of that investigation process?

Ms McALPINE: I would have to take that as a question on notice.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The department's answer to my question relating to the Wentworth Falls properties, which is question A10, indicated that in early 2005 two properties were purchased in the Blue Mountains area, at 117 and 119 Sinclair Crescent. Modifications to the properties were completed early in 2006, and they are now in operation. That means that there it is not a property owned by DADHC in Sinclair Crescent that is currently not being used because the locals—

Ms McALPINE: No. 69 was vacant land, and No. 67 is a property. Our answer back to you indicated that they were on the market for sale.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: So they are not being used?

Ms McALPINE: That is right.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: For how long have those two properties been owned by the department and not used?

Ms McALPINE: Since 2003.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Are there many other properties owned by the department that are not in use?

Ms McALPINE: I do not have the list of those properties with me; I would have to take that as a question on notice.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I noticed that in the department's answer in relation to the current status of the John Williams trust, \$6.7 million was still left even after two other properties had been purchased. What will happen to the other \$7 million? How soon will that be able to be expended in purchasing—?

Ms McALPINE: Two further houses have been purchased. One is in Forestville and the other house we are trying to purchase at the moment is in Dee Why.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That relates to the part of the question that says, "Two further properties have been identified for purchase. The costs of the properties have not yet been finalised." They are the two properties you are referring to?

Ms McALPINE: Yes. Forestville was completed on 16 October and Dee Why we are hoping to get in November.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Approximately how much will be left in the trust once those two properties are purchased?

Ms McALPINE: I do not have the cost of those two houses. May I take the question on notice?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Let us imagine they were worth \$1 million each, which I think is the ballpark figure that Mr O'Reilly gave as the cost to open a facility. It would suggest that there is likely to be somewhere around \$4 million left in that trust.

Mr O'REILLY: That is right.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Will that be expended on the purchase of other properties for that purpose around Sydney?

Mr O'REILLY: Absolutely. The money is tied money under the deed of trust, and it will be spent on the provision of children's respite. Obviously, we will need to talk to the family as well,

about the locations and that sort of thing. But the money does not go back into government coffers or remain in DADHC.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: In your answer to my question relating to community participation, in terms of the cost of consultants' fees, you indicated that \$55,000 was spent on employing independent panel members not employed by State agencies, and you named them. I think my full question was—and I am not sure that I got an answer to this—how much money was spent on consultants in the community participation tender process in total. Was that the total expense, or were there other areas of advice that the department needed? I had heard that a further revision of some of the decisions made by various panels was carried out by an external consultant. Therefore I wanted to get the full cost of consultants' fees in the community participation process.

Ms McALPINE: There were additional costs to deal with the appeal process. I would have to take the details of that on notice.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Were any other consultants involved in the community participation process for the tender, either in the preparation of the tender or the assessment of the tender?

Mr O'REILLY: It would have been probity auditors that we had to employ. We will get the figures on the probity auditors for you.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The answer you gave on community participation in terms of the number of organisations that were unsuccessful was that 36 existing organisations were unsuccessful in community participation tender No. 1. Then you said that this affected 294 young people, many of these people in areas where a second tender has been advertised. I understand that a second tender has been finalised. Could you update those figures, now that the second tender has been dealt with?

Ms MILLS: Yes, I can provide you with advice. In tender No. 2, 29 organisations across 53 outlets were successful. Following both tenders, in total 20 organisations were unsuccessful in any outlet. Following completion of all elements of the tenders, 245 users were with unsuccessful organisations. I am sorry, at the end of tender No. 1, 245 people were with unsuccessful organisations. As a result of the second tender, five service providers were unsuccessful, who have a total of 15 clients between them. Of the 1,745 service users in the community participation, 110 registrations are outstanding. Twelve of them have confirmed that they are exiting the program, and the balance are continuing to be contacted by the department at a regional level to ask them why they have not yet registered with a service provider. Forty-nine service users have applied to stay with existing providers who were unsuccessful; they are being considered at the moment, and eight organisations are affected by that.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I recognise that there would be some sensitivity in publishing the names of existing tenderers who were unsuccessful. But I would be grateful if the department could supply to the Committee, subject to the condition that the Committee would keep that information private, the details of the organisations that were existing prior to the tender process who have remained unsuccessful, and how many clients were involved in that.

[Interruption]

I certainly see no reason why it would not be kept private. My only reason for wanting to have the information is to make sure that I have contacted the organisations themselves. I certainly do not intend to make the information public, but I would like to know that I have been in contact with all those organisations to ensure they were happy with the process. Madam Chair, is it possible to make those arrangements?

