

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 2

Thursday 22 September 2005

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

AGEING, DISABILITY SERVICES

The Committee met at 5.30 p.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. P. Forsythe (Chair)

The Hon. A. Catanzariti
The Hon. Dr A. Chesterfield-Evans
Rev. The Hon. F. J. Nile

The Hon. C. M. Robertson
The Hon. J. F. Ryan
The Hon. H. S. Tsang

PRESENT

The Hon. J. J. Della Bosca, *Minister for Ageing and Disability Services*

Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

Mr B. O'Reilly, *Director-General*

Representative: Ms A Wannan, *Acting Deputy Director-General*

CHAIR: I now declare this meeting open to the public. I would like to welcome you to this public hearing of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2 and I would like to thank the Minister, the Hon. John Della Bosca, and departmental officers for attending today. At this meeting the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of Ageing and Disability Services.

Before we commence some procedural matters need to be dealt with. In relation to the broadcast of proceedings, I point out that in accordance with the Legislative Council's guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings, which is available from Chamber Support Officers and clerks, only 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 photos. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee you must take responsibility for what you publish or what interpretation you place on anything that is said before the Committee.

In relation to the delivery of messages, there is no provision for members to refer directly to their own staff while at the table. Members and their staff are advised that any messages should be delivered through the Chamber Support Officers on duty or the Committee clerks.

The Committee has agreed to the following timeframe in relation to the portfolio. It will be in blocks of 20 minutes, that is 20 minutes first to the Cross-bench, 20 minutes to the Opposition and 20 minutes to the Government and in rotation. However, should the second member of the Cross-bench not have arrived at the conclusion of the first 10 minutes I will then go to the Opposition and come back to the Cross-bench. I will declare the hearing open but ask, Minister, whether you wish to make a brief opening statement?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Yes, Madam Chair, I would like to make a brief statement. I have met many people with disabilities and their families since I was given the responsibility for this portfolio earlier in the year. I have also been meeting and have had occasion to meet with carers, departmental staff, service providers, peak bodies and the very, very large number of dedicated volunteers that work in the disability sector. It is clear to me that we need to provide more help and that we need to provide it earlier in the process.

New South Wales has increased, as I think all members will be aware, the disability services budget has increased, in fact more than doubled, since 1995. This year the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care will receive record funding of more than \$1.5 billion. That is an increase of \$160 million this year, or nearly 12 per cent, yet I think it is self-evident that we continue to face overwhelming demand and that the system is struggling to meet that demand.

While the community does need to make a decision to put more money and more support into disability, it is clear that more money of itself is not a solution. We need to ensure that we get better value for our record funding. To achieve this I believe we need to find a better balance between the needs of people with a disability to participate in the community, the needs of their families and carers for assistance to maintain that care they currently provide for family members with a disability, and the available resources.

I have commenced a series of initiatives to assist with this challenge: A new policy and action plan for accommodation and support, improvement of the post school programs to get better value and involvement for families, and more respite to more people more often. Currently the department spends 45 per cent of its budget on just three per cent of its client. We need to change that equation so the system helps families and provides that help earlier before they get into crisis.

Recently the Government signalled the need to broaden the options available to people seeking accommodation and support and to give them greater choice and flexibility. A discussion paper was released in January and over 200 submissions were received from groups and individuals. The majority of respondents confirmed that a broader range of options is required to meet the

community's diverse needs.

I have hosted two round table discussions with key stakeholders in recent months to discuss how to expand the range of choice for disability accommodation. Together we have developed a series of principles to guide the new accommodation and support policy and a plan of action. I expect that the final document out of this process will be launched very early next year. I am optimistic that we can shape accommodation and support services that better meet people's needs, complement the assistance that they receive from their families, and ensure that we provide the greatest amount of assistance to the greatest number of people.

I can report to the Committee that the sector's contribution has been extremely positive and is vital to its success. Participants at these round tables and in the submission processes have been focussed on solutions and on new ways to provide support and on a collaborative and constructive approach between government, the non-government organisations involved in the sector, and the entire community.

I think that the Committee is well aware that there is about 200,000 people with severe or profound disabilities in New South Wales under the age of 65. We know the vast majority of people with disabilities are supported by their families and friends for significant periods of their lives. Families have told it me that access to respite and day care are vital to their ability to continue supporting their loved ones at home.

Funding for respite care has doubled since 1996 to over \$158 million last financial year. Last week, in a joint initiative with the Commonwealth, I announced a further \$48 million over three for respite services for older carers. Respite not only benefits the carers but it also gives the person with the disability an opportunity to build new relationships and move towards some greater independence.

Obviously the Government has been recognising, and clearly the Parliament has been concerned with, the issue of transition from school. It is one of the most important periods in a person's life, but especially so if the person involved has a disability. There is widespread agreement that the post school disability program, known as ATLAS, or the former ATLAS program, was in serious need of change. Only about three per cent of ATLAS program participants were transitioning to employment but it provided no long-term certainty. Two programs started this year were designed to improve access to employment for young people with a disability and to provide long-term support for those who were unable make the transition to work. However, when coupled with increases in costs levied by a number of community participation providers, many young people with a disability received fewer hours of support.

I was concerned, as was the Parliament, at the impact of this on people with disabilities and their families. People with high needs were getting inadequate hours. The variation among quality, cost and quantity was, in my view, unsustainable. To address this issue a further \$6 million has been provided in addition to the \$69 million this year to ensure that each person in community participation receives at least three days support per week.

Last week the Upper House inquiry into post school programs for young adults with a disability delivered its final report. I have asked the department to consider the report in light of the reform process and its ongoing work on these programs. I want participants and their families to have certainty about support and improved value. For this reason, I have announced a competitive tender for the provision of services in 2006. I am confident that that tender will result in improved and more equitable services for people with a disability.

The vision that I have as Minister, and I think is shared by the departmental officers as well as the Government at large, is to ensure that we have a service system for people with a disability that is sustainable and provides support for the families and their needs long-term.

Since coming to office this Government has doubled funding for disability services. I referred to that before, but funding alone will not resolve the challenges we face. A redesign of the post school programs, reform of accommodation support services, and an increased emphasis on assisting families and people with disabilities earlier will help ensure that funds are used in the best way to help people with a disability and their families.

Madam Chair, there is one final point I wanted to raise before we move on to the questions of Committee members. I am quite prepared to provide a private briefing on any matters concerning individuals out of session to any members of the Committee that would like a briefing. The department is unable to provide information about individuals and their personal circumstances in a public forum such as this and it is unhelpful and inappropriate for private information to be shared in this context, but I am happy and anxious to assist the Committee and its members in any way possible with whatever level of detail they may require by way of a private briefing about any particular individual circumstances that they need to raise.

We will be taking questions on operational issues and about policy generalities. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. Are there any questions?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The seniors phone information service being operated by COTA, I understand, has been put up for tender. Could this just become a call centre and, if so, will it be in New South Wales and will there be any need or obligation for the successful tenderer to actually employ older people or disabled people?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The service, I understand, is provided by COTA. I think to answer your questions adequately, Dr Chesterfield-Evans, I will have to take the question on notice unless Mr O'Reilly can answer in more detail.

Mr O'REILLY: Only, Dr Chesterfield-Evans, that it was at due for renewal of the tender. We have only just gone out to tender again.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But you might know the conditions on the tender. Could it end up in India?

Mr O'REILLY: I am sure it will not end up in India, but I will take that question on notice if you like and I will provide you with all the information, sir.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Will you guarantee that people will be employed in New South Wales trying to meet this tender? Obviously you can get two bites of the cherry. You can employ some people to help them and you can get a service. If you put it outside New South Wales then obviously the people in New South Wales who might have been employed will presumably be on welfare from either you or the Federal Government, might they not, with that income loss?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes. As I said, I will get you the information and I will address those issues.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You will not give a commitment here that you are going to employ people in New South Wales?

Mr O'REILLY: I cannot give you that commitment at the moment without knowing the background to it. I will find that information for you and I will be able to get you that information by mid next week.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What are you doing with the Seniors Card? Is it also going out to tender?

Mr O'REILLY: No, we do have an arrangement for the Seniors Card. We have about 850,000 members currently. We increase it by about 50,000 per annum. The actual preparation of the Seniors Card itself, we do not do that in-house. It has always gone out to tender. The Seniors Card call centre side of things answers inquiries from potential and current New South Wales Seniors Card members about eligibility and issues relating to the Seniors Card program itself. It operates from nine to five on business days year round. The call centre service also processes new member applications, replacement card requests and other incoming mail sent to Seniors Card.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are the two going to be combined?

Mr O'REILLY: The budget is about \$283,100 per annum for the call centre and the call centre costs are forecast to remain close to the total for the same period for last financial year. There will be about a point one per cent increase.

The Hon. ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is the information service, the Seniors Card and the seniors information service going to be combined?