CHAIR: My understanding is that the Committee could resolve that that information be kept as confidential information to the Committee.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Which I believe means it will be maintained in the office of the Clerk and that it would only be available to members to inspect in the Clerk's office.

CHAIR: Is that—?

Ms MILLS: Yes, we could provide that. I think the other comment to make is that the majority have very small numbers of clients with them.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Has the department made any notifications of properties that are surplus to needs under the State Property Authority Act, which I think requires Treasury to be notified?

Mr O'REILLY: When we say "surplus to needs", it is normally because the property no longer fits the need; we need to replace it. We deal with Commerce. Commerce undertakes the majority of our property dealings for us, including purchases, renovations and disposals. They are linked to that arm with Treasury for the property units.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How many properties have you notified to Commerce?

Mr O'REILLY: We have got all the figures. I will just have to provide them. But they are properties that we could be renovating.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Would you provide the committee with notifications under the State Property Authority Act of the property that you have indicated for sale. Would you also indicate which of those you see as being disposed of but not replaced, and those that you expect to be replaced?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I refer briefly to an incident about a resident at the King Creek Group Home on the North Coast. A resident there who was under the care of the department was subject to fairly severe epileptic attacks and included violent episodes. He appeared in court for a number of breaches of apprehended violence orders. The judge in sentencing the man to gaol said:

This man should be in residence, not in gaol. The man is unwell. It is cruel to have him in gaol where he will be a victim to prey. We can only hope that those who care for him in 2006 in gaol are enlightened and humane and have the facility because having regard to the report there is nowhere else I can place him. I cannot even rely on public housing, and presumably he could not cope with that in any case. So in 2006 with all the fanfare of what we do, or what we purport to do for people, we resort to the archaic practise of gaoling people who have mental or other disabilities because we cannot accommodate them elsewhere.

They are quite caustic remarks. Does the department have figures on the number of people who are in gaol, who are there because of the disability that they experience but who are continuing to be in gaol because supported accommodation cannot be found for them?

Ms McALPINE: We do have a list of people with an intellectual disability that Corrections supplies us with, and we know their earliest paroleable date, and the end of the paroleable period. I do not have that detail with me. But we are in the process of setting up a range of group homes for people who have been involved in the criminal justice system, and we are moving people into those homes. I do not know the circumstances of the individual to whom you refer but I shall provide you with that information.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: In Stronger Together about 200 group homes are allocated.

Ms McALPINE: Places.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is that what those positions are allocated for?

Ms McALPINE: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Does that indicate that already the department has a list of approximately 200 people who will need to be accommodated?

Ms McALPINE: No, I do not think the list is as long as 200 but I would have to check. But this is about us projecting that this would be it in the out years. Ideally, if someone has got behaviours

that is likely to see them get a custodial sentence it would be better if we put them into this program and stopped those behaviours. That program has got the accommodation aspect, but it also has got a highly intensive clinical support aspect that aims to address the patterns of offending behaviour so that the person can live a more appropriate life in the community.

Mr O'REILLY: In addition, under the Stronger Together, the five years for people leaving the Corrections Services, \$88.4 million has been allocated.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Under Stronger Together you are also going to set up an office of the senior practitioner to oversee behaviour intervention practices. When will that office be functioning?

Ms McALPINE: That has been advertised once already. We have run interviews. Unfortunately we were not able to make an appointment. We are in the process of re-advertising.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What is the budgetary allocation for the costs of running that office?

Ms McALPINE: Off the top of my head I do not know. I will have to take it on notice.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Earlier you mentioned that as soon as people come to the end of their custodial sentence and are eligible for parole then you seek to find them appropriate accommodation. Is there any ability for you to intervene prior to their custodial sentence—

Ms McALPINE: In fact, it is in their interests and indeed our interests as the service provider for them to exit the gaol while there is a paroleable period—

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I am talking about the non-paroleable period. How do they get out of gaol prior to that?

Ms McALPINE: My understanding is they cannot get out until they are in the paroleable period. There is a hearing at the Parole Board and the circumstances that they would be moving to the in the community are ascertained.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Will you provide the committee with figures on the numbers of people in gaol at the moment who are there because of non-paroleable periods—

Ms McALPINE: I can only provide you with the information that we have from Corrections but we do not hold all of that information.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Would you provide figures of those in paroleable periods and those in non-paroleable periods?