Mr O'REILLY: The tender currently being conducted by State Procurement that covers both the Seniors Card call centre and senior information service may result in economies of scale and therefore cost savings to both services.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I note the Minister's comment about the budget being up by 11 per cent, is it, or 12 per cent?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: 12 per cent.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The rise in the home support however is only up by 5.6 per cent, I note. Is that right? Page 19-45 of the State Budget Papers?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: It is very unusual an Estimates Committee member asking questions from a budget paper.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I like to create precedents and breach new fields.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: It is a little bit unfair.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What are the actual figures you are basing this on for the number of people who are likely to need support?

Mr O'REILLY: If I understand your question, the budget for 2004-05 - the Home Care service in New South Wales, and that is what you are relating to, Dr Chesterfield-Evans?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes, on page 19-45.

Mr O'REILLY: We have got the budget for 2004-05 which was \$145.807 million. The revised budget for 2004-05 was \$143.468 million, a variance of 2.3. The Home Care Service of New South Wales is under budget by \$2.339 million and that is attributable to employee related expenditure being below budget as a result of lower than anticipated delivery service hours in 2004-05 but we did not use that money.

Mr O'REILLY: The budget for 2004/05 145.8, budget for 2005/06 155.855, giving \$10,048,000 increase. The Home Care Service of New South Wales budget for 2005/06 has increased by that 10.048 million on previous years, and that is attributable to--

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What is that as a percentage? I mean I am looking at the bottom figure here, the 187. That is a 5.6% increase. What are the figures for people who actually need to support, are they going up? The CPSA says that the increase in services is not meeting the increase in needs. What figures do you have for the increase in people needing support and where do the figures come from?

Mr O'REILLY: For Home Care?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I mean, what I want to explore is the way in which you grade people needing support. Home Care presumably are the ones who can live at home with relatively low levels of service compared to the more highly disabled.

Mr O'REILLY: So the budget expenditure for Home Care services this financial year is \$187.5 million, which is an increase of 106. The service plans to deliver that, that on the delivery side, of 3.8 million hours of service to approximately 53,000 people this year.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I do not need you to just go over the figures that I can read on page 19-45. The question was, what are the figures for the number of people needing support and where do those figures come from?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think what you are driving at Dr Chesterfield-Evans is what is the level of need in the community for the various services we operate, including the home and community care service. It needs to be understood that the home and community care services are a jointly funded operation by us, the State and the Commonwealth, and it assists not only younger people with a disability, but also the frail older people and people of obviously diverse backgrounds and it has developed a reputation for quality service delivery and it is not just delivered by our own Home Care service, a number of NGOs are involved.

What is very important for our current consideration is we have asked PricewaterhouseCoopers senior actuary partner there, John Walsh, to prepare for myself as Minister and the department and the Government, a study about the future needs for our various services that will be required as the population changes demographically and as the population's size increases.

The general answer to your question is that we have already taken very significant planning action - I think it is probably the first of its type in a fair while - to actually identify those needs and the best ways to service them, including the costing of the various options of service.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can I ask why you did not use things like the ABF, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, or even demand indices on your own services and where do they figure into why it has gone out to some accounting firm to tell you things that I would have thought would have been maybe populations projections or demand indices on requests for your help. Where are the figures from those?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Well, the simple fact of the matter is that that is exactly what Mr Walsh is doing. You would be probably likely - I know that you have many professional differences of opinion with the actuarial profession from a number of different points of view - but can I emphasise that I take the view as a minister that I could make a rough guesstimate or a finger in the wind about what a particular set of statistics from any of the currently public available statistics mean, but none of them have been very good or very reliable indicators about the needs for disability services and that is exactly the project that we have asked John Walsh to undertake, and the piece of work that we expect to come out of that - which I have already described on the public record on a number of occasions - is a significant piece of planning, which as I said, we expect to be able to release early next year which would be a medium term plan for disability support services in New South Wales.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you not current have that number then--*[Time expired]*

CHAIR: Sorry, we are going to hold the timing if we can. Reverend Fred Nile?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you Madam Chair. To the Minister, in Budget Papers No. 3 Vol 2 page 19-41 there is an amount there for non-profit organizations who were given capital grants this year. Which non-profit organizations received capital grants? Do you have a list of them?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I would probably have to take that question on notice Reverend Nile. It would be a very significant number of organizations. Mr O'Reilly might have that in his briefing.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Well, the major ones, or some of the major ones?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: What was the budget page number again?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: 19-41.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: We will have to take that on notice.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: The second part of that question is - and I am pleased that there is an increase in capital grants, roughly from \$1 million to \$5 million - what is the explanation for the increase, just more organizations getting grants? It is on the same page. I was trying to ascertain whether some organizations have just got increased grants or are there more community organizations involved in this area?

Mr O'REILLY: The increase is \$18.4 million in disability grants and 1.6 increased payments to the Home Care service.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I was asking you if there was an increase, just simply you have allocated additional funds, that is the explanation?

Mr O'REILLY: That is right. We received Treasury supplementation of \$34.9 million to disability grants and indexation of \$10.3 million and \$4.8 million for untied growth and revenue, so there were extra funds available.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Were there more organizations receiving grants then?

Mr O'REILLY: I would have to check to see the numbers.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: There were 20 organizations and now there are 30.

Mr O'REILLY: I would have to check to see if there was a change in numbers or increase with the current organizations.

CHAIR: Are you taking that on notice?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes I will.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: What is the breakdown of the number and type of support accommodation programs offered by the department? How is this expected to change over the coming years and how will the department cater for any expected changes?

Mr O'REILLY: We have total number of clients in DADHC funded operated group homes is 1,275. That is as at 31 July 2005. The clients in the non-government sector group homes, it is 1,831. The total number of group homes all up is 692, being 293 in DADHC and 399 from the NGO sector. The number of clients as well?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Yes.

Mr O'REILLY: The number of clients, in DADHC operated large residential is 1,267 and clients in the non-government large residential setting is 722.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: On page 19-9 \$8.4 million over four years was allocated to support trials of alternative supported accommodation models. What non-government entities will be participating in this trial? Will the provision of such models be made available by tender and will the outcomes of these trials be made available to the public, for example, in the form of a report or in what way will they be reported?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I spoke in my introductory remarks about accommodation round table, that is a consultation we have been having with the disability sector, particularly those non-government organizations and the department itself, providing accommodation services and we expect that to be - I think the general answer to your question - we expect that to be quite a transparent process and at this stage, as we have not concluded that consultation, I do not believe we could be specific about which particular organization will receive that funding but the point is that we would expect at the conclusion of the round table, to be in a position to be absolutely transparent, so we would be providing some form of report, either by way of ministerial announcement or a formal report.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: How did the people get involved in the trial, you have the consultation, you assess the various organizations and do you just select them or do they apply to you to take part?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Well, the process up until now is there has been two separate meetings which went for a number of hours. Each one was a fairly focussed discussion with very senior people from around the disability sector, from a variety of non-government organizations looking at the current limitations and opportunities provided by the various accommodation models. Broadly within the context of the devolution policy and what I know will come out of that now, having been through those two consultations and all the back up submissions on the way through to them, is a piece of focus work which will present a number of different models for accommodation services, including obviously the current existing group home model and at that point we will determine a process, which will probably be some kind of tender or expression of interest process, for the trial to be conducted by various non-government organizations. It may be that the department itself might conduct one of the trials but I do not think we are in a position to be definitive about that yet, but certainly both at the tendering of expression of interest phase and any kind of assessment phase, we will be publicly transparent about it.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: The bodies that you are meeting with, these non-government entities, are they confidential or can you say there are ten organizations and name them?

Mr O'REILLY: With the accommodation round table, all the discussions and the outcomes of those discussions we have put on our website to involve all other parties as well. With regards to the actual allocating of the dollars, what will happen is once the accommodation round table process is concluded, we will be actually allocating those dollars towards any new accommodation models. It will be through either public tender. We may be inviting parties to tender for it or it could be if they are a pilot, it could be as the Minister said, that the department may run a pilot but normally what we would do, is any of our accommodation arrangements we put out to tender and we ask for the various providers to express an interest.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Reverend Nile, are you concerned about who was represented at the round table?

Reverend The Hon. FRED NILE: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: We are happy to make that information available to the Committee.

Reverend The Hon. FRED NILE: It is on the web site, you were saying?

Mr O'REILLY: That is right, it is.

Reverend The Hon. FRED NILE: All the information on the web site is going to other organisations. It lists the ones at the round table?

Mr O'REILLY: That is right. It is publicly available, who was on the round table, plus what was discussed.

CHAIR: I will now move to questions from the Opposition.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Mr O'Reilly, or Minister, you mentioned earlier that there was a shortfall in the delivery of Home Care services last year and there was an amount from the budget carried over as a result. Can you outline for the Committee what the reasons were for the shortfall in those hours, how much money was carried over, and what is the situation this year to ensure that the full budget is being spent?