Ms McALPINE: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I refer to questions received on notice, in particular, A19 in which the committee asked for the maximum supported figure in dollars for accommodation and have not got an answer. Why is it not possible to provide the maximum amount spent on supported accommodation?

Mr O'REILLY: On any one individual?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes.

Mr O'REILLY: We say \$604,751-00.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: It states: "the department funds models of supported accommodation through its recurrent funding programs. It provides alternatives to supported accommodation through block funding to group homes." No figure has been given. Perhaps that was edited out by the Minister.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: We do not have a figure in the papers we have. Have you got a figure?

Mr O'REILLY: I have got another paragraph which states:

Individual packages are provided through the emergency response program. Currently, the package with the highest cost is \$604,751.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Mr Christian, were you aware of that figure?

Mr CHRISTIAN: I would be aware that for emergency response individual funding is higher than normal avenues of funding, yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You are negotiating with Nardy House—former Minister Lo Po gave such a commitment—to fund Nardy House recurrently. If you do not know the value of accommodation at Clark Bay Farm how can you indulge in such negotiations?

Ms McALPINE: It is important to point out that the question we answered on notice was about the most expensive individual client in the State, not a benchmark. It is a one-off case. To be eligible for emergency response you have to be homeless, or at an imminent risk of homelessness, tend to be complex and intensive support, and as often as possible for an intensive short-term duration. So it is not a benchmark for a regular service.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I do not say it is but there seems to be a shortage of knowledge about what is a reasonable amount to pay. That is worrying for someone trying to negotiate \$400,000 when it has been costed by others for \$1 million. There seems an absence of a departmental costing that says how it will be done.

Ms McALPINE: We do have a range of benchmarks according to the types of services to be provided.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you have a costing model for Nardy House? Does it involve \$400,00 basic funding and then a market supplying effectively part of respite packages being spent on Nardy House? Is that the model that you are looking for to fund Nardy House?

Ms McALPINE: We have benchmarks which guide regions in delivering a more localised model, because there are obviously some variations, particularly with regard to contributions, volunteer, type of staff on board, the seniority of those staff and the management requirements. So, yes, there are benchmarks that have been used to derive at the region a suggested cost that would be appropriate for the operation of the Nardy House model described by Mr Christian.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is your model that you get \$400,000 funding, and then Nardy House markets its services and from the respite packages gets money per bed night to make up a viable amount to fund that facility? Is that your model?

Ms McALPINE: Our belief is that it would be viable with the level of funding that we are making viable.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Totally?

Ms McALPINE: That the business plan incorporates the service model. We are, in fact, saying, based on the data available to us that the composite of ways in which the service will be provided, and the service support and income available from those various streams, would make it a viable provider.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are you saying it could be totally funded on \$490,000? Are you saying that the ballpark figure would make it \$720,000? Or are you saying that there is a model where they get the basic \$400,000 to \$500,000 and then market it? Will you tell me the basic concepts of the model?

Ms MILLS: The model that is proposed is that, of the six beds, four would be provided through the program funding that was described in detail and two—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You are talking about the \$450,000 or whatever.

Ms MILLS: Correct. And the two places would be funded through the access of those beds by other funded service providers in the area.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So why did Cram House disappear into the sunset? Did they not think that funding model is viable?

Ms MILLS: We have no indication that they chose not to participate for funding reasons. You would have to ask them.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But they were a mentoring system and they seemed to disappear when the idea was floated that they be a funding conduit.

Ms MILLS: We do not know the reason for their decision not to be a partner.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It may have been a coincidence.

Ms MILLS: It may have been a number of other factors.

CHAIR: Do Government members wish to ask any questions?

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: We have no questions at this stage.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I have a couple of other questions. Answer No. 20, which was about a respite facility in Blair Athol, indicated that this unit—I must say I was led to believe that it was a replacement for another facility that the department operated—was previously located at Five Dock in Sydney's inner west. I guess the question that arises is: What are people in Five Dock doing for respite if their respite facility has been moved to Blair Athol? They are clearly not driving that distance so is there some other replacement facility provided for Five Dock? Was the place not in use before?

Ms McALPINE: It was about the spread of respite. The Five Dock-Drummoyne area was well resourced but the outer district was not. The ageing profile is that younger families with younger kids—therefore, families in need of kids respite—are in that part of the region so the facility was moved. The demand for kids respite was not the same in that inner-city area.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Where was the one at Five Dock located?

Ms McALPINE: I do not know the address of that facility.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Was it a departmental facility?

Ms McALPINE: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How many beds did it have?

Ms McALPINE: I will have to take that question on notice.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I guess the Five Dock community would be interested in knowing where else they can access respite now.

Ms McALPINE: We will provide you with the other addresses of respite facilities.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I would be grateful if you would do that. I understood that the Blair Athol respite facility was going to be directed towards teenagers. I think the department knows that for some years I have taken a very keen interest in seeing a teenage facility open in the Campbelltown-Macarthur area. I was led to believe that such a facility would open in September, then it was put off to October and we are now nearly in November and I do not see any indication of that facility opening. When is it due to open?

Ms McALPINE: I will have to take that question on notice too.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Your answer on unpaid carers seems to indicate that, in terms of the number of applicants for supported accommodation versus the number of vacancies in supported accommodation, the number of applicants has increased quite significantly. Is there some reason why you have more applications this year? I understand that last year you received about 1,000 and you seem to be up to 1,300-odd now. Do you have some idea as to why there has been that increase?

Ms McALPINE: Are you referring to the number of applicants for supported accommodation?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Yes. You have given the figures in answer No. 23.

Ms McALPINE: Ageing parents. I do not know all the details. I will have to take that question on notice.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: In "Stronger Together" there are three categories of new supported accommodation to be provided. One is obviously for people coming from Corrections. I think we have probably had some explanation as to what those are because they are new to me. In regard to the places being made available for DOCS clients, can you explain to the Committee what sort of clients they will be, where they are going now and how they compare with other people in the community?

Ms MILLS: Yes. I can answer that question. These are young people with disabilities who have been in the care of the Minister for Community Services, as you said. We have been working very closely with DOCS to try to identify each of those individuals by the time they are 16 so that we can do a transition plan that best suits them when they leave the care of the Minister. There are three or four different pathways that we envisage these young people taking. Some of them have already entered the program and are already taking these pathways. The first is, where possible, we are assisting people to remain with their foster care family. That has resulted from our benchmarking costs of DOCS and identifying an appropriate funding level for people to remain in care with their family.

The second is to look at supported accommodation either on a permanent or a transitional basis in a group home type of model. The third is working with the Department of Housing as part of its accord to look at opportunities for providing young people with a public housing dwelling with in-home support funded through this program. We estimate that about 90 people per year become broadly eligible for the program. It has not been operating long enough yet to give a true indication of the split between those three strands. But we have been procuring some properties in a couple of regions for the group home model. We have also indicated on our needs-based planning that a significant proportion of those are in south-western Sydney, Western Sydney and other areas where DOCS has been assisting people.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: What happened to those people before this plan arrangement? I was not aware that DADHC had a plan for these people. Is this a new program that the department is taking on? Has it existed for ages and no-one noticed it or did DOCS just continue with these people because it was unable to find anywhere else for them?

Ms MILLS: It was a combination of things. This is the second year that we have dedicated funding and a particular program stream. Before this the young people would have applied for access to programs on the same basis of priority as anybody else. So some of them would have applied for supported accommodation places, in-home support et cetera. I guess we have said two things. These are people with particularly difficult backgrounds for whom the transition is quite critical. While in the past there has been the practice of DOCS assisting people beyond them turning 18, we jointly have

a process under our MOU of doing this early planning so that, even if someone remains stable in accommodation—such as with their foster family—they have an ongoing supported program that allows them to have certainty about their future.

Mr O'REILLY: Before two years ago, when a person ceased being a State ward but had disabilities and required support the department used to have to pick that up. But there was no program. We drew up budgetary submissions to say how many people are coming through the system for which there is never any allocation allowed. So we started the process two years ago.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: When the New South Wales Ombudsman reported on boarding houses the Premier said at a press conference that the Minister would bring forward a plan in August responding to that issue. I have not noticed a press release or some announcement from the Minister in that regard. Is a further announcement planned? When can we expect that?

Ms MILLS: Obviously the timing of that is in the hands of the Minister at the moment. He has sought further advice from us about some aspects of the plan. But we have been progressing interagency work with each department with a responsibility for boarding houses, recognising that it varies between local government, health, food and other safety aspects through to Department of Housing support in terms of funding grants et cetera. We have been working with each of those agencies to develop a component plan that addresses what are seen as shortfalls in the current arrangements. We have also been discussing with some local government areas opportunities for trialling alternative models. As soon as they are secured, we will be able to make an announcement.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is any consideration being given to updating the 1973 Youth and Community Services Act, which appears by any definition to be wildly out of date?

Ms MILLS: Yes. That is part of the overall strategy.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I do not imagine that that would be ready in time to be presented to Parliament this session, would it?