Mr O'REILLY: Mr Ryan, the Home Care service ended the year with a surplus in the regional operational budget. Basically managing client intake to services requires a complex assessment of their needs against demand, to avoid creating a recurrent funding problem in the future. I think that what happened in 2004-05, given that in 2003-04 they overspent the Home Care budget, there was a more cautious approach taken, hence the surplus. The effect of that approach was a reduction in the hours of service of 5.5 per cent and an expenditure of 3.5 per cent against the regional budget. That surplus is being applied to the 2005-06 budget for Home Care.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How many hours and how much money was involved in that surplus?

Mr O'REILLY: The actual dollars?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: We will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: If you have the figure, there is no reason for taking it on notice.

Mr O'REILLY: No. The final budget for 2004-05 presented a regional budget surplus of \$8.478 million and that money is being rolled over, as I mentioned, this year. All branches are open. The 48 Home Care branches are open and are taking client referrals now.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: What do you say to people who are missing out on Home Care when there is \$8 million of the budget not spent from last year, and what are you doing to make sure that you do not under-spend the budget by another \$8 million this year?

Mr O'REILLY: That is right. As I mentioned, in 2003-04 the actual budget was exceeded. To bring that back into line - and there is a range of factors why the budget was exceeded, because of demand levels, because of cost increases associated with the hours provided, and the staff costs - what was taken is a number of branches then elected to reduce their service intake and make referrals to the NGO sector, because that is where the growth money had been placed, \$11 million growth in that year from the Commonwealth. Matters were referred there. However, as the year wore on, it was realised that there was too cautious approach. The branches were open for business and to make sure that does not happen this year, a new financial system was put into place last year for Home Care, which allows us to monitor monthly the forecasting and expenditure usage pro rata.

As the funds are being used or not used, we are able see that under our new financial management system each month and we can actually transfer funds to other branches that have unmet needs. We

are confident that will not happen again, Mr Ryan.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Can the Minister explain exactly what the \$54.4 million that is indicated in the budget papers to stabilize the DADHC budget will be spent on? What does that expression mean and what will it be spent on?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Can you refer to the item that you are talking about, Mr Ryan, please?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: It is an expression I am drawing from the budget papers, the narrative that refers to the \$54.4 million. It is an expression used.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: In the budget speech?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: No, in the budget papers, at the beginning of Budget Paper No. 3 there is a narrative section.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: During 2004-05 the Government also provided an additional \$54 million to the department in light of increased demand for services. I think the narrative actually explains. I do not know what else I can actually say, to stabilise funding and service delivery arrangements. These increases are part of the department's expenses. I am not sure what I can add to that narrative.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: What does "stabilise" mean?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I cannot account for the choice of words, but from the context it is very clear that the narrative refers to increased response to increased demand for the department's services, which I think is a well rehearsed reality in terms of budgeting for this agency and service delivery arrangements, which includes costs of providers and so on. I could break down that figure much more precisely. Mr O'Reilly can probably give you a bit clearer picture.

Mr O'REILLY: During the course of the year, Mr Ryan, when I started on duty obviously the first thing to do was to make sure that the budget was under control. It was quickly recognised that to stabilize the budget there were certain allocations that were required. We met with Treasury and the \$54.8 million that we received were as follows - and there is a list if you would bear with me - school leaver program, an additional \$9.7 million; boarding house supports, \$5.4 million; viability claims for NGO organisations who were facing problems with increased costs, \$4.1 million; the DoCS and corrections clients that we were taking on because they were either coming out of gaol or reaching the age of 18 that required support, \$14.8 million; DADHC Group Homes, \$8.2 million; our large residentials, the Stocktons and the Marsdens, \$2.9 million; carers' programs \$300,000; voluntary redundancies \$5.3 million; and Business Link, who do our corporate processing, their indexation costs of \$5.9 million.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The term "stabilise" seems to give the impression that there has been some sort of previous budget overrun which had to be made up when it was discovered. Does that mean that these funds are now permanently built into the budget to ensure that those programs continue at that level, or was that a one-off panic measure to fill a black hole which will develop again?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: You are using very emotive terms there.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Well, I have to say that people in the sector think this is a budget in crisis that needs to be fixed. That is what the word "stabilise" seems to suggest.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I do not think anyone in the sector would be

complaining about any of these items and if they are complaining I have not net them. Mr O'Reilly has probably answered the question as adequately as he possibly could.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Are they now built permanently into the budget, or was that a one-off fix for things that had overrun previously and might overrun again?

Mr O'REILLY: It is a mixture. For instance, the viability claims, to address the viability claims there was a history of one-off money provided. We said look, it is silly to keep saying to non-government organisations yes, we know you need an extra \$1 million or \$2 million to remain viable. We needed to make that recurrent to their base. That became recurrent moneys. Around about \$40 million of that \$54.8 million became recurrent to our base. The rest were one-offs to fix particular issues at that time.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The one-off, for example, that you asked about with regard to NGO viability, the department has put in place some policy initiatives to try to ensure that does not happen again; issues like discussing with NGOs about sharing some corporate services, taking a different approach to the provision of their services and of course some of the department's initiatives around tendering for services, all of which are around support of the NGO sector, to make the changes it needs to get to greater certainty about its viability.

Mr O'REILLY: If I may add that given that we actually rebuilt the budget to understand exactly the DADHC budget when we started there, there were some shortfalls. We met with the sector. They came to us and said we have been arguing for four or five years about recurrent funding, rather than one-off funding. We actually addressed that by this approach, which is really important, because it allows them to get indexation on the recurrent moneys because it is part of their base which allows them to be able to plan ahead.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is there a lesser reliance now on clients who receive non-recurrent funding and then find themselves at crisis at the end of the allocation, meaning that the department then continues their funding and overruns the budget? Is that now a situation which has been addressed or are we going to find funds in next year's budget to stabilise what has happened this year, or is it over? That has been an expression used in two budgets, this year and last year.

Mr O'REILLY: When we received our moneys through the negotiations with Treasury, we brought our budget in on line based on that money. We did not overspend the budget. We came within the allocation and what that allows us to do is have the base for this financial year. We have our allocation, as the Minister said. We receive supplementation for a range of initiatives. We have to live within our budget. We have addressed those outstanding issues from previous years.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Minister, you confirmed in the House recently that you do intend to increase fees for Home Care services and fees for attendant care. Can you give the Committee an explanation why this is necessary, what the levels are going to be, and when you propose to be in a position to make an announcement about introducing fees for the very first time for attendant care services?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Madam Chair, as I indicated to Mr Ryan in the House and to the Chamber, it is important to be very clear that no decisions have been made yet about any fees for service in attendant care. I think he does understand that there is a number of services regularly and routinely provided by DADHC for which fees are charged and, indeed, most of the clients in the group home network are charged fees and so it is not in itself, I think, a critical issue. The point about it is, as I said in my introductory remarks, we are currently spending 45 per cent of our budget on three per cent of our clients. Part of the explanation for that is around issues about equity of access, or that creates issues around equity of act.

We have not made any decisions about changes to fees and fee structures but the intent of my

remarks in the House, and I can reaffirm today, no decisions have been made but we have not ruled out the proposition that you put to me in the House and have put to me again tonight.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Was it not true that a group of people from the service were actually briefed that these things would be introduced by a deputy director?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Can you be more specific?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I do not think the people would wish me to be more specific, but a deputy director told a group of people in a meeting that these fees would be introduced. What is going on? If no decision has been made, why were they told that?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Can you at least tell me the circumstances that you are speaking about, perhaps who the deputy director you are speaking about is?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I am sure they know.

Mr O'REILLY: Mr Ryan, in October last year the audit office report on the Home Care service reported that there was inconsistency in the charging of fees and recommended that a state-wide fee policy be introduced to ensure equity in the charging of fees. The department supported that recommendation and in a question in Parliament the then Minister also announced that she would implement the recommendations from the Auditor General's report. The department has researched the issues identified in the report and is in the process of preparing advice for consideration by Government with respect to fees.

We have not submitted a schedule of fees to the Government at this stage but any schedule of fees will provide a discount for clients receiving a Commonwealth pension and any schedule of fees will cap fees for clients who are receiving high level services. The clients who were concerned about their capacity to pay the scheduled fee will be able to apply for a review which will take into account expenses linked to their particular disability.

Currently what is happening in the Home Care service, we receive roughly \$11 million a year in revenues because there is a fee. However, it is not compulsory. What the Auditor General stated was when the Home Care worker asked the client if they had a capacity to pay, and the client said no, that was the end of the story. What was happening of course is there were clients next door who were paying and they were saying that the whole system is inequitable. You need a common fee structure but you also need to have concessions and also need to be able cap, depending on the number of hours and capacity to pay.

We have been working through that issue. We have involved the Home Care Advisory Board, to advise on matters with respect to Home Care and delivery of services, made up of independents, and we are currently doing some modelling to ensure that (1) we meet the Commonwealth requirements that we are not pushing people out of the system because of their inability to pay and (2) that any revenues received as a result, that goes back into the Home Care service. That is part of the agreement.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The Minister keeps chanting this mantra of 45% of your funds goes to 3% of your clients. Would it be fair to say that the 3% of clients who are receiving a significant amount of funding are probably people who have no resources of their own and their needs are very high? Does this mean that people who have high support needs and are having them met by the department are going to start having less of their needs met in order to make the dollars spread more thinly across the whole sector?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I hope that you are not suggesting anything sectarian by referring to chanting, but I think the most important point to make is that clearly the assertion - which is absolutely accurate - that we are spending 45% of our budget on 3% of our clients - is an indication of a problem. That means that there is a very significant, and it is almost a cliché in this

sector, unmet need. Now that is not at all a suggestion that what we would do would provide lesser or drop the standards in relation to any of the current clients. What is important is that we are efficiently delivering those services and also that one of the reasons why we end up with people in relatively high cost circumstances is because the interventions are not early enough in their program of needs.

Behind all these numbers are real people who have various kinds of needs that become more acute or more chronic when they are not attended to. For example, people who may make the transition into a group home much earlier in the process of life than they would, simply because their family is no longer able to cope. My grandmother used to have a saying called penny wise, pound foolish and in that sense what we are trying to do is be pound wise as well as penny wise, by make sure that, through case management, through better provision of services, through better aligning services earlier in the process of people's needs, until waiting until their needs become critical and then they become much higher costs needs.

If we could get people some in home care packages or some better respite or some in home respite or some day care, that might mean their family is able to more easily cope for a much longer period of time for stalling the need perhaps for a new group home place. On the other hand, people who are in group homes who might need more intense levels of support because they were not able to make the transition into a group home at the right time and they end up with behavioural needs that are more acute, and that means obviously much more labour intensive supervision and the like, and that costs more.

What we are trying to do and the reform that we are talking about around the concept of changing that equation, is not to lower the standards for people who have high needs, but more to make sure that we address people before they get to the point of having relatively high needs, whatever that individual's circumstances are.

Can I just add a couple of points on Mr O'Reilly's answer to you about Home Care fees. I think it is important to emphasise that the Home Care service does not and will not deny service to clients unable to afford any fee in any circumstance. It is also important to note, talking about chanting, you have on a number of occasions made great point about the first administration or the first minister to apply fees to attending care, you said no decision has been made, but it is important to understand - to turn your second question on its head - that currently people in the high needs pool are paying fees as a matter of routine, so that is an important issue that needs to be recognised and that any fees, either those currently collected or any notional change in the fee structure would be used to support people with a disability and their carers and other older people. In other words, in no sense would it be a measure of return to the general revenue, it would be in order to enhance services for DADHC clients.

CHAIR: Do the Government members have any questions?

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: No questions at this time, thank you.

CHAIR: Reverend Nile, would you like another ten minutes now?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: All right.

CHAIR: I have indicated to Dr Chesterfield-Evans that he may be late back and he can have his ten minutes later.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: A basic question Minister, how many respite beds are currently available in New South Wales?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The Government substantially increased funds for respite services for older people and people with a disability. Funding for respite care has doubled since 1996, with a total investment of over \$158 million last financial year. This includes additional \$1.6 million recurrent funding announced in June 2003. There are about 400 respite beds in centres operated and/or funded by the Department of Ageing Disability Home Care as at now.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: What current strategies are in place to clear current blockages to respite beds and how would the effectiveness of these strategies be monitored?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: We understand the importance of respite care for people who care for a person with a disability and we are committed to expanding the current services. It is important, however I think, to be careful about initiatives which are simply aimed at unblocking so-called blocked respite beds. That again, back to the point I was making in my responses to Mr Ryan, that may well not be the best - although it has some political attractions - it may not be the best way to expand available respite and available care services for people who need them, because we are thinking that better investment in case management and a whole range of other initiatives which we have already I think made to various degrees public, would also complement any set of policy decisions to reduce the number of beds currently blocked in respite.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Can you indicate how many beds are in fact blocked and for what reasons?

Mr O'REILLY: With regards to the DADHC operated services, there are 77 blocked beds and with regards to the non-government sector, the information we have is that there are 3 beds blocked. When the Minister also announced in his opening address, about the \$48 million in partnership with the Commonwealth for respite for older carers, it is a joint initiative, what we have also been able to negotiate with the Commonwealth is that where we have surplus capacity, the priority is for the aged carer - and we still have surplus capacity - we will be able to use that for respite services as well, part of that funding moneys and also the fact that there is now \$48 million more into the system, with the Commonwealth's involvement, we will be able to have greater access to the respite services generally.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: What is the main reason then, for say 77 Government beds blocked? Is it simply lack of funds or lack of staff?

Mr O'REILLY: No at times, it just gets too much for families, it breaks down. The families go through the incredibly difficult decision of saying, I can no longer cope caring for my son or daughter and I need support, and often times the media or areas have said that the parents have abandoned the child. They have not abandoned the person at all. What they are saying is I cannot do it any longer in my own home without the support.

In the years gone by we found that in 1998 149 beds were blocked. In June 2002 there were 70 blocked. In March 2003 there were 71 blocked. So there is a sort of a cycle but we actually provide supports to the family with regards to providing case work planning, emergency supported accommodation, local co-ordinators. We try to find other avenues to provide respite services.

There was a question that Mr Ryan raised earlier on about the 3% of clients using 45-plus% of the budget. Basically they are the clients who are in 24/7 care. They are either in our large residential or in our group homes. That will always be the case, that funding level there. What we have to do though is be able to provide more services in the intervention end and the respite end, and this \$48 million and the initiative from the Commonwealth and the State joining together is a huge change. It is a huge amount of money being able to come into the system to help support the respite needs.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: It is obviously a big job keeping track of all the supported accommodation. Do you have any reliable methods in place to identify the demand for and supply of accommodation. For example, is there a departmental computerised data base that is able to indicate at the click of a button, incidents of supply supported accommodation across New South Wales, are there measures in place to register the need for supported accommodation by potential clients and if not, are you planning to introduce one?

Ms WANNAN: The department introduced in the last week the new client information service where we have, for the first time, got integrated information about clients across all aspects of the department's work. What that is going to be able to mean is that we will be able to monitor very well what you are talking about in terms of the demands for services. We will then integrate that with the information we have about the non-government sector and the department and it is an area that we

are investing a lot more effort into in terms of aligning the demand and the different types of demand that families have across New South Wales.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You said a moment ago you would bring the non-government sector on line as well.

Ms WANNAN: No, no, the client information service is a system that departmental staff use. We have got over 500 staff that work in what are called community support teams working with people with disabilities, in addition to the staff that work in group homes and in Home Care service. The staff that work in the community support teams work intensively with families and individuals and what we have done is invest in new computer infrastructure to be able to actually integrate the requests that people are making for services with what people are actually doing and working to support families.

Historically we did not have those things integrated and now it is happening behind the scenes for staff, so it does not involve any additional work for staff, but will put us in a much better place about understanding where the demands are, and then what we have got is, the data that we hold about the non-government sector, where we fund places, and then we have got the data about where our places are, and what we do now, whenever we release additional money for new services, we never just look at ourselves, we always look at ourselves and the non-government sector and combine, because that is really the disability services system.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Have you had complete co-operation with the non-government sector to work within this program, providing information and so on?

Ms WANNAN: In terms of the data that we get from the non-government sector as part of the funding agreement and the information they provide to us, the non-government sector is also required to report under the NDS, which is the data arrangement that we have with the Commonwealth Government and we find a good willingness for people to work with us.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Obviously if they do not give you the data, they do not get the funding. It is an incentive.

Mr O'REILLY: Also at the regional level, we also have under the vacancy management system, there are monthly meetings with the other providers, so that we automatically know where the vacancies are. We are also working with the NGO sector, find out where their vacancies are, then there is an approach taken by clinicians about, okay, there are these people on the list who are desirous of accommodation and support, whole check lists are gone through and then we activate those vacancies that way. But the new client information system, which has been eighteen months, two years in the making, it is a huge step forward for us to be able to record this information and keep this detail.

Reverend The Hon. FRED NILE: What mechanisms are in place to deal with the transfer of high need clients from DoCS to this department when they turn 18? Will all high need clients be transferred in this manner? If not, what policies are in place to determine whether a transfer is appropriate, or if measures are in place to deal with circumstances where a transfer is not appropriate, and can a transfer back to DoCS occur?

Mr O'REILLY: This financial year we received funding. I think it is fair to say basically what was happening in the past with regards to the allocation to the department there was a formula driven approach of vacancies that would arise in our accommodation arrangements. In years gone by that vacancy was around about 3.5 per cent. Because of better care and better arrangements, the vacancy rate has dropped to less than half of one per cent. We went back to Treasury and stated that we have clients who are reaching the age of 18 years of age, who are State wards, and at 18 they are no longer classified as State wards but if they have a disability they still require support and services. In the past the vacancy factor used to allow for that. It no longer did.

This year we received over \$10 million for us to be able to provide those supports to the DoCS clients and also, for the first time, to people exiting the criminal justice system. What we have

done is we have worked with DoCS to be able to go through their data to be able to say who were these clients, at what stage do they become no longer State wards, so we have an early intervention and planning process for what supports they need now that we have the funding to be able to do this.