Ms MILLS: No, that is correct.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I asked in previous estimates hearings for information relating to a branch of the department that, from memory, has the word "Accountability" in its title. I have forgotten the full title. I have a feeling that it was probably tied up in the generic answers given by the Cabinet Office about ministerial support. Is the department able to provide information about—and the correct title of—that branch and its budget?

Mr O'REILLY: That is the Public Accountability Branch.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That is the one.

Mr O'REILLY: The exact numbers I will have sent through for you tomorrow.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I would like to ask one brief question on Nardy House. In relation to the \$8,000 packages, which will be made to Bega Valley residents, must the facilities that people access be in the Bega Valley, or can they access facilities beyond the region?

Mr O'REILLY: Beyond the region.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How many of the 16 of the 20 people who are deemed eligible to receive a package are intending to access facilities beyond the region?

Mr CHRISTIAN: We do not have that information available yet. The respite plans to be tailored to individuals are yet to be drawn up.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: When do you expect to have those drawn up?

Mr CHRISTIAN: Families will be notified in writing either today or tomorrow that they have been approved for a package, and the next step will be to prepare their tailored package.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Who nominates the facility that they are to use?

Mr CHRISTIAN: We will provide a list of eligible services, from which the families themselves and carers can go through and nominate which particular services they would like. If they are out of region, then we will have to investigate to see whether those are eligible service providers.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: If they are out of region, and they are forced to select a facility because nothing available in the region meets their specific needs, will the costs of getting there, and back, and the cost of their carers be taken out of their \$8,000 package, or will they be provided by the department?

Mr CHRISTIAN: If other forms of transport assistance are not available, we would consider them being paid for out of the \$8,000 package. Can I add that individuals with higher support needs may very well be entitled to more than one package as well.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: On what basis would that be?

Mr CHRISTIAN: That will be based on need, and that is assessed by a panel that has an independent representative sitting on it.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is there a database or waiting list of people with disabilities and their levels of disabilities and their whereabouts, to allow for planning, or is it just funded as they apply and there may be huge amounts of unmet demand out there which is not quantified?

Ms MILLS: We use principally the ABS as our data source for planning, in particular the survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. That is a tool that is used nationally. That allows us to allocate resources down to one of our 16 local planning areas. In addition to that, we run consultations each year around more localised areas, and particular needs, to help inform precise locations of services.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you do not have a list of the people, what they are getting and what they may need later, which you could extrapolate? You do it on a case management basis: you take a statistical approximation at one level, and you have the number of people you are actually funding in another. If that is the case, what is the difference between what ABS says the demand is out there and what you are providing? What is the magnitude of the difference?

Ms MILLS: That is not an answer that can be readily given. But, if you go to the survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, the ABS data source that I referred to, they ask in the survey questions of people both in terms of what type of need they have, the degree to which that need is met, and the degree to which they have any particular gaps in respect of those needs. That work is interrogated by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on a periodic basis, and it does produce a work on unmet need in disability. It is presently working on a version based on the 2003 survey.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: How do you relate to that? Do you present that sort of material, or do you simply provide what you can and hope that the unmet need does not become too strong?

Mr CHRISTIAN: The survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers itself is a survey of the population, and so its purpose is to identify within the general population what proportion of people have moderate, severe or profound disability, what type of disability that is, what type of support needs they have, whether they have a carer or not, and whether those supports are adequate to meet their needs. So it is a very important planning tool for us, because it is really quite detailed. Being a survey, however, it does not give accuracy down to the most local level.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But you do not maintain a database. You basically rely on ABS broad-brush, rather than looking at what is needed and known here, is that correct? You do not deliberately have a policy to maintain a database from which you might extrapolate your own conclusions?

CHRISTIAN: We use that as one of the sources. We also, obviously, hold a database of our own clients. We have a client information system which provides details of the services offered to each client. We also have a contract database, which clarifies what services are provided by what funded organisation, and the number of outputs that we would receive for those services.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is the number of people provided at each level one of those outputs that you would be measuring, so that you could then presumably add them up?

Mr CHRISTIAN: In some programs, yes. In other programs, it is multiple outputs. So for the number of people assisted with respite, you have got a separate data count of how many different families and how many actually respite services might be provided in the course of a year.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But can you relate it back to the number of individuals needing this number of services, and could you produce a grant total for the State?