CHAIR: That is the end of the timeframe. I will turn to the Opposition.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Can I just ask for a further update on the blocked beds situation? We have had some figures which were contained in a letter from Mr O'Reilly which suggested a survey in May 2005 indicated there were 73 out of 244 respite beds, so are you saying there is now 77?

Mr O'REILLY: 77.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Given that letter and the budget indicated that the department was going to spend an extra \$2.2 million a year, how is it that the level of blocked beds has remained pretty much the same even though we are halfway through the year.

Mr O'REILLY: To unblock the bed we have to obviously either secure more accommodation through the NGO sector or purchase our own buildings. Unfortunately that does take time. It also requires negotiation with the parents or the carers about where that person is going to be located so that they can still gain access and we also need to look at the compatibility issues between clients when we move them to a supported accommodation arrangement.

Although it is \$2.2 million there, when we look at the \$48 million that has now been agreed to with the Commonwealth and that was only happening last week, that agreement, we will be moving to identify with the NGO sector a whole new arrangement for respite so that we can actually increase the bed capacity so we can prevent the breakdowns in the future hopefully. With the 77 unfortunately, Mr Ryan, we cannot control when it happens. We can come up with the proposals and we can actually lower the number, but when circumstances in a family get to a certain stage, it could be because of accident or injury or factors we cannot control, and they do block a respite bed, those numbers just move up and down.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: One imagines that this program which has been rolling on since, I think, last year and is still rolling on, so one would imagine there would be a period of times when beds would be being blocked and beds would be being unblocked. There appears there is no movement at all. In terms of running the number down, is \$2.2 million sufficient to run that number down such that over the first four year term we are not going to have any blocked beds in four years?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: We could not possibly say that.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Or at least eliminate it to a point where it is minimal, rather than nearly 30 per cent of the available beds.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think that the point Mr O'Reilly made before by indicating the level of blocked respite beds over a lengthy timeframe indicates again that policy issue that we are attempting to confront with the accommodation paper and with putting a large amount of the department's resources into case management, community liaison workers, family support, all of those sorts of initiatives, because we want to ensure as far as possible that people have less incentives, if that is the right way of putting it - it is probably not the perfect way of putting it - but have fewer incentives to block the respite by, as Mr O'Reilly says, not the correct terminology or fair terminology but for to me to use it, in saying that people are abandoned into respite.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Sometime people refer to being relinquished.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Relinquished is the correct technical term, yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How many beds do you expect the \$2.2 million will allow you to unblock during the course of a year?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I can give you an example. One respite unit that you may be aware of, and I think you are aware of, the Angelsea respite unit, the funding for respite care has doubled, as you know, from 1996 but from time to time, as Mr O'Reilly has already said, due to an unexpected breakdown at home, a person with a disability will occupy a bed for longer than planned. We describe that as a respite bed being blocked. In the case where we anticipate that it will be able to be unblocked, we describe as temporarily blocked. At the Angelsea centre there were three beds temporarily unavailable. For this reason in the Angelsea respite facility one of the children at Angelsea has been found an alternative replacement outside of the respite system and that means that particular bed was blocked.

Two case managers have been appointed to work with the other children in Angelsea and their families to ensure permanent placements are found for them as soon as possible. That will unblock those beds. Additional case workers will also work with the children missing out on respite because the difficulty with the blockage of respite is, as a rough calculation, each respite bed perhaps when it is blocked is then blocking respite for up to five or six, and at least four or five families, which means that those families then become stressed fairly quickly because they are unable to achieve respite, which means that they are likely to abandon or relinquish care of the person with the disability into a respite service, or put the department in a position where there is little alternative but to leave them in a respite care bed.

That is, I think, the point that we have been trying to emphasise in terms of the allocation of resources to fix the problems that are manifested or seem to exist because of blocked respite. It is not just about unblocking the beds, it is about making sure that people do not have the incentive to block the beds in the first place, by better case managing their problems and managing people out into permanent accommodation, so it is not as simple as being able to measure the number of beds unblocked in any given year because also the point--

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That is all true but I think people do want a rough idea of what was your plan. When you allocated \$2.2 million for respite this year, how many beds did you think that would unblock?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: We have described our plan.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Why pick 2.2 as a figure? What was the planning behind that, or was there no plan? Was it a figure just plucked out of the air?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I can be quite specific about the number of support workers, case workers, that that supported and I can provide that figure to you. If not now, I can provide it to you by way of notice.

Reverend The Hon. FRED NILE: It was mostly salaries, was it?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes. Currently of the 77 we have 14 that have solutions which have been identified which will unblock 14 of those beds. We have \$48 million from the Federal Government and the State Government.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I will come to that in a minute. You do not have \$48 million.

Mr O'REILLY: Over three years, which will help to deliver the capacity. We may be able to make an offer for a place to move a person out of a blocked bed, but sometimes the parents say the location is unacceptable.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I really understand how this works. This is about the budget. Did you have a specific figure in mind when you allocated \$2.2 million and, if so, what was it? What did you expect \$2.2 million to do?

Mr O'REILLY: It increased the number of case workers to help prevent the increased blockage of beds.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: You cannot just divide, for example, \$100,000, which is the approximate cost of full care for supportive accommodation, which means you will unblock roughly 30 beds. It is not possible to do that calculation with that money?

Mr O'REILLY: That is one way to look at it. Of course, it is not always \$100,000. Sometimes it is providing in-home supports and that kind of thing. We worked out on the basis that we needed to unblock on average about 50 beds per annum.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That is what \$2.2 million will do?

Mr O'REILLY: That is all things being equal.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: It took us a while to get there. With regard to the Federal-State funding, the truth is that this is money that has been on offer from the Federal Government but you have not yet signed an agreement; is that true?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: No.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The Federal Minister says that no agreement has been signed so therefore you still have to work out the details and so I imagine this money would not become available until next financial year?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The New South Wales Government has agreed on an additional \$48 million over three years of joint funding with the Commonwealth for respite for older carers.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: But not this year.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: That funding will deliver at least 1,000 respite places ranging from limited to intensive support. The respite will be delivered in ways to meet individual and family needs, centre based and in-home. A bilateral agreement between New South Wales and the Commonwealth is currently being finalised, which you are obviously well briefed on, under which this funding will be administered. I am looking forward to the completion of the agreement with the Federal Minister.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: When do you expect to be in a position to complete that and to start spending the money, because you and Mr O'Reilly have been using the reference to the word "now". The simple truth is that this is not money that is going to be all available until the next budget, is it?

Mr O'REILLY: Because it is also State and Federal moneys, the agreement is that it does not have to be \$8 million each per year over the three years. Depending on availability of funds at the Commonwealth or State level we expect \$11 million to be available this year through our State arrangements and we have sent the Commonwealth a bilateral agreement. We have sent that down for signing.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: This has to be new money, does it not?

Mr O'REILLY: That is correct.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: It cannot be money you have already intended to spend?

Mr O'REILLY: Correct.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: And you have identified additional money for this budget, have you?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes, we have negotiated that over the next three years the State will place \$24 million and the Commonwealth has made the offer of \$24 million as well.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is one of those years 2005-06?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The other thing is that the requirements of this particular arrangement appear to very quite specific. For example, it is only available to older carers and, as I understand, one of the requirements is that the people who access respite under this plan have to be hospitalised for a period of a week during the course of a year. That would not be a description you would have of many people who would require respite. There would be lots of other people with unmet needs for respite, who would be younger and would not have been in hospital. What do you propose to do for them?

I was somewhat surprised by how narrow the focus was of this program from the Federal Government. I think it could have been a reasonable critique you could have made of the plan, that it was very narrow in its focus.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: We are always reasonable in our critiques and we did in fact make that critique. The money was on the table and we have agreed with the Commonwealth that once older carers, which is essentially their focus in this particular program, and we respect that that is the Commonwealth's policy priority at this particular point of time, but we do have an understanding with the Commonwealth that once the program does meet the needs of older carers, then other people who do not meet the immediate criteria will be able to access the program. This was announced and was something understood by the Commonwealth when we made the announcement.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Last year - and I think we have been encountering this problem throughout this discussion - I expressed frustration on the lack of output data that is provided by DADHC. Minister, you agreed with me and said that it was fair criticism. What has been done to improve the capacity of the department to report on its output data? I think you did mention a new CIS data base. Can you describe to the Committee exactly what information you will be able to get in terms of information categories at least so that next we will be in a position to better target our questions, knowing that you will be able to answer them.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Before I ask Mr O'Reilly to answer that question, could you clarify something? You said that I made the point. I was not the Minister last year.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I think Mr O'Reilly made the point probably, but the Minister at the time agreed that there was a lack of output data because almost all of your descriptions of what you are doing in your program have always been in dollar terms. They are always we are spending \$x. We find out very little in terms of how many beds, how many hours, how many case workers and so on. It is always describing how much money you are spending and that is not necessarily, as you know, a very good way of measuring the output of the Department of Disability Services, as we have just discovered with respite services.

Ms WANNAN: One of the areas that we are investing a lot of energy in at the moment is to do with children and their families and with those initiatives we will be releasing \$8.3 million this financial year. Based on our estimates, we think we will be able to assist 2,130 families. We have got breakdowns by each of the service types, so in terms of our alternate family care, what we will be achieving in our family support program, what we will be achieving with our additional case workers and the work that we will be doing with the children, the very small number of children living in group homes.

So in terms of that new initiative, it is very clear about the level of demand that we will be able to assist. We have got clear output measures and we will be negotiating with the successful non-government organizations that will be providing these services, form of measures, that we will then be reporting quarterly on.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That is a small area of detail but there are lots of other services that Disability Services provides, respite, early intervention services, therapy services and so on. Will the CIS data base enable us to be able to know how many services are provided both by Government providers, non-government providers, what the level of unmet need is, and so on and perhaps by next year we will be talking about the numbers of things you produce as opposed to the amount of money input which the Government spends.

Mr O'REILLY: I think under the client information system, and I think I need to fess up, that it was me who made the comment about whether the data was there or not. Basically what the client information system will be able to provide us is, not only the number of group homes we have got, but the number of clients in each of the group homes. It will be able to provide the respite number of centres, the number of beds, the number of occupations, the number of blocked beds, how long they have been blocked. It will also provide information with regards to our therapy services, how many people are getting services, how many people have had referrals under the Home Care arrangements, what referrals have been made to other agencies, what numbers we have provided services to by region, that sort of thing.

I think the client information system will provide a lot better output data and there is also another system to come into train, which is the workforce management system - it does not sound too sexy I know - but it is critically important.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I am the Shadow Minister for Commerce, I do understand.

Mr O'REILLY: It is critically important for us because of our 12,000 staff and what services are offering and when.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Can I make a suggestion that maybe the Minister might take up. Often the discussion of these computer information data bases do not make a lot of sense in the abstract, is it possible that a briefing might be made available to a number of members of Parliament, both on the Upper and the Lower Houses, who might like to have a briefing on what the new CIS will produce and how it works and perhaps insight, with a computer to look at.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Of course, we would be happy to do that.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I am sure there would be lots of people that would be interested in that. I know I only have minutes left in this particular bracket but I might ask you for an update as to what is happening with regards to Nardy House. I have had the opportunity to read the report that was prepared by Mr Dougie Herd. It makes a number of recommendations but I have to say it does not look like it is very conclusive into what is going to happen in the future. Minister, can you explain what you are going to do? Whilst Mr Herd says that people should give and take and so on, there should be some funding provided, he has been very circumspect in terms of his exact recommendations. Have you any idea what is going to happen to see clients start moving into Nardy House?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Well, I think you are quite aware of some of the issues. On August 18, as your question anticipates, I asked Mr Dougie Herd, the Director of the

Disability Council, to help broker a solution. I think essentially the issue is around the claim by the committee that operate Nardy House that to provide the services they need under their current trust deed arrangements and within the plans and intentions that they have had for some time, they need recurrent funding of approximately \$1 million. On the other hand, they have been asking the Government to reiterate or for me to reiterate on behalf of the Government the Government's intention to provide some recurrent funding.

Now I need to make a number of points, one of which is purely academic because issues have gone beyond it, but the original Nardy House agreement between the Government and the committee provided for us to, that is the Government, the State, to provide capital funding for the Nardy House project but for the committee to provide funding for recurrent services effectively from other sources the agreement says. I think it is important to understand that even subsequent to the original remarks made by my now predecessor not but one but two, Faye Lo Po, that we are not obliged by the terms of that agreement, that is the Government are not obliged, to provided recurrent funding for the service of Nardy House.

Nonetheless, I have, on a number of occasions, repeated our commitment. I am not sure if Mr O'Reilly has publicly repeated this as well on my behalf, but it has been repeated by officers of the department during discussions, that the Government intends to provide recurrent support for Nardy House to commence operating.

A couple of the issues, and you say Mr Herd is circumspect, I think in some ways he is quite specific and puts his finger on what have been the issues, but the one concern, as I understand, and this is a matter of public record, it has been repeated on a number of occasions by representatives of the committee, one concern is that the proposals that the department has put to the Nardy House committee have not provided for a focus on what are described as people with severe and profound disabilities. We have been saying all along, and I can repeat now for the benefit of the public record, that of course we believe that the facility should be able to provide respite care for people with severe and profound disability but given the commitment that has been made to Nardy House, given that there is now a requirement for ongoing recurrent funding, we want to make sure that there is respite care for a range of people in the Bega Valley who require respite care and support.

Essentially there is still, I think, an argument around that issue. I have a great deal of faith that that argument will be resolved satisfactorily in the relatively near future. The inter agency group in the Bega Valley, the Bega Valley Respite Co-ordination Group, which is obviously the representative group of the non-government organizations that provide respite, are working with Mr Herd and the Nardy House committee to provide a solution which is satisfactory all round.

Unfortunately, these things are never simple and I am a little bit surprised that the Nardy House issue is as complex as it is, but it has a history that long precedes my role in the department. I am aware of a facility that is quite an outstanding facility physically which needs to be used and there is a significant need in the Bega Valley. It appears to be not just around those clients that the committee is focussed on but there are a range of other people with disabilities.

The other concern I think, which has been publicly expressed on a number of occasions and certainly expressed to me in some semi private discussions with some of the people from the Nardy House committee, a concern that people with, perhaps challenging behaviours or people who might endanger people with severe and profound disabilities would be in the respite care at the same time. Obviously the department has very, very clear practices in relation to those sorts of matters and the safety of all people in the respite service would be paramount in any discussions about programs or the mixes of use or proposals to use the facility.

I think that sort of summarises where we are up to. It does not do any great service to the history but I think we would need the entire 2 ½ hours of the estimates committee to try and give a history of how we got to where we are, but I think the committee is demonstrating some good will to wanting to resolve the issues and certainly I am anxious that DADHC and Mr Herd and the Bega Valley Respite Group are able to resolve the issues as soon as practicable.

CHAIR: I will give Dr Chesterfield-Evans an opportunity for ten minutes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do I gather then that Nardy House is not operating?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: No.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It has been built but.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: It has been built.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So it is a white elephant at the moment.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: You can use those words, whatever you like, Dr Chesterfield-Evans.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It is a recently built facility with no activity, is that what you are saying?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: That is what you are saying.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It does not have any patients in it funded by either you?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: It would not have patients anyway, it would have people with a disability.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Clients?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: It would have clients. At the moment, I think I made it very clear, that there are no clients using the service.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Minister, are there any plans to adopt private/public partnerships models for community and residential care services?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Well, I cannot pull a plan out of my back pocket Dr Chesterfield-Evans, but clearly, I think I was saying to the committee both while you were here and briefly while you were out of the room, that we have had accommodation reform or accommodation innovation discussions with a number of key people in the sector in the form of round tables. We have called for extensive submissions. We received - I think I said before in evidence before the committee - approximately 200 submissions. Some of those submissions are around innovations to do with funding models. Some of them emphasise the actual model of accommodation. What we will be looking towards doing is what provides the best possible services for people.

I think we indicated prior to this line of questioning in another line of questioning, we would have some trials coming out of the accommodation round table process and that those trials would inform a more comprehensive expansion of the choices people might have for accommodation services.

So it is possible that what you might broadly describe as PFP models or social capital models, or other kinds of models, could be part of the program but we do not have any specific policy intention but we have not got a closed mind either.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You are saying that there are no policy models in the public domain that you might talk about or show us at this point?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Well, there are lots of policy models about PFPs but I said in answer to the Honourable Reverend Fred Nile's questions that we would be absolutely transparent about the trial process and about any kind of tendering or expression of interest process out of that and we would be absolutely transparent about the results and progress of it. So if that process does include any PFP type arrangements or social capital arrangements, then we would

obviously be prepared to be absolutely transparent about them, but at the moment, I do not have a model I can put in front of you.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Transparency means that you see the ad in the paper and it is transparently there?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: No, if you go to our website, the Department of Disability, Ageing & Home Care's website, go through the various clicks and everything else you have to do to operate the website, you will find that there is an extensive record on the web there of the various submissions, of the progress of the round table so far and you will be able to read quite a bit of detail and I think, if my memory serves me well, you will find more than one submission which deals with funding issues that could be broadly described as PFPs.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is that where the department is up to, considering those submissions? What happens is we get vague notice that things are being considered and the next thing we know is that the tender is there.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: No. For a start, we are only talking about trials and expression of interest for the conduct of trials, and the emphasis is on choice for people with a disability, their families, carers and the community. The emphasis of the trials will be about the various physical options, the actual way in which we provide accommodation services. The emphasis will not be on funding models.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You may remember in the group homes tender there was a great deal of angst about the idea that existing interpersonal relationships and families were being broken, or suggested were being broken as the homes were to be tendered out. Can you give a guarantee that those factors will be of primary importance when the funding models are considered?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Of course. The department's clear priority is the choices and life opportunities of people with disabilities that are currently under its care or who are its clients. It goes without saying that will be one of our priorities.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In the Home Care I note that the number of people, I think it is, has dropped and the number of services has dropped, and I gather that there is a little asterisk which says \$33 million more is coming, but it will be put out to tender.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Can you tell me the page number?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Page 19-48, full-time equivalents. We are talking Home Care service, 19-48.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I can see the point you are referring to but I am not sure what the question was.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: This is obviously a tendering model. Are you planning to run private successful tenderers with departmental people?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: No.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Will that mix change?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think you are misinterpreting what that refers to, Dr Chesterfield-Evans. Are you referring to the point that says Government funding for services under the HACC program will rise to an estimated \$33.5 million in 2005-06? Well, under the HACC program there is growth funding provided and some of the HACC funding is absorbed by our own Home Care service, and some of the HACC funding is absorbed by non-government organisations