Mr CHRISTIAN: If you are asking whether there is a census type of approach, no, there is not. There is a needs-based planning model, based on population types and population trends. We know, for example, that indigenous people have higher rates of disability and therefore we take that into account in our planning, based on where high proportions of indigenous people reside. But, in terms of do we have a profile of every single person in the State with a disability, and their needs, no.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think that would be a desirable thing to do?

Mr CHRISTIAN: I think it would be an impossible thing to do.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is it a desirable thing to do, if you could do it? It is an objective, shall I say?

Mr CHRISTIAN: I believe there is one jurisdiction in Australasia that has a registration of births to give you a count. But that would not, by the time somebody is 16, give you meaningful information about what sort of support they might require. I think it is a task that is too difficult. I think in all human services you use the best available data and you plan effectively, but you allow for local flexibility and you allow for models that are not one size fits all to understand that different communities have different needs, and that within different families there are different needs. I do not believe it will ever be possible to quantify to minutiae an extrapolation of what that means at a statewide level.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Surely, the more data you have, the better your conclusion would be, and the longest journey begins with the smallest step.

Ms MILLS: Absolutely, and we are constantly improving our data sources, working both nationally on that and also working on our own internal data systems, and with our service providers through the integrated monitoring system, to ensure that we have the maximum picture of what people are receiving in our system, what they have asked for, how long they may or may not have to wait for those services, et cetera. We do take all of that into account. So I believe we have an effective planning system within the constraints of what is available for disability.

It is probably also worth commenting that, for the first time ever, in the census that was recently conducted there are questions on disability. We do not know what the quality of the data on that will be; we do not yet know. But that would be the first time we would have a self-identified recognition of disability and a self-identified series of questions about whether people have support needs and whether they are being met.

CHAIR: Do Government members wish to ask further questions?

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: I have no further questions.

CHAIR: Ms McAlpine, earlier today you noted that there is only one staff member on at night for respite care. Are you confident and comfortable with the department's duty of care in those circumstances? If that worker were to have a heart attack, for example, or a fall, or perhaps inadvertently was knocked out by a resident, what is the position?

Ms McALPINE: A range of risk management things are in place, including VitalCall in risky situations, where the person hits a button and it sends a call and someone comes.

CHAIR: Comes from where?

Ms McALPINE: VitalCall might be sending a local ambulance. These are commercial systems. We have an on-call system with staff, so that a manager can come out to the house. It is about doing a thorough risk assessment of anybody who is going to be in a house, be it children in a respite house, or be it adults in a group home.

CHAIR: So you are comfortable with those arrangements in respect of the department's duty of care?

Ms McALPINE: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The individual respite packages that you deliver in Bega raises in me the question: Does the department have an idea of what is an appropriate benchmark for a family looking after someone with high support needs? What is an appropriate benchmark for how often they would have respite? I recognise that needs differ from family to family, but do you have some idea of what is an appropriate amount of respite to offer a family in those circumstances, and if so what is it?

Mr O'REILLY: No. To be honest, I do not think we could say we have a benchmark. What we do know, of course, is that some families cannot cope without adequate respite and people enter prematurely into our system, the 24-7 care. That is the idea of trying to get more respite packages to assist those families earlier on. But as far as a benchmark, I do not think we could give you one.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How did you set upon the figure of \$8,000?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How much respite would that give you?

Ms MILLS: A respite place is about \$145 a day. We based that \$8,000 figure on work that was done in 2005 to support the Ageing Carers Respite Program which was jointly funded by the Commonwealth Government. We are doing a lot of work at the moment. As you know, there is a significant increase in respite effort under the Stronger Together budget. Most of that money will begin to roll out from next year, and we are spending a significant amount of effort in this financial year looking at not only different ranges or different types of respite but picking up some of the scenarios that you spoke about—families having different levels of need in terms of models, not just centre based but flexible, and also shared care and other arrangements that might allow us to give a more flexible response for people. Also, as Mr Christian said, we do not necessarily limit to one package. What we have calculated based on the ageing carers work is that an average package historically, with current costs, seemed to be effective for families. What we are saying is that in circumstances where it is necessary people can apply for more than one package in a year, and as we develop our respite program we will have a series of tiers of respite assistance that link quite closely people's needs to the total resources that we will make available.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: In Stronger Together there is reference to respite. Can you provide the Committee with information as to which column the ageing carers package relating to the Commonwealth is located or whether that is additional or is that in those figures? I was trying to work out how I reconciled the two together, how much of that was Commonwealth funding or where it was. I would be grateful if we could have that information, as I said, if not immediately, then on notice.

Ms MILLS: I will provide that to you separately.

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.