which provide services through HACC. That particular item refers to the fact that we will be distributing the proceeds of \$33.5 million worth of additional growth funding for the service.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Some of that will go to the Government if it successfully tenders and some will go to private tenderers; is that right?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Correct. I think it is correct to say, and Mr O'Reilly is free to correct me, that we have no private for profit providers at the moment. They are all non-government organisations and charities.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is it likely to be corporatised, the Home Care service?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: In which context are you asking that? You mean our Home Care service?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes, is it likely to be corporatised?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: It is a statutory body. We have no plans to corporatise it.

Mr O'REILLY: If I may, normally what happens each year we go out to tender through the HACC funding for growth moneys. There was one year that Home Care was told they were not allowed to tender because there was a policy to grow the market. That was rescinded last year because there were obviously problems with that arrangement. Home care, if they are competitive and win the tender, they get the work. It is a standard arrangement that we go out to tender for growth funds to allow any provider, including Government provider, to be able to compete. There is no change to that at all. It is the same system that has been in operation for a number of years. Can I clarify one thing?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes.

Mr O'REILLY: With regards to the for profits, under the HACC arrangement with the Commonwealth they can - the for profits are eligible to apply for funding through the Home and Community Care Agreement.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: For profits can apply?

Mr O'REILLY: There is only a few.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are you aware of the Australian community sector survey done by NCOSS in New South Wales?

The Hon. Christine ROBERTSON: When was it done?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: 2005.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Can you elaborate, please, Dr Chesterfield-Evans?

The Hon. ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: My understanding is it is from NCOSS, is that not right, the Australian Community Sector Survey, which looked at the demand for community sector services?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I have not seen the document you were showing me before, no.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Perhaps I should talk you through it.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Perhaps you should. I am always happy to be educated.

CHAIR: You have 33 seconds.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: 59 per cent of people had increased waiting lists. 12 per cent did not. 52 per cent had increased referrals out of their services. 70 per cent had increased referrals into services. 43 per cent did not meet demands for existing services. 75 per cent had more complex needs than before. 75 per cent had a increase in the use of unfunded work amongst their staff. I just put that into the context, Minister, of your 5.6 per cent increase and your Pricewaterhouse study of what the demand was in the sense that that demand relates to known waiting lists or demands.

CHAIR: Minister, prior to answering that, can I clarify does the government have any questions?

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: No, thank you very much.

CHAIR: I will allow Dr Chesterfield-Evans a further five minutes, Reverend Nile five minutes more and the Opposition 10 minutes more and we will conclude at 7.30 on that basis.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Dr Chesterfield-Evans, I take on board the point you make about that report.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It is the community sector, not entirely your area.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Could I just say that on the two questions you referred to, one on the work we are having done by PricewaterhouseCoopers on services and growth in our sector, NCOSS were consulted about the form of work and were fully briefed about our expectations arising out of that work and secondly, NCOSS itself, and certainly some of its affiliates, were represented at the accommodation round table. In the key areas of reform we have had extensive interaction with NCOSS on the issues of need and current demand levels.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What work have you done in terms of graded support levels within the community? Have there been changes in the models?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I am not sure that I understand. Can you be a bit more specific with your question, please?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: At some levels we are deinstitutionalising and trying to have a lesser percentage of our old people in institutions, so that means you have a greater percentage of people being supported in the community. What steps are being taken to grade that support from minimalist to higher? I understand there were some models of home support systems being trialled.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: You are asking about in-home respite?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In home support principally.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: In home support or devolution? I am not sure which of the questions you are asking.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I do not think you are still devolving, or are you still devolving?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You are still devolving?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Should I ask you questions about how many you have devolved then?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I have asked that.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: That has been attended to.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I will leave that to my colleague.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: We have allocated more than \$445 million to provide long-term accommodation for approximately 5,000 people with a disability. It is a bit hard to go beyond that, is an answer to your question, because I am not sure what you mean by grading our standard of accommodation. What we are trying to do is identify better ways to identify the specific needs of individuals who require disability support and provide it so that what we are looking to do is not be so rigid about the boundaries between respite services, in-home services and support provided by way of case workers and management in the home.

I am not exactly sure if I can answer you in any better way than to say that one of the things we are trying to concentrate on is better deliver the kinds of service that meet individual's needs which we happen to also believe will relieve some of the cost pressure on delivering service and allow us to deliver to a much wider range of people, because if we get to identify people's needs earlier and give them support earlier we actually deliver them a better result and also do that at less cost.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I think you are answering me in the sense that with more flexibility you can get more - it is a matter of flexibility to pass the bureaucratic categories, or we offer this service, which one do you fit into?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I could not have said that better myself, thank you.

Reverend The Hon. FRED NILE: Yes, Minister.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You are doing that, Minister. What index do you have of this in terms of how many people get the support levels they need? If you were delivering a variety of services to a variety of people with different needs, what level of measure do you have?

Ms WANNAN: We use a range of measures within the department about assessing need. With support accommodation we have used a Vermont model, where we would look at the range of different needs and then we would look at funding in relation to that. In terms of the post school program, the work we are doing with the Wollongong University is looking at the relationship between different classifications of need and cost, which is another arrangement around that and in HACC we have a range of different models there. In emergency response we have a range of different benchmarks as well, so what is common around all of those programs is a person with, say, lower support needs, requires a different level of support than a person with higher support needs, and we do not leave it just up to an individual person to say I think this is what this person requires,

because we have got to balance client equity right across the state. What we use is a range of different assessment tools to assist us.

Increasingly within the department what we will be doing is making sure that the assessment tools are just not rigidly applied, but we use them as a guide and then we apply local discretion around making sure that the packages that go to individuals or the funding arrangements to group homes, or the arrangement that happens with the non-government sector balances individual need with client equity across the state. We have a range of different models to do with assessment that we are happy to share.

CHAIR: Thank you. Reverend Nile?

Reverend The Hon. FRED NILE: Minister, we mentioned earlier about services being charged to clients. In regard to the Home Care service of New South Wales are costs of services provided by mainstream community based provider streamlined across New South Wales and does the Home Care service have a fee schedule that can be used as a guide for providers in costing their services to clients?

Mr O'REILLY: We currently are working out the models for what would be - we currently receive fees through Home Care based on a voluntary contribution virtually. What we have done is looked at that information and how much people are paying for the level of service. We then are using that to find out how many people are not paying or contributing to a service and whether or not that is because of financial hardship. We are modelling that work now. That has not finished yet. We are only in early discussions with not only the staff but also with the Home Care Advisory Board before we make a submission to the Minister with regards to fees. Of course, any fee schedule has to have an allowance for fee concessions and also capping of the fee itself, depending on the number of hours.

A person who only has, say, four hours a month might well be able afford, pick a figure, whilst a person who requires 60 hours a month obviously you could not charge the same hourly rate. It would be prohibitive for them. That is the modelling we are currently doing. What we would do with that is we would be advising not on the clients, of course, but also the sector generally, all the sector that are currently providing a Home Care type service so they would be looking at what fees they currently charge to see whether it is in line.

Reverend The Hon. FRED NILE: When do you think that will be finalised, the fee schedule, six months or 12 months time?

Mr O'REILLY: We have done a lot of work on that. I cannot commit when the Government is going to making make a decision on that, but I believe we will have the modelling finished by the end of this year definitely.

Reverend The Hon. FRED NILE: The audit office did an audit on the department and made a number of recommendations. Will all the audit office recommendations be implemented? Have they been implemented? If not, what are the reasons for not implementing all of the audit office's recommendations and are there any assessment measures to determine whether those audit office recommendations are effectively implemented?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: You are referring to the audit office report of Home Care Service?

Reverend The Hon. FRED NILE: The report of October 2004.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The report highlighted a number of areas of good practice in the Home Care service and made some recommendations, including clarifying the position

of the Home Care Service as a provider in the community care continuum, developing a better regime for managing and access to and exit from the service, and developing a state-wide policy on client financial contributions, which I think was the point of your questions to Mr O'Reilly.

The department has developed a number of initiatives in response to the report, which it will finalise during this year and, as I have said in response to some questions tonight and to some other questions in the Chamber to Mr Ryan, the Government has not made any final determinations about proposals in relation to fees, but clearly all of the equity issues we have rehearsed tonight, all of the issues in relation to the occasions on which fees will be considered, will be part of the Government's consideration, as they are currently part of the department's response to the audit report.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Are you saying that the fee area is the only area that you have not implemented, all the others have been implemented?

Mr O'REILLY: There were a series of recommendations. The Government announced that they would adopt those recommendations. We have been working on also the segmentation of business, with regards to how many hours we provide for personal care as against domestic care, housekeeping type arrangements, because that has to link also to our funding agreement with the Commonwealth. We have done a lot of work on that, which has meant going to every branch in New South Wales, looking at the current ratios of those components, segmenting the business, seeing how many people require less than, let's say ten hours a month, those that require between ten and twenty five hours a month and those that are higher than that.

We have also got some limitations with regard to our agreement for the high needs side of things with the Commonwealth, it is round about \$1 million dollars we are allowed to allocate towards high needs and we are linking that to the segmentation of business as well. So there has been a lot of work done on this.

The other one we are also looking at with the Home Care Advisory Board is redoing the customer satisfaction survey. We did that a number of years ago. Our biggest problem is the home care service, the brand name Home Care is the first port of call for people who think, I need home care, they ring Home Care. There are an enormous number of providers who also get Government funding for home care type activities. Home Care NSW has only 34% of the market, that is their business component, so the other 60-plus% is out there with Government funding, through the HACC program to provide those services, so the referral arrangements are critically important as well, and that is what we have been working with the NGOs on.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Perhaps the home care directory should have some of the NGOs numbers listed as well as the department, the major ones?

Mr O'REILLY: Certainly, and our referral system is going to be able to link that to the better service delivery plan, which was a whole of Government initiative where there was about \$18 million put in. The link is there for a referral system for all providers, Government and non-government, to record their details, so that the person who requires a home care service, for instance, can look through the better service delivery, and say right, here are all the providers in my area that I can access.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: That would be very good.

CHAIR: Mr Ryan.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: We have only got ten minutes left and I am desperate to cut out the amount of written correspondence we will need so I was just wondering if I could go through a few questions quickly. First of all, the Ombudsman tabled a report in Parliament with regard to children's services and at the conclusion of that report it referred to an update to be given to the Ombudsman in January of this year, and possibly subsequent updates. Could you provide that information to the committee or at least that report as a table of your report for the committee so that we can see what happened as a result of the Ombudsman's recommendations?

Ms WANNAN: What we are doing at the moment is working with the Ombudsman about establishing an agreed valuation framework to measure our effectiveness in this area. That will be finished within the next month and we have consulted with the Ombudsman's office the whole way through that and are happy to provide it. It is about institutionalising the department's effort in children's services beyond just responding to the report.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Did you provide written updates?

Ms WANNAN: Yes we have.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Could we have a look at those?

Ms WANNAN: Yes.

CHAIR: Could you take that on notice?

Ms WANNAN: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: A new vacancy management arrangement has been in operation I think for roughly a year for supported accommodation. Can you give the committee some idea as to how many vacancies occur in supported accommodation during the course of a year that have had to be vacancy managed?

Mr O'REILLY: With regards to vacancies, normally with regards to our group home, we work on the basis of about 4.6% vacancy rate.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That would mean a lot to people if we knew how many beds you had?

Mr O'REILLY: DADHC operated we are talking about, 1,361 beds.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: You have 1,361 beds in total?

Mr O'REILLY: Right, DADHC operated.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: And 4.6%--

Mr O'REILLY: 4.6%, that was in August 2005, in July it was 5.3, so somewhere around that figure for our accommodation.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: What about NGOs?

Mr O'REILLY: NGOs, they have 1,887 bed capacity and they have a vacancy rate of around 3%.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Does the department have access to how many people would have applied for the available vacancies that were not able to be given a bed?

Mr O'REILLY: Each month under the vacancy management arrangements that occur at the discussion with the NGO sector at the regional level, so you have the NGO providers, plus the DADHC providers meet and look at the number of people who have requested accommodation arrangements. They then go through a prioritisation using the clinical expertise and work through and as the vacancies arise and the placements and compatibilities.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That is right, so how many people did you assess that missed out, because obviously there are always more applications than there are vacancies and I accept that some people might even apply a multiple number of times, but how many people, in rough terms, were assessed for the available number of vacancies that you had during the course of the year?

Mr O'REILLY: If I could take that on notice but if I gave you three months of figures, that might be better than just a single snap shot.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Could you tell the committee how many people received attended care services from the department and how many people do you have on the waiting list for attended care and have you allocated any additional funds this year to expand the number of people receiving attended care?

Mr O'REILLY: Attended care at July 2005 314 places for a budget of \$20.1 million. The waiting list was 324. Approximately half of the 324 are receiving some support from the service system but are seeking additional hours. The average hours is 31.8 hours per person per week.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: So you have got more people waiting for the service than you actually deliver the service to. Is there any proposal to expand the amount of attended care so that we can start getting through that waiting list?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Are you asking us to make a new policy announcement Mr Ryan?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I am allowed to ask, it is not question time. I am just sort of saying it does appear that the waiting list is growing and there seems to be no additional money for extra places this year.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: In the numbers that Mr O'Reilly just indicated to the committee I think provided for an increase for 100 in just one year, last year, so that the assumption is that there is growth in need and that we are addressing that growth and obviously it relates back to the points I made in my introductory remarks and I have referred to a number of times in these discussions, we are pursuing three very important pieces of work at the moment. One is measurement of the actual future needs, which are broadly described as the Walsh report or the PWC work, and we are going through a process of consultation with the sector in relation to accommodation. That consultation is all but complete now and we will be producing a written work resulting from that fairly shortly for further and final consideration by non-government operators, some of the academics and other stakeholders that gave us some views and input into that.

In other words, I think the answer to your question, over and above the fact that we have already been provided increased levels of support and care to the tune of 100 extra places in one year, that the overall sustainable answer to your question will be produced by the accommodation paper and the plan that we have referred to that we expect to be releasing early next year.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Would it be fair to say that the devolution program has largely halted temporarily whilst you are discussing the issue of new accommodation models because there does not appear to be any budget allocated to continue the devolution program, so what are the Government's plans with regard to devolution, how many people are still living in institutions and what is the long term plan? As I understand in one briefing provided by the department to the sector an estimate was made that it would require, in order to move the people from the devolution list that are currently in institutions, two new group homes a week for a significant period of time and I think the inference was that was probably too large a program for the department to carry out, it was unrealistic for the department to do that in the immediate future.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think we have to very sensitively, but nonetheless as transparently as possible, deal with the question of devolution and the program the department has had going for some time now in relation to devolution. The first and most important point to make is to refute your suggestion that we have suspended or in some way, either temporarily or otherwise, suspended devolution. Since the closure of the large residential centres program commenced in 2000, there have been 272 people moved into community based accommodation options. I think that is at least a part answer to your question. It has resulted in the closure of seven institutions and for more than a decade, as you know, group homes and large residential centres have been the major supported accommodation options open to people with a disability. For many people these models have largely met their support needs. For a range of others, neither model is currently sufficiently flexible to meet their needs.

What we have been considering is a broad range of accommodation models to support the needs of people with disabilities. In January this year a discussion paper was released as part of the round table process I have been referring to, referred to as models for supported accommodation dealing with a disability. Mr Ryan, I am sure you have familiarised yourself with that document. A consultation process is, as I said, all but complete and the department is currently writing up some of the work that is involved.

The overall message in the submissions received and in the discussions I have had has been a need for a much broader range of accommodation support options. In July and August 2005 I hosted those two fairly comprehensive discussions which focussed on the kinds of models that might be appropriate to continue not only the organizational process of devolution but to refocus the attention of the disability sector and the Government on the important policy priorities which lay behind devolution, which is to provide people in disability care or supported accommodation with the maximum number of options. The most supportive environment for them to have individual capacity to engage with the community to the fullest extent that is possible for them and to refocus on the objectives behind devolution for the individuals involved in the care system.

In doing that, the practical outcome is that since the closure of the large residential centres program, we have closed Streh Allen, Marsden Rehabilitation Centre, John Williamson Wahroonga, Woodstock in Albury, York Road Bondi Junction and the non-government sector, CRAM at Wollongong and Jennings at Parramatta have been closed.

CHAIR: Minister, I am going to have to stop the proceedings at this point because we have got another hearing shortly. Can I just thank both you and your Director General and Deputy Director General for your participation and the committee members for the spirit in which it has been conducted.

I should indicate you have not had any documents that you have sought to have tendered but in relation to questions taken on notice, this committee has resolved that we would like them back within fourteen days, however, should there be a reason why some of them are not available at the time because of the complexity of something, you may wish to advise the committee that you cannot meet our timetable. We will determine at another time whether we need to call you or your officers back for any further hearing and other than that, if I could thank everybody and ask that the room now be cleared.

The committee proceeded to deliberate.